Translated English and universals of translation

JIANG YAJUN and REN ZAIXIN

An overview of recent trends in translation studies, especially the view that 'translated English' has distinctive features, warranting the label 'third code'

Introduction

This paper investigates the notion of 'translated English', in contrast to 'non-translated English'. Its focal point is that translated English texts differ from comparable non-translated texts in English, the target language (TL), in the sense that they have specific properties that cannot be found in the latter. Translated English, therefore, is a distinct variety of English. What makes it distinct is that, on the one hand, translated English texts, regardless of the source language (SL), have been found to share significant lexical, syntactic, and textual features and, on the other hand, they are inevitably SL-specific, exhibiting unique characteristics due to, among other factors, features of the source language and the translation tradition involved.

In this paper, we will first draw upon findings from recent corpus-based translation studies to show some of the important 'universals of translation'. These have been defined as 'linguistic features which typically occur in translated rather than original texts and thought to be independent of the influence of the specific language pairs involved in the process of translation' (Laviosa-Braithwaite, 1998, p.288). We then draw on insights from Contrastive Rhetoric and cultural studies on translation to reveal the culture- and language-related differences in translated English texts. The combination of these aspects result in what we call 'translated English'.

Language of translation

It is common, when reading translations, to feel that they have their own peculiar style. This makes translation scholars speak of the language of translation as a separate sub-language within a language, which they call 'the third code' (Frawley, 1984), 'the third language' (Duff, 1981), or translationese (Gellerstam, 1986). Frawley (1984, pp.168–69) has the following to say about 'the third code':

> The translation itself […] is essentially a third code which arises out of the bilateral consideration of the matrix and target codes: it is, in a sense, a subcode of each of the codes



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> involved. That is, since the translator truly has a dual lineage it emerges as a code in its own right, setting its own standards and structural presuppositions and entailments […].

Although scholars such as Frawley (1984) and Sager (1984) saw the need to examine translations as a register and to unveil their unique features, until recently this 'subcode' has by and large been talked about either in terms of recommended 'foreignization' or in terms of negative evaluation. For example, it occurs when an 'unusual distribution of features is clearly a result of the translator's inexperience or lack of competence in the target language' (Baker, 1993, p.248). Jiang (2002) also shows that how the debate over 'foreignization' vs. 'nativization' has continued for years to be one of the lasting themes in Chinese translation circles.

However, the past decade has witnessed a gradual shift to a more descriptive, non-evaluative point of view, which considers the language of translation as a unique register resulting from the confrontation between the source and the target codes. Baker (2000, 21) describes this as 'a kind of compromise between the norms or patterns of the source language and those of the target language'. This has led translation scholars such as Øverås (1998) to a long journey 'in search of the third code'.

What is exciting about the journey is that traditional comparisons between one source text and its translation have given way to comparisons between large bodies of translated text with large bodies of original text in the same language, both retrieved from monolingual comparable corpora, which include original (non-translated) texts in a given language and translations into the same language. These corpora are now believed to be a 'fruitful resource for the systematic study of the product and the process of translation' (Laviosa, 2003, p.267): large amounts of material make it possible to decide whether or not the characteristic phenomena of translations suggested in earlier studies really exist by comparing translated texts with non-translated texts and, more importantly, conclusions based on large corpora are more reliable than those based on small samples and intuitions. As a result, different corpora have been built and explored to compute distributional statistics about the selected lexical, collocational, syntactic, and discoursal features expected to be relevant to the translated/original distinction (e.g. Scott, 1996; Al-Shabab, 1996; Laviosa, 1998a, 1998b; Munday, 1998), translator training (Zanettin, 1998), professional translating (Zanettin, 1998; Laviosa, 2003), and human perception of translationese (Tirkkonen-Condit, 2002).

A much exploited corpus is *The Translational English Corpus* (TEC), a corpus of translated English held at the Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies at the University of Manchester. It was designed specifically for the purpose of studying translated texts to unveil the way in which the patterning of translated text might be different from that of non-translated text in the same language, and stylistic variation across individual translators. The 10-million-word corpus currently consists of four text types: fiction, in-flight magazines, biography, and newspaper articles. The translations were published from 1983 onwards and were produced by translators, male and female, with English as their native language or language of habitual use. Other similar corpora include the English Norwegian Parallel Corpus (ENPC), compiled by the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Oslo, and several corpora hosted at the Centre for Translation Studies, The University of Leeds. These corpora are being expanded from time to time to involve more materials and different registers. It has to be noted that texts from these corpora are usually investigated against comparable texts retrieved from the British National Corpus (BNC).

