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LANGUAGES FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES AND SPECIALIZED TRANSLATION: EXPLORING THE COMMONALITIES

Abstract

Specialized translation and LSP pedagogy share a common interest in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic contact involving texts for specific purposes. Corpus linguistic studies of different types of multilingual corpora may be of importance to researchers working in both fields. The aim of this paper is to explore the connections between language for academic purposes and specialized translation through a corpus study of academic discourse. A small parallel Slovene-English corpus of geography research papers published in a bilingual journal is analysed to examine the adaptations in the translated texts. The results reveal that revoicing occurs in the texts translated into English, as they contain more explicit references to Slovenia to ensure an unambiguous interpretation. The findings also underline the importance of establishing a stronger connection between LSP pedagogy and specialized translator training.

Keywords: LSP, specialized translation, corpus study, academic discourse, translation of academic discourse, adaptation

1. Introduction

The fields of LSP pedagogy and specialized translation share a common interest in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic contact involving texts for specific purposes. Because of the links between the two fields, it is not uncommon for language professionals involved in LSP to have practical experience with both, as LSP educators and practicing translators. It is therefore not surprising that the findings of LSP research carried out within the framework of applied linguistics can be of relevance to LSP educators as well as translators working with specialized texts, and that certain methodological approaches, most notably corpus linguistic studies involving different types of multilingual corpora, can be successfully used by researchers working in either field.

However, as LSP deals with a wide variety of subject fields, as diverse as business, nursing or law, it is not surprising that the research paradigms have expanded in a range of different directions and the links between LSP pedagogy and translation are not always immediately obvious. One important area where these links have been explored by both researchers in the field of language teaching and translation is language for academic purposes. Researchers working on academic discourse conventions and academic literacy development have addressed the question of translation above all in the context of language mediation (cf., Lillis and Curry, 2006; Perez Llantada et al., 2011; Luo and Hyland, 2019). On the other hand, researchers focusing on translation of academic and scientific discourse have focused mostly on the challenges of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic variation in academic discourse traditions (cf., Siepmann, 2006; Williams, 2007; Bennet, 2011). The results of such studies highlight the links and commonalities between LSP pedagogy and specialized translation which can be successfully combined in research contexts. Moreover, they raise interesting questions about how the synergies between the two fields can be successfully employed in LSP education and/or specialized translator training.

The aim of this paper is to explore the connections between LSP pedagogy and specialized translation through a corpus study of academic discourse. A small parallel Slovene-English corpus of research papers dealing with Slovene geography published in a bilingual geography journal is analysed to examine the issue of adaptation of the translated text to a new audience. Whereas the Slovene source texts are written for a small, homogeneous audience of Slovene geographers who share a detailed knowledge of Slovenia, the English target texts are intended for a broader, international audience less familiar with Slovenia. The translated texts thus have to be modified for the international audience. The pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed in the context of both LSP training and translator training.

2. Language for academic purposes and translation

In addition to having a complementary potential in research contexts, combining language for academic purposes and translation may also offer benefits in educational settings. The first advantage involves the incorporation of translation into a language for academic purposes course, which may turn out to be an important asset in many contexts. While translation was largely rejected as part of the old grammar-translation method of language learning with the advent of new educational approaches, such as communicative language teaching, it has

been making a gradual come back in recent years (cf., Laviosa, 2014, pp. 4–44). The potential of translation is increasingly being recognized, with calls to integrate it into the foreign language curriculum as the “fifth skill” (cf., Colina & Lafford, 2017), although, as Laviosa (2014, p. 144) points out, its prospective role in the context of LSP remains largely unexplored. This lack of interest seems somewhat puzzling above all in the context of language for academic purposes, as (self-) translation may be a required skill for multilingual scholars working in settings where multilingual abstracts and similar multilingual texts are required (see Pisanski Peterlin (2019) for a detailed description of the situations in which self-translation is required in academic contexts in Slovenia). In addition to this very specific need to acquire translation skills for self-translation, the language for academic purposes curriculum could benefit from using translated texts as a source of information. In fact, a number of studies (cf., Markkanen & Schröder, 1989; Van Bonn & Swales, 2007; Alharb & Swales, 2011; Perales-Escudero & Swales, 2011) have shown that self-translated texts are a valuable source of data on how cross-cultural rhetorical differences can be managed in the context of language for academic purposes. Moreover, parallel corpora of specialized source and target texts may be an invaluable source for dealing with terminology-related issues.

