Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies • Vol. 11 (60) No. 1 – 2018

A Contrastive-Translational Approach to Substitution

Mona ARHIRE [1]

The study is aimed at investigating the contrastiveness of substitution as a formal link between English and Romanian. The methodology for analysis adopts a translational perspective, which implies the examination of examples extracted from two translations of the same source language text. The findings display a variety of means of translating English substitutes into Romanian, which lead to conclusions relative to similarities and differences in the occurrence of substitution in the two languages, determined by structural peculiarities, shifts of cohesion and translator preferences.

Key-words: *substitution, contrastiveness, translation, cohesion*

1. Introduction: objectives and methodology

The study presented in this paper is interdisciplinary as it borrows methodological resources from several disciplines, such as translation studies and intercultural communication, contrastive linguistics, discourse analysis and textual linguistics. Discourse analysis and textual linguistics are the ones dealing primarily with cohesion, while the other three are inherently concerned with the manifestation of cohesion in the interlingual and intercultural transfer of messages so as to ensure communicative effectiveness. For cohesion is, along with coherence and correctness, an important component in constructing meaningful discourse.

As compared to conceiving messages in one's native tongue, the translation of messages is set under certain constraints determined by the possible conflict between the semantic content to be rendered in the target language and formal and/or stylistic language matters, which might be equally important especially in literary texts.

[1] Transilvania University of Braşov, mona.arhire@unitbv.ro

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

This paper broadly aims at investigating the cohesive equivalence in translation that can be obtained in the transfer of a text from a source language to a target language, and it particularly focuses on how the substitution of lexical items in English is rendered in translation into Romanian. Thereby, a contrastive insight is provided into the manifestation of cohesiveness between the two languages as derived from the analysis. The research is applied on a representative number of examples in which substitution occurs in the original English text, out of which the most relevant ones are presented herein. They are extracted from J. D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1991), from both its narrative and its dialogue, and are set in contrast with two translations into Romanian of Salinger's work, one translated by Catinca Ralea and Lucian Bratu and published in 1964,and the other onetranslated by Cristian Ionescu and published in 2011.

2. Theoretical considerations

This section highlights some relevant scholarly considerations that guided the subsequent research. They address issues related to cohesive devices in general and to substitution in particular. In addition, some views on their translatability and contrastiveness are synthetically presented in order to support the observation of the balance between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence, the former being the point of investigation, while the latter being ultimately desirable in translating literary texts (Nida 1964).

2.1. Cohesive devices and their translation

As Newmark asserts, "the topic of cohesion […] has always appeared […] the most useful constituent of discourse analysis or text linguistics applicable to translation" (1999, 295). Indeed, cohesion is a matter of textual naturalness and fluency, and fosters the coherence and understandability of discourse. Therefore, "[t]he translator need only be aware that there are different devices in different languages for creating texture and that the text hangs together by virtue of the semantic and structural relationships that hold between its elements" (Baker 1992, 188). In the same line, Blum-Kulka (2000) claims that the shift in cohesion affects the target language text either at the level of explicitness or/and in its semantics. Moreover, "[the choice involved in the types of cohesive markers used in a

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

particular text can affect the texture (as being 'loose' or 'dense') as well as the style and meaning of that text" (Blum-Kulka 2000, 299).

Despite the recognized importance of cohesive devices in the transfer of messages from a source language to a target language, the problem has been granted limited scholarly attention so far. Rooted in a translational perspective, the present study aims to provide some insight into contrastive aspects of the cohesive systems of English (Toolan 1998, etc.) and of Romanian (Bidu-Vrănceanu, *et al.* 2001, Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2002).

2.2. Substitution

Substitution or partial ellipsis (Toolan 1998) is one of the devices that languages employ to create the formal connectedness of any discourse and thereby determine its level of cohesion. Having no independent status, in that it does not provide meaning by itself, substitution displays a feature of co-referentiality and is context-dependent. It can relate to nouns or noun phrases, when the omitted, explicit items are referred to by *one, ones, the same,*or to verbs and verb phrases, when the omitted item is replaced by the corresponding auxiliary verb *do, be, have*, etc. or by *do the same, do so, be so, do it/that* (Duff1996).