Although there are both theoretical and practical problems, even 'potential dangers', in building and using translational corpora (Laviosa, 1998a, p.6), various studies have confirmed the hypothesis that the language of translation is a distinct variety of language, being different from both the SL and the TL. Johansson (1998), for example, finds a good example of differences in lexical distribution between translated and original texts in the English–Norwegian Parallel Corpus: while the English verbs (*love* and *hate*) are about three times as common as their Norwegian counterparts in the original texts, the frequencies for the English verbs go down and the figures for Norwegian verbs go up in the translated texts.

Based on a sub-corpus of the narrative prose from the monolingual, multi-source-language

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English Comparable Corpus (ECC), a one-million-word sample of the TEC, and 18 comparable texts from the BNC, Laviosa (1998c, p.8) has found what she calls 'core patterns of lexical use' in translated versus original texts:

i) translated texts have a relatively lower percentage of content words versus grammatical words (i.e. their lexical density is lower);
ii) the proportion of high frequency words versus low frequency words is relatively higher in translated texts;
iii) the list head of a corpus of translated texts accounts for a larger area of the corpus (i.e. the most frequent words are repeated more often);
iv) the list head of translated texts contains fewer lemmas.

Since the vast majority of studies involve translated English texts of certain register, rather than language pairs excluding English, the characteristic phenomena uncovered probably feature what I call 'international translated English'. Actually, Baker (1996) is said to have developed some 'hypotheses on the universal features of *English translations*' (Hansen-Schirra, 2003, p.288, italics added), which, as will be seen, have been verified by evidence from English translations from a number of languages including German, Finnish, Spanish, Norwegian, Italian, Chinese, Catalan, French, and Brazilian Portuguese. At the same time, in a study of the translated and the original newspaper texts from *The Guardian* and *The European*, Laviosa (1998c) discovered tendencies similar to what she found in the ECC narrative texts (Laviosa, 1998b). Because those features occur in two different text types, Laviosa suggests that 'they may prove typical of *English translated text in general*' (1998c, p.8, italics added).

Universal features of translated English

Although the corpus-based investigations of universals in translated text are mainly limited to Romance languages and the degree of comparability between translated and original texts is still open to discussion (Laviosa 1997), the following global patterns of translated English have been increasingly shown to be beyond debate by studies in various linguistic and cultural contexts:

Explicitation

This means that translators tend to render explicit in their translations implicit information in the source language text. That is to say, the translated text tends to contain fewer ambiguous items than the original. Evidence of explicitation has been found in terms of sentence and text length, explanatory vocabulary, optional words and subordinators. Øverås (1998), for example, compared the distribution of explicitating and implicitating shifts in two sub-corpora consisting of English and Norwegian translations of fiction from the bi-directional ENPC. The results show that there is a general tendency of explicitation in both translated English and translated Norwegian texts.

The TEC has also been exploited for the same purpose. Olohan and Baker's (2000) empirical analysis, for example, indicated a substantially heavier use of the reporting *that* with verbs *say* and *tell* in the TEC than in a BNC sub-corpus. Olohan (2001) pursued the same line of research further, focusing on a less common verb, *promise*, which can also take an optional *that*, and found the same pattern between translated English and non-translated. In another study, Olohan (2002) has found significant differences in the two corpora concerning the optional preposition *to* after verb *help* and optional *in order* before *to*: the complementiser *to* is used in 37.5% of the TEC instances, compared with only 26% of the BNC occurrences; and the search of *in order to* returned 250 instances in the BNC, but 1,225 in the TEC.

It has to be noted here that researchers have also attempted to see whether the tendency to keep the optionals is the result of conscious or unconscious process. In an investigation of translation explicitation in the imaginary domain, for example, Olohan (2001) has shown that that translated English in the TEC displays a higher incidence of a range of optional syntactic features than is observed in a comparable sub-corpus of BNC and, more importantly, that

> this tendency not to omit optional syntactic elements may be considered subliminal or subconscious rather than a result of deliberate decision-making of which the translator is aware – most translators do not have a conscious strategy for dealing with optional *that*, for example. It can be argued that it is the nature of the process of translation and the cognitive processing which it requires which

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produces the kind of patterning seen here. (2001, p.429)

