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# Greek and English linguistic identities in the EU

## A translation perspective

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Translated and original texts have been claimed to differ with respect to their linguistic make-up. Parallel versions of texts seem to reflect aspects of the identities represented by the respective languages. The study exploits this potential, in the EU context, with a view to raising awareness of linguistic and cultural differences between English and Greek. A descriptive approach to parallel English and Greek EU material reveals aspects of linguistic preference across languages, with reference to the five dimensions of cultural values in Hofstede and Hofstede's model of cultural relativism (2005). Translation practice can provide evidence of the linguistic manifestation of socially preferred patterns of behavior which determine linguistic action. Aspects of linguistic preference traced in the EU English-Greek translation context are shown against a background of linguistic preference manifested in other genres.

Raising awareness of identities across languages is expected to ultimately provide recommendations for quality improvement in the EU translation practice, or how to achieve near-native command in language acquisition, while foregrounding the significance of the experienced socio-cultural realities in the study of meaning making.

**Keywords:** translation, socio-cultural realities, cultural relativism, intercultural manifestations, EU, dimensions of verbal communication, Greek

### 1. Introduction: On pragmatics and translation

In supra-national contexts like that of the EU, parallel texts may be assumed to have registered interlingual and intercultural variation, as a manifestation of linguistic and cultural identities. Research on identities in multicultural contexts could promote intercultural understanding and broaden the set of areas which may be viewed from a “pragmatic angle”, or on which there may be placed “pragmatic emphasis” (Mey 1998: xxvi) by including translation practice in the set. It is

insightful to look for places where “our cultural varnish cracks and the underlying substance becomes visible” (Mey 2001:264), in order to shed light on pragmatic presuppositions cross-culturally; thus, translation practice seems to be able to provide cultural ‘varnish-crack’ points in intercultural transfer as manifestations of intercultural variability.

The paper examines a sample of English and Greek versions of EU texts to highlight the potential of translation to contribute to the study of language use as determined by cultural assumptions. In theoretical terms, thus, it highlights the significance of cultural aspects of experience in describing the making of meaning. It stresses the “socio-cultural relativity in non-propositional meaning” and assumes that “linguistic meaning is subjective and reflects predominant cultural aspects and culture-specific modes of social interaction” (Marmaridou 2000:31). The paper addresses the question whether the relatively narrow range of linguistic variation manifested in the English-Greek EU data can provide evidence for the cultural traits attributed to Greece in intercultural theories of social behavior.

## 2. EU data: Mirroring cultural preference

Translation data have the potential to allow us to draw conclusions about intercultural differences. The EU context seems to provide plenty of multicultural data and a great opportunity for multicultural research, although there has been some doubt about its potential to genuinely reflect identities. One reason for this is the equivalence intention in the EU context, which tends to blur linguistic variation among EU versions for reasons of uniformity and accuracy.

Another reason is that EU texts, in particular, have been claimed to favor some hybridity, which makes their linguistic make-up vary from the original production. In the EU context, hybridity may be due to the mediator’s intention to establish equivalence, or to the fact that EU drafters may not be writing in their mother tongue — which would allow for traces of foreign preferences to appear in their discourse construction.

The study uses EU data on the assumption that the linguistic features which survive in parallel texts are the typical features of a (‘target’) language, i.e. mostly the features which have the potential to reveal which linguistic techniques are sub-consciously preferred by native speakers of the language to enforce the communicative potential of the message.

If the variation in features that intercultural theory<sup>1</sup> attributes to cultural contexts can be traced in EU parallel texts, and if the treatment of these features can be shown to vary *systematically* between these parallel versions, then it only takes a small step to conclude that EU texts, despite their hybridity, provide evidence of

intercultural variation; this is done by pointing up translation shifts in the treatment of discourse phenomena which reflect varying socio-cultural experience. The results of the present study may thus be indicative of the types of such variation and its significance for intercultural theory.

The study focuses on a sample of 3,000 words (per language version). Obviously, full corpus data would allow for more accurate measurements, and thus for much stronger conclusions, by employing the EU's full-text databases, document collections (CELEX, EUR-lex), or the translation records available (with matched sentences available from past translations in both source and target languages; Wagner et al. 2002). Findings in this small-scale qualitative research are paralleled by types of variation frequently encountered in other English-Greek translation genres, thus verifying the validity of tendencies observed in the present set of data. In this way, the paper intends to show that even in a hybrid multicultural setting, cultural identities *are* discernible, but require the attention of the researchers to effectively sustain the presence of differences.

EU documentation makes use of what has been termed 'special language'. Translators' decision-making in intercultural transfer has attracted the attention of empirical translation research (Ahmad and Rogers 2007). Topics range from term and concept rendering, to emotional involvement or non-involvement in the discourse of special texts, to the level of ambiguity or vagueness between translated and original production — to mention only a few. More specifically, emotional involvement or non-involvement across languages could manifest the degree to which emphatic language is used in some language versions, or the degree of repetition preferred across cultures, which again may imply various degrees of involvement on the part of the speaker, etc. Variation at the level of ambiguity or vagueness among languages may be related to the degree of specificity preferred (e.g. in some languages, definite pronouns and definite spatio-temporal markers may be preferred over vague, indefinite ones). In a Greek translation of Virginia Woolf's *The Mark on the Wall*, a number of markers like *here/there* and *now/then* were systematically added in the Greek target version (Sidiropoulou 2003: 88), presumably in order to adjust the original's spatio-temporal vagueness to a (target-)culturally preferred definite orientation.

Systematic variation across EU text versions in the treatment of such language phenomena may reveal an intercultural variation which may be part of an identity (comprising linguistic, socio-cultural, and socio-psychological aspects of experience). Variation is thus assumed to be the manifestation of a cross-cultural linguistic preference which would have gone unnoticed, if not seen in juxtaposition with another language version. The present study traces preference in the treatment of linguistic phenomena between Greek and English EU texts, with a view to singling out linguistic manifestations of features, which in Hofstede and Hofstede's intercultural theory have been attributed to the Greek cultural context.

The data comprises a 3,000-word sample of Greek EU text fragments (contrasted with their English parallel texts of about the same size); the findings are discussed in the light of evidence from the author's English-Greek translation research in the advertising, news reporting, and other genres. The next section traces types of variation in the linguistic behavior of English and Greek EU text producers, in order to highlight the significance of variation for intercultural theory. Types of variation are then shown to provide linguistic evidence for intercultural variation, in accordance with Hofstede and Hofstede's model of social behavior — thus suggesting that, despite hybridity, EU data can reflect aspects of cultural identities.

The text samples are randomly selected, mostly from the beginning of EU periodical publications addressing the public: they are fragments of EU documentation issued between 1987 and 2001 by the Office for the Official Publications of the European Communities. Examples are also taken (but not included in our count) from recent online material from the official website of the European Union, *EU-ROPA — Gateway to the EU*. The present samples come from 'outgoing documents' (Wagner et al. 2002:68), i.e. texts written inside the institutions (usually in English or French) and translated into the other EU languages. Because such 'outgoing documents' address the general public of the EU member states, they are more likely to have the linguistic identities of the member states inscribed, compared to internal EU documentation, which may display more prominent traces of hybridity.

