Translation and Language Change: The Interplay of Diachronic and Synchronic Corpus-Based Studies

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Key Aspects

• Corpus-based methodology for the investigation of differences and similarities between translated, non-translated and source texts.

• Changes occurring through time: translation as a language contact phenomenon.

• Translation of popular science texts: a unidirectional process from English into less widely spoken languages.

• Changes in non-translated texts that might have been encouraged through translations from English.
The TROY Corpus

The TROY Corpus (TRanslation Over the Years) is a corpus of non-translated and translated Greek popular science articles and their English source texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TROY Corpus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
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</tbody>
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Original Aspects of the TROY Corpus

- One of the first diachronic corpora in translation studies, first involving Greek data
- First attempt to combine all corpus-based methodologies:
  - Diachronic: same texts - different points in time
  - Synchronic: different texts - same point in time
  - Comparable: non-translated vs translated
  - Parallel: source texts vs target texts
Corpus Methodology

Language change in Greek

- Diachronic analysis of a monolingual corpus.
- Non-translated articles are compared at different points in time.

The role of translation

- Synchronic analysis of a comparable corpus.
- Translated articles are compared with non-translated ones.

The role of source texts

- Synchronic analysis of a parallel corpus.
- Translated articles are compared with their source texts.

Applications

- Translation-specific features: Linguistic features that belong to the target language, but are under the obvious influence of the source language.
- Examine their dissemination in the target language.
- Understand translation as a language contact phenomenon that might encourage change.
- Understand how genres develop in the target culture.
Focus of Analysis

• **Passive voice**: plays a central role in the way in which information is constructed and presented in different languages.

• **Reporting verbs**: 10 most common reporting verbs in the Greek and English sub-corpora.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Λέω (say/tell)</td>
<td>Say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Θεωρώ (consider)</td>
<td>Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Απαιτώ (demand)</td>
<td>Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Υποστηρίζω (maintain)</td>
<td>Think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Γνωρίζω (know)</td>
<td>Suggest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Αναφέρω (report)</td>
<td>Tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Εξηγώ (explain)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Διαπιστώνω (ascertain)</td>
<td>Ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δηλώνω (state)</td>
<td>Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Μαθαίνω (learn)</td>
<td>Explain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language Change

\[ \chi^2 = 8.63, \text{d.f.} = 2, \ p < 0.05 \]
The Role of Translation

The frequency of the passive voice in Greek non-translated and translated popular science articles

2003-2004
$\chi^2=16.52$, d.f.=1, $p<0.05$

2009-2010
$\chi^2=30.85$, d.f.=1, $p<0.05$

The Role of the Source Texts

The frequency of the passive voice in Greek translated popular science articles and their English source texts

2003-2004
$\chi^2=7.07$, d.f.=1, $p<0.05$

2009-2010
$\chi^2=2.47$, d.f.=1, $p>0.05$
Passive Voice Reporting Verbs in 2009-2010

- Language change in Greek
  - There is substantial change in the frequency of the passive voice reporting verbs in Greek.
- The role of the translations
  - Translations seems to encourage this change.
- The role of the source texts
  - Influence can be traced back to the English source texts.
So what?

• Translation as a linguistic and social activity, i.e. a social circumstance facilitating change.

• Combination of corpus-based methodologies can assist in understanding
  • the similarities and differences between translated, non-translated texts and originals
  • how certain genres have developed through time

Thank you!

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