

Bertuccelli Papi, M., Cappelli, G. e Masi, S. (eds.) (in print), *Lexical complexity: theoretical assessment and translational perspectives*, Pisa: Plus Pisa University Press

Introduction

This volume collects papers which provide different perspectives on various instantiations of one and the same phenomenon: the complexity of language, and of the lexicon in particular. Indeed, the study of complexity in language has long proved to be an fruitful area of research, catalysing interest and contributions following different theoretical approaches. Here, however, a specific notion of complexity is proposed for investigation, namely the notion derived from theories of dynamical systems as applied in the study of empirical sciences. The ultimate goal of the present volume is precisely that of setting up a theoretical model for the study of the lexicon as a complex dynamical system, with the translational perspective both as a powerful instrument for the exploration and as a relevant domain for the application of its findings.

The search for a parallel with a broader, extra-linguistic notion stems from the attempt to enrich descriptive accounts with theoretically motivated, objective means for explaining and (possibly) predicting this kind of complexity (Merlini Barbaresi, (ed.) 2003, Bertuccelli Papi, 2003, 2006).

Within a broader view of the linguistic system as a complex dynamical system itself, the lexicon can be described as a nested complex dynamical system within which different types of structures act as organizers in order to make it possible for cognition to handle the immense amount of information involved in the communicative process. If looked at from this perspective, the lexicon of a language actually exhibits several features of dynamical systems: it displays emergent patterns of self-organization which reduce its complexity and determine its relative stability (MacWhinney 2001, Elman 1995), it is non-linear as far as relations with conceptual structures and reactions to changes in the system are concerned, and it exhibits adaptivity to external pressures. Indeed, the complex system of a language includes the complex system of the lexicon, and lexical items themselves can in turn be seen as complex dynamic microsystems differing for their degree of complexity and internal organization.

If the intralinguistic study of the system clearly reveals a first order of complexity in the mapping between words and concepts, translation unveils a second order of complexity in the cross-lingual mapping between word/concept pairs, proving therefore as a privileged vantage point for empirical observation of the dynamics of meaning construal.

The issue of lexical complexity is here addressed both theoretically and empirically from multiple points of view: that of theoretical and computational linguistics as well as that of literary and translation studies. The translational perspective acts as the underlying theme of the volume,

since translation is a powerful heuristic tool in the investigation of lexical complexity. It brings to the fore not only the non-linear mapping between words and concepts in different text types and the complex mapping between words belonging to different lexical systems, but also and above all the complex interplay between functions and meanings under the constraints imposed by culture-specificity to text-recontextualization. In this respect, literary translation is especially suggestive of the power of words to dynamically recreate meanings and, at the same time, of the limits imposed by text-internal and external conventions.

By highlighting the nature of the lexicon as a complex dynamic system, translation prompts linguists to search for the constitutive and organizing principles of the system. Linguistics, in turn, can hopefully hand back to translators the outputs of its research efforts, in the form of useful suggestions to act as input towards true diagrammaticity (i.e. preservation of analogous internal relations) in translation (Merlini 2003).

The first contribution of the linguistic research to the debate comes from Marcella Bertuccelli Papi and Alessandro Lenci's article, where the theory of lexical complexity is extensively presented and exemplified. The authors give an outline of the properties shared by theories of complex systems in different fields, provide arguments to support the view that the lexicon is a complex system, and finally discuss the implications for translation emerging from a case study in lexical complexity.

The debate on the linguistic side is conducted further by Marina Bondi, whose contribution looks at the presence of statements of purpose in comparable corpora of historical article openings in English and Italian, and explores disciplinary and cultural variation in metadiscourse with special attention to self-reference and discourse deixis. Variation is studied with a view to understanding how far text and discourse are influenced by national/international disciplinary culture, or by national/international academic culture in general, and the analysis is based on three small corpora of openings, taken to be representative of research writing in different disciplines (economics and history in English) and in different cultural contexts (history in English and in Italian).

Silvia Bruti's paper aims to explore the translation of the speech act of complimenting (Wolfson, 1981, 1984; Manes & Wolfson, 1980; Pomerantz, 1978; Wolfson & Manes, 1980; Herbert, 1991; Holmes 1988) in audiovisual translation, i.e. interlingual subtitling and dubbing. It investigates how this speech act is translated and if/how what is expunged or altered can be recovered from the non-linguistic communicative channels. The analysis is based on a small corpus made up of British/American films and of their Italian subtitled and dubbed versions.

Annalisa Baicchi addresses the topic of resultative events and their translatability. The aim of her study is that of proposing a possible explanation for an unusual translation output which occurs

when Italian translators are faced with the English telic aspect of a motion event, i.e. when the path of motion crosses the limit of a bounded space (Beyond Path Conformation). The explanatory proposal put forward stems from the theoretical frameworks of Typological Linguistics and Cognitive Semantics. These approaches help understand the degree of translational complexity of “beyond events” across the typological divide, and the different cognitive construal that the changed patterning of Image Schemata entails.

Gloria Cappelli tackles some problems of non-semantic and non-pragmatic equivalence in the translation of the verbs of cognitive attitude *think* and *assume* into Italian. The theoretical framework of lexical complexity enables the author to highlight the different semantic and pragmatic functions of the two lexical domains which are only apparently equivalent.