The data show traces of the same type of variation which has been detected in other genres in English-Greek translation contexts; they are presented in this study with the purpose of raising awareness of their potential as manifestations of cultural identities in the EU context, and attention is drawn to text fragments which do not display a one-to-one correspondence across English-Greek EU versions. Evidently, the research presented here does not pretend to be a large-scale diachronic investigation of identity reflection in the EU context — it only hopes to be able to show the potential of cross-cultural research in the EU context.

In the EU context, tracing the 'original' of a 'translated' text fragment is extremely difficult. As Wagner et al. (ibid: 7) remark,

Article 4 of Council Regulation No 1 refers to the feat of "drafting in 11 languages", an expression coined to avoid mentioning "translation". None of the legislation refers to translation.

Thus, all EU 'translation' research is conducted on so-called 'parallel drafts', rather than on 'source-' and 'target-text' pairs; however, this does not seem to diminish the significance of the variation found between language versions. *If variability is systematically present and certain features seem to appear on the same language side,*

these manifestations may be assumed to qualify as potential linguistic evidence of the existence of cultural identities.

In a target version, there always seems to be a tendency for making things more explicit, no matter what the direction of the translation is. However, this ‘explicitation tendency’ does not seem to create a problem, as quite a few of the linguistic features discussed appear on one language side in EN>GR translation, and on the other language side in GR>EN translation: thus, logical connectors are often added to the EN-GR version of EU texts, whereas the number of conjunctions is significantly reduced in GR>EN translations of these genres (the same may be the case for other genres, such as EN>GR translations of stage plays or novels). Explicitation is assumed here to be more of an ally than an enemy, because translators tend to make explicit the typical features of a target language in their effort to enhance the communicative potential of the target version.

### 3. Types of English-Greek translation shifts in the EU context

The approach to the data in this section is bottom-up. As to the grammatical phenomena examined, they happen to fit in nicely with Halliday’s metafunctions, but my intention from the start was not to find theoretical correspondences. Rather, the Hallidayan concepts of ‘cohesion’ (the textual function) and ‘tenor’ (assumed to relate to the interpersonal function) were chosen simply because they allowed for the exhibition of cross-cultural variation. Section 4 below shows in what way evidence of variability in cohesion and tenor can be meaningful in Hofstede and Hofstede’s model of social behavior.

The study further exploits other lexical or phrasal markers, which may be assumed to provide evidence of variability along other dimensions of social behavior in Hofstede and Hofstede’s model. In contrast to the approach in the other sections, this kind of miscellaneous evidence (dealt with in Section 3.2) is treated in a top-down manner: the data were searched for further evidence that would signal some particular orientation along any of Hofstede and Hofstede’s dimensions. In fact, the variation studied in this particular section (3.2) falls outside the realm of the strictly ‘grammatical’, as it extends into that of ideology and culture — here, I follow Hatim and Mason in their distinction between major principles involved in translation as a communicative/pragmatic/semiotic activity on the one hand, and the visions of reality, ideologies and myths that languages may be carrying with them on the other (1990: 237).

### 3.1 Variation in the intercultural manifestation of Halliday's metafunctions

#### 3.1.1 *Coherence/cohesion*

Cohesion has been claimed to fall within the textual metafunction of language. In fact, by 'cohesion' I implicitly presuppose the notion of 'coherence' (the semantic connectedness of text) of which cohesion is its surface, manifesting its "structural (syntactic and other) connectedness" (Mey 1993:195). In discussing standards of textuality in a translation context, Hatim and Mason (1990) define coherence/cohesion as follows:

**Coherence** can be defined, following Beaugrande (1980) as the procedures which ensure conceptual connectivity, including (1) logical relations, (2) organization of events, objects and situations, and (3) continuity in human experience. It seems safe to assume that the sequence of coherence relations would, under normal circumstances, remain constant in translation from ST [source text] to TT [target text]. Such basic relations as cause-effect, problem-solution, temporal sequence, and so on, are universally fundamental to meaning and the way it is structured within a text. But the ways in which this underlying coherence is reflected on the surface of text — the **cohesion**, or sequential connectivity of surface elements — are much more likely to be language-specific or text-specific. There are many possible cohesive devices capable of relaying, say, a given relationship between propositions. And in a given language, some are likely to be preferred options (emphasis original; 1990:195).

I would thus like to refer to a set of motivated shifts which seem to ensure appropriate levels of text coherence across English-Greek EU texts. Among Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesive devices,<sup>2</sup> the ones that seem to exhibit particular variability in the way they connect, and also seem to vary across English-Greek EU versions, are: reference markers, markers for lexical cohesion, and adversative/causal markers.

Conjunctions do seem to be a point where "the cultural varnish cracks" (Mey 2001:264) in intercultural transfer: German, for instance, seems to prefer a more long-winded subordination than does English, whereas Arabic prefers to organize messages in longer units (as compared to English) and in more ambiguous ways (Baker 1992). In the EU context, Greek seems to be highlighting adversative and causal conjunctive links.

In example 1, below, cohesion is enforced in the Greek version through enhancement of the logical relations. Adversative and causal connectives such as *however* (ὄμως), *is due to* (οφείλεται), and *consequently* (κατ'επέκταση) are added to the Greek version to strengthen the persuasive force of the argument. Reinforcing such logical relations seems to be a systematic preference in Greek; it is likewise documented in the press, in advertising, and translations of stage plays

(Sidiropoulou 2002, 2004, 2008b). The tendency also appears in Greek students' translation practices. The [] signs in the English version of example 1 identify the points at which the translator has interfered.

<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Official English version</b></p> <p>...</p> <p>This is the reason why communities have always striven to develop and safeguard their agricultural production. [] The primary objective is to cover the highest possible proportion of food requirements from one's own resources, in order to reduce external dependence and to forestall the risk of shortages.</p> <p>[] This does not exclude trade in food with other countries, but such trade must be balanced and not lead to one-sided trade or [] critical dependence.</p> <p><i>The Common Agricultural Policy and its Reform</i>, ISBN 92-825-6821-0/ Periodical 1/1987:7</p> <p><b>Back-translation of the Greek version</b></p> <p>...</p> <p><i>This role of agriculture explains why all peoples have always attributed high importance to the development of their agricultural production.</i></p> <p><i>However, for us Europeans, secure supply in human nutrition has been safeguarded, in the meantime, which is due, after all, to the agricultural policy, which allowed development of agricultural production. Of course, the goal of food supply does not exclude international exchange, however balance should be achieved and these exchanges shouldn't lead to one-sided and consequently to dangerous dependence.</i></p> <p><b>Official Greek version</b></p> <p>...</p> <p>Ο ρόλος αυτός της γεωργίας εξηγεί το λόγο για τον οποίο ανέκαθεν όλοι οι λαοί απέδωσαν μεγάλη σημασία στην ανάπτυξη της γεωργικής παραγωγής τους.</p> <p>Όμως για μας τους Ευρωπαίους ο ασφαλής εφοδιασμός σε είδη διατροφής έχει γίνει στο μεταξύ κάτι το αυτονόητο, πράγμα που οφείλεται σε τελευταία ανάλυση με μια γεωργική πολιτική, που επέτρεψε την ανάπτυξη της γεωργικής παραγωγής. Βέβαια, ο στόχος του εφοδιασμού με είδη διατροφής δεν αποκλείει τις διεθνείς συναλλαγές, όμως πρέπει να επιτευχθεί ισορροπία και να μην οδηγούν οι συναλλαγές αυτές σε μονομερή και κατ'έπекταση επικίνδυνη εξάρτηση.</p> <p><i>Κοινή Γεωργική Πολιτική για τη Δεκαετία του '90</i>, ISBN 92-826-0634-1/Περιοδική έκδοση 5/1989:9</p>
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Such enforcing of cohesion is obviously intended to establish inter-language equivalence at the level of coherence. None of the two versions is more cohesive than the other — they are both assumed to be cohesive enough for the purposes of the exchange, in agreement with cross-cultural views of what appropriate cohesion levels should be.

