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Exploring style in translation with text-analysis tools. Register shifts and theme alterations of taboo language in two Greek translations of Voyage au bout de la nuit by Louis-Ferdinand Céline

This communication aims at contributing to the intense contemporary debate on corpus stylistics in Translation Studies (Baker 2004; Bosseaux 2001; Winters 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Munday 2008; Kamenická 2008; Saldanha 2011; Cheesman et al. 2016; Mastropierro 2017), by studying with text-analysis tools concrete stylistic features of the Célinian novel Voyage au bout de la nuit, widely recognized as an iconic modernist text (de Benoist 2015; Latin 2008) and one of the first to have been studied with computer tools (Hubert de Phalèse 1993). Considering style as referring “to those aspects of language assumed by the hearer, reader or translator, and indeed by the speaker, original writer, or writer of translations, to be the result of choice” (Boase-Beier 2006, 53), we investigate the rendering of taboo language (Leach 1966; Andersson & Trudgill 1990; de Klerk 1991; Jay 1992 & 1999; Ljung 2011), which constitutes a core stylistic, cultural and ideological element of the text, in the two Greek translations of the novel.

This communication is part of a wider, corpus-based study, focusing on the rendering of argot, vulgar and taboo language in Zola’s and Céline’s translations into Greek. It explores selected taboo language categories in the parallel corpus of the first 27 chapters of Céline’s novel and their translations, which has been compiled and annotated with freeware tools (LF Aligner, CATMA). The tagging of the taboo language is based on a classification drawing by both Jay’s (Jay 1992, 166) and Ljung’s (Ljung 2011, 35-42) sociolinguistic taxonomies of taboo language. We propose to identify the theme alterations and register shifts of the Célinian taboo language in the translated texts, in order to extract quantitative and qualitative information on the translators’ choices, strategies and ideology and on translation norms, with special reference to orality, as a major authorial feature (Céline 1995 [1955], 23), and to the rhetoric of the invective (Larochelle 2008; Sautermeister 2003). Our further objective should be to provide some measurable indicators for a heuristic, computer-assisted framework of translation criticism.

References


Creating poems with the same effects: approach to poetry translation

Existing approaches to poetry translation include some that focus on preserving the rhyme scheme, rhythm or sentence structure of the original but change the tone, diction or details, and others that retain the specific meanings but change the sounds. Therefore, the question is what is considered to be good translation of poetry? Here, we adopt the idea that poetry translation should create the same effects as in the original poems. According to Hofstadter (1997), an engineering approach to poetry translation is to determine what happens when we read a poem and how we can ensure that happens in another (target) language.

In this approach, it is necessary for machines to understand the original poems and their aesthetic effects. Poetry is a high-density form of language whereby several meanings are packed together in a compact passage (Burroway, 2007), and those meanings are sometimes ambiguous (Addonizio and Lux, 1997) or leave room for interpretations by readers. According to Birkhoff (1933), aesthetics is formalized as ratio between order and complexity and can be measured as such. However, the application of aesthetic measures to poems is usually limited to sound devices or phonetic features. In the same way, most previous research for computational analysis of verses focused on sound-based methods such as rhyme and meter (Hayward, 1996; Greene et al., 2010; Genzel et al., 2010). The word choice or richness of meaning is often overlooked even though it is the meaning of poems that make them aesthetically appealing. Kao and Jurafsky (2012), nonetheless, study the computational methods to compare the stylistic and content features of meaningful poetic texts. The features include diction, sound devices, emotive language and imagery. Their research results show that professional poets make reference to concrete objects or using imagism and do not attach to strict or traditional rhyming.

In our research, we aim to create machine translation of poetry consisting of three modules: (1) computational linguistic analysis and understanding of poems, (2) extracted content features and effects, and (3) natural language generation of poems. Our experiment consists of 10 English poems by Mary Oliver which will be translated into Thai. The expected results of this proposed research is a model of understanding poems by computers. Ultimately, this will benefit many applications such as computer-aided machine translation and co-creative systems or systems where human and computer work together for creative art.