The second advantage of combining language for academic purposes and translation involves translator training. Specialized translation is particularly challenging because the translator is not a member of the discourse community in question and needs to cope with terminological, rhetorical and content-related complexities (cf., Pisanski Peterlin, 2014). In this context, the integration of language for academic purposes tasks into translator training presents an opportunity to provide trainee translators with genre and rhetorical scaffolding, as well as help them develop the know-how required to build and/or use terminological resources, such as parallel or comparable corpora.

Learners of language for academic purposes and trainee translators have somewhat divergent needs and strengths, which means that the materials developed for one of the target groups may not be directly relevant to the other. Trainee translators as disciplinary outsiders need to develop an understanding of the workings of the disciplinary community and its specialized terminology, while learners of language for academic purposes require a focus on translation skills. Both groups, of course, can benefit from a clear cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspective on the rhetorical and genre conventions.

2.1. Rhetoric in translation

Using translation-related activities and materials requires the development of an in-depth understanding of the rhetorical shifts occurring in translation of academic discourse. Translation is not a formulaic activity, but a complex process influenced by a number of factors, such as translation direction, purpose, scope, audience, translator, etc. The target text can never be considered to be a simple copy of the original (cf., Hermans, 2002), so it is important to suitably contextualize any type of translation-related materials or activities used in the classroom.

This paper focuses on how Slovene research papers, originally written with a Slovene audience in mind, are adapted in translation into English, intended for an international audience. The shifts that occur in translation impact the rhetoric of the text in terms of the

interaction between the author and the audience. The importance of building a relationship with the audience has been underlined by Hyland (2001), who demonstrates how this can be achieved through various types of engagement markers. However, as audience awareness is a key feature of successful writing (cf. Thompson's (2001, p. 58) view of the text as a dialogue between the author and the audience), the text needs to be revoiced (cf., Nelson & Castelló, 2012). Such revoicing may occur at different levels. The present paper focuses on the introduction of explicit references to the geographic location through the use of the terms *Slovenia*, *Slovene* and *Slovenian*. It is hypothesized that these terms are commonly added in translation to adapt the text to a new target audience. It is furthermore assumed that shedding light on how the relationship between the author and the audience is revoiced in translation can be of relevance both in the context of LSP and translator training.

3. Corpus and method

The corpus used in the present study is a 280,000-word specialized parallel corpus of geography research articles. It comprises 30 Slovene source texts (STs) and their 30 corresponding English translations or target texts (TTs), all of which were published between 1999 and 2005 in an international peer-reviewed geography journal, *Acta Geographica Slovenica* (<https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/ags>), published in Slovenia. The source and target texts were published side-by-side. The source texts were written by Slovene native speakers and translated into English by Slovene and English native speakers (for more details on the corpus, see Pisanski Peterlin, 2016). The corpus was aligned at sentence level using the alignment tool of the Déjà Vu (2007) translation memory software.

The corpus was searched electronically using ParaConc (Barlow, 2003), a parallel concordancer. The search was limited to three English expressions, *Slovenia*, *Slovene* and *Slovenian*. The results were subsequently examined manually to determine whether there was a Slovene translation equivalent in the source text subcorpus in the form of the Slovene version of the country name or its derivative forms. The instances where no corresponding translation equivalent in the form of the proper name of the country was found were further examined in an attempt to determine the possible reasons for the addition in translation.

4. Results and discussion

The search yielded 418 occurrences of *Slovene*, *Slovenian* and *Slovenia* in the TTs with the corresponding ST segments. In the first part of the analysis, all the instances were manually examined to determine whether a corresponding reference to the country in the form of the name of the country or the nationality adjective derived form of the name of the country can be identified in the STs. The quantitative results of the initial corpus search are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Quantitative results of the corpus search

No. of occurrences with a corresponding ST expression	361 (86.5%)
No. of occurrences without a corresponding ST expression	57 (13.5%)
Total no. of occurrences	418 (100%)

These figures reveal that there were on average two additions of references to Slovenia per text; additions of explicit references to Slovenia in academic texts thus seem to be a translation strategy that merits further exploration.

For this reason, the instances without a corresponding ST expression were manually examined to determine whether there was an expression in the ST with a related meaning in the second part of the analysis. The analysis showed that this occurred in about one third of the examples (19 in total).

