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Semantic simplification and structural interference. Complex nominal constructions in Polish original and Czech and French translated texts

ABSTRACT

Semantic simplification and structural interference: Complex nominal constructions in Polish original and Czech and French translated texts

Translated language is known to differ systematically from the original language of both the source and the target languages. (Target-oriented) simplification and (source-oriented) interference seem to be universals of translation. In the present study, we analyze both phenomena with respect to complex nominal constructions (CNC) of different structural types from a Polish original text and their translation equivalents in Czech and French. We observe semantic simplification in nearly one-fifth of all the translation equivalents in Czech, but very seldom in French. Instead, the French translator often modified the analyzed constructions both formally and semantically. Interference processes with respect to CNC are not present in French; however, in the Czech translation, compared to a Czech original text, we observed an increased use of genitive constructions (e.g., *léta dětství* 'years of childhood') that might result from the frequent use of this construction type in Polish. We attribute the differences between the Czech and French translations of Polish CNC at least partly to the different degrees of relatedness of these languages to Polish.

Keywords: complex nominal constructions, semantic simplification, interference, translation universals, Polish, Czech, French

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1. Introduction

Complex nominal constructions (CNC), such as the Polish *wytwórca artykułów żelaznych* 'manufacturer of ferrous goods' occur in almost all languages but differ greatly cross-linguistically in (qualitative) structural and (quantitative) distributional aspects. Thus, they are a promising research object for contrastive linguistics (e.g., Clasmeier/ Hennecke 2024) and translation studies. For translation studies, CNC are of particular interest, as their often language-specific and complex structure represents an ideal object for investigating typical features of translated texts, the so-called *translation universals*. At least two well-known translation universals can be targeted simultaneously as regards CNC. Due to their complex structure, CNC can be used to test the universal *simplification* at both formal and functional levels. Furthermore, each language has its own "fingerprint" in terms of language-specific CNC types (and tokens), which, in translation, is likely to be the source of *interference* phenomena (Fabricius-Hansen 2004: 327).

In this paper, we pursue two research objectives. First, we aim to investigate whether the semantic simplification of CNC occurs when fiction is translated from the original Polish into Czech and French. Second, we study whether structural and distributional features of Polish CNC influence their translation into the two target languages.

In the following, we give an overview of translation universals (section 2.1.) and CNC (section 2.2.). Then, we formulate our research objectives and put forward the hypotheses (section 2.3.), before presenting our study of CNC in original Polish as well as translated (and parallel) Czech and French fictional texts (sections 3. Methodology and 4. Results). We discuss the results in section 4 and conclude with prospects for further investigations in the field (section 5).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Translation universals

Translation universals have been a prominent research topic in translation studies since in the 1980s (e.g., Toury 1980) and 1990s seminal works claimed that there exist "universal features of translation, that is features which typically occur in translated text rather than original utterances and which are not the result of interference from specific linguistic systems" (Baker 1993: 243). Based on individual observations from previous studies, Baker (1993: 243–245) named tendencies to explicitness, disambiguation, simplification, and avoiding repetitions as potential candidates for translation universals. Importantly, these features do not indicate poor translation quality; rather, they are a statistical phenomenon, which Gellerstam (1986) called *translationese*. For

example, Blum-Kulka and Levenston (1983) focused on simplification, and Laviosa (1998) studied lexical and frequency-related properties of translated texts. Big electronic corpora, which started becoming available for linguistics in the 1990s, were considered to offer the potential to systematically investigate these and other translation features.

Translation universals are especially important for linguistically based translation studies, as translations are argued to represent "hybrid language" (Trosborg 1997; Schäffner/ Adab 2001) or a "third code" (Frawley 1984) and thus constitute a unique translatological research object. However, the topic is controversial: some scholars question the translation-specific character of universals (House 2008) or state that "the very idea of making claims about universals in translation is inconceivable since we have no way of capturing translations from all times and all languages" (Mauranen/ Kujamäki 2004: 1–2). Others argue that the phenomena that fall under the label "translation universals" can be traced back to "general characteristics of human cognition" (Halverson 2003: 197). The latter point is not incompatible with the postulated existence of translation universals, as it rather adds explanatory power and cognitive anchoring for the underlying processes.

Since the broad uptake of the possibilities of machine translation and machine learning, the topics of machine translation and translation universals have been interconnected. Numerous studies investigate whether and how reliably translated texts can be identified and differentiated from original texts by machines. Volansky et al. (2015) test the contribution of a wide range of claimed translationese features to the successful classification of translated and original texts based on supervised machine learning. Their study uses the proceedings of the European Parliament (EUROPARL) and focuses on English as the language of original texts and target language of translations and on ten other languages as source languages.

In contrast to Baker (1993), Volansky et al. (2015: 100) follow Chesterman (2004) by differentiating between T-universals and S-universals and state that the latter are "features that can be traced back to the source text", such as the reduction of repetitions and interference. They further state that "interference operates on different levels, from transcribing source language words, through using loan translations, to exerting structural (morphological and syntactic for example) influence" (Volansky et al. 2015: 107). T-universals, on the other hand, can be studied independently of the source texts but in comparison with non-translated texts in the target language. Examples of T-universals are simplification and under-representation of target-language-specific items. One of the most striking results of Volansky et al.'s (2015) study concerns the S-universal "interference," that is, the "fingerprints" of the source on the target language: when the machine learning algorithm used in their study relied on this

feature, it gave the most accurate results in terms of classifying texts as original or translated. As interference is, by its nature, not independent of individual source languages, the authors therefore question the universal status of translation universals.

