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Translations as Representations of Cultural Bias

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Translations are important (From Why Translation Matters)

Translations impact the reader
- ◦ Translation expands our ability to explore through literature the thoughts and feelings of people from another society or another time.
- ◦ It permits us to savor the transformation of the foreign into the familiar and for a brief time to live outside our own skin. It expands and deepens our worlds.

Translations impact writers in the target language
- ◦ The impact of the kind of artistic discovery that translation enables is profoundly important to the health and vitality of any language and any literature.
- ◦ Translation is in fact a powerful, pervasive force that broadens and deepens a writers perception of style, technique and structure by allowing him/her to enter literary worlds not found in one national linguistic tradition.
- ◦ Goethe believed that a literature exhausts itself if it closes itself off to the influences and contributions of other literatures.

Translations differ for many reasons

Translators must understand both languages and both cultures (and the culture at the time the work was written)

Some translations are freer than others (adhere less closely to the original)

Some literal word for word translations miss other aspects of the text.

Some translators concentrate on English readability and may lose aspects of the original

Translations have been compared to the performance of a score. No two are the same. There are always personal choices.

So where is the bias

Andre Lefevere in his work Translation, rewriting and the manipulation of literary fame said "Translation is a rewriting of an original text. All rewriting reflects a certain ideology Rewriting is manipulation in the service of power."

He also said that manipulative shifts occurring during translation

Translators have omitted passages of text they considered inappropriate

Few translations are published, and most are from Europe and South America. The tendency is to publish what you know will sell rather than less well known authors or cultures.

Some languages don't get fewer direct translations. Crime and Punishment was only available in Portuguese through indirect translation until 1990. English is a privileged language.

How well are translations identified in the library catalog?

A Patron walks into a library and wants to read Anna Karenina. How does the library catalog help (or not)

In the local catalog:

Identification of the Translator in record
- 20 Percent of the records lacked the name of any translator
- 34 percent of records had the name but did not identify the role
  - One record listed Dole and Garnett. Both are have written translations. In this case Dole wrote the introduction.

Identification of the original language

10 percent did not list Russian as the original language

Uniform title

3 did not contain a uniform title

There are many English Translations of Anna Karenina

Was it really necessary to have so many translations?

What is the difference between them.

Articles have described differences

Dole : Completed the first translation, but was not a fluent in Russian. Used the French translation to complete his translation rather than working from the Russian. Admitted in an AK introduction than he omitted passages.

Constance Garnett: Famous and prolific producer of Russian translations. If you can't tell the difference between Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, you haven't read either, you have read Garnett. Her Russian is not as dependable as the Maudes

Maude and Maude- Garnett's language has a naturalness not approached by the Maudes. Their phrasing is stiff. They knew Tolstoy intimately. They have been called lucid and accurate translators.

Rosemary Edmonds – her dialogues are more believable than the Maudes. She at times is lax about details which are important in Tolstoy.

Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky: Husband and wife team, one does the Russian to english and the other then makes the English flow. Some, but not all, think much better than Garnett. Some say English is strained and harder to read than Garnett.

Using Text Mining Tools to identify differences

I used the HTRC as a source of digital files to compare digitized content.

I limited the comparison to titles where the complete work had been digitized
  ◦ 4 additional translators were eliminated due to only incomplete sets

There were 6 translators and 34 digital files to compare
  ◦ Nathan Haskell Dole, 1852-1935
  ◦ Constance Garnett
  ◦ Rosemary Edmonds
  ◦ Louise and Aylmer Maude
  ◦ Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky
  ◦ Translator Unidentified

The Process

◦ Using HTRC Enhanced Features I created token sets for each version of AK

◦ I compared the token sets to each other using Jaccard similarity index

◦ To develop a sense of what the numbers meant

  ◦ I did compare files that in HathiTrust were attached to the same record. Scanned by different libraries.

  ◦ I compared an Anna Karenina with a translation of Madame Bovary to see the token overlap.

