

Book review

Svenja Kranich. 2016. *Contrastive pragmatics and translation: Evaluation, epistemic modality and communicative styles in English and German*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins. P.p xiv + 204. ISBN 978 90 272 5666 9.

Svenja Kranich's *Contrastive pragmatics and translation: Evaluation, epistemic modality and communicative styles in English and German* offers an in-depth, sophisticated analysis of pragmatic contrasts attested in English and German letters to shareholders and popular scientific articles and their rendition in English-German translations. The varieties under analysis are Standard American English and Standard German German since they "play the most important role with regard to the investigation of English-German translation" (p. 1). The study uncovers the range of similarities and differences in the use of evaluative adjectives and epistemic modal markers in the two languages and genres and their realisations in English-German translations, eventually confirming the validity of the communicative contrasts between English and German discourse. Throughout the study, Kranich emphasises that pragmatic contrasts are more likely to be unnoticed by translators than formal systemic differences, evidenced by the distribution of the pragmatic and structural features of evaluative adjectives and epistemic modal markers in the corpora explored. Apart from disclosing a number of pragmatic and formal contrasts in the linguistic devices mentioned, the aim of the study was to disclose the extent of the shining through effect of source language features and adaptation to target language norms in translations and to analyse the possible impact of translations on target language conventions. The study is undoubtedly valuable in terms of its comprehensive detailed literature review, vast data, adequate methodology, consistent analysis of cross-linguistic data across two genres, insights into the influence of English on German and some universal trends affecting language change. The study consists of nine chapters, preceded by acknowledgments, a list of tables and a list of figures and is followed by references and a subject index.

Chapter 1 states clearly the focus, object and aims of the research and provides the definitions of contrastive pragmatics, covert and overt translation, translation 'universals', cultural filter, the shining-through effect, subjectivity and addressee orientation. This chapter stresses the axis of contrast between English and German discourse. The former is said to be interactive, subjective and addressee oriented, whereas the latter is considered to be content oriented. It is emphasised that previous studies dealing with English-German contrasts were based on personal experience, cultural stereotypes or

the interpretation of data in a “certain light”, while the findings of this study are obtained by valid qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. Moreover, it is maintained that most attention has been devoted to the structural differences between the two languages, whereas pragmatic contrasts and their correspondences in translation have not been considered, especially from a cross-linguistic perspective. The chapter highlights the novelty of the research.

Chapter 2 outlines the four general hypotheses of the study, the description of the data and the methods and design of the corpora. In comparison to other investigations mentioned in further chapters, this study stands out in terms of data and methodology. The vast data were obtained from comparable English and German corpora such as the Popular Science Corpus, the Letters to Shareholders Corpus and the Mixed Business Corpus, which consist of English originals, English-German translations and German originals. The Popular Science Corpus contains texts from two time-frames, 1978 to 1982 and 1999 to 2002, enabling the diachronic part of the research; the Mixed Business Corpus also contains German-English translations. The advantage of these specialised corpora is their comparability, which allows for the establishing of valid pragmatic similarities and differences between the two languages in business communication and popular scientific writing and their handling in translation. Reference is also made to other corpora such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the Corpus of the Digital Dictionary of the German language (DWDS), mentioned in Chapter 6. Because of the different sizes of the corpora, quantitative findings are discussed on the basis of percentages and normalised frequencies. Although it is mentioned that “the studies presented in the core chapters of this book, as well as a number of studies cited in the research overview, have been conducted within the project ‘Covert Translation’” (p. 17), the continuity between the project and the current study is not explicit enough.

Chapter 3 provides a succinct overview of the dimensions of communicative contrasts between English and German identified on the basis of studies carried out by House (1982, 1996, 2007) in written and spoken registers in different types of discourse. The parameters crucial to English and German contrasts are “directness/indirectness”, “orientation towards persons” or “content”, “implicitness/explicitness” and “verbal routines/ad-hoc formulation”, which turn out to be important to the study undertaken by Kranich. Discussion of the parameters of contrast between English and German provides background information to the studies discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, which reflect different communicative preferences in the two languages.