Enforced logical relations do not come as a surprise in the English-Greek intercultural context. It is a rather typical feature of English-Greek interlingual transfer, which manifests itself in a wider set of shifts than those that are simply realized by adding some adversative or causal connective. Below, I will show some traces of translators' intentions to establish coherence by enforcing cohesion in other genres; I will do this by analyzing a press release from a US newspaper and an instance of cause-and-effect link enforcement in an English-Greek advertisement translation (the CASTING — L'Oréal advertisement, see below). (These examples are not numbered as they do not belong to the EU data examined in this paper). In the case of the press translation, the contrast-highlighting intention is not manifested simply in terms of some added contrastive connective, but also in terms of additional material (as seen in the extract below): the journalist-translator is concerned with emphasizing the *conflicting* aspects of Iranian politics. In addition, the Greek headline "War between Moderates and Radicals" also highlights this adversative/conflictual intention. (For another instance of adversative/contrastive link enforcement in English-Greek press translations, see Sidiropoulou 2008a: 6).<sup>3</sup>

□ The capture of the Britons initially showed the rising dominance of the president and his allies, specifically the Revolutionary Guards, whereas a move towards finding a diplomatic solution is a sign that the pragmatists are pushing back. "Seizure of Britons Underlines Iran's Political Split", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 4/4/2007

*The case foregrounded the wavering nature of Iranian politics. The capture of the Britons initially underlined the rising dominance of the president's allies, specifically the Revolutionary Guards. More recently, though, as the crisis seemed to have the potential to undermine Iran's position internationally, a more moderate stance started to show up before Tehran officially goes back on its positions.*

"The War between Moderates and Radicals", TO VIMA, 8/4/2007

Η υπόθεση έφερε στο φως την αμφίρροπη φύση της ιρανικής πολιτικής. Η σύλληψη των Βρετανών υπογράμμισε αρχικά την αυξανόμενη κυριαρχία εκείνων που συντάσσονται με τον πρόεδρο, ιδίως των φρουρών της Επανάστασης. Πιο πρόσφατα, όμως, καθώς η κρίση φάνηκε ότι θα υπονόμει τη θέση του Ιράν παγκοσμίως, άρχισε να διαφαίνεται μια πιο μετριοπαθής στάση, προτού ακόμη η Τεχεράνη υπαναχωρήσει δημοσίως από τις θέσεις της.

«Πόλεμος μετριοπαθών και σκληροπυρηνικών», TO ΒΗΜΑ, 8/4/2007

The following Greek version of a L'Oréal advertisement (from *Marie-Claire*) shows a tendency to highlight the causal links between parts of discourse: compare the use of the causal connective *since* (*αφού*), or the causal/resultative connective *so* (*γι αυτό*) in the Greek version, compared to the original English in another L'Oréal advertisement (from *Glamour*; Sidiropoulou 1998: 193).

CASTING — L'Oréal

...It's gentle.

No ammonia and low peroxide made it gentle as can be. You can even color the same day you perm.... (*GLAMOUR*, 3/1995)

*The Casting innovation: an extremely gentle texture, since it contains no ammonia. So it respects your hair, which retains an incredible softness for a long time.*

**ΚΑΙΝΟΤΟΜΙΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΠΑΛΟΤΗΤΑ.**

Η καινοτομία του Casting: Μια σύνθεση εξαιρετικά απαλή, **αφού** δεν περιέχει αμμωνία. **Γι αυτό**, σέβεται τα μαλλιά σας που διατηρούν για πολύ καιρό μια απίστευτη απαλότητα. (*MARIE CLAIRE*, 4/1995)

On a par with enforcing logical relations in discourse, textual cohesion may be enforced through expanding referential links, as shown in examples 1 and 2. In example 1 (see also Appendix I, where the whole extract appears), two occurrences of *this* expand into (a) *this role of agriculture* and (b) *the goal of food supply*, respectively. Likewise in example 2, where *this* expands into *this effort*.

2

**Official English version**

Protecting the water

Through the urban waste-water treatment directive, the Union has set the goal of cleaning up all surface and coastal waters of organic pollution by the end of 2010. **This** will involve huge investments in waste-water treatment by local governments and industries over the next decade.

'The European Union and the Environment', *Europe on the Move*, Brussels 1997

**Back-translation of the Greek version**

*Protection of water*

*Through the urban waste-water treatment directive, the Union has set as a goal the cleaning up all surface and coastal waters of organic pollution by the end of 2010. **This effort** will involve huge investments in waste-water treatment by local governments and industries over the next decade.*

**Official Greek version**

Προστασία των υδάτων

Με την οδηγία σχετικά με την επεξεργασία των αστικών λυμάτων η Ένωση έχει θέσει ως στόχο τον καθορισμό όλων των επιφανειακών και παράκτιων υδάτων από την οργανική ρύπανση μέχρι το τέλος του 2010. Η προσπάθεια αυτή θα απαιτήσει μεγάλες επενδύσεις στον τομέα της επεξεργασίας λυμάτων εκ μέρους των τοπικών κυβερνήσεων και των βιομηχανιών κατά την επόμενη δεκαετία.  
 ‘Η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση και το Περιβάλλον’, *Η Ευρώπη σε Εξέλιξη*, Βρυξέλλες 1997.

Cohesion is further enforced through lexical repetition, as shown in example 3, below, with its two occurrences of the Greek word for *entails* (*συνεπάγεται*). In the English version, the corresponding expression is *means* and it appears only once in this context. In addition, the use of *it entails* (*συνεπάγεται*) highlights the tendency of the Greek version towards enforcing causal relations, as suggested above: the relation implicit in the choice of *It entails* (*συνεπάγεται*) is causally stronger than it would have been, had the English *means* been rendered in terms of its readily available Greek equivalent (*σημαίνει*); in the case at hand, the causal relation is further enforced through repetition.