References
Technology in general and machine translation in particular are intrinsically included in the translation process in the language industry (see the 2019 Language Industry Survey by the European Association of Translation Companies). This automation has focused primarily on how technical or scientific translations are produced. In recent years, there has been an interest to see how MT can benefit or hinder the translation of more creative texts. Some studies show that MT might help professional literary translators to be more productive (Toral et al. 2018). However, translators’ perception is that the “more creative” the literary text, the less useful MT is (Moorkens et al. 2018). On the other hand, there are few studies in machine-assisted translation that focus on the ultimate user of the translation (e.g. Castilho and Guerberof 2018; Guerberof, Moorkens and O’Brien 2019). The study presented here seeks to re-address this focus by applying MT to literary texts to answer the question: how do readers engage with literary texts that have been translated using different translation modalities?

At the beginning of 2019, we carried out an pilot experiment (Guerberof and Toral 2019) in one language direction (English-to-Catalan) that included a questionnaire to assess narrative engagement (Mangen and Kuiken 2014), using a scale created for this purpose (Bussell and Bilandzic 2009), and another questionnaire to gauge the reception of a fiction piece translated in three conditions: from scratch (fully human translation), machine translated, and a post-edited version (machine translation output corrected by translators). We found out that readers were more engaged with human translation, as expected, followed by, surprisingly, the machine translated text, and lastly by the post-edited text. We are presenting here the results of a followup project that seeks to explore further these results by exploring the three modalities (machinetranslated, post-edited and human-translated) with a larger cohort of Catalan readers. The objective is ultimately to understand how readers engage and receive texts that have been translated assisted by technology, and to understand how the use of this technology might or might not constrain creativity in the translators’ process.

References
Pivot Translation Reconceptualised: A Computer-Augmented Approach to the Translation of Poetry

How useful can machine translation be made for translation practitioners in the production of translations from languages they do not speak? “Indirect translation” or “pivot translation”, as it is respectively referred to in the fields of Translation Studies and Machine Translation (MT), is a widely employed practice, generally conceptualised as a work-around, where the more desirable approach of translating directly is, for one reason or another, impossible. This paper aims to employ the practice as a potential strength that allows for the translation of work from languages that a human translator has not mastered. It reconceives MT output through Nord’s (2006) distinction between so-called “instrumental translation” and “documentary translation”. While MT outputs are generally intended primarily as instrumental translations, or stand-alone representations of their source texts in target languages, this paper demonstrates that MT systems can also produce documentary translations, or texts with specific details about the source text that do not necessarily stand in for it. The outputs produced by this system do not, therefore, consist of only one complete text. Rather, the system produces several variants of instrumental translation by selecting output candidates produced by the neural machine translation (NMT) system, based on different criteria. It supplements these with documentary translations, in the form of qualitative notes on the source text. These outputs can be used in combination by a human translator who potentially does not have direct access to the source language, to produce complete translations, either in the same language as the outputs or in subsequent working languages. The focus of the system at present is poetry, one of the text types that is currently most problematic for NMT systems. The case study chosen takes examples of poetry from the Arabic source text of the Thousand and One Nights, which has formal characteristics specific to Arabic. As well as several permutations of an instrumental translation, the system outputs notes on the linguistic makeup of the poem in question, its rhyme scheme and meter. Human translators, whether they speak the source language or not, can use these various outputs actively to produce a translation that is both thematically similar to the source text and of distinctive poetic value.

References
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The figure of the literary translator amid new technologies

The literary field has always held a unique place within translation studies and has repeatedly attracted equal criticism: ever since translation scholars first defended the very idea of human (literary) translation (Mounin 2016), but also as soon as translators started to equip themselves with tools as basic word processors (Ladmiral 1994). However, the importance given by scholars to literature, and poetry in particular (Bassnett 1998), heavily contrasts with the predominant position on the market of what is reductively referred to as ‘technical translation’. While these texts sparked a growing demand for translators and an interest in translation technologies (Hutchins 2001), they also caused renewed concern, as a new generation of detractors condemn the use of such tools with creative texts, on the grounds that the inherent subtleties and formal intricacies of literary translation should be flatly contradictory to the mechanical and automatic operations of new technologies.