Chapter 4 reports previous research on pragmatic and stylistic contrasts between English and German in academic discourse, popular science writing and business

communication. The devices revealing these contrasts include hedges, impersonal expressions, deictic elements and indicators of text organisation and linearity. Kranich argues that some previous studies into professional academic writing in English and German proved insufficient because of a lack of statistical significance in the results, inadequately chosen data or its categorisation. This chapter also reviews studies into English and German communicative contrasts in political interviews and telephone conversations. A summary of the chapter is provided in Table 5, which indicates whether results obtained from previous studies confirm or deny the existence of the dimensions of communicative contrasts (“indirectness versus directness”, “orientation towards persons versus orientation towards content”, “orientation towards addressee versus orientation towards self”, “implicitness versus explicitness”, “verbal routines versus ad-hoc formulations”, “more interactional/interpersonal discourse versus more transactional/ideational discourse” (p. 47–49)) between English and German.

Chapter 5 reports on the handling of communicative contrasts between English and German in translations of popular science, business communication and other genres (fiction, tourism brochures). The devices considered in English-German translations and in some studies in German-English translations pertain to person deixis, sentence-initial connectives (*and/und, but/aber/doch*), modal markers and evaluative lexis. A summary of the chapter is provided in Table 6, which indicates the dimensions of the communicative contrasts that are rendered closely to the source language text and adapted to the target text norms. Detailed analysis of previous studies shows that “the English-German translations are characterized by a mixture of shining through of source language features and adaptations to target language conventions” (p. 64).

Chapters 6 and 7 deal with contrasts in the use of evaluative adjectives and epistemic modal markers in English and German original texts and translations. The latter are considered in letters to shareholders and popular scientific articles, whereas the former are explored in letters to shareholders. Both chapters outline the motivation for studying linguistic categories under consideration (evaluation and epistemic modality), hypotheses, previous research on the expression of evaluation and epistemic modality in discourse, methods, contrastive findings, translation analysis and a summary. Since Chapter 7 deals with the distribution of epistemic modal markers in both genres, it also contains a section on cross-genre comparison of epistemic modality.

Kranich maintains that evaluative lexis has been chosen for investigation in letters to shareholders because it functions as a rhetorical strategy in providing significant information about the company and creating its image. Epistemic modal markers of high and low probability in letters to shareholders are worth investigation because functioning

as hedges they add to the informative or marketing function of the genre. In popular scientific articles they reduce the force of propositions containing new and sometimes controversial ideas.

Both chapters clearly explain the steps and procedures of data selection that yield reliable results. The identification and analysis of the positively evaluative adjectives draw on the semantic class of value adjectives in Dixon (1982) and the classification of adjectives presented by Paradis (1997). The study shows that the class of value adjectives is in fact much broader than defined in Dixon's typology and assigns the semantic feature of value to adjectives that express evaluation indirectly. The positively evaluative adjectives are further classified into 'scalar' and 'extreme' adjectives, following Paradis' classification. Epistemic modal markers in both genres were identified, counted, attributed to a lexico-grammatical class (modal verb, adverb, adjective) and characterised as markers of high or low probability. In letters to shareholders they were also analysed in terms of reference to the present, past or future states of affairs of the company and to the states of affairs referring to the company itself or matters outside the company. The latter parameters aimed to show the addressee or content orientation of the epistemic modal markers under study. Although the criteria of identifying scalar and extreme adjectives and markers of high and low probability are illustrated well, a full list of the value adjectives and epistemic modal markers in the two languages could have been provided. The category of lexical modal markers and longer lexical constructions also requires more explanation and a full list of these markers would clarify the boundaries between the two categories. Despite the recognition of the overlap between the content and addressee oriented functions of epistemic modal markers, more comments could have been made on the actual number of instances illustrating the overlap.

