Background: Not all translations are done from the "original"

Indirect translation is "a chain of (at least) three texts, ending with a translation made from another translation".

For example: according to the bibliographic information, the Finnish translation² of Nikos Kazantzakis' novel on Zorba the Greek was not done from Greek³ but from French⁴.

In many books, bibliographic information on the source language(s) of the translation is lacking or inaccurate.

The source language(s) need to be correctly identified in order to draw meaningful conclusions on, for example, the overall number of indirect translations.

Thus, methods to uncover the source language(s) are needed.

3 METHODS to UNCOVER the DE FACTO SOURCE LANGUAGE(s) of TRANSLATIONS

1) Paratextual Analysis

Look for cues on the source language(s) in bibliographic information, translator’s correspondence and papers, translation reviews, etc.

+ easy to interpret
- not always reliable, as negative attitudes may result in indirectness being hidden⁵

2) Textual Criticism

Compare different language-versions of the text and look for (dis-)similarities in layout and content

+ reliable
- labourious and requires language skills that the researcher might not have

3) Stylometry

Identify the source language(s) through a statistical analysis

+ efficient
- is it possible – can a statistical analysis reveal the source language of a translation, or the source language of a translation from translation?

References

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