

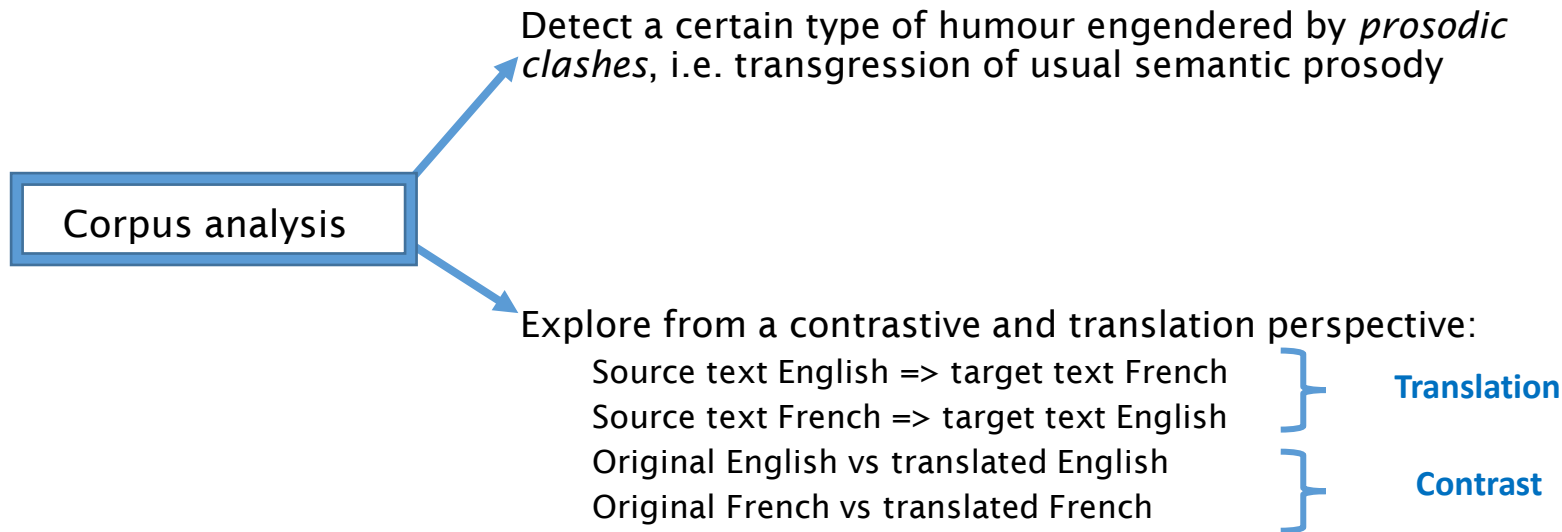
Translation analysis of humorous 'prosodic clashes' and other linguistic humour strategies in TED Talks

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Summary

- 01 Objective
- 02 Semantic prosody
- 03 Methodology
- 04 Categorisation
- 05 Translation difficulties EN + FR
- 06 Conclusion and perspectives

01. Objectives



➡ Potential applications to **translation training** and translation **quality evaluation**

02. Semantic prosody

Concept coined by J. Sinclair on the model of Firth ‘phonological prosody’ in which consonants are phonologically coloured by the vowels that follow

⇒ semantic prosody is defined as *A consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates* (Louw, 1993: 157)

02. Semantic prosody

❑ Semantic prosody is linked with notions such as connotations (Stubbs, 2001; Partington 2004 ‘*evaluative prosody*’), evaluative meaning (Hunston, 2007), or attitudinal meaning (Sinclair, 1987, 1999).

❑ SP emerges on the level of pragmatics => *discourse prosody* (Stubbs, 2001)

❑ Semantic prosody is not restricted to single words:

Grabowski (2021:2) *linguistic items longer than single words (i.e., multi-word units or constructions, idioms and formulas of various types,...) can be also described in terms of their semantic prosodies,*

⇒ words, lexico-grammatical patterns, idioms can be polarised and have a discourse function

Not going to argue with Gabrielatos!