3

**Official English version**

Being mobile also **means** taking a broader view, [] being open to new technologies, seeking cooperation whenever opportunity presents itself.  
 ‘A Young People’s Europe’, *Europe on the Move*, Brussels 1991.

**Back-translation of the Greek version**

*Mobility also entails a broader view. It also entails familiarity with new technologies and search for cooperation whenever a similar opportunity presents itself.*

**Official Greek version**

Η κινητικότητα **συνεπάγεται** επίσης μεγαλύτερη ευρύτητα σκέψης. **Συνεπάγεται** επίσης εξοικείωση με τις νέες τεχνολογίες και αναζήτηση της συνεργασίας κάθε φορά παρουσιάζεται παρόμοια δυνατότητα.  
 ‘Η Ευρώπη των Νέων’, *Η Ευρώπη σε Εξέλιξη*, Βρυξέλλες 1991.

### 3.1.2 *Tenor*

I adopt Halliday’s concept of register and its three parameters: field, mode, tenor (Hatim and Mason 1990: 46) — with tenor manifesting the level of formality in discourse, where ‘tenor’ is assumed to draw on Halliday’s interpersonal function of language. The EU data show a clear tendency to raise tenor. The level of formality seems to be higher in the Greek versions of the texts, evidently because this is how the translator assumes tenor equivalence should be achieved. Tenor is adjusted cross-culturally either as a preference for passivization and nominalizations, as

shown in examples 4 and 5, or in terms of a preference for preposing adverbials in the Greek versions.

Evidently, on the Greek side, raising tenor does not seem to be a general preference. This may have to do with the fact that in interpersonal communication, as elsewhere in interpersonal relations, Greek (a positive politeness language; see Sifianou 1991) favors closeness. By contrast, the tendency to raise tenor seems to be a trait favored in technical-scientific discourses, as it also seems to be the case in the EU context.

In example 4, the expressions *elapsed* and *remains* have been rendered in terms of passivized constructions in Greek (*were needed*: *απαιτήθηκαν*; *is delayed and impeded*: *επιβραδύνεται και δυσχεραίνεται*), although there are readily available options for these items in Greek (*10 years elapsed*: *πέρασαν 10 χρόνια*; *remains slow and cumbersome*: *παραμένει αργή και κουραστική*). Similarly, in example 5, the verb *to intervene* has been nominalized in the Greek version (*intervention*). Such nominalizations (called ‘negative politeness devices’ by Brown and Levinson, 1987) raise the level of formality, the tenor.

4

**Official English version**

Some 10 years then **elapsed** before it was realized that a new impetus was required... This goes some way towards explaining why the decision-making process as it affects tax matters **remains slow** and cumbersome.

*Taxation in the Single Market*, ISBN 92-825-1599-5/ Periodical 6/1990:5

**Back-translation of the Greek version**

*10 years were needed for it to be realized that the new impetus was necessary... This is one of the reasons why decision-making in this area is delayed and impeded.*

**Official Greek version**

**Απαιτήθηκαν** δέκα χρόνια για να συνειδητοποιηθεί ότι ο νέος ρυθμός ήταν απαραίτητος... Αυτή είναι μια από τις αιτίες που η λήψη των αποφάσεων σε αυτόν τον τομέα **επιβραδύνεται και δυσχεραίνεται**.

*Η Φορολογία σε μια Ενιαία Αγορά*, ISBN 92-826-1598-7 /Περιοδική έκδοση 6/1990:5

5

**Official English version**

The means to **intervene**

As part of the CFSP toolbox, the Union put in place a European Security policy

...

[http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/overview\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/overview_en.htm) (accessed 4/2009)

**Back-translation of the Greek version**

*The means of intervention*

*In the framework of the CFSP toolbox, the Union put in place a European Security policy ...*

**Official Greek version**

**Τα μέσα παρέμβασης**

Στο πλαίσιο της ΚΕΠΠΑ, η Ένωση δημιούργησε την ευρωπαϊκή πολιτική ασφάλειας...

[http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/overview\\_el.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/overview_el.htm) (accessed 4/2009)

Another manifestation of the preference for a higher level of formality is the tendency to prepose adverbials in the Greek versions. Levin and Garrett (1990) have claimed that left-branching transformations (moving adverbials to the left of their arguments) raise the level of formality in English. A ‘tenor experiment’ in the form of a questionnaire answered by 50 Greek students from the Faculty of English, University of Athens (Sidiropoulou 2004) showed that left-branching in Greek EU discourse creates a similar effect; this is in contrast to right-branching transformations (where the adverbial is moved to the middle or end of the clause; see the sample question in example 6). Raising the level of formality in Greek increases interpersonal distance, and thus seems to enhance the persuasive force of an argument. In the Greek context, a supra-national authority is assumed to require higher levels of power distance in communication for the communicative situation to be effective.

**6**

**The tenor experiment**

Greek sentences like the following were used in a questionnaire examining tenor modification effects triggered by moving the adverbial in the clause.

**Today** inequalities are smaller

(*Σήμερα οι ανισότητες είναι μικρότερες* — left branching)

Inequalities **today** are smaller

(*Οι ανισότητες σήμερα είναι μικρότερες* — adverbial in the middle)

Inequalities are smaller **today**

(*Οι ανισότητες είναι μικρότερες σήμερα* — right branching)

Table 1 summarizes the pairs of EU parallel text fragments in the present data sample.