Furthermore, Volansky et al.'s (2015) investigation is of importance for our study because the authors list specific features that indicate simplification: lexical variety (type–token ratio), mean word length, syllable ratio (syllables per word), lexical density (content word–token ratio), mean sentence length, mean word rank, and most frequent words. Interestingly, these features are exclusively formal or structural in nature. This is not surprising, considering that translationese is normally investigated in quantitative studies that need formally applicable criteria. However, the question arises of how far these formal-structural simplification features accompany semantic simplification. This question is explorative in nature, as a range of hypotheses can be derived from existing research. Reduced lexical variety in translated texts, for example, should inevitably entail semantic loss; however, shorter mean sentence length and less complex syntactic structures in translated texts (cf. Bao 2025) could, but do not necessarily, involve semantic loss. Due to spatial limitations, we can only touch on the controversial issue of semantic equivalence in translation and translation equivalence in general here. We operationalize semantic equivalence for our empirical purposes in section 3 (Methodology) and refer the interested reader to overviews such as those by Koller (2011) and Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2004).

2.2. Complex nominal constructions

We analyze CNC in terms of their semantics and structure in original and translated texts, as they offer the opportunity to investigate simplification and interference processes simultaneously. In this section, we present linguistic approaches to this construction type and define the term CNC as applied in our own study.

CNC, such as the French *brosse à dents* "toothbrush" or *timbre-poste* "stamp"; lit. "stamp-post" have sparked controversy in the academic debate on compounding in Romance languages. The discussion is characterized by both considerable terminological confusion and inconsistent classifications along with delimitations. This topic is discussed in a similar way in literature on various Romance languages and will therefore be addressed from a comparative and cross-linguistic perspective here (for a detailed discussion, see Hennecke 2021). The current literature on word formation often refers to CNC as *syntagmatic compounds* (Buenafuentes de la Mata 2010), but also as *phrasal compounds* (Bisetto/ Scalise 2005), *syntactic compounds* (Rio-Torto/ Ribeiro 2009), *phrasal lexemes* (Masini/ Scalise 2012), and *phrasal nouns* (Cetnarowska 2019).

The terminology is inconsistent because several classifications have been proposed and attempts made to differentiate between lexical and syntactic units. On the one hand, the mentioned CNC syntactically resemble syntactic units, as they consist of more than one lexical constituent and, in many cases, obey syntactic rather than morphological rules of word formation. On the other hand, many CNC semantically resemble lexical items, in that they form a (more or less) fixed or even lexicalized semantic form-meaning pair or "naming unit" (Štekauer 2001). While some approaches include CNC in the definition of compounding (e.g., Buenafuentes de la Mata 2010; Ten Hacken 2021), others do not. For instance, Villoing (2012: 35) excludes "lexicalized syntactic constructions that behave like lexical units" and "NPs of the structure of NN," such as *fil de fer* 'iron wire' and *avocat ami* 'lawyer friend' from her description of French compounding. She states that "a sequence of words is a morphological compound if it is a lexeme (noun, verb or adjective) constructed from other lexemes, according to a non-syntactic mode of organization" (ibid); therefore, no kind of CNC satisfies her definition of compounding.

In the academic debate on CNC, the criteria used to differentiate between morphological composition and syntactic structures remain controversial. While some authors, such as Villoing (2012: 35), consider the morphosyntactic structure to be the most important criterion, others, such as Val Álvaro (1999: 4827), argue that the absence of compositional meaning in syntagmatic compounds is the most important distinguishing feature.

According to Fernández-Domínguez (2019: 190), complex lexemes can be distinguished from free syntactic structures by specific (semantic or syntactic) criteria. The first criterion is their referential uniqueness with an extralinguistic referent (e.g., the French *brosse à dents* 'toothbrush' refers to one specific extralinguistic referent). The second criterion refers to the inability to insert other lexemes ("atomicity") (e.g., the French *salle de bain* 'bathroom' and **salle de mon bain* 'room of my bath'). The third criterion concerns the inability to replace the semantic head without loss of meaning ("semantic fixity") (e.g., in the French *guerre froide* 'cold war' vs. **conflit froid* 'cold conflict'). These criteria can be applied to many, primarily (semi-)idiomatic and fixed, complex lexemes, but the referential uniqueness ("naming function") is particularly difficult to verify in concrete classification processes. Cetnarowska (2019: 279) summarizes the discussion by stating that complex constructions "show phrase-like syntactic complexity yet they resemble morphologically complex words (such as affixal derivatives and compounds) in exhibiting the naming function."

According to Van Goethem and Amiot (2019: 148f.), the differentiation between French compounds and syntactic structures is far from clear; therefore, they opt for a constructionist approach to CNC. From their perspective, a constructionist approach can deal with structurally complex and ambiguous

structures. In that sense, "both compounds and phrasal structures with a naming function can act as conventionalized form-meaning pairings or 'constructions' and we should accept the existence of what Booij (2010: 109) calls 'lexical phrasal constructions'" (Van Goethem/ Amiot 2019: 149). Cetnarowska (2019: 285) takes the same approach for Polish complex constructions, also called "phrasal nouns" or "juxtapositions," such as NN_{gen} (e.g., *mąż stanu* 'statesman'), N prep N (e.g., *chustka do nosa,* literally, 'cloth for the nose', i.e., 'handkerchief'), NA_{rel} (e.g., *drukarka laserowa* 'laser printer'), $A_{rel}N$ (e.g., *nocna zmiana* 'night shift'), and NN (e.g., *poeta-tłumacz* 'poet-translator')[1]. In her approach to Polish complex constructions, Cetnarowska (2019: 300f.) establishes construction schemes based on Construction Morphology, which can account for the discrepancy in their complex syntactic and semantic structure.