02. Semantic prosody and genres, registers, LSPs

Semantic prosody may vary across registers, genres, LGP-LSP (Bednarek 2008; Hunston, 2007; Kübler & Volanschi 2012); Tribble (2008) also talks of 'local semantic prosodies'

Bednarek (2008) and Stewart (2009) note that even though some words seem to have a negative semantic prosody because they collocate with negatively connotated words, the result can be positive, as in *to tackle a problem* (Western culture)

To reduce the appearance of X : X = redness, wrinkles, fine lines, dark spots ou photo damage (cosmetics presentations)

=> Semantic prosody is context-dependent and culture-dependent (Bednarek 2008)

=> Detecting semantic prosody and its evaluative or attitudinal meaning is subjective and depends on the knowledge of the linguist (Bednarek 2008, Stewart 2009)

Semantic prosody is not accessible in a « Chomskyan » way, i.e., via introspection or linguistic intuition (Louw, 1993)

=> Corpora have allowed linguists to study SP by identifying frequent patterns of use and collocates

=> A double approach: quantitative and qualitative (manual)

02. Semantic prosody : contrastive and translation studies

Contrastive perspective: cross-linguistic Spanish-English analysis (Munday, 2011); similarities (Berber-Sardinha, 2000) and differences across near-synonyms (Partington, 1998;); unpredictable SP in English and Chinese (Xiao & Mc Eney 2006)

Translation perspective: study one three items in English-Norwegian corpus (Ebeling, 2014); impact on translatability (Wei & Li 2014), change in SP from LGP to LSP (Kübler & Volanschi 2012; Bayon Garcia, 2013), extended units in Slovene-English translation (Jurko 2015), translation quality in Polish-English translation (Grabowski, 2021)

Reminder: pragmatic translation: pragmatic denotes the 'reader's or readership's reception of the translation' (Newmark 1988: 133) focussing on the perlocutionary effect of the translation in the target language culture (Hickey 1998). (Kübler & Aston 2010)

=> Translators should be aware

02. Semantic prosody and humour

1. Sinclair's (1991) *switch points*, pertaining to the open-choice principle, are introduced by the language user deliberately altering the expected patterns of words to achieve special effects such as irony, humour, contrast, emphasis and empathy.
2. Louw's *prosodic clash* :
 - large corpora afford us insights into the SP of a word
 - *prosodic clash* means using a word with the opposite connotation, which engenders irony

=> In line with Nerhard's cognitive approach of humour as a *consequence of the discrepancy between two mental representations, one of which is an expectation and the other is some other idea or a percept* (Nerhardt 1977 : 47)

=> Same principle: transgression of semantic prosody with unexpected collocates

02. Introduction: Semantic prosody, humour and CBTS

Focus on prosodic clashes in the source text and its translation

=> Translation of humour not obvious: incongruity (and semantic prosody) is culture-dependent or linked to a group (discourse community, Vandaele, 2010)

=> Detecting semantic prosody not obvious:

Intuition (Stewart 2009) to be checked in the corpus

=> Automatic detection difficult

How can prosodic clashes be detected? => semi-automatic approach

02. Semantic prosody: Why TED Talks?

TED Conferences, LLC (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is an American-Canadian media organization that posts talks online for free distribution under the slogan "ideas worth spreading". (Wikipedia)

- TED Talks : use of humour to attract/keep the attention of the audience, create connivance, belonging (Scotto di Carlo, 2014:85)
- TED Talks transcribed and translated into French (volunteers)
- TEDx Talks in French transcribed and translated into English

Adequate corpus to study prosodic clashes

03. Methodology: English original (1)

□ Corpus

- Corpus of English TED Talks transcripts: ~4.4 million tokens
- Corpus of French translations (non-aligned): ~5.5 million tokens

□ Annotation

- CLAWS POS tagging by Wmatrix
- USAS semantic tagging by Wmatrix (lexicon of 42,000 single words and 18,400 MWU) to identify connotated words – positive and negative emotions
- Annotated English corpus uploaded into SketchEngine

03. Methodology: English original (2)

□ Detection of humour-generating prosodic clashes

- Laughter marker in transcripts: “(Laughter)”
- Hypothesis: humour-generating prosodic clash = element with SP + unexpectedly connotated word
- Formula for detecting humour-generating prosodic clashes: “connotated emotion” + laughter marker in a 5-word range
- CQL in SketchEngine: [!empos=".*E.*"] [0,5] [word="\("] [word="[L]augh.*"] -> 1900 concordances, 27 results, all translated in FR

□ Validation of semantic prosodies for words or expressions

- In general EnTenTen20 and FrTenTen17 corpora, via Word Sketch, collocations and frequencies features

03. Methodology: French original (1)

□ Corpus

- Corpus of French TEDx Talks transcripts: ~2 million tokens
- Corpus of English translations (non-aligned): ~450,000 tokens