Chapter 6 provides sound evidence for the divergent distribution of positively evaluative adjectives in English and German original texts, determined by contrasts in communication and genre-specific conventions. Chapter 7 provides a thorough discussion of functional and formal contrasts in epistemic modal markers in English and German letters to shareholders and popular scientific writing. Functional comparison focuses on markers of high probability and low probability which display different degrees of modal strength and hedging effects, whereas formal comparison focuses on lexico-grammatical classes of epistemic modal markers. Both chapters provide important findings on the extent of the shining through effect of the source text and adaptation to the target text in translations. Detailed analysis of English-German translations of positively evaluative adjectives and epistemic modal markers reveals both the shining through effect of the source text and adaptation to the target language text. Both extreme adjectives and

epistemic modal markers are more frequent in the English-German translations than in the German originals in the corpora under study. Kranich makes an important observation that the shining through effect concerns mainly pragmatic stylistic differences, which are less codified than structural ones, and it may be genre dependent.

Some revision of the subject matter under analysis and terminological clarification are needed when discussing the addressee or content orientation of the epistemic modal markers in English and German original letters to shareholders. Kranich argues that propositions referring to the company itself rather than other states of affairs throw light on the addressee oriented use of the markers. However, it should be noted that reference to other states of affairs is rather inconsistent. A variety of terms is used (“without company”, “outside company”, “general states of affairs”, “other states of affairs”). Therefore it is not clear what states of affairs are meant. On p. 124 there is a claim that the English-German translations contain fewer occurrences of epistemic modal markers in future-time contexts in comparison to the English originals because most probably the markers in the source language were used for addressee oriented functions. It would be illustrative if some examples of addressee oriented contexts with future-time reference could be provided.

Despite the terminological inconsistencies mentioned, Chapters 6 and 7 successfully combine qualitative and quantitative analysis, the results of which are presented in figures and tables. All generalisations are supported by discussion of the statistical significance of the results. The connections are established not only between the qualitative and quantitative parts of the study but also between the findings obtained in the discussion of the original and translated texts. The results presented in the chapters are undoubtedly valuable from a cross-linguistic and cross-genre perspective because they comprehensively complement other studies on English and German communicative contrasts, references to which are also presented. The chapters offer a systematic account of how English and German texts are created in the fields of business communication and popular scientific writings and raise awareness of the differences between the two languages and genres in communicative preferences.

The comprehensiveness of the study also lies in its diachronic dimension, which is the focus of Chapter 8. This presents a consistent comparison of the distribution of first person plural pronouns, sentence initial conjunctions (*and*, *but*) and epistemic modal markers over two time-frames (1978 to 1982 and 1999 to 2002) in popular scientific articles in the two languages, thus aiming to establish the influence of original English texts on English-German translations and German originals and discuss the cross-linguistic and cross-genre factors determining possible changes. The diachronic

changes attested in the English-German translations and German originals are, however, attributed not to the prestigious status of English and its influence on German texts but to the overall changing linguistic trends in German, namely a move towards “more colloquial ways of expressions”. Moreover, the diachronic changes found in the originals of both languages and translations are considered to be reflections of general trends of communication characterising Western societies, namely the globalisation of knowledge and communication, the increasing validation of youth and youth culture, etc. The interconnection of linguistic changes with social trends adds to the depth of the study. Sound evidence is provided to show the decrease of shining through effects and the increase of cultural filtering in translations over time. Thus this chapter provides valuable empirical data regarding the impact of English on German.

Chapter 9 summarises the aims of the study, dimensions of contrast between English and German and the use of evaluative adjectives and epistemic modal markers in English and German business communication and popular scientific writing and their realisations in translation. The chapter thoroughly discusses the verification of the hypotheses and the manifestations of the shining through effects of the source text and adaptation to the target language text in translation and factors determining the choices made. It is concluded that the degree of shining through effect is genre dependent, and adaptation to target language norms in both genres is stable when lexico-grammatical choices are concerned. This chapter also states that other factors (cognitive, social, cultural) should be taken into account when exploring the questions of shining through and adaptation in translation.

Thus this book offers an in-depth analysis of pragmatic contrasts found in English and German business communication and popular scientific writings and their rendition in translations. It throws light on the different rhetorical strategies used in English and German letters to shareholders and popular scientific articles and proves that formal and functional systemic differences are more prone to adaptation in translations and original texts than pragmatic contrasts. The study provides invaluable guidelines for translators and their trainers, who should be aware not only of structural contrasts between languages but also pragmatic and stylistic ones.

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