**Table 1.** Pairs of parallel text fragments with word counts for the Greek versions (total 3,196 words)

		Greek text word count:
1	<i>The Common Agricultural Policy and its Reform</i> , ISBN 92-825-6821-0/ <i>Περιοδική έκδοση</i> 1/1987:7 <i>Κοινή Γεωργική Πολιτική για τη Δεκαετία του '90</i> , ISBN 92-826-0634-1/ <i>Περιοδική έκδοση</i> 5/1989:9	188
2	<i>Europe — A Fresh Start</i> , ISBN 92-826-1220-1, 1990:5 <i>Μια Νέα Ιδέα για την Ευρώπη</i> , ISBN 92-826-1219-8, 1990:5	108
3	<i>Taxation in the Single Market</i> , ISBN 92-826-1599-5, 1990:5 <i>Η Φορολογία σε μια Ενιαία Αγορά</i> , ISBN 92-826-1598-7, 1990:5	390
4	<i>Economic and Monetary Union</i> , ISSN 0379-3133/1991:1 <i>Η Οικονομική και Νομισματική Ένωση</i> , ISSN 0258-8250/1991:1	96
5	<i>A Young People's Europe</i> , ISSN 0379-3133/1991:1 <i>Η Ευρώπη των Νέων</i> , ISSN 0258-8250/1991:1	131
6	<i>Working for the Regions</i> , ISSN 0379-3133/1991:1 <i>Στην Υπηρεσία των Περιφερειών</i> , ISSN 0258-8250/1991:1	170
7	<i>What is the EMS?</i> ISSN 0379-3133/1991:1 <i>Τι είναι το ΕΝΣ;</i> ISSN 0258-8250/1991:1	130
8	<i>The Community and its Eastern Neighbours</i> , ISSN 0379-3133/1991:1 <i>Η Κοινότητα και οι Ανατολικοί Γείτονές της</i> , ISSN 0258-8250/1991:1	190
9	<i>The European Community and Mediterranean Countries</i> , ISSN 0379-3133/1991:1 <i>Η Ευρωπαϊκή Κοινότητα και οι Μεσογειακές Χώρες</i> , ISSN 0258/8250,1991:1	270
10	<i>The Social Challenge</i> , ISSN 0379-3133/1991:1 <i>Η Κοινωνική Πρόκληση</i> , ISSN 0258-8250/1991:1	165
11	<i>Approximation of Taxes. Why?</i> , ISSN 0379-3133/1991:1 <i>Φορολογική Εναρμόνιση. Για ποιά λόγο;</i> ISSN 0258-8250/1991:1	148
12	<i>The European Union and the Environment</i> , ISBN 92-828-1899-3, 1997:22 <i>Η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση και το Περιβάλλον</i> , ISBN 92-828-1898-5, 1997:22	138
13	<i>The European Union and world trade</i> , ISBN 92-828-5938-X <i>Η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση και το διεθνές εμπόριο</i> , ISBN 92-828-5937-1	240
14	<i>Europe's Agenda 2000- Strengthening and widening the European Union</i> , ISBN 92-828-7888-0, 2000:6-7 <i>Πρόγραμμα δράσης 2000- Για μια ισχυρότερη και ευρύτερη Ευρώπη</i> , ISBN 92-828-7887-2, 2000:6-7	640
15	<i>Who's who in the European Union?</i> , ISBN 92-894-0490-6, 2001:5 <i>Ποιός κάνει τι στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση</i> , ISBN 92-894-0489-2, 2001:5	188

Table 2 summarizes the text fragment pairs in the sample, with the number of occurrences of particular phenomena and an indication of which language side they occur on. For instance, in the ‘logical relations’ section of Table 2, line (1), the three square signs (■), aligned on the right under GR, stand for *however, is due to, consequently* (see Appendix I). The same square in the ‘collectiveness’ section stands for the *for us Europeans* which occurs in the Greek version. The three squares in the ‘evaluation’ section stand for the *of course, all, after all* in the Greek version. The bullet (●) aligned left under EN in the ‘logical relations’ section of Table 2, line (9) means that the relevant feature appeared on the English language side and thus may be considered a counter-example.

Table 2. Parallel text fragment pairs vs. number of occurrences of enforced phenomena per language version (EN vs. GR)

	COHERENCE Phenomena enforced			TENOR Raising formality through			OTHER Phenomena enforced		
	Logical relations	Referential links	Lexical repetition	Passivization	Nominalization	Adverb preposing	Collectiveness	Explanation	Evaluation
	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR
1	■ ■ ■	■ ■					■	■	■ ■ ■
2					■		■		
3				■ ■ ■		■			
4	■			■	■				
5	■			■		■	■		
6					■	■			
7					■ ■ ■				
8					■				
9	● ■ ■ ■				■ ■ ■	■			
10			■ ■ ■ ■			■ ■			
11					■	■			
12				■					
13				●		■			
14	■ ■ ■	■			■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■		■	
15						■			■
			T	O	T	A	L	S	
	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR	EN GR
	1 11	- 3	- 4	1 6	- 16	- 11	- 3	- 2	- 3

Table 2 shows that in a sample of about 6,000 words (3,000 words for each language version) of material published between 1987 and 2001, the appropriate levels of coherence and tenor are established through *systematic* shifts (i.e. variation which almost always appears on the same language side), especially in the areas of logical connectivity (coherence), and of adverbial preposing, nominalization, and passivization (tenor).

### 3.2 Some miscellaneous evidence

The extract from which example 1 is taken is reproduced in Appendix I in order to provide an overall impression of what the data read like. This extract provides two further traces of variation (which could be relevant to some social psychological aspects of establishing identity across language versions): (a) a variation in the treatment of the concept of security; and (b) a variation in the collective perception of the communicative situation as it is favored on the Greek language side. (Evidently, one has to take into account that the extract comes from a period in which the intention to secure equivalence among the different language versions in the EU context was not as strong as it seems to be nowadays).

The relevant segment of the extract appears below, example (7). Readers may notice that the notion of security figures prominently as the subtitle of the Greek version (*'secure supply'*). The collective perception of reality on the Greek side has two manifestations in this extract: the term *common agricultural policy*, which occurs in the Greek title, and the phrase *for us Europeans*, occurring in the body of the text.

7
<b>Official English version</b>
Why is an agricultural policy necessary?
<b>An economic sector of strategic importance</b>
...
This is the reason why communities have always striven to develop and safeguard their agricultural production.
[ ] The primary objective is to cover the highest possible proportion of food requirements from one's own resources, in order to reduce external dependence and to forestall the risk of shortages. ...
<i>The Common Agricultural Policy and its Reform</i> , ISBN 92-825-6821-0/ Periodical 1/1987:7



**Back-translation of the Greek version**

*Arguments in favor of a common agricultural policy.*

*Secure supply*

...

*However, for us Europeans, secure supply in human nutrition has over time, become a matter of no concern, something which in the final analysis, is due to ...*

**Official Greek version**

Επιχειρήματα υπέρ μιας κοινής γεωργικής πολιτικής

**Ασφαλής εφοδιασμός**

...

Όμως για μας τους Ευρωπαίους ο ασφαλής εφοδιασμός σε είδη διατροφής έχει γίνει στο μεταξύ κάτι το αυτονόητο, πράγμα που οφείλεται σε τελευταία ανάλυση σε ....

*Κοινή Γεωργική Πολιτική για τη Δεκαετία του '90, ISBN 92-826-0634-1/Περιοδική έκδοση 5/1989:9*

The concept of security seems to be a top priority in the Greek context and is thus promoted to the title line of the Greek text fragment. Concerns for safety and security have been observed also in other genres of English-Greek translation practice: for instance, the Greek version of the L'Oréal advertisement, quoted above in Section 3.1, has reorganized the order of the shampoo's virtues, in order to give priority to its safety: its not detrimental to your health. Thus the *no ammonia* feature appears second in the English version, after *it's gentle*, whereas in the Greek version, *no ammonia* appears first: it is given prominence because obviously, the translator assumes safety to be an important issue (Sidiropoulou 1998:193). The EU text addresses a readership which is assumed to value security and collectiveness higher than do the readers of the parallel text.

Such variations in the social-psychological aspects of experience may vary cross-culturally and become manifest through translation, in particular regarding the extent to which values like security or collectiveness are considered more important than other values in a society. Hofstede and Hofstede quote the Greek-American psychologist Harry Triantis' account of the concept of *philótimos* as evidence of the Greek preference for the collective (as opposed to the individual): "A person is *philótimos* to the extent in which he conforms to the norms and values of his ingroup..." (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005:90). Such variations may be outside what we consider to be strictly grammatical features, as they fall into the social-psychological sphere, but they are worth considering in a multicultural environment since they *are* manifested through translation; also, they are features which

perhaps run the (highest) risk of disappearing through the uniformity and translation equivalence pursued in supranational environments like that of the EU.