For this contribution, we adopt Cetnarowska's approach and base our analysis on the five mentioned Polish complex constructions ("phrasal nouns"), with a focus on nominal constructions with at least two constituents and the formal structure NN_{gen}, NA_{rel}, $A_{rel}N$, N prep N, and NN. Therefore, since we are applying a purely structural criterion, our study is not directly related to word formation. CNC with two nominal constituents have also been referred to as binominal constructions (see Pepper et al. 2023 for a detailed discussion). Pepper et al. (2023) define binominal constructions on a functional level as complex constructions including two nominal concepts and on a formal level as complex constructions consisting of two "thing-morphs" (Pepper et al. 2023: 10; also Pepper 2020: 104, Pepper 2023: 30). This definition thus excludes deverbal derivations, such as the Polish *przewód elektryczny* 'electric line' (from the Polish *przewodzić* 'to guide'), or compounding through derivational suffixes, such as the French *saladier* 'salad bowl' (see Clasmeier/ Hennecke 2024 for a more detailed discussion).

In this contribution, we avoid theoretically clear but empirically problematic concepts such as "naming unit" and "thing-morph" and base our analysis on structural aspects of the complex construction. Importantly, we consider "phrasal nouns" as well as syntactically related nominal phrases with the abovementioned constituents. This decision is justified by our research question, which focuses on possible simplification and interference phenomena during the translation process. For this purpose, it is not relevant whether the analyzed construction is considered a naming unit or consists of "thing-morphs."

The table below summarizes the underlying classification of CNC for the corpus analysis. Note that the first and second columns are directly aligned with the Polish examples that illustrate the corresponding CNC type. For Czech,

1| We use the following abbreviations: N=noun, A=adjective, Gen=genitive, Prep=preposition, Rel=relational.

French, and English, we provide translation equivalents[2] of the Polish CNC. The CNC type of the translation equivalents is not coded in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of analyzed complex nominal constructions and examples

CNC type	Polish	Czech	French	English
N N_{gen}	kąt oka	oční koutek	coin de l'œil	corner of the eye
N prep N	nóż do chleba	nůž na chléb	couteau à pain	bread knife
N A_{rel}	czepiec kucharski	kuchařský klobouk	toque de cuisinier	chef's hat
A_{rel} N	drewniany talerz	dřevěný talíř	assiette en bois	wooden plate
NN	farmer niziołek	půlčík farmář	fermier lutin	farmer-halfling

2.3. Research question and hypotheses

As discussed in sections 2.1 and 2.2, comparing translations of CNC could shed light on both source-text-oriented and target-text-oriented translation phenomena. Therefore, we set out to answer the following research question: how are the CNC from an original Polish text translated into a closely related language from the same language family, namely Czech, and into a more distantly related one from another language family, that is French? More precisely, does semantic simplification occur, and if so, to what extent? And does the CNC type of the Polish original influence the choice of CNC types for the Czech and French translation equivalents?

As the latter two questions require different levels of analysis, we formulate two hypotheses. The first is the simplification hypothesis. Simplification is a frequently reported process in translation, and some of the observed features at the formal and lexical levels might be associated with semantic loss as well. Therefore, we expect translation equivalents for Polish CNC to show a certain degree of semantic simplification. For this purpose, we compare the Polish original text with its Czech and French translations.

The second is the interference hypothesis. The three languages share most CNC types but fundamentally vary in the distribution of these types in language use (token frequency). We expect to observe an influence of the source language on the choice of CNC type for the translation equivalents; thus, the distribution of CNC types in the Czech and French translation equivalents

2| Here and in the following we use the term "translation equivalent" to refer to a construction in the translated text that corresponds to a CNC in the original text.

should resemble that in the Polish original. We expect this effect to be bigger in the closely related Czech than in the more distantly related French. For this purpose, we compare the CNC distributions in the translated Czech and French texts with the distributions in original texts from these languages, on the one hand, and with the original Polish text, on the other.

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus

We analyzed 275 CNC from the first chapter of the original Polish fantasy novel "Krew elfów" (1994, "Blood of Elves") from the "Wiedźmin" ("The Witcher") series by Andrzej Sapkowski and their Czech and French translation equivalents. We chose this novel as it represents modern Polish and has been translated into numerous languages. The analyzed Polish original text contains 10,361 word tokens, the Czech translation (1995 by Stanislav Komárek) 10,351, and the French translation (2008 by Lydia Waleryszak) 15,947.

Furthermore, we analyzed Czech and French original texts with regard to CNC as baselines for the investigation of the interference hypothesis. For Czech, we analyzed the story "Poslední návrat" ("The Last Return") by Jan Cimický (1988), containing 17,460 tokens. For French, we chose "Journal du dehors" ("Diary of the Outside World") by Annie Ernaux (1993), with 15,626 tokens.

While we compiled the "Krew elfów" translation corpus ourselves, based on the web corpus Sketch Engine (sketchengine.eu), we chose the Czech and French original texts from the Czech national corpus kontext (https://www.korpus.cz/kontext) and the French database Frantext (https://www.frantext.fr). The decisive criteria for selecting these texts were their availability and date of origin, which had to be comparable to the original Polish text.

3.2. Procedure

For the purpose of our study, we investigate CNC ("phrasal nouns" as well as syntactically related nominal phrases) based on the theoretical considerations laid out in section 2.2. In addition, we made the following operationalizations: CNC consist of at least two nominal components, that is, nouns or relational adjectives in their relational function. We define nouns grammatically; thus, we consider prototypical nouns denoting objects, such as *drzewo* 'tree' and deverbal and deadjectival derivations, such as *zderzenie* 'clash' or *białość* 'whiteness' (Lehmann 2013: 308–309). Only common nouns were considered; no proper nouns were included.

Relational adjectives frequently develop secondary qualifying meanings; for example, the Polish *metaliczny* 'metal-' can also mean 'metallic' as in *metaliczny*

głos 'metallic voice'. In these polysemous cases, context analysis revealed the actual meaning of the adjective. Constructions containing polysemous adjectives with a qualifying function were excluded from the analysis.