Just as ellipsis and reference, substitution is a means of language compression, occurring when some material is left out since it is understood from the co-text, and its repetition or near-repetition is unnecessary. As Halliday and Hasan (1976) assert, substitution is grounded on presupposition, which is explicit. This means that there is another lexical item inserted to take the stead of a previously mentioned one. Redundancy is thus avoided, which enhances the communicative effectiveness because the new information is not overshadowed by the repeated given information. Considering all this, substitution plays a part in establishing the cohesive flow of a discourse by combining different parts of sentences so as to ensure that there is propositional development (Newmark 1999).

The scholarly definitions of substitution provided worldwide are often inconsistent or have been nuanced in several different ways (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Hoey 1991; Baker 1992; Toolan 1998; Merchant 2001; McShane 2005; Johnson 2008, etc.). The explanation for the variety of angles might lie in the impossibility of conceiving a theory that could be unitary and at the same time

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

valid for all languages. This justifies a closer look at the contrastiveness of cohesive devices between English and Romanian, envisaging better translation performance.

3. Examples and analysis

Since substitution appears in relation to both noun phrases and verb phrases, the analysis is structured along these two coordinates. The most frequent pronominal substitutes for **nouns or noun phrases** are *one* and *ones* in English. Although pronominal substitution does exist in Romanian as well, it is by far less common and less natural, and is therefore only occasionally used. The direct equivalents for *one* and *ones* would be *unul*, *una* and *unii*, which are most of the times avoided in favour of some other cohesive devices or alternative constructionstypical of Romanian.Here are a few examples:

(1) a. "I don't even think the bastard had a handkerchief, if you want to know the truth. I never saw him use one, anyway." (Salinger 1991, 19).

The meaning of *one* can be easily retrieved from the co-text as being *handkerchief*. The 1964 Romanian version employs a substitute as well, which, if back-translated, would be the equivalent of *something like that*:

b. – *Și la drept vorbind, cred că nenorocitul nici măcar n-avea batistă. În orice caz eu nu l-am văzut niciodată folosind așa ceva.* (Salinger 1964,61)

In contrast, the 2011 Romanian translation omits any lexical item, with ellipsis (marked by Δ) establishing the cohesive flow of the utterance:

c. – *Nici măcar nu cred că avea o batistă, ticălosul, dacă vreți să aflați adevărul. Eu, unul, nu l-am văzut niciodată să folosească*Δ. (Salinger 2011,48).

Even though the omission of the object is not the preferred way of expression in Romanian, unlike in English, it is possible. However, a more appropriate solution would have been repetition in Romanian.

In the following example, the substitute *ones* appears translated into Romanian by a demonstrative substitute in the 2011 version (2b) and by a repetition in the 1964 version (2c). Both versions are appropriate and cohesive:

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

(2) a. “I got hit with a snowball,” I said. “One of those very icy ones.” (Salinger 1991,31).

b. – *M-a lovit cineva cu un bulgăre de zăpadă. Știți, din aia înghețată*. (Salinger 2011, 76).

c. – *M-a lovit cineva cu un bulgăre de zăpadă – un bulgăre înghețat*. (Salinger 1964, 86).

A demonstrative substitute would have been appropriate in the translation of the following example, too, but rephrasing and the omission of any reference were opted for instead, in both Romanian translations:

(3) a. “The girls I like best are the ones I never feel much like kidding.” (Salinger 1991,42).

b. – *Pe fetele de care-mi place foarte mult nu prea-mi dă ghes inima să le tachinez*.(Salinger 2011, 105).

c. – *… atunci cînd îmi place serios o fată, nu-mi mai vine s-o tachinez*. (Salinger 1964, 112).

Ellipsis is the choice of both translators for the substitute *one* in the following example:

(4) a. “It isn't very serious. I have this tiny little tumor on the brain… Oh, I'll be all right and everything! It's right near the outside. And it's a very tiny one.” (Salinger 1991,32).

b.– *… e* Δ *foarte mică*. (Salinger 1964, 88; Salinger 2011, 79).

c. – *… e una foarte mică*.(my translation).

