

A Corpus-Based Investigation of Lexical Cohesion in English and Italian Non-Translated Texts and in Italian Translated Texts

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ABSTRACT

The present study sets out to investigate lexical cohesion and the network of lexical chains it creates from the point of view of translation. This topic has been largely understudied in the translation field, though many scholars acknowledge its importance and the major role it plays in shaping the quality of a translation - Hoey [1991] demonstrates that approximately 50% of a text's cohesive markers are lexical - and in affecting the target readership's response to translations. This study employs Morris and Hirst's (1991) categorization of lexical cohesion into 1) reiteration with identity of reference; 2) reiteration without identity of reference; 3) reiteration by means of superordinates; 4) systematic semantic relations; and 5) non-systematic semantic relations. The study tests two hypotheses. Hypothesis number one claims that Italian translations of English scientific articles taken from *Le Scienze*, which is the Italian edition of *Scientific American*, tend to reproduce the lexical cohesive markers of the source texts failing to make them conform to the TL norms and text-type conventions. Hypothesis number two claims that the lexical cohesive markers used in articles originally written in Italian and published in *Le Scienze* differ from the ones used in the Italian translations. In both experiments, WordNet, which is a lexical database for the English language designed by Professor George A. Miller at Princeton University, was used to identify the word senses and the semantic relations connecting the different lexical chains in the texts. As for the Italian texts, MultiWordNet, a multilingual lexical database which allows the Italian version to be strictly aligned with the Princeton WordNet, was used in analyzing word senses and semantic relations. The statistical analysis of the findings, which was carried out through a One-Way Between Subjects ANOVA in a statistical analysis tool called SPSS supports my two aforementioned hypotheses. Both hypotheses are strictly interrelated insofar as they both set out to demonstrate that, as yet, little emphasis has been placed on cohesion in general and lexical cohesion in particular in translator training programs, and that a greater awareness of it could benefit both professionals and novices.

KEYWORDS: coherence, lexical cohesion, semantic categories, translation.

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