The procedure outlined above leads to the five basic CNC types: noun + relational adjective (NA_{rel}), relational adjective + noun ($A_{rel}N$), noun + nominal genitive attribute (NN_{gen}), noun + preposition + noun (N prep N), and noun + congruent noun (coordinative compounds; NN) in Polish (see Table 2, p. 66, for examples).

We also analyzed constructions that consist of more than two nominal components, for example, N prep N constructions with an additional attribute accompanying the second noun. An example is cp. *wełniane szaliczki w kolorze zgniłej zieleni* 'woolen scarves in the color of rotten green'. We name these further attributed CNC types *complex*, yielding NA_{rel} complex, NN_{gen} complex, and N prep N complex (NN and $A_{rel}N$ do not occur in complex form). Importantly, we considered only additional nominal components. Syntactic attributes in the form of qualifying adjectives, participles, or pronouns were not taken into account.

The decision to include more complex units originated from the underlying research question of this contribution, as complex constructions are particularly suitable for investigating processes of simplification in translation. For the same reason, our analysis focuses on semantically compositional constructions only. We exclude idiomatic expressions (e.g., *kawał chłopa* literally 'piece-of-a-peasant' meaning 'a giant of a man') as well as exocentric compounds with a semantic head outside the compound structure, such as the English word *blackcap*, as they do not allow for semantic simplification or interference processes.

Note that in the CNC described above, proper names may occur "by chance." However, such occurrences are not constitutive of these CNCs; rather, they appear incidentally in the analyzed phrase. Finally, we labeled complex CNC based on their head, thus, *otchłań (ciemnych) bocznych przejść* 'abyss of (dark) side passages' is classified as "NN_{gen} complex", leaving aside the fact that *bocznych przejść* 'side passages' is also a basic AN construction.

To test the simplification hypothesis, we classified translation equivalents for Polish CNC regarding the semantic relationship of the original and the translation as follows:

1. The semantics of the original CNC is **retained** in the translation (denotative equivalence, Koller 2011: 230–243).
2. The semantics of the original CNC is not fully retained in the translation; at least one semantic component is missing; the translation is semantically **simplified**.
3. The semantics of the original CNC is **modified**; at least one semantic component is replaced by a semantically different component in the translation, or at least one semantic component is added.

Importantly, we did not consider formal parameters of simplification here. If a Polish CNC such as *sklep jubilerski* 'jewelry shop' is translated by a formally simple, but semantically appropriate derivate in Czech or French (e.g., the French *bijouterie*), no case of simplification is attested.

Paraphrases of original CNC can occur with simplified semantics (e.g., pl. *ludzie pokroju tego Rience'a* 'People of the Riences breed' → cz. *lidé, jako je rience* 'people like rience'), but this is not always the case (e.g., pl. *(spojrzał) w oczy czarodziejki* '(looked) into the eyes of the sorceress' → fr. (*regardait) la magicienne droit dans les yeux* '(looked) the sorceress straight in the eyes').

To test the interference hypothesis, we classified Czech and French translation equivalents for Polish CNC with regard to their CNC type (cf. Table 3, p. 67). As described above, we differentiated between basic CNC (e.g., N prep N) and further attributed CNC (e.g., N prep N complex). Finally, three other types of translation equivalents occurred: if the equivalent was not a CNC but a simple lexeme, we classified it as a "lexeme". If it was paraphrased, for example, translated with a verbal construction, we coded it as "other". If the original CNC was not translated at all, it was coded as "omitted".

4. Results

We analyzed 275 CNC from the Polish original text (OT) and classified them by their CNC type (cf. Table 2). English translations here and below are provided by the authors.

Table 2: CNC types from the Polish original text

CNC type	Absolute number	Proportion (%)	Example from Polish OT	English
NN_{gen}	119	43.3%	antałek piwa	beer keg
NN_{gen} complex	33	12.0%	brak szacunku dla wszelkich wartości	lack of respect for any values
N prep N	35	12.7%	arras z nimfą	tapestry with a nymph
N prep N complex	15	5.5%	aksamitny kaftan w kolorze sepii	velvet kaftan in sepia color
NA_{rel}	22	8.0%	artykuły żelazne	article of iron
A_{rel} N	46	16.7%	czarodziejski pierścień	wizard's ring
NN	5	1.8%	dziecko niespodzianka	surprise child
	275	100%		

The distribution of CNC types in Table 2 (p. 66) clearly shows that genitive constructions are by far the most frequent CNC basic type in the Polish original text. Furthermore, and surprisingly, AN constructions clearly outweigh NA constructions, although NA (i.e., the postposition of the adjective) is typical in Polish, especially with relational adjectives. However, this result is consistent with recent observations from Clasmeier/ Hennecke (2024) and Clasmeier (2023).

As the focus of the present paper is on translation phenomena, we now turn to the analyses of Czech and French translation equivalents of the Polish CNC and report the results with regard to our two hypotheses separately.

4.1. Simplification hypothesis

The equivalents of the Polish CNC were analyzed in the Czech and French translated texts (TT). The translation equivalents were then classified with respect to their semantics, as described in section 3 outlining the procedure.

Table 3 illustrates each category with examples from our translation corpus.

Table 3: Illustrative examples for the categorization regarding the CNC semantics in translation

Polish (OT)	**EN**	**Czech (TT)**	**EN**	**French (TT)**	**EN**
1. Semantics retained					
antałek piwa	'beer keg'	sud piva	'beer keg'	tonnelet de bière	'beer keg'
2. Semantics simplified					
odblask światła	'light glare'	světlo	'light'	–	–
czarodziejski pierścień	'magic ring'	–	–	bague	'ring'
3. Semantics modified					
muzyka lutni	'music of the lute'	zvuk loutny	'sound of the lute'	le son d'un luth	'the sound of a lute'

As Figure 1 (p. 68) below shows, the semantics of the original Polish CNC is retained in more than two-thirds of the cases. However, one-third of the translations in the two languages clearly differ. The "semantics simplified" category appears significantly more often in the Czech translation (17.1%) than in the French (5.1%). Conversely, "semantics modified" appears more frequently in the French version (27.6%) than in the Czech (13.5%).