Simplification

This refers to the tendency of translators to simplify texts – consciously or unconsciously – in order to improve the readability of their translations. Simplification, more often than not, goes hand in hand with explicitation. Linguistic features indicating explicitation (e.g. sentence length and the ratio of lexical vs. grammatical words) may, at the same time, make the texts easier to comprehend. The mean sentence length of translated texts tends to be lower, as translators are found to break up long, complex sentences into more, shorter sentences in their translations (Hansen-Schirra, 2003). As we have seen above, the lexical density, or ratio of lexical versus grammatical words, in translated English texts is lower than in original English texts, and the ratio of high frequency words versus low frequency words is relatively higher (Laviosa, 1998c). This means that translations contain more function words, fewer lexical words and more commonly used words than originals and are thus easier to read.

Vocabulary richness or variety is also believed to be a good indicator of simplification in translated English. Al-Shabab (1996), for example, investigated the type–token ratio, the ratio of 'types' (the number of lemmata) to 'tokens' (the total number of words), in three corpora of radio news broadcasts in English. The texts include English broadcasts based on Arabic originals for Damascus English Service; original English broadcasts for BBC Radio Four (for native speakers); and original English broadcasts from the BBC World Service (for non-native speakers). The results revealed that the translational group had a lower type–token ratio than the two original target-language corpora. Furthermore, Al-Shabab found that there were fewer cases of *hapax legomena*, a type occurring just once in the entire text, and greater repetition of frequent words. Al-Shabab argued that these three characteristics were related aspects of simplification in the language of translation.

Normalization

Normalization means that translations have a tendency to conform to, or even to exaggerate, the typical features of the target language. As a test for normalization, Scott (1996) analyzed the Portuguese novel *A Hora da Estrela*, by Clarice Lispector, and its English translation *The Hour of the Star*, to see, in particular, how the negative word *nao*, which is dispersed throughout the original, is rendered in the English translation. The result showed that that the word *nao* had been translated into 72 different English words and, more importantly, it had been omitted 50 times. By grouping the translator's choices, Scott found two poles of normalization: that resulting from the systemic constraints of the target language and that from the translator's own preferences. Consequently, Scott concluded that, as cited in Laviosa (2003, p.271), 'the nothingness conjured up in the source text has been weakened and dispersed'.

Another linguistic feature which represents normalization is the tendency to normalize marked and ungrammatical structures. This is often found to occur in interpreting, where 'interpreters tend to finish unfinished sentences and to grammaticalize ungrammatical structures' (Hansen-Schirra, 2003, p.289).

A further method to test this universal feature of translation is to see how punctuations are used in translations, since translators are believed to use punctuations less creatively (Baker, 1996). For example, they often use a stronger mark to render a weaker one in the original: semicolons or periods for commas and periods for semicolons. This can also be considered an attempt to simplify the text.

Leveling

Compared to a corpus of texts originally produced in the target language, texts in a comparable corpus of translated texts are more similar to each other in terms of lexical density, type-token ratio and average sentence length. This means that translators tend to use common-core linguistic features, preventing their translations from becoming extreme (Baker, 1996).

To sum up, features like the above contribute to the commonality of translated English. With the expansion of translational corpora and the software for processing them, translation researchers will undoubtedly have a better understanding about both macro- and micro-structural and stylistic features that occur exclusively or with unusually high or low frequency in translated English texts as opposed to original ones and that cannot be traced back to the influence of any particular

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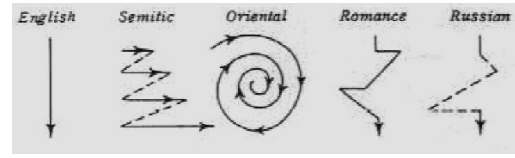
SL. While this is a promising field of study for both translation and world Englishes scholars, SL influence upon translated texts can never be ignored and it is, as a matter of fact, an important factor that makes translated English different from non-translated English. What is even more significant is that it is also one of the major factors that make translated English from various source languages different from one another.

SL-specific features of translated English

Translated English from different source languages are necessarily different from one another and from comparable non-translated English. In other words, translated English from Chinese is more or less 'Chinese English' and that from Japanese, 'Japanese English'. This is mainly due to, among other factors, the source language, especially the way information flows in the SL text, and the translation tradition involved.

