

INTRODUCTION

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The articles collected in this special issue are based on a selection of papers presented at the second Nordic Translation Conference, which was held at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, 4–6 April 2013.

The second edition of this unique conference – being the only international translation conference dedicated to the Nordic languages and literatures – was organized by B.J. Epstein (East Anglia University) and myself (Ghent University). The purpose of the conference was to bring together academics, students, translators, literary authors, publishers, and others who work with the Nordic languages in order to discuss the particular challenges of translating between various Nordic languages and also between English and the Nordic languages. Nordic here includes Continental and Insular Scandinavian languages as well as Finnish, Greenlandic, and the Sámi dialects.

The articles in this issue focus on linguistics and style in translation and cover a range of topics related to specific linguistic issues in literary and non-literary texts and translations. The well-known fact that the Nordic countries are often closely related culturally, if not always linguistically, opens up for interesting linguistic analyses. The languages dealt with in the five articles in this issue are Swedish, English, Danish and Finnish.

Along with a blooming translation industry from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, and the rise of technological tools and multilingual corpora (both comparable and translation corpora) in the last few decades, there has been a growing interest in cross-linguistic research, both from a contrastive point of view (see e.g. Krzeszowski, 1990; Johansson, 2000) or from a translation perspective (see e.g. Chesterman, 1997; Laviosa, 2002; Baker, 2009; Olohan, 2004).

Whereas earlier cross-linguistic studies focused mainly on the language system rather than language use (Johansson 1998) and had a limited area of interest in phonology and grammar, later studies were oriented towards lexicon and pragmatics (Altenberg & Granger 2002). This opened up for a diversity of cross-linguistic studies related to discourse phenomena, style, text structuring and information structure. The wide variety of possibilities offered by new perspectives for contrastive and translation studies is also reflected in the studies presented in this volume.

Four of the articles, by Ida Klitgård, Inger Ruin, Andrew Chesterman and Saga Bendegard, deal with translations and cover themes such as translation strategies, the analysis of a translation of a particular text or genre, the study of the translator's role, and the effect of cultural similarities and differences among the countries associated with the source and target texts. One article, by Karin Lindqvist, takes a contrastive approach and deals with text structuring and style in Swedish and English. Despite the varying themes covered, the papers share a cross-linguistic approach to the study of a language, which constitutes a common thread in the neighbouring disciplines of contrastive and translation studies.

The article by **Ida Klitgård** investigates two sets of Danish translations of passages in the famous novel *Ulysses* (1922) written by the Irish modernist writer James Joyce. The translations compared are

produced by the Danish poet Jørgen Sonne (1948) on the one hand and the more famous translations by Mogens Boisen on the other (these include translations from 1949, and retranslations from 1970 and 1980). Starting from the theory on domestication and foreignization in translations by Lawrence Venuti, Sonne's and Boisen's translations are analyzed, compared, discussed and evaluated from the point of view of finding new stylistic 'territory' in the translation of the foreign into a domestic scenario. The study clearly reveals different translation strategies employed by the two translators in terms of domestication and foreignization. Nevertheless, the picture is much more complex due to the fact that Joyce's language is a hybrid containing elements from English and Gaelic language and culture, combined with underlying references to the reigning cultural and hierarchical relations that characterize Ireland from that era.

The article by **Inger Ruin** provides a detailed study of literary translation from Swedish into English with a focus on style. Starting from a corpus containing extracts from 18 modern Swedish novels and their English translations, the author analyses the source and target texts mainly in terms of formal features of the text and sentence structure in particular. In doing so, the aim is to map how particular stylistic choices in the source text are transferred into the target text and to explain deviating patterns. The study unveils a great number of instances where the translator opts for restructuring the sentences, even though this strictly speaking was not necessary. As Ruin shows, these observations make an interesting case for trying to explain the consequences of sentence restructuring when for instance clause elements are moved from initial to final position or long sentences are broken up into shorter sentence units. By means of examples, the author attempts to show that these operations have an impact on the reader's perception of the text, e.g. in terms of salience, rhythm and flow of the narrative. In line with claims by Gutt (1991), Ruin would like to argue for the preservation in the translations of stylistic operations intended by the author of the source text.

In the third article **Andrew Chesterman** examines the concept of the descriptive paradox. Starting from earlier claims in the field of translation studies that translation practice can be affected by translation theory, Chesterman tries to unravel how exactly such influence arises and is transmitted. In suggesting three possible channels that can transmit such influence – prescriptive teaching, tacit theory, descriptive theory – and describing each of them in detail, and drawing on his own experience as a translator, the author comes to the conclusion that it is very difficult, if possible at all, to pinpoint such influence from theory to practice. In spite of the vast area of translation studies, it is clear that more research is needed in order to figure out the mechanisms at work in the translation process of the individual translator.

In her article on EU-translations **Saga Bendegard** investigates why Swedish translations of EU legal texts often do not meet the plain language standards which are required for texts produced by Swedish authorities. The study is based on interviews with Swedish translators working at the European institutions. In addition to earlier beliefs that the translations of EU legal texts are heavily skewed by the very nature of the written source texts, the outcome of the study reveals that other, and even more significant, factors such as requirements for the translators to draw on earlier translations, short deadlines and an unclear readership trigger this outcome. These results challenge the question whether EU translations really should be seen as Swedish target texts in the default sense of the word or as a particular product associated with the EU source domain, and how to relate to, and perhaps even modify, plain language standards in the long run.

The article by **Karin Lindqvist** takes a contrastive approach and investigates the use of commas in English and Swedish newspaper texts. Following a description of the comma use in each of the languages, which renders a nice survey, a corpus-based contrastive analysis is presented with a view to arriving at a mainly quantitative description of the comma use in the languages concerned. The analysis reveals that commas are more frequently used in the English texts compared to the Swedish ones. This difference can be explained by differences in sentence structure in the two languages: whereas the English sentences reflect more hypotactic relations involving a greater use of commas, the Swedish sentences contain more paratactic relations which do not usually contain commas. The results of the study are interesting for translators, language teacher or learner of either English or Swedish.

Summarizing, all five authors provide new insights in the mechanisms involved in translations, the relation between source text and target text, the textual features of translated texts and the complex nature of translation as such. In other words, the studies constitute further steps in unraveling the mechanisms involved in the translational enterprise and offer a contribution to corpus-based research. Grounded in a firm tradition of translation research concerning concepts such as equivalence, universals and naturalness, the articles witness of further perspectives and research possibilities in the field of translation studies and contrastive analysis that are far from exhausted.

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Biographical note on guest editor:

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