  ◦ I compared Anna Karenina with The history of Science to see the token overlap

◦ I collected the data in a grid

◦ I used the data in Tableau to create a dashboard for the data

◦ Add Tableau Public link

Find the ID in HathiTrust

Using a Colab Notebook to generate token list

colab.research.google.com/drive/17bsirgkgoqySdVnVws-2b8Eugx0iLQed#scrollTo=k2xZduyKBuk0

Garnett1919Dole1914traits.ipynb ☆

File   Edit   View   Insert   Runtime   Tools   Help   All changes saved

💬 Comment   👥 Sh

+ Code   + Text

RAM
Disk

```
[2]  from htrc_features import FeatureReader
     from htrc_features import Volume
     import matplotlib
     import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
     import numpy
     import pandas
     import glob
```

```
[3]  Garnett = FeatureReader(ids=['osu.32435071600910']).first()
     Garnett
     Dole = FeatureReader(ids=['mdp.39015065242235']).first()
     Dole
     Pevear = FeatureReader(ids=['uc1.32106015290767']).first()
     Pevear
```

Anna Karenina : a novel in eight parts / by Tolstoĭ, L. N. (Lev Nikolaevich), 1828-1910, Pevear, Richard, 1943-, Volokhonsky, Larissa (2000, 870 pages) - uc1.32106015290767

```
[4]  tokensGarnett = Garnett.tokenlist()
     tokensDole = Dole.tokenlist()
     tokensPevear = Pevear.tokenlist()
```
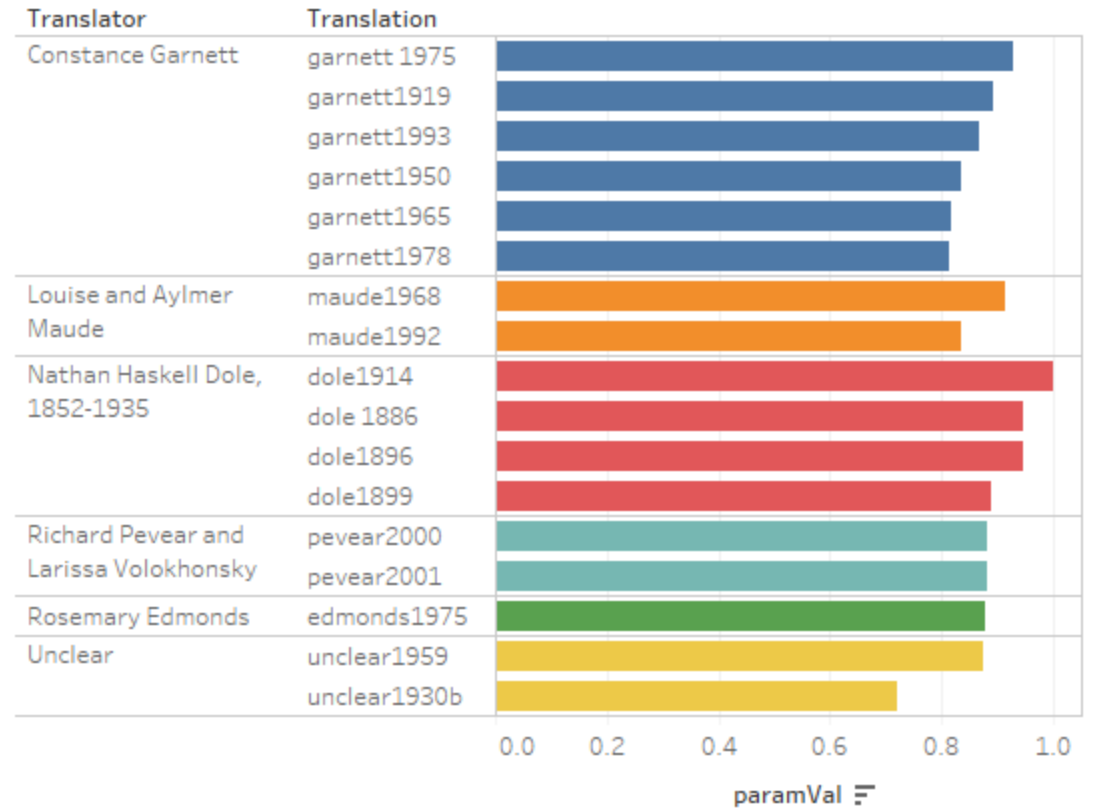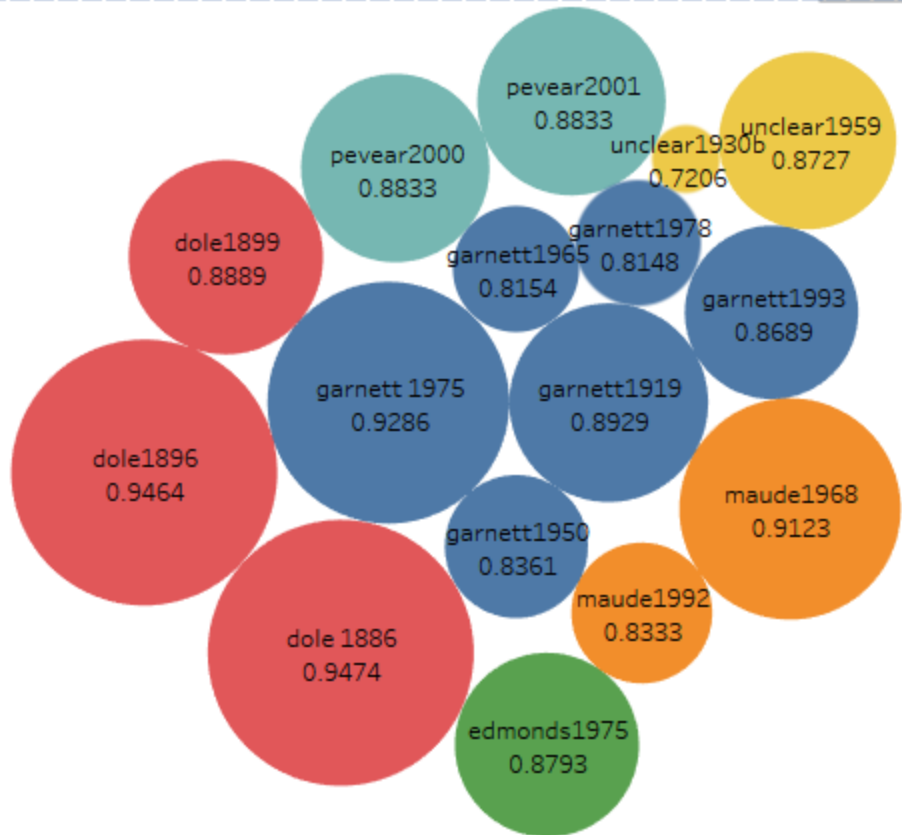
Next steps

Compare again after deleting the introductions and any other additional notes to limit the comparison to strictly the text

Generate additional comparisons for different parts of speech to see if the differences are chiefly in one vocabulary section.

Look at language to see techniques in foreignization or domestification.

https://public.tableau.com/en-us/search/all/anna%20Karenina

Recommended Sources

Baker, Mona. Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account. Routledge, 2019.

Blatt, Ben. Nabokov's Favorite Word is Mauve: What Numbers Reveal about the Classics, Bestsellers, and our own writing, Simon and Schuster, 2017

Grossman, Edith. Why Translation Matters. Yale University Press, 2010

Lefevere, Andre. Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of the Literary Frame. Routledge, 2017

May, Rachel. The Translator in the text: on Reading Russian Literature in English. Northwestern University Press, 1994.

Venuti, Lawrence. The Translator's Invisibility: a history of Translation, Routledge, 1995.

Recap

Translations are an important way to share culture

Translators are like performers recreating a score – some are better than others

The quality of translations can vary greatly. Older translations can be a hallmark of their time. There is variation between older and newer editions of the same translator.

Catalog records may need to be updated to indicate the translator role

Consider how best to explain differences.