

Register-specific interference in translation

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This paper discusses a quantitative corpus analysis of register-specific translator behaviour, in terms of the extent to which interference of the source language is admitted into the translation. Evert and Neumann (in press) provide corpus evidence for source language interference and show differences depending on translation direction, arguably due to the prestige of the languages involved. However, they do not further differentiate the findings according to register, although there is growing evidence that translators are susceptible to register conventions (Neumann 2013, Delaere 2015). This evidence is also in line with assumptions about the language system being essentially organised into registers as subsystems that, in combination, capture the probabilistically distributed features of a language (Halliday 1991). According to this approach, a feature may be highly likely to occur in one register and virtually blocked in another (Matthiessen 1993). These assumptions would predict that translators adapt to the specific situational context in which the register (both of the source text and of the planned target text) is embedded and that they consequently modulate the extent to which they allow the source language to interfere or adapt to perceived register conventions in the target language.

In this paper, we will use the multivariate methodology developed by Diwersy et al. (2014) to examine the influence of register on the extent of source language interference in translation. We use lexico-grammatical features capturing the field, tenor and mode dimensions of register that were semi-automatically extracted from the CroCo Corpus of English and German originals and translations (Neumann 2013). Additionally, comparable features are extracted from the Dutch Parallel Corpus (Macken et al. 2011) so as to test whether the findings for the language pair English-German reflect a more general pattern that can also be found in other language pairs. The findings of our study will shed light on the extent to which translators are susceptible to register norms and, more generally, on claims about the role of registers in language.

References

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