The next section deals with linguistic variation across English-Greek in terms of intercultural models; the one chosen is Hofstede and Hofstede's model of social behavior. Following that, additional data will be considered in light of the model.

#### 4. The intercultural theory model and data processing

Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) theory of cultural relativism is based on cross-cultural research conducted in a considerable number of countries for about thirty years. I shall use their model of intercultural variation in social behavior to account for variation in the linguistic data. I shall attempt to trace variation in discursive values, which seems to be preeminent across English-Greek versions of the studied material.

Among the questions to be asked here are: Is it the hearer's or the speaker's responsibility to signal cohesion in discourse? Does the text assume an individualistic or collectivist perception of the communicative situation? Should discourse relations be made explicit or left unspecified? Is the speaker oriented towards the future or towards the past?

The model classifies cultures along five dimensions of intercultural variation in communication styles. It distinguishes between

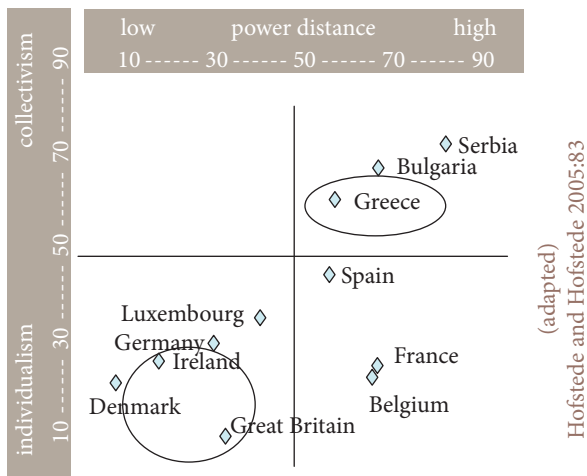
- a. high/low power distance cultures,
- b. collectivist vs. individualistic cultures,
- c. masculine vs. feminine cultures,
- d. uncertainty avoiding vs. uncertainty tolerant cultures,
- e. long-term vs. short-term orientation cultures.

The explanatory potential of the model has been examined in the context of translated advertisements (Sidiropoulou 2008b); there, English-Greek advertising was shown to provide evidence for Hofstede's and Hofstede's dimensional model. In the present context, the question arises whether the rather narrow set of linguistic variation types in the EU context provides the same sufficient evidence of variability as was the case for the advertising data.

**Power distance** relates to the extent to which cultures tolerate social inequality in social behavior, at work, at school, in the family, etc. Chinese and Japanese cultures are claimed to be high in power distance, since they tolerate power inequality in communication, in contrast to English, which is a lower power distance culture. The EU data show that Greek seems to favor higher power distance than does English: this is manifested in the preference for a higher level

of formality in the EU context, as shown in examples 4 and 5, in particular by the preference for preposing adverbials in the Greek versions. It also shows up in the Greek versions' tendency to use evaluating expressions like *all* (όλοι) or *in the final analysis* (σε τελευταία ανάλυση): the producers of the text assume they have to provide their personal insights in order to facilitate processing for the addressees. Highlighting logical relations in discourse also has an evaluating function.

The Greek **collectivist** tendency is manifested by the addition *for us Europeans* (για μας τους Ευρωπαίους) in example 1 and in the added adjective *common* (preceding *agricultural policy*) in the title of the Greek version. Traces of a collectivist perspective are plenty in Greek culture, in contrast to the more individualistic cultures of western European countries, in particular as these cultures are expressed in language. In the context of translation, the Greek rendering of English passive constructions by an inclusive *we*-reading of the verb's first person plural may be assumed to be another manifestation of a collectivist tendency on the Greek side. In non-translation contexts, such as the writing of abstracts for a world conference on applied linguistics (held in Chalkidiki, 1990), one observes a preference for personalization (e.g. by the use of *we*) in the Greek researchers' abstracts; this is in contrast to abstracts written by researchers from English-speaking countries. Thus, structures like the following were preferred by the Greeks: *in this paper we first examine... Second, we make a multivariate qualitative analysis of...* (Sidiropoulou 1995: 585). Similarly, Koutsantoni's study of academic writing (2005) confirms the collectivist preference on the part of the Greek authors. More instances of this



**Figure 1.** The place of Greece and English-speaking countries on Hofstede and Hofstede's international map with reference to the power distance and the individualism/collectivism dimensions (adapted from Hofstede and Hofstede 2005)

collectivist preference may be traced to the Greek cultural environment; a more systematic exploration is needed here.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1 shows where Greece stands on the Hofstede and Hofstede international map with reference to the dimensions 'power distance' and 'individualism-collectivism'. Greece's position is different from that of the English-speaking countries, in that Greek favors a higher power distance than does English, just as Greek culture prefers a more collectivist behavior in the sociolinguistic sphere. The EU data do seem to confirm the orientations attributed to the Greek culture relative to those manifested in the English language texts considered in the present paper.

As to **uncertainty avoidance**, cultures which exhibit this trait worry mostly about health and money; as a result, new products on the market are received with caution (compare the rearrangement of the virtues of the L'Oréal shampoo in order to assign priority to the health issue). Likewise in cultures that avoid uncertainty, investment strategies are conservative rather than high-risk, as these cultures prefer to avoid unstructured situations and have an emotional need for legal regulation (Hofstede and Hofstede, *ibid*).

The EU data provide quite a few instances where Greece (in its culture and language) seems to be at the high end of uncertainty avoidance. In contrast to English, the Greek versions of the EU texts exhibit traces of a stronger tendency towards uncertainty avoidance, both within and outside of the grammar, as shown in the following:

#### OUTSIDE OF THE GRAMMAR

The Greek text fragments in ex. 7 and Appendix I promote the concept of security to title status; this is taken as an indication that Greek society tolerates uncertainty less than English society does, and consequently prefers to highlight security.

#### INSIDE THE GRAMMAR

By expanding its referential links, the Greek version of the EU text (in exx. 1 & 2 and Appendix I) further indicates that Greek prefers to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity of reference, also at the discourse level.

Furthermore, as ex. 8 shows, Greek tends to upfront the source of the information provided, due to a tendency to remove any ambiguity with respect to the source's reliability.

8

**Official English version**

Competition must be fair

It is illegal **under EU rules** for businesses to fix prices or carve up markets between them. ...

[http://europa.eu/pol/comp/overview\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/comp/overview_en.htm)

**Back-translation of the Greek version**

*Competition must be fair*

*According to EU rules, businesses break the law when fixing prices or carving up markets between them..*

**Official Greek version**

Ο ανταγωνισμός πρέπει να είναι θεμιτός

Σύμφωνα με τους κανόνες της ΕΕ, οι επιχειρήσεις παρανομούν όταν καθορίζουν τιμές ή κατανέμουν τις αγορές μεταξύ τους. ...