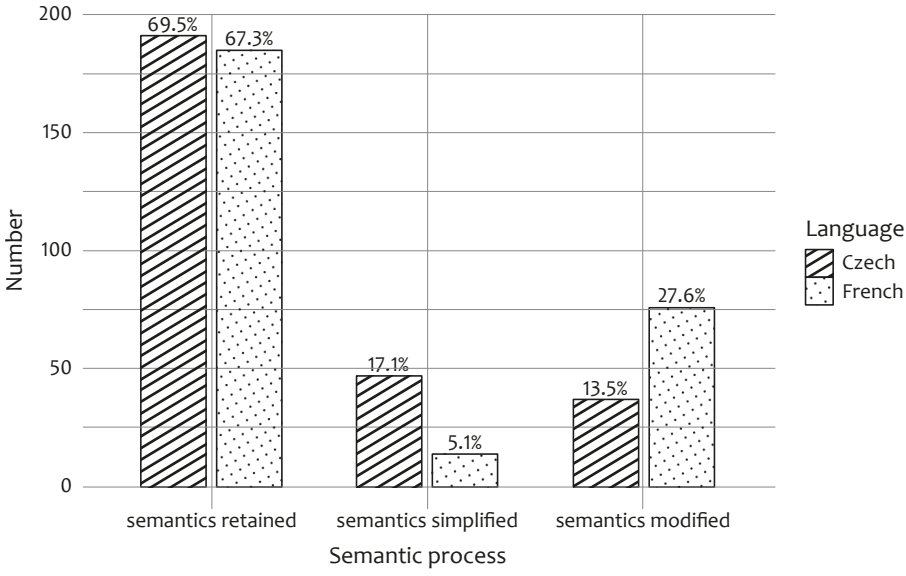


Figure 1: Semantic processes in Czech and French CNC translations

A chi-square test revealed that the differences between Czech and French in the distribution of each of the three semantic processes are highly significant, $X^2(2, N = 275) = 31.408$, $p < .001$.

Semantically simplified CNC belong to structurally different types, essentially, semantic reduction and total omission. The reduction of the original CNC in the Czech translation is illustrated in example (1):

(1) Polish original: *Chłopiec spuścił głowę i wrócił do cichego brzdąkania na* ***strunach*[3] *lutni***.
'The boy lowered his head and returned to quietly strumming on **the strings of his lute.**'
Czech translation: *Hoch kvapně couvl a pokračoval dál v tichém brnkání na* ***loutnu***.
'The boy backed away hastily and continued to strum quietly on his **lute**.'

Total omission rarely occurs in Czech, and not at all in French, and is represented in example (2):

(2) Polish original: *Hej, grajku – powiedziała Mama Lantieri, wkraczając do izby bez pukania, pchając przed sobą* ***woń hiacyntów, potu, piwa i wędzonki***. *– Masz gościa.*

3| We have underlined the words that were omitted in the translation in the original text.

"'Hey, player," said Mama Lantieri, entering the chamber without knocking, pushing **the scent of hyacinths, sweat, beer and smoked meat** in front of her. – You have a visitor.'
Czech translation: *„Hej, šumaři," řekla Máma lantieri, vcházejíc bez zaklepání do světnice. „Máš hosta."*
"'Hey, musician," said Mama Lantieri, entering the room without knocking. "You have a visitor."'

Modification also occurs in different forms, as illustrated by an example from the French translation:

(3) Polish original: *Czarodziejka odstawiła kubek, sięgnęła po **rożen z kurczakami**.*
'The sorceress put down the cup, reached for the **chicken spit**.'
French translation: *La magicienne reposa son gobelet et empoigna **une broche sur laquelle rôtissaient des poulets**.*
'The sorceress put down the cup and reached for **a spit on which chicken roasted**.'

4.2. Interference hypothesis

The Czech and French translation equivalents for Polish CNC were analyzed regarding their own CNC type. The categories were identical to those used with the Polish original text (cf. section 2). Additionally, we analyzed CNC types and frequencies in one Czech and one French original text.

4.2.1. Czech

We analyzed 206 translation equivalents for the 275 Polish CNC in the Czech translation. Note that the total numbers differ, as for this step of the analysis, we excluded cases of omitted translations (9), translations with a simple lexeme (30), and paraphrases (30) that did not meet the definition of CNC. Table 4 (p. 70) gives an overview of the absolute numbers and the proportions of each CNC type and examples with translations into English.

Furthermore, CNC in Cimickýs story "Poslední návrat" (N = 461) were analyzed similarly to the analysis of the Polish original text. Figure 2 (p. 70) demonstrates the proportions of CNC types in the Polish original text (left) and the Czech translation (middle) as well as the Czech original text (right). As Figure 2 (p. 70) shows, in Cimický, the same CNC categories appear as in the Czech translated text, except for NN.