In some cases, such as examples¹ (1) and (2) below, a first person plural form of a pronoun or verb was used in the Slovene ST, but in the TT, a shift to the neutral expression Slovenia etc. occurred.

(1) *Prva prava zemljiško katastrska izmera v **naših krajih** je bila izvedena leta 1800 med francosko okupacijo, in sicer za nekaj katastrskih občin (v nadaljevanju k. o.) v okolici Gorice (Demšar 1995, 15). 'The first true cadastral survey in **our territory** was carried out in 1800 during the French occupation, specifically for a few cadastral municipalities (henceforth k.o.) in the vicinity of Gorica (Demšar 1995, p. 15).'*

(1a) *The first true cadastral survey of **Slovene territory** was made in 1800 during the French occupation for a few cadastral municipalities in the area of Gorizia (Demšar 1995, p. 15).*

(2) *S 445 osebnimi avtomobili na 1000 prebivalcev **se uvrščamo** višje od Danske (350), Nizozemske (418), Finske (414) in smo na ravni držav, kot so Belgija in Irska (EU Energy and transport in figures 2003). 'With 445 automobiles per 1,000 inhabitants, **we rank** higher than Denmark, the Netherlands (418), Finland (414), and are at the level of countries such as Belgium and Ireland (EU Energy and Transport in Figures, 2003).'*

(2a) *With an average of 445 automobiles per 1,000 inhabitants, **Slovenia ranks** higher than Denmark, The Netherlands (418), and Finland (414) and is on the level of countries such as Belgium and Ireland (EU Energy and Transport in Figures, 2003).*

Such shifts reflect the revoicing (cf., Nelson & Castello, 2012) of the texts for an international audience: while the Slovene original attempts to highlight the shared background of the author and the local audience of Slovene geographers, the translation needs to be adapted to a new, international audience. While references to shared background or experience have been shown to be an important element of academic writing (Hyland, 2001, 2005), it is crucial that such assumptions are not automatically retained in cross-cultural transfer.

¹ All the examples provided are from the corpus used in the study. Throughout the paper, an English gloss is provided in inverted commas for all Slovene examples, while the published English translations are marked with the letter *a*.

In other cases, the source text expression occurred in some other form of less explicit reference to Slovenia, with examples range from those with affective connotation (example 3) to neutral (example 4) or a combination of neutral expression with a first person pronoun (example 5)

(3) *Ker leži jezerce na višini 1515 m n. v., je morda boljša primerjava z izsledki raziskav v gorskih jezerih v Evropi **in doma**.* 'As the small lake lies at an altitude of 1515 meters above the sea level, a comparison with the findings of studies on mountain lakes in Europe **and at home** is perhaps better.'

(3a) *As our small lake lies at an altitude of 1515 m above sea level, it is perhaps more appropriate to compare our findings with the results of research done on mountain lakes in Europe and **elsewhere in Slovenia**.*²

(4) *Pogled na karto delne sinteze razkrije, da so razmere znotraj **države** sorazmerno zapletene, kar potrjuje precejšnja pomešanost razredov različnih kategorij.* 'A look at the map of partial synthesis reveals that conditions in **the country** are relatively complicated, which is confirmed by the considerable mixture of classes of different categories.'

(4a) *A study of the map of partial synthesis reveals that conditions in **Slovenia** are relatively complicated, which is confirmed by the considerable mixture of classes of different categories.*

(5) *Takšen pristop omogoča zaznavanje drobnih pokrajinskih razlik, tako značilnih za **našo državo**.* 'Such an approach enables the perception of minute regional differences so characteristic of **our country**.'

(5a) *Such an approach allows the perception of the minute regional differences so characteristic of **Slovenia**.*

In approximately two thirds of the examples (a total of 38 instances), the source text contained no expression referring to Slovenia whatsoever. These examples of additions can be classified into four types. The first includes language-related explicitations, as in example 6 below.

(6) *Prekmurski Romi se šele v novejšem času označujejo kot **Romi** predvsem zaradi institucionalnega poenotenja tega prebivalstva in iz tega izhajajočih pravic.* 'The Prekmurje Romany have only recently been specifically as **Romany**, primarily due to the institutional unification of this population group and the rights originating from it.'