Nevertheless, these tools that were once the sole privilege of a few tech-savvy users are now continuously evolving, reaching a wider audience and expanding into specialized fields (Goncharova & Lacour 2011; Besacier & Schwartz 2015). In this context, we therefore aim to analyse the potential benefits and shortcomings of computer-assisted literary translation, as well as how new technologies are perceived by literary translators. To help us highlight these considerations, we present a case study based on the Septimus Heap saga. The first six novels were used to create a translation memory from scratch with LogiTerm (Terminotix 2016), and the resulting file was then fed into Trados (SDL 2017) to help with the translation of the seventh volume and see if CAT tools were indeed relevant when dealing with prose from the heroic fantasy genre.

Following this experiment, we argue that such tools and their tailored functionalities not only facilitate and speed up the process, but also boost creativity, as they provide useful hindsight and ample material for better informed and more coherent translation choices. This is fundamentally important for translation scholars and professionals alike (Baker 2000; Taber 1972), especially in the case of retranslation, change of translator or collaborative work, and these findings are in keeping with other recent works in this area (cf. Youdale 2019). Moreover, we can build on this experience to deconstruct some persistent myths about CALT and suggest avenues for the development of tools even better suited to the activity, including some where machine translation would play a key role.

References

Taber, Charles R. “Traduire le sens, traduire le style.” Languages, no. 28, 1972, pp. 55–63.
In this thesis, the central question was what potential benefits there are for literary translators using Voyant Tools (VT) and Sketch Engine (SE), and SDL Trados Studio (Trados) for source-text analysis and translation practice. The research aims to fill a niche within translation studies with regard to literary translation and translation technologies other than machine translation. The research was centred around Evelyn Waugh’s short story “Mr Loveday’s Little Outing” (1936) as a case study, analysing the source text with VT and SE individually and retranslating it in Trados. This allowed for (potential) benefits to be identified, some of which also apply to literary translation without an existing translation being available.

In this case, VT proved to be most beneficial in identifying recurring words, phrases and patterns in the text. Although SE showed significant limitations, it showed potential with regard to analysing larger and more complex corpora. Trados offered a greater general overview of the text and the term base and translation memory offered better documentation of translation choices. It was found that the tools added a new, more objective view of the text to that of a translator and made it easier to follow through translation choices based on the results of source-text analysis. As for retranslation, Trados’ segmentation reinforced a better comparison of the source text and the existing translation. General possibilities resided in more efficiently combining the workings of the tools, to which further research may add in order to work towards the actual implementation of CAT in literary translation.
The use of machine translation in the creation of literature has been approached from two main perspectives (Kenny 2020). The first, and longer standing perspective, adopted in particular by poets, tends to see machine translation outputs as a kind of ‘found poetry’, serendipitously encountered linguistic ‘stuff’ that can be manipulated like materials in the plastic arts. Rehomed in a new literary artifact, such outputs are often prized for their alienating, ungrammatical, anti-narrative or even comical effects (see also Lee 2011; Taivalkoski-Shilov 2018). The second perspective, taken in particular by computer scientists, has positioned newer types of data-driven machine translation engines as serious contenders in the translation of literary prose, capable of producing ‘fluent’ outputs, and competing with human translation when evaluated in experimental conditions, where the focus is sometimes on single, out-of-context sentences (see Toral and Way 2015, 2018; Moorkens et al. 2018). Neither of these perspectives, however, reflects the views or experiences of literary translators, and very little work thus far has sought to discover how such literary translators might use machine translation in their work, and to what effect.

In this paper we break new ground by investigating the use of a commercially available MT system by a highly experienced English-to-German literary translator working on a specially commissioned translation, in his normal environment. We complement our observations with linguistic analysis and a post-task interview, in an effort to achieve a more holistic and ecologically-valid understanding of computer-assisted literary translation than previous studies have allowed. Our analysis focuses in particular on the translator’s style and how it changes when the translator uses machine translation. Style is understood here, after Saldanha (2011), as a coherent pattern of motivated linguistic choices, recognizable across a large body of a writer’s output, and studied efficiently using corpus techniques. A ‘baseline’ picture of the translator’s style is provided by previous corpus-driven studies of their published translations, conducted over the last two decades (Winters 2007, 2009, 2015). The work builds on initial analyses presented by the authors in late 2019 (Kenny and Winters 2019; Winters and Kenny 2019).