A chi-square test revealed that the differences between the proportions of CNC types in the Polish original and Czech translation are highly significant ($X^2(7, N = 481) = 31.169$, $p < .001^{***}$). Even though the chi-square test for differences between the Czech translation and Czech original text (Cimický) also reveals significant differences, the X^2 is much lower, indicating that the

Table 4: CNC types in the Czech translation

CNC type	Absolute number	Proportion (%)	Example from Czech TT	English
N N_{gen}	71	34.5%	dcerka krále	the king's daughter
N N_{gen} complex	34	16.5%	díry očních jamek	holes of the eye sockets
N prep N	22	10.7%	nechuť vůči záletníkům	aversion to philanderers
N prep N complex	11	5.3%	žena v mužském oděvu	woman in men's clothing
N A_{rel}	2	1.0%	věci obecné	general things
A_{rel} N	62	30.1%	milostný příběh	love story
A_{rel} N complex	3	1.5%	prkenná stájová přepážka	plank stall partition
NN	1	0.5%	půlčík farmář	farmer-halfling
	206	100%		

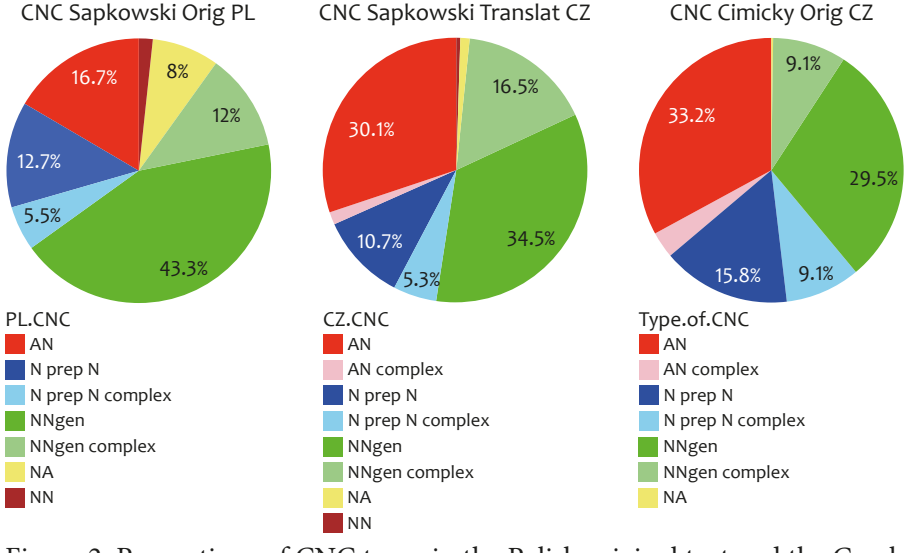


Figure 2: Proportions of CNC types in the Polish original text and the Czech translation and original text

differences are smaller: $X^2(7, N = 667) = 19.023$, $p < .01$**. Figure 2 (p. 70) shows that the CNC in the Czech translated text share proportional features with both the Polish original and the Czech original text; thus, they seem to represent an intermediate state between the two. This is especially true and interesting for $A_{rel}N$ and NN_{gen} constructions: $A_{rel}N$, on the one hand, is the most frequent CNC type in the Czech original text (33.2%), used almost twice as often as in the Polish original (16.7%) and occurring in 30.1% of cases in the Czech translation. On the other hand, the most frequent CNC type in the Czech translation is NN_{gen} (34.5%). In this respect, the translation is similar to the Polish original, of which NN_{gen} is very typical.

4.2.2. French

We analyzed 207 translation equivalents for the 275 Polish CNC in the French translation. Again, the total numbers differ between the original and the translation, as we excluded non-CNC equivalents, that is, lexemes (17) and paraphrases (51). There were no cases of complete omission in the French translation. Table 5 gives an overview of the absolute numbers and the proportions of each CNC type and examples with translations into English.

Table 5: CNC types in the French translation

CNC type	Absolute number	Proportion (%)	Example from French TT	English
N prep N	125	60.4%	cri de rage	cry of rage
N prep N complex	51	24.6%	chef du groupe des nains	leader of the group of dwarves
N A_{rel}	21	10.1%	ruelle boueuse	muddy lane
N A_{rel} complex	1	0.5%	fariboles poétiques sur la destinée	poetic nonsense about destiny
NN	9	4.3%	couteau papillon	butterfly knife
	207	100%		

CNC in Ernaux's story, "Journal du dehors" (N = 482), were analyzed in the same manner as in the Polish and Czech original texts. Figure 3 shows the distribution of CNC types in the Polish original text (left), the French translation (middle), and the French original text (right). As Figure 3 (p. 72) shows, the CNC types NN_{gen} and NN_{gen} complex do not occur in the French texts, as morphological case marking does not exist in French, and case is generally expressed via prepositions, as in *la maison de mon père* 'My dad's house'.

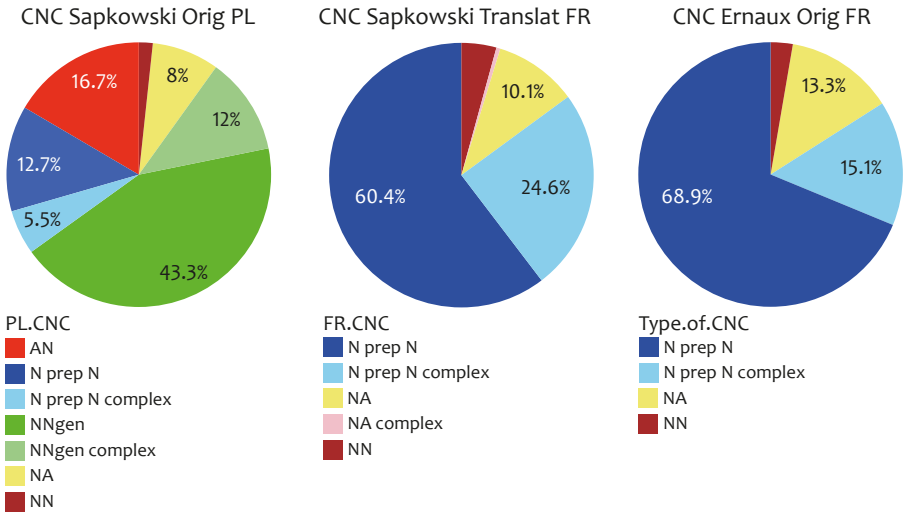


Figure 3: Proportions of CNC types in the Polish original text and the French translation and original text