The source language

The source language always makes itself felt in the translated English. First of all, translators seldom, if ever, change the way information is arranged in the SL text: the sentence order in a paragraph and the paragraph order in the text. Nor do they remove parts of a text that may be considered unnecessary by TL readers. This is obvious when one considers what is called 'the unit of translation', 'the stretch of source text on which the translator focuses attention in order to represent it as a whole in the target language' (Malmkjær, 1998, p.286). Using the method of videotaping, Séguinot (1999, p.91) has shown that the sentence is the typical unit in translation. When perceiving and translating a manageable stretch of the text, translators seldom go beyond the sentence to the paragraph, not to say to the whole text. This means that the sentence order in a translated text remains, by and large, the same as it is in the original text; it is words and sentences, rather than the rhetoric, that are 'translated' from one language into another. In most cases, the discoursal and rhetorical arrangement remains intact. The result is that a translated English text is lexically and grammatically English, but rhetorically it is actually localized since the information is packed in almost the same way as it is in the original.



Kaplan's (1966) cultural thought patterns (in Silva & Matsuda, 2001, p. 21)

The crux is, as contrastive rhetoric has long revealed, that writers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds organize information in different ways. This led scholars such as Cole (1991) to the conceptualization of 'arhetoric societies' in Asia and Africa, because essays composed by writers from these areas do not meet the expectations of Anglo-American readers. Kaplan (1966) identified five types of paragraph development. As a visual aid, he drew five idiosyncratic diagrams to illustrate his ideas on the culturally embedded rhetorical patterns.

Kaplan's diagram suggests that Anglo-American expository essays follow a linear development. In contrast, paragraphs in Semitic languages consist of a series of parallel coordinate clauses and those in Romance languages and in Russian show a degree of digressiveness and contain extraneous materials, while essays in Oriental languages use an indirect, inductive approach and come to the point at the end. Although being criticized for simplification ever since its publication, Kaplan's diagram has inspired contrastive rhetoric researchers to unveil the rhetorical differences between major languages in the world. These differences are well documented in Connor (1996).

Kachru (1995, p.28) also reported the difference between 'Western syllogism' (A) and the Indian syllogistic thinking (B):

A a. Where there is smoke there is fire.
  b. There is smoke above the mountain.
  c. There is fire on the mountain.

B a. There is fire on the mountain.
  b. There is smoke above it.
  c. Where there is smoke there is fire, as, for instance, in the kitchen.
  d. Such is the case with the mountain.
  e. Therefore there is fire on the mountain.

She argues that '[b]oth are equally logical and contain the same essential elements; the second contains an extra element, an example. Once the equivalences are made apparent, it is clear that neither one is superior to the other' (1995, p.28).

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By focusing on the sentence, translators, in case of Chinese–English translation, do not make the information flow 'deductive' in the translated English version, which may be packed in an 'inductive' way in the original Chinese text (Connor, 1996). Nor do they omit the extraneous information in a Russian text that would seem to be excessive to native speakers of English (Connor, 1996). Kirkpatrick is able to show how a translated English letter from Chinese can be so strange as to upset the reader.

Kirkpatrick (2000) used Bartlett's (1932, p.201) notion of *schema*, 'an active organization of past relations, or of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response', to explain why the translated English letter is not so 'English' rhetorically. Because the formal schema of the Chinese letter – salutation → facework → reason for request → request(s) → sign off – is culturally specific and different from that of an English letter (main point → reasons for request/decision → facework → sign off), the reader's reaction to the letter may be quite unexpected to the Chinese writer:

> English speakers might feel certain exasperation and ask themselves something like: 'When is she going to get to the point?' After all, in an Anglo Australian cultural context, there is no need for deference here, and the imposition is extremely light. (Kirkpatrick, 2000, p.64)

Similarly, a letter written by a Chinese scientist even makes Campbell (1998) wonder: 'Can Chinese rhetoric survive translation?'

Although Kaplan's claim of the importance of indirectness or inductiveness in Chinese writing has been questioned (Mohan & Lo, 1985), Chinese rhetoric does seem to be different from its Anglo-American counterpart. After a detailed review of the literature, Connor (1996, p.41) has the following to say:

> … contrastive rhetoric studies have discovered differences between Chinese and English writing. These differences are explained by a number of sociopolitical and cultural reasons. It is believed that the organization of the eight-legged essay by itself is not the reason for the seemingly indirect writing of Chinese writers. Instead, explanations that consider cultural orientations toward self, others, society, and social interaction are brought into interpretation.

