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Abstract



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Understanding Wikipedia's Dark Matter

In our research we refer to translation as Wikipedia's 'dark matter': we know it must be there but it is often difficult to locate. We use a number of approaches to track it down: identifying the rare cases where its presence is documented, comparing extracts from different parallel articles or digging back into the articles' history to discover the origin of translated text fragments. Previous research has shown that some of news articles in the encyclopaedia resemble collages assembled from small text fragments some of which have been imported from another article within the set – very likely via a reference to an external news source included in that article.

Identifying the translated material, establishing what it is a translation of and tracking the fate of each translated fragment once inserted in an article are time-consuming tasks requiring detailed, painstaking work but are also necessary stages in the research. What is of interest is whether these fragments support an article's point of view and whether the knowledge that each supposedly parallel article contains is therefore in some way distinctive, providing its readers with a somewhat different presentation and interpretation of events. These are important considerations, not least in the light of Wikipedia's policy of pursuing a neutral point of view as a link does appear to exist between translation and point of view construction.

We believe research into Wikipedia translation will increase our understanding of the dynamics that govern the multilingual Wikipedia and will provide translation studies with valuable case studies on a special type of collaborative translation. Wikipedia translation is in many ways unique but captures the essence of a style of communication that is becoming increasingly prevalent and for that reason is worthy of study.

Brief Bio :

Mark Shuttleworth has been involved in translation studies research and teaching since 1993, at the University of Leeds, Imperial College London, University College London and, most recently, Hong Kong Baptist University. His publications include the Dictionary of Translation Studies, as well as articles on translation technology teaching, metaphor in translation, translation and the web, and Wikipedia translation. The use of digital methodologies in translation studies research is also an interest of his. His monograph on scientific metaphor in translation, *Studying Scientific Metaphor in Translation*, was published in 2017 and he is currently working on a second edition of the Dictionary.