As shown in Figure 3, the distribution of CNC in the French translation resembles the distribution of the French original text more than that of the Polish source text. This first impression is confirmed statistically: a chi-square test revealed that the differences between the proportions of CNC types in the Polish original and the French translation are highly significant ($X^2(8, N = 483) = 261.68$, $p < .001^{***}$). The extremely high X^2 indicates that the differences are fundamental. Again, even though the chi-square test for differences between the French translation and the French original text is also significant, the X^2 is much lower, indicating that the differences are much smaller: $X^2(5, N = 690) = 19.238$, $p < .01^{**}$. Both the descriptive distribution in Figure 3 and the statistical analysis indicate that interference is not a global characteristic of the French translation. The translation, as such, does not show clear evidence of interference phenomena in the CNC. Instead, the general characteristics of the French translation resemble the French original text. In the French translation, N prep N, including complex N prep N constructions, is by far the most frequent CNC type, followed by NA and NN. The French translation does not show a higher proportion of NA and NN constructions than the original French text. In that sense, our analysis does not show evidence for interference that may be caused by the higher frequency of AN, NA, and NN_{gen} constructions in the Polish text. The distribution of CNC in the French translation corresponds to the French original text and is also consistent with the general preference of French for N prep N and NA constructions (see Clasmeier/ Hennecke 2024).

5. Discussion

We analyzed CNC from the first chapter of a Polish fantasy novel and their Czech and French translation equivalents to answer two research questions: First, does semantic simplification occur in the translation equivalents (simplification hypothesis)? Second, are the Czech and French translation equivalents structurally influenced by the CNC types typical of Polish (interference hypothesis)? With respect to the interference hypothesis, we expected the effect to be bigger in Czech, which is closely related to Polish, than in the more distantly related French.

5.1. Simplification hypothesis

Interestingly, in both translated languages, the proportion of semantically full equivalent translations is almost the same (69.5% for Czech, 67.3% for French). However, they differ with respect to the processes of simplification and modification. Simplification of the Polish CNC is relevant in the Czech (17.1% of cases) but not in the French translation (5.1%). The opposite is true for modification, which occurs in more than one quarter of the French translation equivalents (27.6%) but seldom in Czech (13.5%).

This difference is possibly due to higher similarity in CNC types and their frequency distributions between Polish and Czech (see next section). However, it may also be caused by different translators' strategies and preferences. Note that the Czech translated text is a few words shorter than the Polish original (Czech: 10,351 word tokens, Polish: 10,361), even though Czech is more analytical with respect to auxiliaries in first and second persons' verbal forms (Polish *byłem* > Czech *byl jsem* 'I was'), which separately count as word tokens. This hints that the Czech translator used a tightening translation strategy.

The high number of modifications in the French translation might be caused by structural differences between Polish and French. As the translator more often needs to deviate from the original structure of the Polish source text, this leads to further internal modifications of the constructions. These modifications include semantic enrichment rather than semantic simplification. The French translation frequently shows structurally more complex constructions that slightly modify the semantic meaning, such as in the translation of the Polish AN construction *kolczą siatką* ('chainmail'), translated as the French complex N prep N construction *brassards de mailles armés de pointes* ('chainmail bracers armed with spikes'). It is further striking that the French translation regularly adds descriptive adjectives to the translated CNC, as in the translation *le parois de l'étroit couloir* ('walls of the narrow corridor') in comparison to the Polish original *ściany korytarzyka* ('corridor walls') or in *la gorge de la jeune personne* ('the young person's throat') as a translation of pl. *gardło*

postaci ('the figure's throat'). This may, on the one hand, be explained by the stylistic choices of the translator. On the other hand, it may be partially caused by the highly analytical nature of French, which allows for more stylistic insertion. The particularly analytical nature of French and its possibly more advanced stage of grammaticalization, also in comparison to other Romance languages, has been postulated by various authors based on different morphological and syntactic phenomena (for discussion, see e.g. Carlier et al. 2012; Haspelmath/Michaelis 2017).

5.2. Interference hypothesis

Polish and Czech share most CNC types and, to some extent, their proportions in language use. Constructions with relational adjectives and genitive nouns (NN_{gen}) are very common. With regard to relational adjective constructions, the post-position of the adjective (NA_{rel}) is known to be a typical feature of Polish (e.g., Cetnarowska 2019; for a literature overview, see Clasmeier 2020). However, NA_{rel} occurs surprisingly seldom in the analyzed Polish original text (8%). Constructions with adjectives ($A_{rel}N$) in the pre-position are more than twice as frequent (16.7%). Though this finding is fundamentally in line with recent empirical work on the flexible character of word order in Polish adjective noun constructions (Clasmeier 2023), the clear predominance of $A_{rel}N$ is unexpected. We can only speculate about the cause of this result. Genre peculiarities may be one explanation; however, it may also be due to language change in this syntactic domain. In Czech, the pre-position of the adjective is the default; NA_{rel} is possible in two cases. First, it occurs for information structural reasons when the adjective must be explicitly stressed. Second, it is the default word order in several terms for plant and animal species, such as *zvonek*$_N$ *český*$_A$ 'czech bellflower', *zajíc*$_N$ *polární*$_A$ 'polar hare'. This is presumably due to Latin influence,[4] as seen in the Latin terms with postponed adjective *campanula bohemica* and *lepus arcticus* for the above terms. However, this explanation is speculative and must be left to future systematic empirical investigation. NA_{rel} occurs only once in the Czech original text (Cimický): *akce*$_N$ *srdeční*$_A$ 'cardiac activity' and twice in the Czech translated text: *věci*$_N$ *obecné*$_A$ 'general things' and *milost*$_N$ *boží*$_A$ 'the grace of God'. While *věc*$_N$ *obecná*$_A$ might have occurred under the influence of the Polish *sprawa*$_N$ *uniwersalna*$_A$, *milost*$_N$ *boží*$_A$ is not possible in the reverse order, as *boží*$_A$ *milost*$_N$ is the name for a sort of Czech Easter cookie.