□ Annotation

- FreeLing POS tagging by SketchEngine
- USAS French semantic lexicon (2,725 words) + EmoBase French emotional lexicon (156 words) combined and cleaned from duplicates (2,857 words) for semantic tagging to identify connotated words – positive and negative emotions
- Annotated French corpus uploaded into SketchEngine

03. Methodology: French original (2)

❑ Detection of humor-generating prosodic clashes

- Laughter marker in transcripts: “(Rire)”
- CQL in SketchEngine: [lempos=".*E.*"] [0,5] [word="\("] [word="[Rr]i.*"] -> 177 conc., only 1 result

❑ Change of methodology to study all instances of laughter marker

- CQL in SketchEngine: [word="\("] [word="[Rr]i.*"] -> 2,256 concordances, 14 results, 4 EN translations

❑ Validation semantic prosodies for words or expressions

- In general FrTenTen17 and EnTenTen20 corpora, via Word Sketch, collocations and frequencies features

04. Tentative categorisation: Linguistic strategies behind humour in TED Talks

prosodic
clashes in
21 out of 27
results

- a) transgression of the semantic prosody of a word or an expression;
- b) conflict between the opposing semantic prosodies of several words or expressions;
- c) conflict between the opposite connotations of several words or expressions;
- d) *transgression of the idiom principle*;
- e) oxymoron;
- f) transgression of semantic preference;
- g) transgression of parallelism;
- h) conflict opposing different registers;
- i) conflict opposing different domains;
- j) replacement of a word in a fixed expression by its antonym;
- k) reversal of a positive SP concept by describing it with a negative SP concept.

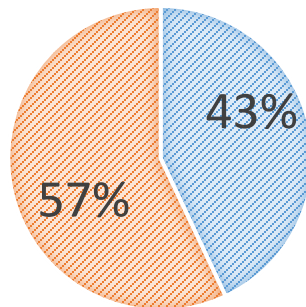
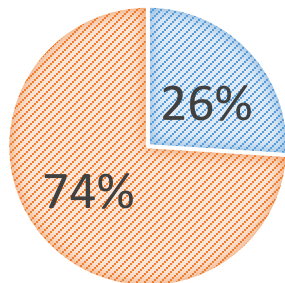
05. Translation difficulties EN to FR

SEMANTIC PROSODY

- Similar SP between EN and FR (12)
- Different SP between EN and FR (9)

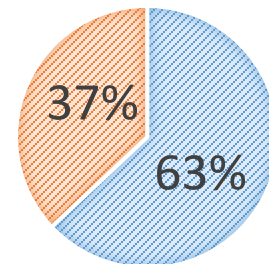
TRANSLATIONS

- Successful translations (20)
- Unsuccessful translations (7)



TRANSLATION DIFFICULTIES

- Examples with difficulties (17)
- Examples without difficulties (10)



05. Translation difficulties EN + FR

Translation difficulty	Successful translation	Unsuccessful translation	Total
Different SP between EN and FR equivalents	1	3	4
Different semantic preference between EN and FR equivalents	1	1	2
Different degree of <i>boundness</i> between EN and FR	3	2+2	5+2
Change of mode (passive/active) between EN and FR	0	1	1
Register change	3	1	4
'Obsolescence' in EN to transfer in FR	1	1	2
Different frequency of equivalents between EN and FR, leading to the weakening of the perlocutionary effect	0	1	1
Necessary to propose an explicitation	3	0	3
Polysemous (ambiguous) translation leading to misinterpretation	0	1+1	1+1
Omission of prosodic clash	0	1	1
TOTAL	12	12+3	24+3

05. Translation difficulties.

Example of successful translation: Transferring register

- EN: *When Charles Darwin went across the Atlantic in 1832 on the Beagle, he saw the turkey vulture, and he said, "These are disgusting birds with bald scarlet heads that are formed to **revel in putridity**."* (Laughter)
- FR: *Quand Charles Darwin a traversé l'Atlantique en 1832 sur le Beagle, il voit l'Urubu, et il a dit: « Ce sont des oiseaux dégoûtants à tête chauve et écarlate qui se forment à **festoyer dans la chair en putréfaction**."* (Rires)
- EN: *revel in* – positive SP, formal register; *putridity* – negative SP -> prosodic clash
- FR: *festoyer* – more specific than *revel in*, but positive SP, formal register; *putréfaction* – negative SP -> prosodic clash

explicitation *dans la chair* emphasizes the perlocutionary effect

05. Unsuccessful translation: SP different between EN and FR

- EN: *Or this ad that I read in the New York Times: "Wearing a fine watch **speaks loudly** of your rank in society. Buying it from us **screams good taste**." (Laughter)*
- FR: *Ou cette pub que j'ai lue dans le New York Times: "Porter une belle montre en **dit long** sur votre place dans la société. L'acheter chez nous est une **déclaration de bon goût**." (Rires)*