If Chinese writing is 'indirect' in the eyes of Anglo-American readers, their English translation will remain to be so, since translators 'translate', not 're-write'. More often than not, they are putting Chinese sentences into English, rather than paragraphs or texts. The result is that an English version of a Chinese text is lexically and syntactically English, but rhetorically it remains Chinese or uses the Chinese textual grid, so long as translation is done sentence by sentence.

Translation tradition

Another reason that instances of translated English are different from one another and from the non-translated English lies in the fact that translators from different cultural backgrounds are found to have different views as to what is 'good translation' and this bears upon the result of their product. For example, as early as 1980, Alder (1980, p.6) has found, during his work in China in editing the translation of *Mao's Volume V*, that

> [n]aturally the translators want it to read as smooth as possible. I suggest this temptation is greater for foreign comrades than for Chinese comrades. They will sometimes sacrifice precise meaning for the sake of neatness. This, in my opinion, Chinese comrades rightly fight against. They insist on accuracy of meaning first even if the result is a little clumsier than an alternative which reads rather easily.

Alder uses the term 'Chinglish' to refer to this kind of 'clumsier' expression, which he thinks is 'more difficult, perhaps most difficult of all, to eliminate' (1980, p.11). Chinglish, as Alder (1980, p.14) explains, is 'not wrong, there's nothing wrong with it grammatically. It's certainly not the way one would write it in English'.

Many Chinglish expressions are due to cross-linguistic different uses of words (verbs, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, etc.) and different uses with regard to duplication and emphasis. For example, Alder has discovered that Chinese often uses strong adverbs with strong verbs, and this may result in Chinglish such as 'smash completely', which is 'over-emphasis and has the opposite effect' (Alder, 1980, p.15). Another type of Chinglish is the frequent over-use of phrases like *in the world* or *in this world*.

> You use spatial and temporal adverbs, and spatial and temporal phrases, more frequently than we do in English, especially where the context makes it clear. In English it's just clumsy. For instance, we struggled in earlier

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> volumes with 'in the world', 'in this world' and 'in our country'. In general I think in Volume V it's been smoother in this respect. (Alder, 1980, p.16)

It is probably true that 'in Volume V it's been smoother', with the help of Alder. However, due to the different approaches to translation mentioned earlier, what Alder called "Chinglish" would never be eliminated. This is evident in the fact that, twenty years later, Pinkham (2000), one of Alder's fellow countrymen who did similar work in China, has published a book entitled *The translator's guide to Chinglish*. In the preface to the book, Yao Xiaoping (2005) noted that Chinglish is everywhere in English translations in the country: "in our out-door advertisements, in our English-language newspapers and magazines, and in the translated versions of government documents."

Another area in which different ways of information flow can be seen is English for Academic Purposes (EAP). One of the approaches to rhetorical strategies used in research genres (research articles, abstracts, theses and dissertations, book reviews, etc.) is what is called 'genre analysis', initiated by Swales (1981, 1990) and Bhatia (1993). In the first several years researchers attempted to see what academic texts have in common, but later some of them focused on the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences between scientific texts. For example, Taylor and Chen (1991) studied the relationships among "culture-linguistic" systems, discourse structures and disciplinary conventions in article introductions by three groups of physical scientists: Anglo-Americans writing in English, Chinese writing in English, and Chinese writing in Chinese. They analyzed thirty-one papers published in the English-speaking world as well as in mainland China in the fields of geophysics, metallurgy, and mineral processing, material science and materials engineering. The analysis of the '"four move structures" under the framework of "Swale's four moves"' demonstrated that Chinese writer did not seem to start their articles in an indirect way, and each of the four moves appeared in the writing of all three groups. Yet some variation was found among the groups, and a fairly consistent pattern of difference was found between the Anglo-American-English group on one hand and the two Chinese groups on the other. The Chinese scientists were less likely to elaborate the moves, wrote at less length, and cited fewer references. The major difference was in the second move: the Chinese scientists paid less attention to summarizing the literature in their fields of study. Translations of Chinese academic texts, therefore, are necessarily different, in information structure and information flow, from those composed by native speakers of English.

Conclusion

In his paper we have investigated the notion of 'translated English,' in contrast to 'non-translated English'. This type of English has been shown to be a distinct variety of English, being different from comparable non-translated texts in English, in the sense that they have specific properties that cannot be found in the latter, and being different from each other due to the source languages and culture-specific translation traditions. As corpus-based translation studies mature and progress is made in contrastive studies between languages and cultures, more will be discovered about the nature and the features of translated English. ■

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