Translation as a Donor in Constructing Cross-Linguistic Epistemologies in Text Computing

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Abstract

While in-between knowledge has proved to be vital for the growth of translation studies, the actual and potential influence of translation theory on other disciplines has received little attention. Its contribution to digital humanities, for example, has been considered mostly in relation to the use of translation as a tool to disseminate knowledge at research events. Although in recent years digital humanities has shown increased interest in languages and linguistic diversity, its techno-linguistic foundations remain limited to English.

Translation supplies digital humanities with an interesting epistemo-methodological problem that challenges monocultural epistemologies in text computing. While distant reading in one language is relatively straightforward, computation across languages faces many challenges, including Anglophone bias, economies of scale, blackboxes, and lack of phenomenological depth. If we can solve these problems, disrupting monolingual practices in knowledge production would be one of many benefits of cross-linguistic computation.

In this paper, I will discuss the affordances of translation by drawing on my ongoing research, including the DRaL (Distant Reading across Languages) project which began with the concerns of how to make digital research epistemologies more inclusive of and more open to languages other than English.

Keywords

distant reading across languages, cross-linguistic epistemologies, monoculturalism, repetition strings, thick computing