□ EN: *scream* – negative SP, *good taste* – positive SP -> **prosodic clash**

Phrase structure repeated: Ving + speech V, but *speak loudly of* – neutral SP, expectation of the verb with neutral SP in the 2d sentence -> **transgression of parallelism**

□ FR: *déclaration* – only slightly negative SP, *bon goût* – positive SP -> **not enough for prosodic clash**;

Phrase structure partially repeated: Vinf + speech V, Vinf + be + Nominalisation of speech V, but SP of N not strong enough for transgression of parallelism

Our suggestion: *déclaration fracassante de bon goût*

Fracassant – strong negative SP, collocate of *déclaration*

-> **prosodic clash** + **transgression of parallelism**

05. Successful translation: Different degree of *boundness* between FR and EN

- FR: *Ce jour-là, par hasard - mais est-ce qu'il n'y a vraiment que des hasards? - j'achète un magazine que je n'achète jamais d'habitude. Pourquoi ? Sur la couverture, il y avait écrit : « Comment **réussir son divorce** ». (Rires) Donc ça m'a fait envie !*
- EN: *That day, by chance - but is there such a thing as chance? - I bought a magazine that I never usually buy. Why did I buy it? Because on the cover it said: "How to **make a successful divorce!**" (Laughter) So that appealed to me!*
- FR: *réussir* - positive SP, *divorce* - negative SP -> **prosodic clash**; *réussir le mariage* - collocation (with 7.4 LogDice score in FrTenTen17), *divorce* - antonym of *mariage*
- EN: *successful* - positive SP, *divorce* - negative SP -> prosodic clash; no equivalent verb collocates with *marriage*, but *successful marriage* - collocation (with 5.4 LogDice score in EnTenTen20), *divorce* - antonym of *mariage*

05. Unsuccessful translation: Different degree of *boundness*

- **FR:** *J'ai laissé mon corps faire. Je lui ai fait confiance. Et on fait tous ça. Dans cet état, on va dire la plupart du temps, parce qu'on a plein d'expressions pour qualifier ça, qu'on était ailleurs, qu'on était dans les nuages, qu'on était sur la lune, qu'on était sur Mars. (Rires)*
 - **EN:** *I let my body go. I trusted it. And we all do that. We have plenty of expressions for this state. we were somewhere else, in the clouds, we were on the moon, we were on Mars. (Laughter)*
 - **FR:** expressions with the same meaning: *être ailleurs, être dans les nuages, être dans la lune. Être dans la lune – reinterpreted as literal and continued in être sur Mars*
 - **EN:** literal translation, no trace of the expressions
- Our suggestion:** *we were daydreaming, we were miles away, we had our head in the clouds, in the stars (or we were parsecs away)*
- Idioms: *to be daydreaming, to be parsecs away, to have one's head in the clouds.*

Corpus failure ;)

- EN: *Mishawaka is many good things but cultural hub of the world it is not, so my only exposure to theater and film was limited to the plays I did in high school and **Blockbuster Video, may she rest in peace**. (Laughter)*
- FR: *Mishawaka, c'est sympa, mais ce n'est pas le centre culturel du monde. Je n'ai vu du théâtre et du cinéma que ce que je jouais au lycée et **les vidéos en location, paix à leur âme**. (Rires)*
- EN: Blockbuster Video – popular chain of video rental shops in the US in 1990s, cultural reference of obsolete items, *she* shows personal attachment, may X rest in peace – semantic prosody for humans

Our suggestion: *les VHS du Vidéo Futur*

06. Conclusion and perspectives

Approach to detect new candidates efficient, but limited => enrich the tagged lexicon in French

English and French have similar SP in 12 out of 21 cases, not predictable

Translating prosodic clashes can use other strategies

- When translating, several linguistic strategies can be applied, but the SP can be different from the source text.
- However: difficult to systematize translation strategies
- Corpus of examples for translation training exercises: corpus use for learning to translate
- Tagging system for connotated words: difficult because context-dependent, culture-dependent, register-dependent, LSP-dependent, idiosyncratic, evolving (cf . Louw)
- Study words belonging to potentially useful USAS categories and analyse occurrences to find more prosodic clashes and check semantic prosody

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