

The prestige of English and its effect on the translation process and product

Arndt Heilmann

Jonas Freiwald

Stella Neumann

RWTH Aachen University

Translation properties have been hypothesized to be not solely the result of the translator's competence but to also depend on the socio-cultural environment the translation is embedded in. This could mean that the prestige of the languages involved co-determines the extent to which source language features tend to shine through in the target text or are replaced by more standard features of the target language (Toury 2012). Due to its status as a lingua franca and its omnipresence in a variety of media worldwide, English can be said to be a more prestigious language than German. A multivariate analysis of multiple linguistic features of English and German originals and translations (Evert and Neumann 2017) found patterns that can be attributed exactly to this difference in prestige. We reanalyse two translation experiments recorded with Translog-II (Carl 2012) in order to examine emergence of such tendencies during translating. In the experiments, professional translators translated popularscientific texts into their L1 English and German respectively. We analyse the translations for features such as language-specific preferences for pre- or postmodification, voice etc. described by Teich (2003) to have differential distributions in popular-scientific texts in the two languages for instances of shining through and norm-conforming behaviour. If Evert and Neumann's conclusion is right, these instances should show more revisions in translations into English, especially when the translator started with a literal translation atypical of English. Conversely, translations into German should show more variation in the product and be revised less often than English translations even if the resulting translation is marked in German. The analysis will be complemented by independent naturalness ratings of the translations, collected using an online survey, where participants rate the grammaticality and naturalness of the translations. The study will help to assess the influence of prestige on translation (process) properties.

References

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