

A CONTRASTIVE ANGLE ON TRANSLATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT

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1 SOME RELEVANT PARAMETERS FOR DISTINGUISHING TQA SYSTEMS

1. CONTEXT OF USE: [real-life]/[didactically imported/projected (“let’s pretend we’re translating”)]
 - (a) (if [real-life]:)
 - i. TIME/EFFORT REQUIRED FOR POST-EDITING
 - ii. DEGREE OF AUTOMATIZABILITY: [high]/[low]
 - (b) (if [didactically imported/projected]:)
 - i. INSTRUMENTALIZATION HIERARCHY DOMINANCE: [language-teaching]/[translation]
 - ii. UNDERLYING PEDAGOGIC MODEL: [competence model]/[performance model] (Bernstein)
 - iii. TRANSLATION TASK SPECIFICATION: [implicit]/[explicit]
2. COMPREHENSIVENESS (redounding with DEGREE OF AUTOMATIZABILITY=[low]): [yes]/[no]
3. GROWTH STRATEGY (*‘quo modo augebitur scientia?’*): [simple accretion/decretion]/[dialectic]
4. AXIAL ORIENTATION (INSTANTIALITY): [language-system-oriented]/[text-oriented]
 - (a) (if [language-system-oriented]:)
 - i. ‘third-party’ language-system interference?
 - ii. ‘text-induced’ (‘paraphrasal’) language-system interference?
 - iii. ‘instantial’ (‘logogenetic’) changes to (quality assessor’s model of) translator’s target language system architecture/state: ‘repeat’ errors (and/or ‘overlooked’ errors)
 - (b) (if [text-oriented]:)
 - i. PRO-/RETROSPECTIVENESS: [target-text-oriented]/[source-text-oriented]
5. ERROR LOCALIZABILITY (LOCALIZATIONALITY)
6. ERROR CLASSIFICATION: [implicit]/[explicit]
 - (a) (if [explicit]:) 1° classification by STRATUM/RANK or by METAFUNCTION?
 - (b) treatment of double classification?
 - (c) ease of ‘global readjustment of criteria’?
7. ERROR WEIGHTING
 - (a) additivity/linearity of individual error weighting?
 - (b) automatic cutoff point?
8. THE MINIMUM PREREQUISITES OF AN ADEQUATE APPROACH TO TQA are in my view:
 - (a) a situated, global view of the text (subsumable under (c))
 - (b) a statement of the translation task
 - (c) an adequate model of language

2 MICROCORPUS OF STUDENT TRANSLATIONS

Five final-year undergraduate students of translation at the University of the Saarland’s Institute of Applied Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting transformed (/transferred/rewrote/put/did/...) the portion of text reproduced on the following page (source = <http://www.eurplace.org/fresh/giscard.html>) from their [nominally:] ‘native’ language (French) into their [nominally:] ‘second’ ‘foreign’ language (English) as part of the final written examinations for their diploma degree held at the end of winter semester 2002/03. They had three hours, and were allowed a one-volume monolingual dictionary (either French or English). The only instruction they were given was the following:

Translation Task: This portion of a speech by Valéry Giscard d’Estaing to the French National Assembly on 12.06.2001 is to be translated into English for the EU archives.

I have underlined only a few selected passages, as a basis for discussion.

Original

M. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing — Les députés du groupe UDF ne voteront pas la ratification du Traité de Nice (“ Oh ! ” sur plusieurs bancs). Ainsi, pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'édification européenne, les membres du parti de Robert Schuman et de Jean Lecanuet n'approuveront pas un traité concernant l'Europe. Pourquoi ce refus ? Tout traité relatif à l'Union doit être apprécié à deux titres : est-il favorable à la France ? Contribue-t-il à faire progresser la construction européenne ?

Le Traité de Nice est défavorable aux intérêts de la France, pays fondateur de l'Union : la France ne demande aucun privilège, elle demande que la place correspondant à son importance et à son expérience communautaire lui soit reconnue. Ce n'est pas le cas. Aujourd'hui, la Commission compte 19 membres, dont deux commissaires français. L'objectif de la négociation était de réduire ce nombre à dix ou quinze commissaires — vous l'aviez exposé à notre commission des affaires étrangères, Monsieur le ministre, le compte rendu de ses débats en fait foi. La Commission, quant à elle, proposait de plafonner le nombre de ses membres à vingt personnes. Or la couveuse du Sommet de Nice a produit une Commission de 27 membres, et supprimé le second commissaire français . . . ce qui aurait été acceptable si cela avait correspondu à une réduction de l'effectif total. Il en va de même au Parlement européen, où le nombre de députés français va tomber de 87 à 72 alors que l'effectif de leurs collègues allemands, jadis égal au nôtre, sera toujours de 99.