References


A Very Short Story, an early short story by Ernest Hemingway first published in 1925, will be used to analyze and compare literary translation and post-editing processes. In a first phase of a broader empirical study of literary translation processes, five professional German translators translated the story into German, using Translog as a keylogging tool and Audacity to audio-record concurrent and retrospective verbalizations (Kolb 2011, 2013, 2019). In a second phase, five different professional German translators have been asked to post-edit a machine translation of the story produced by DeepL, using the same tools to capture the process. Both groups of participants worked at home, their usual workplace.

In my presentation, based on an analysis of the verbal protocols and keylogs, I will compare the two types of processes (zooming in on two participants from each group, due to time constraints):

1) on a quantitative level, looking at task organization, timelines and work patterns, and

2) on a qualitative level, focusing on two aspects that have emerged as salient points in the translation processes, i.e., the translators’ handling of some of Hemingway’s stylistic choices such as the use of repetitions and a pun. All in all, Hemingway’s story is a very “simple” story if we look at its textual makeup – there is little lexical variation, with a preference for simple, everyday words and frequent repetitions; the syntax is straightforward and paratactic, with frequent parallelisms. This perceived “simplicity” makes it an interesting candidate for a study of machine translation performance as such as well as a study of the cognitive and creative processes of translating and post-editing a literary text.

References


Duncan Large – Academic Director, British Centre for Literary Translation, University of East Anglia

tba
Punning, a form of wordplay in which one word or phrase is used to evoke the meaning of another, similar- or identical-sounding word or phrase, is a recurrent and expected feature of many types of literature. And though punning is well understood linguistically and is among the most extensively researched problems in translation studies, it remains out of scope for natural language processing applications such as machine translation. This is because today's language technologies treat anomalies, incongruities, and ambiguities in the input as things that must be resolved in favour of a single "correct" interpretation, rather than preserved and interpreted in their own right. But if computers cannot yet deal with puns on their own, can they at least provide specialized support to translation professionals?

In this paper, I summarize the state of the art in linguistics, computational linguistics, translation, and machine translation as it relates to humour and wordplay, as well as the results of my own interviews with and observations of literary translators who have worked on puns. On the basis of these findings, I argue that the proper place of machines in the translation of wordplay is to support rather than to replace human translators. In the vein of the "Translator's Amanuensis" proposed by Martin Kay, I make some specific proposals concerning how the hitherto disparate work in these fields can be connected with a view to producing "machine-in-the-loop" computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools to assist human translators in selecting and implementing appropriate translation strategies for puns. I present a prototype of such a CAT tool and demonstrate how it could be used as part of a wider workflow in literary translation.
We present two original infrastructures - Bukvik¹ and LitTerra² - as a fluid approach to a wide range of stylometric tasks. Their potential is especially apparent when applied to scenarios such as computer-assisted comparison of multiple translations of the same text. This work is supported by the Prismatic Jane Eyre project at Oxford University, an ongoing large-scale comparative study of the multiple translations of a ‘global’ novel, in this case, “Jane Eyre”. While this project’s insight into the way Charlotte Bronte’s novel refracts in over twenty languages forms the context for our case study, we apply our toolkit especially to the existing former Yugoslavian and Russian translations as compared to the English original novel and balanced corpora in the source and the target languages.

Through the example of the translations, we explore the infrastructures’, and the underlying methodologies’, potential in terms of the comparison of multiple translations of a given text into the same language and, crucially, across languages as well.

In so doing, we apply the methodology we refer to as Qualitatively Augmented Quantitative Analysis (QAQA) - with the focus, in particular, of combining the advantages of close and distant reading approaches. The data from the qualitative domain (close reading) will shape and instruct the quantitative domain (distant reading) in the analysis leading to more optimal and relevant results, while the quantitative domain will provide insights for the qualitative domain.

The main challenge such solutions are facing, in regard to fluidity, comes from the duality of the QAQA methodology. The methodology requires a mechanism that will balance, stimulate interaction, and inform both domains.

Bukvik is an online collaborative system for DH (Digital Humanities) experiments designed with a focus on an adaptive approach to a researcher community needs, discussion, reproducibility, versioning, results-visualization, and open+agile research. It supports longitudinal text analysis and comparative parallel translations of the same text focusing on various aspects, like the text structure, words’ scope (richness, exoticism, etymology), keywords/categories/patterns, and Society of Words (SoW), among others.