This translation, in both Romanian versions, is the equivalent of *it is very tiny*, which is perfectly appropriate. Nevertheless, the primary equivalent of the English substitute *one* could have been suitably used as a pronominal reference (*una*) in Romanian, which would have been a perfect equivalentbetween English and Romanianat both the formal and semantic level:

Similarly, ellipsis is adopted for the translation of the English *one* in both Romanian versions, in which the pronominal reference *unul* would have been possible though:

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

(5) a. The cab I had was a real old one.(Salinger 1991,44).
b. *Taxiul în care m-am urcat era îngrozitor de vechi*. (Salinger 1964, 115)

Substitution in the English **verb phrase** is most frequently the replacement of a notional verb by its corresponding auxiliary verb. As the examples below illustrate, this very common phenomenon in English is hardly possible to render formally in Romanian. The following example shows that the substitute *do* has been translated into Romanian either by repetition (6b) or by paraphrase (6c):

(6) a. "I have gray hair. I really do."(Salinger 1991,5).
b. – … *am o grămadă de fire de păr alb. Zău că am*. (Salinger 1964, 31)
c. – … *am ceva păr alb. Vorbesc serios*. (Salinger 2011, 15)

The substitution with an additional emphatic value in the next example has been similarly translated into Romanian, namely once by repetition (7b) and once by an elliptical paraphrase naturally integrated into the emphatic construction which comprises it (7c). This latter translation would be rendered back in English as *Yes, of course*:

(7) a. "Oh, I feel some concern for my future, all right. Sure. Sure, I do." (Salinger 1991, 8).
b. – *– Ba da, cum să nu mă preocupe. Sigur. Sigur că mă preocupă.* (Salinger 1964, 36).
c. – *A, ba mă preocupă viitorul, da. Sigur. Sigur că da.* (Salinger 2011, 22)

Another emphatic construction employs substitution in the source language text, which is translated by repetition in the Romanian 1964 version (8b) and by paraphrase in the 2011 version (8c), just as in the example above:

(8) a. "What did Dr. Thurmer say to you, boy? I understand you had quite a little chat."
"Yes, we did. We really did."(Salinger 1991,3).
b. – *Ce ți-a spus doctoral Thurmer, băiete?Am auzit că ați avut o discuție destul de lungă.*

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

– *Da, <u>am avut</u>. Așa e*. (Salinger 1964, 30).

c. – *Ce ți-a spus doctoral Thurmer, băiete? Înțeleg c-ați avut o mică discuție.*

– *Da, așa-i.*(Salinger 2011, 14).

(9) a. You never saw anybody nod as much in your life as old Spencer <u>did</u>. (Salinger 1991, 4).

b. *În viața voastră n-ați văzut om să dea atât din cap <u>ca bătrânu' Spencer</u>*. (Salinger 2011, 14)

c. *În viața mea n-am văzut un om care să dea atâta din cap*Δ. (Salinger 1964, 29).

Example 9a comprises the substitute *did* for the verb *nod*. The Romanian 2011 version (9b) uses a paraphrase, which would literally be in English *like old Spencer*, while the 1964 version (9c) omits the explicit comparison, reasonably considering that it is understood from the context. Neither version affects the cohesiveness of the message.

4. Findings

The example analysis proved that there are different cohesive links applied in Romanian for the English substitution. They vary from repetition, to substitution and ellipsis. The substitution of nouns in English was most of the times translated by repetition into Romanian. Although pronominal and demonstrative reference is possible in Romanian, it is not frequently applied to establish cohesion. The attempt to insert pronominal or demonstrative substitutes in the Romanian versions appears rather unnatural and is therefore less preferred. However, other substitutes can be suitably used, such as the Romanian equivalent of *something like that* for the English *one* (example1b). Ellipsis seems to be the second most frequent cohesive device after repetition, and does not affect the coherent or cohesive flow of the message, the omitted item being easily retrievable from the co-text. Sometimes, alternative translation versions are equally appropriate. In example 2, the substitute *ones* was translated by repetition in one version and by a demonstrative substitute in the other one, without any of them affecting the

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

message. Also, as in example 3, it might happen that the use of substitution in English does not necessarily involve one in Romanian. The translations (3a and 3b) are different, but both are creative solutions that succeed in preserving the semantic and stylistic content.