Avec une population représentant 12,25 % de la population de l'Union, la France pourrait légitimement prétendre à trois commissaires et à 85 députés. On le voit : la place qui lui est faite n'est ni réaliste, ni convenable, et si le peuple français était interrogé.. il y a fort à parier qu'il vous répondrait par une ballade irlandaise (Sourires sur divers bancs ; applaudissements sur les bancs du groupe UDF).

Ces sacrifices auraient une signification s'ils étaient la contrepartie d'un progrès dans l'édification européenne. Mais vous en êtes si peu convaincu, Monsieur le ministre, que l'encre du Traité de Nice à peine sèche, vous vous lancez dans une fuite en avant en annonçant un nouveau Traité en 2004. Vous savez bien que vous n'avez guère de chances d'aboutir, car plus l'Europe s'élargit, et moins les réformes sont possibles.

Student 1

Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing — The UDF group of MPs will not be voting the ratification of the Treaty of Nice (gasps uttered on several benches). So, for the first time in history of European edification, the members of the Robert Schuman and Jean Lecanuet's party will not be ratifying a treaty on Europe. And why not? Every treaty relating to the EU has to be assessed on two levels: is it beneficial to France? Does it make contribution to the progress of the European construction?

The Treaty of Nice is not in the interests of France, founding member of the EU: France does not ask any privileges, it asks to be accorded the ranking commensurate with its standing and its experience in the EU. Which is not the case. Today the Commission has 19 members, with two Commissioners being French. The aim of the negotiations was to reduce this number to ten or fifteen Commissioners — you had exposed our Commission to Foreign Affairs, Minister, the conclusion of these debates bears witness to this. The Commission, for itself, proposed the number of its members be capped, with a limit of twenty people. The Nice Summit ended up producing a 27-Member Commission, dispensing with the second Commissioner being French... which would have been acceptable if this had corresponded to a reduction of the total number. The same goes for the European Parliament, where the number of French EMPs will be cut from 87 to 72 whilst the number of their German colleagues, used to be the same as ours, is being kept at 99.

With a population accounting for 12,25% of the population of the European Union, France could legitimately claim three Commissioners and 85 EMPs. It is as plain a day: the ranking it has been accorded to it is neither realistic nor appropriate and if you were asked French people... they would surely answer with an Irish ballad (smiles on several benches; applause from the UDF group's benches).

The sacrifices would be meaningful if they were progress towards the European edification in return. But you are the more less convinced of that, Mr Minister, the ink of the Treaty of Nice was still wet, you forged ahead regardless to announce a new Treaty in 2004. You know full well that you have no chances of pulling it off, because the more Europe grows, the less likely reforms are.

Student 2

Mr. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing - The deputies of the French right-wing UDF group will not vote for the ratification of the Treaty of Nice ("Oh!" on several benches). So for the first time in the history of the European construction, the members of the parti founded by Rorbert Schuman and Jean Lecanuet will not approve a treaty concerning Europe. What are the reasons for this refusal? Any treaty related to the Union must be considered from two aspects: is it in Frances interest? Does it help advance the building of Europe?

The Treaty of Nice is unfavourable to the interests of France, a founding country of the Union: France is not asking for privileges, it meanly asks to be accorded the position appropriated to its importance and its experience in the Community. Today France counts two commissioners among the 19 members of the Commission. The negotiation aimed at reducing the number of members to 10 or 15 commissioners - you submitted it at our Commission on foreign affairs Mr Minister as the minute attest it. As for the Commission it proposed to fix an upper limit to the number of members at 20 persons. But as a fertile ground the Summit of Nice produced a Commission of 27 members and eliminated the second French commissioner...

That would have been acceptable if at the same time the total number had been reduced too. The same goes for the European Parliament where the number of French deputies is going to fall from 87 to 72 whereas the number of their German colleagues, which was the same as ours in former times, will remain 99.

With a population representing 12.25 per cent of Unions population, France could legitimately lay claim to three commissioners and 85 deputies. It is evident: the position which had been proposed to France is neither realistic nor acceptable, and if the French people were asked ... we can surely bet that they would response with an Irish ballad (Smiles on several benches, applauses on the UDF group benches).

These sacrifices would make sense if they were necessary to the progress of the European construction. But you are so little convinced Mister Minister that no sooner the ink on the Treaty of Nice dried than you already seek to escape by announcing a new treaty in 2004. You do know that the chances of success are very small because the bigger Europe becomes, the harder it is to reform.

Student 3

Mr. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing - The deputies of the French parliamentary UDF group will not vote for the ratification of the treaty of Nice ("oh!" on several benches). Thus, for the first time in the history of the European construction, the members of the party of Robert Schuman and Jean Lecanuet will not approve of a treaty concerning Europe. Why this refusal? Any treaty relating to Europe must be assessed on the basis of two aspects: Is it favourable to France? Does it contribute to improve the European construction?

