

Synonymity and Translated Finnish. A Corpus-based View of Contextuality of Synonymous Expressions and Lexical Features Specific to Translated Language

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is twofold: First, it examines how synonyms can be distinguished from each other by analysing their cotext, that is, their nearest linguistic environment. Secondly, the study focuses on untypical lexical patterning in translated language, which is hypothesised to be a translation universal. This research is a component of the project *Translated Finnish and Translation Universals: A Corpus Study* led by Anna Mauranen.

Synonymous expressions can be distinguished by several criteria, such as style, register and social or geographic dialects. In the present analysis, it is hypothesised that also cotextual co-occurrence preferences and restrictions – collocation, colligation, semantic preference and semantic prosody – strongly direct the use of synonyms and thus differentiate one item from another at the syntagmatic level. Furthermore, it is postulated that also morphological preference – both paradigmatic and syntagmatic – belongs among the components of a lexical item and distinguishes synonymous expressions.

The study also states another main hypothesis according to which cotextual profiles of lexical items in translated Finnish differ from those in non-translated Finnish; it is claimed that translations into Finnish show both untypical frequencies of lexical items and untypical lexico-grammatical as well as lexico-semantic combinations. It is suggested that this tendency occurs regardless of the source language stimulus.

The above-mentioned hypotheses are tested by studying the frequencies and association patterns of three semi-grammatical words, namely the synonymous Finnish degree modifiers *hyvin*, *kovin* and *oikein* (all roughly meaning ‘very’). The data for analysis consist of the Finnish Comparable Corpus of Fiction (FCCF), which is a subset of the Corpus of Translated Finnish (CTF) compiled at Savonlinna School of Translation Studies. The FCCF is composed of three subcorpora: (a) a corpus of non-translated Finnish, (b) a multi-source-language corpus of translated Finnish (both Indo-European and Finno-Ugric source languages), and (c) a mono-source-language corpus of translated Finnish (English as the source language).

The results indicate, firstly, that the synonymous degree modifiers clearly differ in terms of their cotextual profiles. This is manifested in every category at the syntagmatic level, but especially clearly in the semantic dimension. It also turns out that the less frequent the item is, the more restricted it is to a particular cotextual patterning. The analysis of translated Finnish reveals that translated language seems to show frequencies as well as collocations and clusters that are different from those in non-translated texts. It fails, however, to show any clearly untypical cotextual profiles; semantic preferences and prosodies being the most constant in the translation process. Quantitative differences, however, are found to some extent in every category of cotextual dimensions. The data also suggest that the cotextual profiles of synonyms may differ more in translations than in non-translations. Finally, translation universals such as simplification and the impact of source language are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: contextual meaning, corpus-based translation studies, degree modifiers, synonyms, translated Finnish, universals.

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