In the verb phrase, the most frequent equivalent in Romanian of the English substitute is repetition as well. Another commonality is that, among the cohesive devices, ellipsis is second most frequent and paraphrase is also creatively used to translate meaning and style. Additionally, there are sometimes different approaches to the translation of the same source language substitute. However, the main difference is of a formal nature, in that Romanian does not use auxiliary verbs as substitutes in the way English does. Even if some Romanian tenses are constructed with auxiliary verbs, they cannot be used for reference. As compared to English, the Romanian main verbs inflect the information about the tense and about the subject in terms of person, number and gender.

5. Conclusions

This study confirms the fact that the manifestation of cohesiveness follows different rules in different languages. It seems that, when discourse is conceived in a natural language, it will just naturally follow these inherent rules with the language users providing cohesion intuitively. But in the process of translation, the influence of the source language cohesive texture might affect the natural cohesive flow of the target language. However, the dynamics of the target language texts implied in this investigation does not appear affected by this fairly common translational inconvenience. The translations of substitution analyzed in this paper demonstrate that the translators could well cope with this inconvenience since no direct formal relation can be traced between the original English text and its translations.

The outcome of the investigation illustrates that substitution is not as frequent in Romanian as in English and, when it occurs, its manifestation is different from English and more varied. English seems to possess a more rigorous system of substitution both for nouns and for verbs. Even though Romanian uses means of substitution as well – some of them quite similar to the English ones – they do not match at a formal level in the two languages. Also, other formal links can be suitably employed to establish the cohesive flow in Romanian. Moreover, as

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

the analysis of some examples demonstrated, there is no perfect match between the English substitution and any lexical or grammatical Romanian device. This confirms Baker's assertion that "every language has its own devices for establishing cohesive links" (1992, 190). Baker continues by claiming that"[l]anguage and text-type preferences must both be taken into consideration in the process of translation" (1992, 190). Baker's claim can be completed by the finding that translator preferences can also play a significant part in the choice of cohesive devices. This conclusion derives from the following findings: in the 1964 translated version, repetition prevails, while the translation of substitution was more creatively dealt with in the 2011 version, which resorts more often to paraphrase. Moreover, the variety of manners of translation proves that the translation of substitution cannot follow precise patterns and that there is fuzzy contrastiveness in this matter between English and Romanian. The cohesiveness of the target language version can be ensured in the post-process stage of translating dedicated to reviewing, for instance, by applying a naturalness test, the aim of which is "to see if the form of the translation is natural and the style appropriate" (Larson 1997, 542). In this way, the desired balance between formal and dynamic equivalence can be established.

References

Baker, Mona. 1992. *In Other Words. A Coursebook on Translation*. London: Routledge.

Bidu-Vrănceanu, Angela, Cristina Călărașu, Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, *et al.* 2001. *Dicționar de științe ale limbii*. București: Nemira.

Blum-Kulka, Shoshona. 2000."Shifts of Cohesion and Coherence in Translation". In *The Translation Studies Reader,* ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 298-313. London: Routledge.

Duff, Alan. 1996. *Translation*. London: OUP.

Halliday, Michael A. K., and Hasan Ruqaiya. 1976. *Cohesion in English.* London and New York: Longman.

Hoey, Michael. 1991. *Patterns of Lexis in Text.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Johnson, Kyle. 2008."A View of QR from Ellipsis". In *Topics in Ellipsis,* ed. by Kyle Johnson,69-94. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)

Larson, Mildred L. 1984. *Meaning-based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence*. Lanhan, New York and Oxford: University Press of America.

Merchant, Jason. 2001. *The Syntax of Silence: Sluicing, Islands, and the Theory of Ellipsis.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Newmark, Peter. 1999. *Approaches to Translation*. U.K.: Macmillan.

Nida, Eugene. 1964. *Toward a Science of Translating*. Leiden: E.J.Brill.

Salinger, Jerome D. 1964. *De veghe în lanul de secară*. Translated by Catinca Ralea, and Lucian Bratu. București: Editura pentru Literatură Universală.

Salinger, Jerome D. 1991. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston, New York, London: Little, Brown and Co.

Salinger, Jerome D. 2005/2011. *De veghe în lanul de secară*. Translated by Cristian Ionescu. Iași: Polirom.

Stoichițoiu-Ichim, Adriana. 2002. *Semiotica discursului juridic*. București: Editura Univerității București.

Toolan, Michael. 1998. *Language in Literature – An Introduction to Stylistics*. U.K.: Arnold.

BDD-A28531 © 2018 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:58:19 UTC)