LitTerra is a world of literature. LitTerra augments books in multiple ways, spatial, temporal, entities, writing stylistics, character analysis, cross-books’/writers’ interactions, etc. It supports such augmentations for parallel bilingual texts as well. It supports integration and cross-informing QAQA domains of close reading findings and distant reading findings in the continuum of bilingual texts.

¹ Bukvik (https://Cha-OS.org/Bukvik)
² LitTerra (https://Cha-OS.org/LitTerra)
As the project is ongoing, we propose to present a set of results as well as a vision for its further development within and beyond the context of our existing case study.
Despite a growing body of research on the application of translation technologies to its workflow (Voigt and Jurafski, 2012; Jones and Irvine, 2013; Besacier and Schwartz, 2015; Toral and Way, 2014; 2015a; 2015b; Toral et al., 2018), literary translation appears to be postponing the encounter with new tools, reinforcing the image of being ‘the last bastion of human translation’ (Toral and Way, 2014: 174). In this regard, Littau (2016) advocates for a rediscovery of the ways in which materiality and ideality mutually and symbiotically shape each other, in that if we are to explore translation in contemporary society and culture, then we are to study the interplay between the two. This paper is based on a doctoral research project which aimed at doing so by exploring the dynamic, mutual and social construction of human-computer interaction in literary translation. In particular, it focused on uncovering literary translators’ narratives of their role in society and their attitudes towards technology via means of a questionnaire. Findings show (1) literary translators’ differing attitudes towards general and translation-specific technology, and (2) how these are strictly related to the way they perceive themselves in society. Furthermore, suggestions are made in regard to innovative ways in which new technology tools could be implemented in the literary translation workflow by taking into account both material and immaterial elements of human-computer interaction in literary translation. This, in order to promote a fruitful collaboration between relevant social groups and a proactive approach to the process of technological innovation in literary translation.

References


Even a few years ago, results of machine translation of literary texts were quoted, at best, for want of better jokes, and literary translators felt quite secure with their low-paying and invisible yet pleasant jobs. With the latest Deep Learning-based translating machines they are no longer safe, as MT-processed literary texts, while still not perfect, are often in need of an editor rather than a translator. Of course, humans themselves can (usually) still detect the difference between DL MT and (good) human translation even in well-researched language pairs. However, human translators have just lost a powerful ally in this Götterdämmerung struggle. Stylometry-based author- and translator-attribution, which relies on statistics of frequencies of very frequent words, and which quite recently could tell Google-translated literary texts from those translated by humans, is now rather helpless against both Google Translate and DeepL and it can no longer separate machines from people - for most, but not all, originals. This is at least what can be observed when multivariate analysis of Burrows Delta scores is applied to Google Translate, DeepL and human translations of fifty French novels into English.
Gabriela Saldanha, Department of Modern Languages, University of Birmingham

_Literary translation and artificial intelligence: the limits of creativity_

Literary translation is nowadays often considered as ‘creative writing’ (Malmkjær 2020, Loffredo and Perteghella 2006). Boden (2016), suggests that the potential contradiction between ‘Creativity and Artificial Intelligence’ is a “philosophical question” – rather than a scientific one -- to which “no clear answer can be given as yet”. On the other hand, Toral and Way (2018) suggest that automatic literary translation of an “equivalent quality to translations produced by a professional human translator” can already be (partially) achieved. On that basis, we could suggest that literary translation performed by artificial intelligences may be just a matter of time. My argument here, however, is that whether artificial intelligences can deal ‘creatively’ with language, is not the right question to ask, neither philosophically nor scientifically. While it may help to measure the level of sophistication of MT systems, it is based on a limited understanding of both literary translation and cognition. This paper proposes that literary translation, as an art, is not confined to creative writing, Drawing on an anthropological understanding of art as a process that may, or may not, be aestheticized as such in the interaction between the artefact and other participants, I suggest that we need to first broaden our horizons and our understanding of literary translation before we explore how computers, or any non-humans, can participate in its creation.