(6a) *The Prekmurje Romany have only recently been specifically as "**Romany**" ("**Romi**" in Slovene), primarily due to the institutional unification of this population and the rights originating in this identification.*

In such cases, the translator opted to include an explanation of a Slovene term, generally, an important term directly related to the subject matter of the paper. Strictly speaking, such additions are typically unnecessary from the point of view of enhancing the comprehensibility of the text, as they only add supplementary information about the Slovene language equivalents, and do not contribute to clarifying the meaning.

2 It is noteworthy that the addition of reader-inclusive "our" in the translation of the reference to the lake may also convey some degree of emotional colouring. In this case, the reader-inclusive pronoun is used to guide the reader through the argument by the writer.

The second type of additions involve those instances where a proper name of an institution, document, etc. was expanded with an explicit reference to Slovenia, as in example 7.

(7) *Ta prispevek je torej usmerjen v pregled razpoložljivih računalniških modelov gibanja skalnih gmot, v njihovo razvrstitev glede na merilo obravnave in v posebnosti pri njihovi rabi v smislu določanja ogroženih območij zaradi delovanja hribinskih plazov (pravni izraz, ki obsega tudi pojave skalnih odlomov in podorov) po **Zakonu o vodah (2002)**.* 'This paper is focused on an overview of available computer models of rockfalls, their division according to the scale and special characteristics when used for determining risk areas due to rock slides and rockfalls in line with the **Water Law 2002**.'

(7a) *This paper is focused on an overview of available computer models of rockfalls, and their division regarding the scale and special characteristics when used for determining risk areas due to rock slides and rockfalls in line with the **Slovenian Water Law (Zakon o vodah 2002)**.*

This type of explicitation seems to reflect the translator's awareness of the fact that while the Slovene name used in the ST is uniquely identifiable to a Slovene audience, the English translation would be ambiguous and vague without adding an explicit reference to Slovenia.

The third type of additions occurs with references to different types of geographic names, as in examples 8 and 9.

(8) *Povišane vrednosti težkih kovin se tako nahajajo **v Alpskem svetu** (železarna Jesenice), v Pohorskem Podravju (Koroška železarna Ravne in rudnik ter topilnica svinca v Mežici), Velenjski kotlini (Termoelektrarna Šoštanj), Ljubljanski kotlini in Koprskem Primorju (splošna razvitost industrije in visoka gostota prometa) ter seveda Celjska kotlina s Cinakrno Celje in železarno v Štorah.* 'Higher concentrations of heavy metals are found **in the Alpine area** (the Jesenice ironworks), Pohorsko Podravje (the Ravne ironworks of Carinthia and the Mežica lead mine and smelter), the Velenje basin (the Šoštanj thermal power plant), the Ljubljana basin, and in the Koper coastal area (industry development in general and very heavy traffic), as well as, of course, in the Celje basin with the Celje zinc factory and the ironworks in Štore.'

(8a) *Higher concentrations were found **in the Slovene Alps** (Jesenice ironworks), Pohorsko Podravje (Koroška: Ravne ironworks and the Mežica lead mine and smelter), the Velenje basin (Šoštanj thermal power plant), the Ljubljana basin, the Koper coast areas (industry in general and traffic), and of course the Celje basin with Celje zinc factory and ironworks in Štore.*

Again, the explicit reference clarifies any ambiguity about what is to be understood in English as "the Alpine area" in the context of the passage. On the other hand, the source text expression "alpski svet" is a well-established term in description of Slovene geographic areas, familiar not only to the members of the disciplinary community, but also to the Slovene general public.

(9) *Ugodne razmere so tudi v izteku Vipavske doline in v njenem zgornjem delu, v Goriških brdih, v jugozahodnem zaledju Ljubljanskega barja, v osrednjem delu Bele krajine in (nekoliko presenetljivo) celo ponekod na dnu Zgornje Dravske doline in Mežiške doline **na Koroškem**.* 'Favourable conditions also occur at the mouth of the Vipava Valley and in its upper part, in the Goriška brda, in the southwestern part of the Ljubljana Barje moor, in the central part of Bela krajina,

and – somewhat surprisingly – even in places along the bottom of the upper Drava Valley and the Meža Valley **in Carinthia**.’