Silvia Masi proposes a cross-linguistic and cross-textual investigation of lexical and formal dialogic descriptors (i.e. verbs of report and different forms of reporting) by making reference to Peirce’s (1965) semiotic principles (cf. their application in Merlini Barbaresi 2003, 1988 and in Bertuccelli Papi 2003). She suggests that, ideally, the same semiotic values should be preserved on the varying linguistic levels of English source texts and Italian target texts. In fact, her work shows that the complex mapping (cf. lack of direct correspondence) between the two lexical systems gives rise to adjustments and correlated consequences for overall text diagrammaticity in translation.

Elisa Mattiello focuses on the importance of preserving equivalence (i.e. equivalent function, see Catford 1965, House 1997) in the translation of linguistic varieties that are culture-specific or belong to a socially restricted speech community. Hence, she claims that, when transposing slang into a different language, the translator should keep lexical complexity (e.g., a marked relation between signans and signatum), as it is generally related to such socio-pragmatic purposes as identification with a group, secrecy, intimacy, vulgarity, etc.

In her contribution, Maria Ivana Lorenzetti carries out a corpus-based contrastive analysis of the English verb *see* and its Italian counterpart *vedere* in relation to the phenomenon of the null instantiation of objects, i.e. the omission of the direct object in transitive verbs. Her study is esp. aimed at highlighting the semantic differences lexicalised by the two verbs.

Veronica Bonsignori’s contribution analyses the linguistic phenomenon of Tag Questions (TQs) in English in relation to the notion of complexity (Merlini 2003) and from the perspective of a particular type of audiovisual translation, i.e. dubbing. She takes into consideration the use of TQs in some movies and makes a comparison with their dubbed versions in Italian. The fact that the Italian language does not display a varied and complex set of such forms as English does, she argues, makes translation very difficult.

Sara Conti's paper deals with double-base *-ed* derivatives in a corpus of English literary texts and their translation into Italian. After analysing the morphological complexity of these formations, the paper focuses on the complexity in translation, deriving from the non-correspondence of formal means between the two linguistic systems, and aims at identifying patterns of rendition, as well as possible regularities, activated to compensate the formal lack in the Italian linguistic system.

Daniele Franceschi analyses the semantics of the verb *to see* in combination with the preposition *about*. He highlights that the prepositional verb in question can undergo a process of complexification whereby the resulting meaning is not just produced by the sum of its constituent parts, but also by contextual material and pragmatic implicatures. The individuation of recurrent lexico-syntactic patterns and the semantics emerging from them, he suggests, may help pave the way for the construction of ontologies and thesauri and may possibly be useful for machine translation.

From the perspective of translation studies, Juliane House describes her Systemic-Functional Model for Translation Criticism and shows how this approach facilitates contrastive lexicopragmatic analysis. She ventures a glance into the future of translation criticism and finally argues for making a distinction between linguistic analysis and social evaluation in translation criticism.

Christiane Nord's contribution presents her Four-Function Model for Pretranslational Text Analysis. The author argues that the identification and classification of communicative functions is an important part of pretranslational source text analysis, because it can serve as a basis for the translator's decision as to translation type and translation strategy. She concludes that in order to preserve the source text function across the culture barrier, it is necessary to adapt function markers to target-culture standards.

With regard to the literary perspective, Mario Curreli tackles the problem of the complexity of literary translation by commenting on the Italian versions of some of Joseph Conrad's works that have been translated by famous Italian writers such as Carlo Emilio Gadda, Margherita Guidacci and Dacia Maraini, and by supporting his analysis with a selection of relevant examples.

In her contribution, Carla Dente discusses the problems involved in the writing, performance and analysis of the word of drama. She starts her argumentation by pointing out that, in English, the problematic relationship between the literary and the practical aspects of theatre is foregrounded by the very existence of two different words - *drama* (i.e. the written text) and *theatre* (i.e. the aspects pertaining to performance). The author esp. underlines that the texts written for the theatre are more complex than other literary texts because they have to be

necessarily performed in order to accomplish their communicative function. The interpretation of a dramatic text through its analysis and its staging, she argues, ends up as the coordination of an essentially intertextual work applied to complex forms of textualities.

Sara Soncini further expands on the complexity of the word of drama by focusing on the demanding task of its interlinguistic translation. The author claims that, with very few exceptions, plays are written to be performed and their communicative potential is only fulfilled when a play undergoes the process of intersemiotic translation, i.e. when it moves from the page to the stage. This means that every translator tackling a drama text operates within two different semiotic systems (textual and audiovisual) and consequently addresses two different types of audience (readers and spectators), which very seldom overlap.

Ilide Carmignani analyses complexities in the translation of lexical items in *El Otoño del Patriarca* by Gabriel García Márquez. The author focuses on translation issues at the phonological, morpho-syntactic and semantico-conceptual levels of the literary word. The paper highlights the way in which translation may alter the so-called “magic realism” of the original text, making the “magic” more prominent than the “realism” so as to meet the expectations of the target culture.

Roberto Di Scala’s work deals with the complexities in the translation of the words ‘hobbit’ and ‘Bilbo Baggins’, the name of the most representative of them in Tolkien’s masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings*. The author claims that, when translating Tolkien, three main factors should be taken into account: Tolkien’s own guidelines, the linguistic levels underlying the terms themselves and possible phonetic effects attached to them (e.g. alliteration, etc.).

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