[http://europa.eu/pol/comp/overview\\_el.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/comp/overview_el.htm)

This ‘up-fronting’ is extensively practiced in the Greek versions of the EU texts as well as in the press: as example 8 shows, the adverbial expression *according to* is often moved to the front in Greek, in contrast to English, which does not seem to favor this structure.

Another indication that Greek avoids uncertainty and ambiguity is that it emphasizes the terms and conditions under which a rule may be upheld: the Greek version in example 7 avoids the readily available translation of the conjunction *if* (*αν*) and prefers terms like *provided that* (*εφόσον*) and *on condition that* (*υπό τον όρο ότι*). This emphasis on the conditions under which a rule or regulation applies suggests a stronger tendency to avoid uncertainty. In example 9, the English conjunction *if* is rendered as *on the condition that* (*υπό τον όρο ότι*) twice, and as *provided that* (*εφόσον*) once, although for both, there exists a readily available option in Greek (*αν*). In addition, the Greek connective *εφόσον* (*provided that*) translates the English *because*. It is as if uncertainty avoidance overrides the need for making cause-and-effect relations explicit in discourse.

9

**Official English version**

Exceptions that prove the rule

Some exceptions to the general rules are possible. The Commission can allow ...

It can allow smaller companies to cooperate if this strengthens their ability to compete with larger ones.

State aid will get a green light if there is a real chance that a business in difficulty — or a new venture — can eventually become profitable and if it is in the interests of the Union (e.g. by preserving or creating jobs).

The overriding considerations are whether consumers will benefit or other businesses be harmed. Aid for research and innovation, regional development or small and medium-sized enterprises is often allowable **because** these serve over-all EU goals.

[http://europa.eu/pol/comp/overview\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/comp/overview_en.htm)

#### Back-translation of the Greek version

*Exceptions prove the rule*

*However, the general rule has some exceptions. The Commission can allow ...*

*Providing support to smaller companies is allowed **on the condition that** in this way it could strengthen their ability to compete with larger ones.*

*State aid is allowed to be given, provided that there is a real chance that a business in difficulty — or a new venture — can eventually become profitable and **provided that** it is in the interests of the Union (e.g. by preserving or creating jobs).*

*An overriding consideration is whether consumers will benefit or other businesses be harmed. Aid for research and innovation, regional development or small and medium-sized enterprises is often allowable **on the condition that** these serve over-all EU goals.*

#### Official Greek version

Οι εξαιρέσεις επιβεβαιώνουν τον κανόνα

Ωστόσο, ο γενικός αυτός κανόνας έχει μερικές εξαιρέσεις. Η Επιτροπή μπορεί να επιτρέψει ...

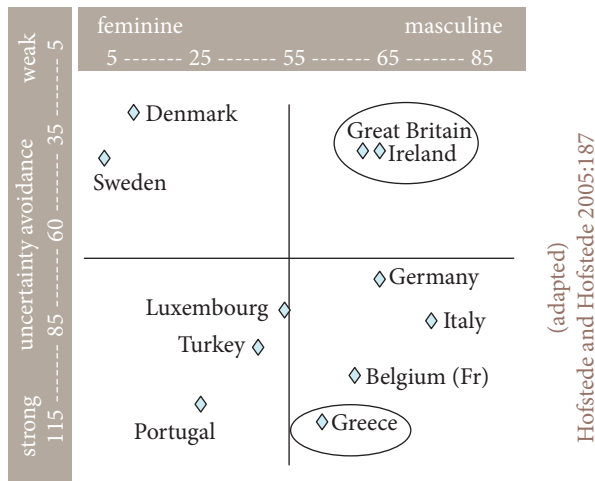
Η χορήγηση ενίσχυσης σε μικρότερες επιχειρήσεις επιτρέπεται, **υπό τον όρο** ότι με τον τρόπο αυτό θα μπορούσε να αυξήσει την ανταγωνιστικότητά της έναντι των μεγαλύτερων επιχειρήσεων.

Κρατική ενίσχυση επιτρέπεται να χορηγηθεί **εφόσον** υπάρχουν πραγματικές πιθανότητες για μια προβληματική, ή νέα επιχείρηση, να καταστούν κερδοφόρες και **υπό τον όρο** ότι είναι προς το συμφέρον της Ένωσης (π.χ., διατήρηση ή δημιουργία θέσεων εργασίας).

Αυτό που έχει βαρύνουσα σημασία είναι το κατά πόσο θα ωφεληθούν οι καταναλωτές ή θα ζημιωθούν άλλες επιχειρήσεις. Οι ενισχύσεις για την έρευνα και την καινοτομία, την περιφερειακή ανάπτυξη ή τις μικρές και μεσαίες επιχειρήσεις συνήθως επιτρέπονται, **υπό τον όρο** ότι εξυπηρετούν γενικότερους στόχους της ΕΕ.

[http://europa.eu/pol/comp/overview\\_el.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/comp/overview_el.htm)

The next dimension relates to the distinction between **masculine** and **feminine** cultures. Masculine cultures favor distinct male/female roles (the man buys the car, the woman buys the food). Hofstede and Hofstede claim that in feminine cultures, the roles of men and women overlap. Such variation has not been noted in the present



**Figure 2.** The place of Greece and English-speaking countries on Hofstede and Hofstede’s international map with reference to the uncertainty avoidance and the masculine-feminine dimensions (adapted)

EU sample, except perhaps in that the default gender in the Greek version is the masculine (e.g. *he* rather than *he or she*; *his* rather than *his or her*). Lack of ample linguistic evidence along the masculine-feminine dimension may be due to the fact that both English and Greek are assumed to represent masculine cultures, following the Hofstede and Hofstede model. Advertising data (Sidiropoulou 2008b) provide traces of a stronger masculine orientation on the Greek side, in that the roles of men and women in society are distinct rather than overlapping. (See Figure 2)

The final dimension of Hofstede and Hofstede’s model relates to **long-term vs. short-term** orientation in social behavior. Long-term cultures favor values and investment carrying long-term rewards, whereas short-term cultures emphasize immediate past and present values (Hofstede and Hofstede’s 2005 model does not include Greece on the international classification along this dimension). My intuition suggests that there is some preference for long-term orientation in Greek, as manifested by some future orientation in time specification. Consider the following data from a popular magazine:

(Original English text)

Some 35 years have passed since anyone has been able to **look back** at the beautiful sphere of Planet Earth, alone in the darkness of space. ...

(Back translation from the Greek)

*Some 40 years have passed since humans looked at planet Earth for the first time from far away and saw that beautiful blue sphere spinning alone in the dark vastness of space...*

(Greek translation)

Έχουν περάσει περίπου 40 χρόνια από τότε που ο άνθρωπος **κοίταξε για πρώτη φορά** από μακριά τον πλανήτη Γη και είδε την πανέμορφη αυτή γαλάζια σφαίρα να στροβιλίζεται μόνη στη μαύρη απεραντοσύνη του διαστήματος. ...

The Greek version's *looked at planet Earth for the first time* renders the English *look back* and offers a future, long-term orientation, which is lacking in the English version. Besides, the Greek version refers to 40 years, rather than 35 as suggested in the original; this, too, signals some longer term tendency in time specification: rather than referring to a period of 35–36 years (from 1972 to 2008, when the article appeared in the magazine, the Greek version prefers to mention some *40 years*.

