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The Impact of the Source Language in Spanish Translations: A Survey on English Counterfactuals ‘Should have’

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1. Theoretical background

“Attempts to produce translations which would represent their sources ‘as closely as possible’ are in constant tension with the attempts of establish in a target culture and language native-like texts.” (Touy 1995 : 276)

2. Research questions

- Are translation outcomes coherent with the language-use of native speakers?
- Are modal verbs and subjunctive tenses similarly distributed in (i) Spanish counterfactuals and (ii) translations resulting from the English construction ‘Should have + Past participle’?
- Is the word-by-word translation ‘Debería haber + Past participle’ a positive transfer¹ in Spanish?

3. Our corpus

1.3 million-word Social Sciences texts:

8 essays, 4 political biographies, 2 dystopian novels (n = 95)

	Original	Translation
AL	Lorde, A. (1982). <i>Zami: A New Spelling of My Name</i> . London: Persephone Press.	<i>Zami: una nueva forma de escribir mi nombre</i> . (2010). Traducción de María Durante. Madrid: Horas y horas.
BO	Obama, B. (2004). <i>Dreams from My Father</i> . New York: Three Rivers Press.	<i>Los sueños de mi padre</i> . (2008). Traducción de Fernando Miranda y Evaristo Páez Rasmussen. Almed: Granada.
DK	Kahneman, D. (2011). <i>Thinking fast, thinking slow</i> . London: Penguin.	<i>Pensar rápido, pensar despacio</i> . (2012). Traducción de Joaquín Chamorro Mielke. Debate.
GO	Orwell, G. (1949). 1984.	1984. (1980). Traducción de Rafael Vázquez Zamora. Barcelona: Salvat.
JB	Butler, J. (1999). <i>Gender Trouble</i> . New York: Routledge.	<i>El género en disputa</i> . (2007). Traducción de María Antonia Muñoz. Barcelona: Paidós.
MY	Yousafzai, M., Lamb, C. (2013). <i>I Am Malala</i> . London: Orion.	<i>Yo soy Malala</i> (2013). Traducción de Julia Fernández. Madrid: Alianza.
NC	Chomsky, N. (2003). <i>Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance</i> . New York: Metropolitan.	<i>Hegemonía o supervivencia: El dominio mundial de EEUU</i> . (2004). Traducción de Carlos José Restrepo. Bogotá: Norma.
NC ₂	Chomsky, N. (1989). <i>Necessary Illusions. Thought Control in Democratic Societies</i> . New York: South End Press.	<i>Ilusiones necesarias: control del pensamiento en las sociedades democráticas</i> . (1991). Traducción de Loreto Bravo de Urquía y Juan José Saavedra Esteban.
NK	Klein, N. (2000). <i>No Logo</i> . Great Britain: Flamingo.	<i>No Logo</i> . (2001) Traducción de Alejandro Jockl. Barcelona: Paidós.
NK ₂	Klein, N. (2007). <i>The Shock Doctrine</i> . New York: Metropolitan.	<i>La doctrina del shock</i> . (2007). Traducción de Isabel Fuentes García, Albino Santos Mosquera y Remedios Diéguez Diéguez. Barcelona: Paidós.
NM	Mandela, N. (1994). <i>Long Walk to Freedom</i> . Boston: BackBay.	<i>El largo camino hacia la libertad</i> . (2012). Traducción de Antonio Resines y Herminia Bevia. Madrid: Aguilar.
RB	Bradbury, R. (1953). <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> . New York: Ballantine Books.	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> . (2006). Traducción de Alfredo Crespo. Almería: Ediciones Perdidas.
SF	Federici, S. (2004). <i>Caliban and the Witch</i> . Autonomedia.	<i>Calibán y la bruja</i> . (2010). Traducción de Verónica Hendel y Leopoldo Sebastián Touza. Madrid: Traficantes de sueños.
VW	Woolf, V. (1929) <i>A room of one's own</i> . London: The Hogarth Press Ltd.	<i>Una habitación propia</i> . (2008). Traducción de Laura Pujol. Barcelona: Seix Barral.

4. Translations

(1) Todo **debería haber sido** diferente en Rosario. [NK#23]

It should have been a different Rosario.

(2) Les dijimos que **debían haber visto** la isla en 1964. [NM#49]

We told them that they should have seen the island in 1964.

(3) Después de cada accidente de aviación conocemos historias de pasajeros que no **debieron haber tomado** el avión. [DK#21]

After every plane crash there are special stories about passengers who “should not” have been on the plane.

(4) No **hubiese debido tener** libros. [RB#58]

She shouldn't have had books.

(5) Así sea, **hubiera dicho** yo. [VW#04]

So be it, I should have said.

(6) A veces pienso que **debí quedarme** en Chicago y luchar allí. [AL#77]

Sometimes I think I should have stayed and fought it out in Chicago.

Notes

[1] Subtle influence which leads to a form that is possible in the source language but does not correspond to what the native speakers generally produce in such a context. Positive transfers are hardly recognizable to the reader because the output construction is still grammatical. Nonetheless, they hence a shift at the level of frequency ratios between more or less frequent constructions pertaining to a specific semantic domain.