The treaty of Nice is unfavourable to the interests of France, one of the founding countries of the union: France does not ask for any privilege, it requests that the place that corresponds with its importance and its experience within the community should be recognized. It is not the case. Today the commission comprises 19 members including two French commissioners. The negotiation aimed at reducing this number to ten or fifteen commissioners - you had exposed it to our foreign affairs commission, Mr. minister, the report of these discussions proves it. As regards the commission, it proposed to fix the highest number of its members to twenty persons. Therefore, the summit of Nice has produced a commission of 27 members and has removed the second French commissioner... This would have been acceptable if it had led to reduce the total number. It also concerns the European parliament where the number of French deputies will decrease from 87 to 72 while the number of their German parliamentary colleagues, that used to be equal to ours, will remain by 99.

With a population that represents 12,25% of the population of the Union, France could rightfully lay claim to three Commissioners and 85 deputies. Indeed we see that the place allocated to it, is neither realistic nor suitable and if the French population was asked about this issue it is obvious that it will answer with an Irish ballad (smiles on different benches; applause on the benches of the parliamentary UDF group).

These sacrifices would make sense if they were considered to be the compensation of a progress towards the European construction. But you are so less convinced mister minister that you have just only signed the treaty of Nice that you are looking forward while announcing another treaty in 2004. You know indeed that you have less chances to have a successful end as far as the more Europe is enlarged, the less reforms are possible.

Student 4

Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing – The deputies of the UDF party will not vote for the ratification of the Treaty of Nice („Oh!“ on many benches) Thus, for the first time in the history of the European construction, the members of the party of Robert Schuman and Jean Lecanuet will not approve a treaty on Europe. Why this refusal? two aspects must be taken into account in order to assess a treaty relating to Europe. Is it favorable to France? does it contribute to improve the European construction?

The Treaty of Nice doesn't serve the interests of France which is the founding country of the Union. France doesn't ask for any privileges. It only requests that a rank equivalent to both its importance and its experience concerning the Community is given to it. It is not the case. Currently, the Commission comprises 19 members. Among them, there are two French commissioners. The objective of this negotiation was to reduce this number to ten or fifteen commissioners. You have told it to our Commission of Foreign Affairs, Mr Minister. The report on the debates proves it. As for the Commission, it proposes to set the maximum number of its members to twenty persons. Thus, the summit of Nice has created a Commission with 27 members and has removed the second French commissioner ... This would be acceptable if it had led to a reduction of the total number of the members. The same thing happens in the European Parliament where the number of the French deputies will be reduced from 87 to 72 while the number of its German colleagues, which was equal to the French one in the past, will remain 99.

Because of its population which represents 12,25% of the population of the Union, France could rightly lay claim to three commissioners and 85 deputies. People realise it: the rank attributed to France is neither realistic nor suitable. If the French were questioned... it is virtually certain that they would answer with an Irish ballad (smile on many benches; applause on the benches of the UDF party)

These sacrifices would mean something if they were the necessary condition for the improvement of the European construction. But you are so less convinced of it Mr Minister that, the Treaty of Nice has just be signed and you are already looking ahead by announcing a new treaty in 2004. You know that you have no chance to succeed because the more Europe is enlarged the less reforms are possible.

Student 5

Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing – The deputies of the UDF parliamentary group will not vote in favour of the ratification of the Treaty of Nice (“Oh!” on several benches). For the first time in European construction history, therefore, the members of the party founded by Robert Schuman and Jean Lecanuet will not approve a treaty concerning Europe. What are the reasons for this refusal? Any treaty concerning the Union has to be assessed according to two aspects: is it in France's interest? Is it a contribution to the advance of European construction?

The Treaty of Nice is unfavourable to the interests of France, a founding country of the Union: France does not ask for any privilege, it solely asks that a position appropriate to its importance and experience in the community be recognised. This is not the case. The Commission today counts 19 members, and two of these Commissioners are French nationals. The negotiation aimed at reducing the number of commissioners to ten or fifteen – Mr Minister, you laid this down to our Commission on foreign affairs, the minutes of the debates demonstrate it. As far as the Commission is concerned, it proposed to impose a ceiling of twenty on the number of its members. But the incubator of the Nice Summit has produced a Commission of 27 members, and eliminated the second French Commissioner job... . That would have been acceptable, if it was coupled with a reduction of the total number. The same goes for the European Parliament, where the number of French MEP* is expected to fall from 87 to 72, whereas the number of their German counterparts, in former times the same as ours, will remain 99.

With a population representing 12.25 per cent of the Union's population, France could legitimately lay claim to three Commissioners and 85 MEP. It is obvious: the position granted to France is neither realistic, nor suitable, and if the French were asked... there is much to bet that their answer would be an “Irish ballad” (smiles on several benches; applause on the UDF group benches).

These sacrifices would make sense, if they were made in return for an advance in the European construction process. Mr Minister, you are so little convinced, that as soon as the ink of the Treaty of Nice has dried, you desperately forge ahead by announcing a new treaty scheduled for 2004. You are well aware that you have no chance to succeed, because the larger Europe gets, the less possible reforms become. *MEP = Members of the European Parliament