PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS AS BILINGUALS: THE USE OF COGNATES AND NON-COGNATES

INTRODUCTION
The field of Cognitive Translation Studies shares a number of research interests with bilingualism (Shreve, 2012). Cognates and non-cognates are a case in point. In Translation Studies, Shlesinger & Makkel (2005) and Makkel (2009) concluded that translators tend to choose a non-cognate translation over a cognate translation when both are (presumably) equally translationally equivalent (Kussmaul & Tirkkonen-Condit 1995). Evidence from psycholinguistic studies however suggests – based on the overwhelming evidence of the cognate facilitation effect (Scheepens et al. 2012: 157–158) – that translators, when confronted with the possibility of translating an L2 source word by both an L1 non-cognate target form and an L1 cognate target form, would be more likely to choose the cognate form over the non-cognate equivalent (if both forms are equally frequent).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Do texts translated by professional translators contain more or fewer cognates than
   - non-translated texts,
   - texts produced by second language learners,
   - texts produced by novice translators?
2. Can results from psycholinguistic research be generalized over all types of bilinguals?

METHODOLOGY (RESEARCH QUESTION 1)

STEP 1: Establish an (as exhaustive as possible) list of cognate pairs for DUTCH-ENGLISH and DUTCH-FRENCH

- Corpus: Dutch Parallel Corpus (Macken et al. 2011)
  - 10 million words
  - parallel and comparable
  - Dutch & French and Dutch & English
  - variety of textual registers

STEP 2: Establish cognate ratios for corpora of translated texts and non-translated texts

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- Lists can be used to calculate cognate ratios

EXTRACT COGNATE PAIRS FOR DUTCH-ENGLISH AND DUTCH-FRENCH

- Apply measure(s) of orthographic (and phonetic) similarity to the list of candidate translation equivalents
- ORTHOGRAPHIC: Normalized Levenshtein Distance (NLD) calculated with B (Gries 2004)

RESULTS
- 14231 DU-EN candidate cognate pairs with NLD ≤ 0.5
- 11842 DU-FR candidate cognate pairs with NLD ≤ 0.5
- Example of raw output of DU-EN cognate pairs:

FUTURE RESEARCH (RESEARCH QUESTION 2)

Experimental set-up with a translation task

PARTICIPANTS
- 1) student translators
- 2) professional translators
- 3) native bilinguals

EXPERIMENTAL TASK
- Translation of French/English text into Dutch (mother tongue)
- Text contains a selection of a cognates based on exhaustive list of corpus study (research question 1)
- Experimental items are French or English words which have both a cognate and a non-cognate translation equivalent in Dutch

HYPOTHESES
- 1) The higher the cognate ratio for two languages, the more cognate translations in the target text
- 2) The more time pressure, the more cognate translations in the target text
- 3) The less experienced a translator is, the more cognate translations he produces
- 4) The more frequent and prevalent (Brysbaert et al. 2016) a cognate translation is, the more frequently it is produced in the target text