[2] *Hecho, dicho, imaginado, escrito, supuesto, olvidado, hablado, sentido, escuchado, actuado, provocado, jurado, causado, recordado, prometido, arrepentido, generado, declinado, acarreado, creído.*

8. Empirical hints for translators

- Keeping the word order of the source construction generally implies to exclude the Spanish subjunctive
- Conversely, using the Spanish subjunctive over indicative predicates allows to disengage from modal markers derived from ‘deber’

7. Conclusions

The most frequent way of translating ‘Should have + Pp’ in our corpus is the construction ‘Debería haber + Pp’. This is not coherent with:

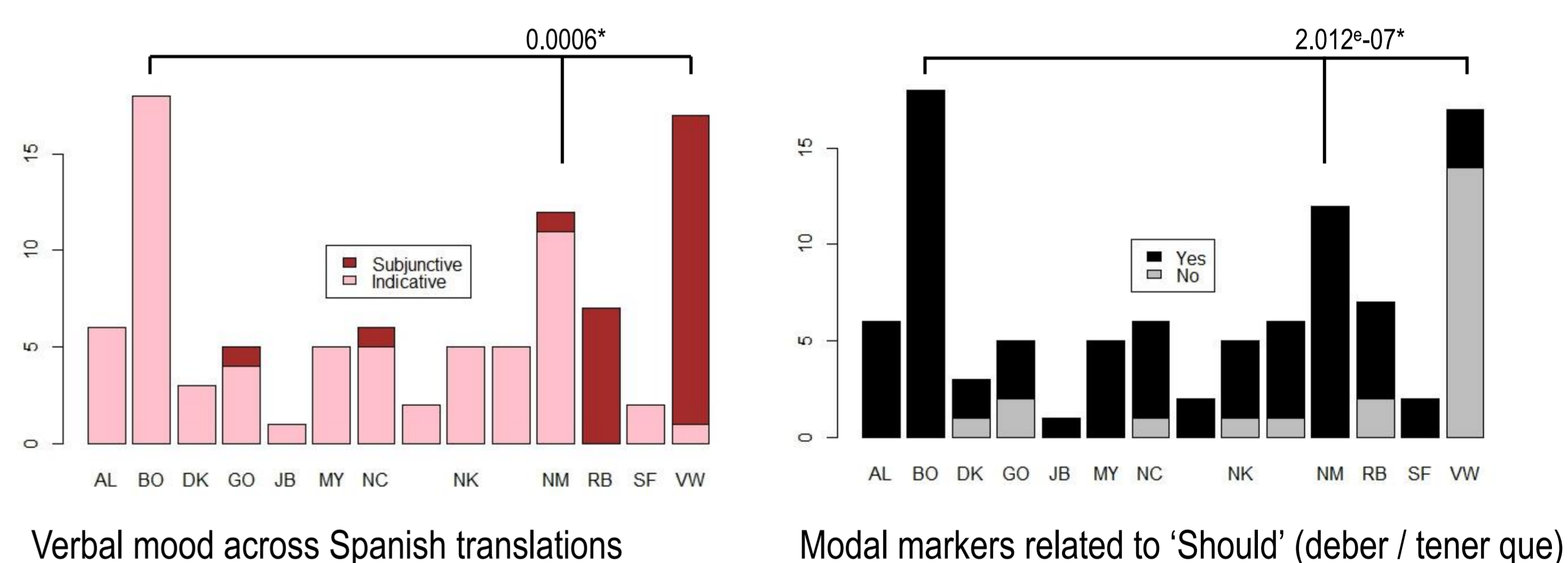
- The prominence of the pluperfect subjunctive as a prompting tense for counterfactual readings over infinitive periphrastic constructions (83% Vs. 17%)
- The use of modal verbs within verbal predicates in written Spanish, which generally occurs at the past participle position (e.g., *No hubiese debido tener libros* rather than *Todo debería haber sido diferente*; 32% Vs. 17%)
- The lexical preference for the modal marker *tener que* over *deber* (RAE 2009 : 2144) => Non- iconicity of the modal verb ‘deber’ to express the speaker’s subjectivity

Translating *Should have* by *Debería haber* might have:

- Economic advantages in terms of time and cognitive processes for the translator
- An effect in the readability of the output text by Spanish users, who assist to a reversal in the frequencies of the prominent constructions related to counterfactual contexts

6. Individual differences

P-values resulting from the t-test analysis



5. The reference corpus CREA

154 million-word coming from 140.000 written documents in Spanish

	Tokens	Indicative Vs. Subjunctive	Subtotal / Total
Debería haber + Pp ² (1)	587 (9.2%)	1,071 (16.7%)	6,378 / 154,000,000 (0.004%)
Debía haber + Pp ² (2)	464 (7.3%)		
Debió/debimos haber + Pp ² (3)	20 (0.3%)		
Hubiera/se debido (4)	150 (2.3%)	5,316 (83.3%)	
Hubiera/se podido	1,870 (29.3%)		
Hubiera/se + Pp ² (5)	3,296 (51.7%)		

References

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