References


The development of modern society in a more commercial fashion and the emergence of online media have caused a tremendous impact on traditional literature. Net literature has made the scene. Recent years have witnessed a reading frenzy among the West in Chinese net literature, especially fantasy novels, also known as XianXia novels. This type of novel gradually formed its own genre by the rise of mass media and net literature. It shares the same readership with some other forms of literary works, light novels, and cultural products such as Japanese anime or manga. The welcome by-product of this reading frenzy, the fandom who takes up the translation work voluntarily, is boosting the new development of literary translation with the aid of machine translation.

While the literary text is considered to be the greatest challenge for machine translation, it increasingly appears that MT, especially with the development of neural MT, might be a way of dispelling the myth and developing the emerging area in the field of literary translation, Chinese fantasy novels. Compared with formal, traditional literature, the characteristics of net literature (i.e. interactivity, intermediality and performance), especially of fantasy novels that have a specific realm of terminology, seems more suitable for machine translation. Though there are researches on the international communications of Chinese web literature, the studies on fantasy novels, particularly from the perspective of machine translation, are rarely scarce.

This paper will discuss how MT assists the spread out of Chinese fantasy novels to the world. An overview of the contemporary Chinese fantasy novel translated into English will be provided, and a model for MT development in net literature translation is analysed, based on the consideration of translation quality and time and audience’s response. The two major fandom websites dedicated to translating Chinese fantasy novels will be examined and compared in detail. This present paper will argue that MT will allow the translation of Chinese fantasy novels to prosper and succeed. It also brings us new ideas that MT could be one of the ways of introducing particular types of Chinese net literature to the world.
Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen was first published in 1919. This study of the forms of life, thought and art in France and The Netherlands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was nationally and internationally received as particularly innovative because it replaced the prevailing factual history of the great events with a culturally biased history of mentality of high literary quality. The successive reprints in Dutch and the early translations into the main European languages are proof of this. Nowadays it continues to be an internationally renowned reference work, as evidenced by the number of re-translations and first translations in other languages.

At this moment there are four European languages with an early translation and at least one re-translation: German, English, Italian and Portuguese. Re-translating a classic poses a major translation problem: how to deal with outdated language? Basically, the translator has two options: a source-oriented translation approach based on archaisation, i.e. emphasising the historicity of the text by using non-modern language in, or a target-oriented approach based on modernisation, i.e. emphasising the current relevance of the text by using modern language. These two strategies dealing with a time gap are closely related to those that handle with spatial distance: foreignization, i.e. ‘sending the reader abroad’, and domestication, i.e. ‘bringing the author back home’ (Venuti 2008).

Before re-translating Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen into Spanish, as I have been commissioned, it is useful to get insight into the translation approach adopted by my fellow translators. Lexicon is a relevant element of literary non-fiction which, moreover, suffers from the passage of time and thus may be regarded as a representative characteristic of evolving language use. That is why this particular aspect is considered in order to measure the degree of archaisation or modernisation of re-translations compared to early translations.

Using LF Aligner allows to build a parallel corpus aligning the Dutch source text to the four early translations and their re-translation(s). The lexicon will then be thoroughly analysed with the help of Sketch Engine. In a first step the key lexicon will be extracted from the source text. The equivalents of the four early translations into German, English, Italian and Portuguese will then be compared to those of their respective re-translation(s), so as to shed some light on the translation approach adopted by the re-translators.

CORPUS

Dutch

1919 – Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen, Johan Huizinga
German
1923 - *Herbst des Mittelalters*, translated by Jolles-Mönckeberg
2018 - *Herbst des Mittelalters*, translated by Annette Wunschel

English
1924 - *The waning of the Middle Ages*, translated by F. Hopman
1996 - *The autumn of the Middle Ages*, translated by Rodney J. Payton
January 2020 - *The Autumn-tide of the Middle Ages*, translated by Diane Webb

Italian
1940 - *Autunno del Medioevo*, translated by Bernardo Jasink
January 2020 - *L'Autunno del Medioevo*, translated by Franco Paris (‘a slightly revised translation’)

Portuguese
1962 - *O declínio da Idade Média*, translated by Augusto Abelaira
2010 - *O outono da idade media*, translated by Francis Petra Janssen