(9a) *Favourable conditions are also found at the mouth of the Vipava Valley and in its upper part, in Goriška brda, in southwest part of the Ljubljana Barje moor, in the central part of Bela krajina, and – somewhat surprisingly – even in places along the bottom of the upper Drava Valley and the Meža Valley **in Slovene Carinthia**.*

In such cases, the explicitation is again made in translation to avoid ambiguity which is not present in the Slovene original. Example 9, in particular is noteworthy: the Slovene geographic name *Koroška* (or *Carinthia*) may refer either to a region in Slovenia or a state in southern Austria, the two entities were historically part of the same state, the Duchy of Carinthia. The Slovene text requires no explicitation, as the reference to the Meža Valley is clear enough; moreover, the passage only addresses parts of Slovenia. The same assumption cannot be made for the international audience, where Carinthia would more likely be interpreted as the Austrian state.

Finally, the last type of additions occur when explicit references to the geographic context are made, as in example 10.

(10) ***Mnogokje*** *prevladujejo odlomi kamenja (padanje posameznih kamnov in skal), kakor na primer v skalnih usekih ob prometnicah (Petje in sodelavci 2005a), drugje pa pride lahko do obsežnejših premikov kamninskih gmot v obliki različno velikih kamnitih plazov in skalnih podorov (Petje 2005). ‘In many places, stone falls (the falling of single stones and rocks) prevail, as, for example, in the rock cut slopes along motorways (Petje et al. 2005a), elsewhere large movements of rock mass may occur in the form of large rock avalanches and rockfalls (Petje 2005).’*

(10a) ***In many places in Slovenia, stone falls (falling of single stones and rocks) prevail, for example in rock cut slopes along motorways (Petje et al. 2005a), elsewhere large movements of rock mass occur, having the form of large rock avalanches and rockfalls (Petje 2005).***

It seems likely that in these instances, explicitation was used for the sake of precision: the Slovene audience of the Slovene text is assumed to understand that the references are local, while the same assumptions cannot be made about a wider international audience for the entire text.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the study presented here was to examine the connections between LSP pedagogy and specialized translation. For this purpose, authentic textual data in the form of a small parallel Slovene-English corpus of academic discourse was used. The study focused on academic texts written for a local, Slovene audience translated into English for a global, international audience. The shifts occurring in the transfer that impact the rhetoric, above all in terms of the author-audience relationship were examined. The findings show that the revoicing of the texts is indeed traceable in translation. The translated texts contained more explicit references to Slovenia, above all to ensure an unambiguous interpretation of the text.

The paper also attempted to explore how the findings of this study and similar studies are relevant for both in LSP teaching as well as in specialized translator training. While the corpus used in the present study was small, the analysis, nevertheless identified interesting issues that merit further examination. Future studies using process research to collect data on the motivations of translators would allow us to gain insight into translation-decision making.

Finally, the importance of establishing a stronger connection between LSP pedagogy and specialized translator training should be underlined. While the learner needs in the two contexts are somewhat different, LSP pedagogy and specialized translator training share certain commonalities. It seems that both subdisciplines would benefit from a more systematic exploration of the synergies between them, specifically in terms of the pedagogical applications, such as materials and activities development. An interesting area of research where the two fields may also converge is contrastive linguistics (see, for instance, Bellés-Fortuño & Querol-Julián 2010, Taboada, Doval, & González 2013, Bellés-Fortuño 2018); however, a more detailed discussion of the potential of using contrastive linguistics to connect LSP teaching and translator training is beyond the scope of this paper.

5.1 Pedagogical implications

When translation is introduced as an activity in the language for academic purposes classroom or when trainee translators are faced with translation of an academic text, terminology may seem to be an obvious issue that needs to be addressed (cf., Pisanski Peterlin (2013, 2014) for more detail on trainee translators' views on this issues). However, the results of the present study show that translation also raises questions about how rhetorical strategies are modified in translation and how the text acquires a new voice in the process.

Translation activities involving the need to deal with rhetorical issues enable the learners to gain an understanding of how the text is rhetorically reshaped in translation to adjust to a new audience and foster their awareness of the fact that translation cannot be reduced to a simple search for one-to-one equivalents.

When faced with activities involving translation decisions as the ones discussed in this paper, LSP learners are encouraged to develop a new voice in their English TT versions of the text: this allows them to consider the implications of the new voice for their potential self-translated texts as well as L2 texts that they will write directly in English.

Activities involving this type of translation decision-making are also of potential benefit to trainee translators involved in specialized translation courses. It is important for them to develop a familiarity with translation strategies that can be used to cope with the rhetoric of academic discourse in two languages, as issues concerning the rhetoric and style of an academic text inevitably arise in translation.

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