

Ji, Meng (ed) (2016). *Empirical Translation Studies. Interdisciplinary Methodologies Explored*. Sheffield (UK)/Bristol (USA): Equinox, pp. 238, £17.52. ISBN: 9781781790496 (hardback).

The back cover of this book describes it as “a practical study guide to postgraduate and research students of applied translation studies.” This might give the impression that the volume is a textbook, which it is not. Rather, the book is a collection of nine separate articles. Their common denominator is that they are corpus-based or corpus-driven descriptive studies. Nevertheless, the contributions are so varied in approach and rich in information, that they can undoubtedly inspire other researchers in the field of descriptive translation studies.

Some of the topics have become classics, like the study of metaphor in translation. Mark Shuttleworth (7-29) admits that the identification of metaphors is a tricky issue (19). His study involves material from *Scientific American* and its translations. Six articles were analysed manually with close reading to identify search terms for uncovering worthwhile metaphors. The remainder of his corpus is then searched via WordSmith Tools, using these terms. As his material was apparently not directly amenable to sentence alignment, finding translations was a painstaking issue. It would arguably have been handier to start from an aligned corpus and to use a tool like ParaConc. In the end, the study is limited to metaphors relating to “nature.”

Iraklis Pantapopoulos (53-76) also ventures into the analysis of metaphor in translation and likewise narrows his scope to the translation of one element, *viz.* a Greek word meaning “turn(ed) into marble”, as often used in the work of the poet Seferis.

Another classic is the dichotomy (or rather the cline) of foreignization *vs.* domestication, which is the focus of Hannu Kemppanen and Jukka Mäkisalo’s article (30-50). Student assessments of the foreign *vs.* domesticated nature of four Russian-Finish translations are compared with a number of textual features selected with WordSmith, and further compared with non-translated Finnish. The only feature where translations differ significantly from original texts appears to be sentence length.

Other features mentioned in the literature as possibly indicative of translated text are not confirmed. There is no evidence, for example, that translators use a more restricted vocabulary. Yet Vandevoorde *et al.* (128-146) use an ingenious extension of Dyvik’s Semantic Mirrors, combined with correspondence analysis, to show that the semantic fields in a translated text may after all be less fine-grained than the corresponding fields in original text. Here, too, the analysis concentrates on only one case, *i.e.* the semantic field of “inceptiveness” (*i.e.* expressions for “begin”).

In a carefully conducted study, Qing Wang *et al.* (77-90) focus on James Joyce's use of atypical collocations with "laugh," "smile" and "see" followed by an adverb in -ly. They find that translator Xiao reduces them mostly to unobtrusive, "normalized" collocations, although as a man of letters, he makes ample use of creative language in his own writings.

Most descriptive translation studies examine lexical material but Adriana Pagano *et al.* (93-127) argue that grammar functions as described in systemic functional linguistics can also be revealing. They use 68 such variables to compare a literary source text (by Katherine Mansfield) with its various translations over time and present visual clustering of the texts showing relative proximity to or distance from the source text.

The three concluding contributions deal with audio-visual translation. Anna Bączkowska (149-179) notices that the discourse marker "well," which can have a great many uses and functions, is mostly left out in Polish subtitles. Where her student subtitlers do translate the word, they often fall back on a traditional dictionary translation, ignoring the pragmatic context.

Introductions and wishes, on the contrary, mostly do get translated in the two series dissected by Veronica Bonsignori and Silvia Bruti (180-209). This is not obvious, as conversational routines may differ across cultures.

Mikołaj Deckert, finally (210-232), gives a series of convincing examples of subtitlers shifting the salience in an utterance, which can result in subtle, but not unimportant, changes of meaning.

All the studies invest heavily in theoretical foundation and methodological argumentation, resulting in lengthy bibliographies that other researchers will relish. In comparison, most contributions end up aiming their sophisticated weapon at a very restricted target. It may be hoped that other researchers will take the hints in this volume and that they will broaden their application. In this sense, the book may after all serve as the "practical study guide" that it is claimed to be in the blurb.

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