

A Corpus Based Genre Analysis of Institutional Translation in Korea

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ABSTRACT

National government translations inform an international audience about an institution's political positions, policies, and ideologies. In this institutional setting, translation is *de facto* self-translation, where producers of the originals and the translations are the same, thus the institution and the institution exerts control over every stage of the ST and the TT production. In doing so, institutional images are reinforced and often changed in the translations. Although translational activities are very common in governments, surprisingly, translation issues related to politics and national institutional settings have received relatively little attention, and no detailed research has been undertaken in regard to characteristics of the Korean government translation processes and products.

Drawing on a corpus-based methodology combining a quantitative with a qualitative analysis, this study examines translation processes and products in three Korean government institutions: the art web magazine *Art:Mu* in the National Museum of Contemporary Art, press briefings by the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and speeches by President Lee Myung-bak. These are analysed with a view to identifying different agents and procedures involved in institutional translation practices; linguistic and genre features of translations; changes made in translations compared to the ST; and how those different factors in the processes can influence the outcomes. For this study, interviews with the people in charge of translation were conducted; a specially designed parallel corpus of Korean and English – the Korean Institutional Corpus (KIC) – was compiled incorporating 151,546 words; and WordSmith Tools 6.0 was used for the analyses of frequency lists, keywords, clusters and concordance.

The results obtained indicate that the more important the originals and the translations in terms of strategy and diplomacy, the higher degree of control in the process and the bigger changes in terms of frequency are found in the translations. The translations of the press briefings were more tightly controlled than the web magazine in that all translation processes of the press briefings were made and monitored by in-house employees, and their macro change frequency (sentence level deletions and additions) was higher than in the case of the web magazine. The analyses of frequency lists, keywords and clusters revealed the linguistic and genre features of the three genres: the web magazine exhibited keyness of 'his', 'art' and 'museum', suggesting that a description of agents of artworks is primary, while keywords in the press briefings were significantly influenced by diplomatic issues at the time of delivery. In the speeches, keyness of 'crisis', 'reform', 'independence', and 'freedom' was identified.

From organisation to management of institutions and from establishment to implementation of institutional policies including translation policies, the national government seems to exert enormous power on public institutions in South Korea in any form, budgetarily or structurally. It is hoped that this study will enhance our understanding of how

factors in the processes can affect the products and encourage the development of translation practices in South Korea.

KEYWORDS: institutional translation, parallel corpus, presidential speeches, press briefings, South Korea, web magazine

Completion of Thesis

Place: University of Leicester, UK

Year: 2014

Supervisors: Prof Kirsten Malmkjær, Dr Marina Spunta