Though the Czech translated text shares most CNC features with the Czech original text, there is one interesting deviation: the most frequent CNC type

4| The immense language contact between Polish and Latin in the Middle Ages is supposed to have caused the development of the predominant adjective postposition in Polish as well (Rospond 2000: 197).

is NN_{gen}, a feature shared with the Polish original text. This result could be attributed to structural interference from Polish. To determine whether genitive constructions in translated Czech occur as direct equivalents for Polish genitive constructions, we analyzed the latter and their Czech equivalents in direct correspondence and found that most cases (86%) are indeed translated with a Czech (complex) genitive construction, for example, *lata dzieciństwa* > *léta dětství* 'years of childhood' (note that the correspondent Czech $A_{rel}N$ is also common: *dětská*$_A$ *léta*$_N$). In the remaining 14% of cases, Polish genitive constructions are translated with Czech $A_{rel}N$ constructions, for example, *mury zamku* > *hradní*$_A$ *zdi*$_N$ 'castle walls'. Interestingly, there are no cases in which a Czech genitive construction would be used as an equivalent for a non-genitive construction in the original.

Last, there are comparable proportions of N prep N in all three analyzed texts.

French shows quite different structural preferences for the formation of CNC from those of Polish and Czech. N prep N is by far the most frequent structural type of CNC, followed by constructions of the NA and NN type. Constructions of the AN type primarily occur with qualifying adjectives in French and only rarely with relational adjectives (Hennemann/ Plötner 2015). Here, French differs from other Romance languages, such as Spanish or Italian, that show a more frequent use of relational adjectives preceding the noun (see Clasmeier/ Hennecke 2024 for a more detailed discussion). Therefore, it is not surprising that the French translation only contains two constructions of the AN type compared to a rather higher number in the Polish original text (16.7%). However, these two constructions, *grandes occasions* ('special occasions', translated from the Polish *okazjach wyjątkowych*) and *énorme éperon* ('enormous spur', translated from the Polish *olbrzymią ostrogą*), do not include a relational adjective in the French translation and were therefore excluded from the analysis of the French CNC. In the same sense, the original French text does not contain any AN constructions with a relational adjective, as relational adjectives are usually postponed in French (Hennemann/ Plötner 2015). The infrequent use of AN constructions in French can also explain the overall higher number of NA constructions in the French texts than in the Polish text. Furthermore, it is striking that only 28% of the Polish AN constructions and 25% of the Polish NA constructions are translated into an NA construction in French. Most Polish constructions including an adjective are hence translated by other means, such as N prep N and paraphrases. This usage can be seen, for example, in the translation of the Polish *kara boża* 'divine punishment' into the French *châtiment des dieux* 'punishment of the gods' or in the translation of the Polish *śpiewam o sprawach uniwersalnych* 'I sing about universal issues' into the French paraphrase *les themes de mes chants sont*

universels 'the topics of my songs are universal'. Thus, we cannot see any influence of the number of NA and AN constructions in the Polish original text. This view is also supported by the fact that the number of NA constructions is even higher in the French original text than in the French translation (cf. Figure 3, p. 72).

While the Polish source text only includes 18.2% of (complex) N prep N constructions, these constructions make up a large part of the French texts. While the number of N prep N constructions is larger in the French original text, the number of complex N Prep N is higher in the translation. As mentioned above, French lacks a grammatical case system, and case is generally expressed via prepositions. This might explain why 84% of the Polish NN_{gen} and 82% of the Polish NN_{gen} complex constructions are translated into French as a (complex) N prep N, for example, the Polish *mury zamku* 'castle walls' as the French *murs du château* 'walls of the castle'. However, despite these structural differences between French and Polish, the French translation does not show an overall higher number of (complex) N prep N constructions or NA constructions than the French original text. Therefore, we cannot see any clear signs of interference in the French translation. It is nevertheless noteworthy that the French original text contains fewer complex N prep N constructions than the translation. This may be due to the fact that verbal constructions and paraphrases are generally preferred over complex nominal structures in French.

6. Conclusion and outlook

In the present study, we combined qualitative and quantitative methods for a comparative investigation of CNC in a Polish original text and their translation equivalents in Czech and French. We observed a relevant number of simplification processes and a possible influence of Polish on the choice of the CNC type in the Czech translation, but not in the French translation. These observations confirm our hypotheses, especially with respect to the different behaviors seen in Czech, which is closely related to Polish, and in the more distantly related French.

However, any generalization of our results would be premature, as the number of languages involved—and, more importantly, the number of items analyzed—is limited. Another limitation is that our data stem from only one text genre (fantasy novel) and two translators and could thus be biased by individual features of those. Furthermore, the Czech and French original texts (Cimický and Ernaux) are fictional but do not belong to the fantasy genre.

Another limitation relates to the structural analysis of CNC in original and translated texts. An important further step would be to determine the degree of lexicalization or range of alternative constructions with an identical meaning

for a specific CNC. This is probably an important factor, as interference phenomena may only occur in non-lexicalized cases with at least one nearly synonymous alternative construction (e.g., in the Czech NN_{gen} and $A_{rel}N$ constructions *léta dětství* and *dětská léta*, both of which mean 'years of childhood').

As a next step, we would like to consider different text types, namely, fictional but non-fantasy texts and non-fictional texts. We also aim at integrating other languages, such as Ukrainian, Russian, and Spanish, to verify the cross-linguistic causes of the observed different translation phenomena. Finally, we are interested in the Romance-to-Slavic direction of translation, for example, in the analysis of a French original text and its translation into Spanish and Polish.

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