Another instance was offered by a student;<sup>5</sup> it comes from the AIESEC (Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales) website. In the English version, the focus of interest is today, whereas the Greek version emphasizes future life and career prospects.

(Original English text)

Present in over 107 countries and territories and with over 50,000 members, AIESEC is the world's largest student-run organisation. Focused on providing a platform for youth leadership development, AIESEC offers young people the opportunity to be global citizens, to change the world, and to get experience and skills that matter **today**. (<http://www.aiesec.org/>, 4/9/2010)

(Back translation from the Greek)

*Present in 107 countries and territories, in about 1700 universities, and with over 40,000 [sic] members, AIESEC is the world's largest student organization. AIESEC is the international platform for young people to explore and develop their leadership potential, to be global citizens and to get experience and skills that greatly matter for their future life and vocational career.*

(Greek translation)

Παρούσα σε 107 χώρες και περιοχές, περίπου 1700 πανεπιστήμια και με περισσότερα από 40.000 [sic] μέλη, η AIESEC είναι ο μεγαλύτερος παγκόσμιος φοιτητικός οργανισμός. Η AIESEC αποτελεί τη διεθνή πλατφόρμα για νέους να εξερευνήσουν και να αναπτύξουν τις ηγετικές τους ικανότητες, να αποτελούν πολίτες ενός παγκόσμιου περιβάλλοντος και να αποκτήσουν εμπειρίες και δυνατότητες πολύ σημαντικές **για τη μετέπειτα ζωή τους και επαγγελματική τους σταδιοδρομία**.

(<http://www.aiesec.org/cms/aiesec/AI/Western%20Europe%20and%20North%20America/GREECE/Organisations/>, 4/9/2010)

Cultures differ with respect to the way they specify time: they can be monochronic or polychronic (terms originally due to the anthropologist Edward T. Hall, 1969: 173–174). Monochronic cultures emphasize temporal measurement and



deadlines, polychronic cultures focus on relationships and task accomplishment; they show less concern for meeting deadlines.

The US is assumed to be a monochronic culture (Neuliep 2006: 160). Greek seems to have a somewhat polychronic character; the typically Greek proverb “He is an Englishman in his time/timing” (*είναι εγγλέζος στην ώρα του*) seems to signal a popular awareness of intercultural differences as regards time specification and meeting deadlines. In the Greek translation of press releases, there are quite a few traces of future orientation in time specification on the Greek side: thus, in the example below, *before the end of this year* is translated into Greek as *towards the end of the year* (using the vaguer *towards* rather than the more precise *before*; Sidiropoulou 2004: 53)

Original English text:

...it [the military] is pressing ahead with preparations for presidential elections **before the end of this year...**

(“Many losses, no victories in Algerian war”, THE GUARDIAN, Feb. 17, 1995)

Back translation from the Greek

...Instead the military are planning presidential elections **towards the end of the year...**

(“Algeria: Deadlock extended”, I KATHIMERINI, Feb. 18, 1995)

Greek translation

...Αντ’αυτού οι στρατιωτικοί προγραμματίζουν προεδρικές εκλογές **για τα τέλη του έτους...**

(«Αλγερία: παράταση αδιεξόδου», Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ, 18 Φεβρ. 1995)

Example 10 provides a shift in time specification which is taken to indicate to a future, polychronic orientation of the “process called European Political Cooperation”: in the English version, it is claimed to have begun “in 1970”, whereas the Greek version presents it as beginning “in the 1970s”; in other words, the starting time is more vague in the Greek version and extends towards the future.

10

#### Official English version

A difficult challenge

...EU countries have always recognised the need for a foreign policy and defence capability. But it has proved hard to achieve. A timid start was made **in 1970** through a process called European Political Cooperation, whereby...

[http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/overview\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/overview_en.htm)

**Back-translation of the Greek version*****A big challenge***

*...The EU countries have always recognized the need to have a foreign policy and defense capability, but this has proved hard to achieve. In the 1970s a timid start was made through a process called European Political Cooperation, whereby...*

**Official Greek version**

Μια μεγάλη πρόκληση

...Οι χώρες της ΕΕ αναγνώριζαν ανέκαθεν την ανάγκη ύπαρξης εξωτερικής πολιτικής και ικανότητας άμυνας αλλά κάτι τέτοιο αποδείχτηκε δύσκολο στην πράξη. Τη δεκαετία του 70 ξεκίνησε δειλά η διαδικασία αυτή μέσω της Ευρωπαϊκής Πολιτικής Συνεργασίας, ενώ...

[http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/overview\\_el.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/overview_el.htm)

## 6. Conclusion

Part of the present research was conducted on the occasion of a presentation made to Greek EU translators in Brussels and Luxembourg, 2009, with a view to suggesting that even routine EU translation practices (along with the EU tools and electronic devices) reproduce and perpetuate discourse tendencies that place national and cultural identities in the balance; hence due attention should be paid to translators' freedom of choice when they decide on a particular translation. My contention was that if there is concern for sustaining intercultural difference, it is worth our time and energy to invest in intercultural research in a supra-national context.

The present study examined shared concepts of society through the contrasting lens of English vs. Greek, through discourse strategies and socio-pragmatic parameters of institutional discourse. Examination of a 3,000-word sample of English-Greek EU documentation provided quite a few traces of the intercultural differences that were at the basis of Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) dimensional model of cultural relativism. There are differences in the way cultures perceive the world, and such differences are traceable by observing the shifts that occur between the English and Greek versions of particular EU text samples; their respective discourses seem to be reverberating distinct and coherent sets of values and representations, which need to receive attention in multicultural contexts.

The linguistic features which were singled out in Hofstede and Hofstede's model of social behavior belong to the following dimensions:

One, the Greek versions show higher formality in discourse, an indication that Greek favors higher power distance than does English, along with a collectivist perception of the communicative situation.

Two, strengthened cohesion points to higher values in the dimensions of distance and uncertainty avoidance.

Three, overall, Greek rather favors a long-term orientation. This tendency may be weaker in the EU context than in other genres, evidently due to a need to strive for equivalence between the parallel versions of EU texts.

Four, in contrast to other text genres, the present data do not provide traces of the masculine/feminine dimension. (Note that in the advertising genre we did find some evidence in favor of masculinity on the Greek side; there, the roles of men and women seemed to be rather distinct).

More research on the cultural values favored in EU-produced texts is expected to shed light on the processes of interaction between languages in the EU translation context. Data from more strictly defined periods of EU history or from the development of translation policies might help us establish how the various traits and values have come to be established.

One question is whether and to what extent translators should be free to restructure discourse in a supra-national environment like that of the EU, and how intercultural dialogue could be sustained through translation practices. (After all, 2008 was the year of intercultural dialogue). In the context of intercultural communication, Klyukanov (2005) attempted to identify a formula (the ‘golden ratio’) which could handle interaction among cultures in a manner which would ensure the sustainability of intercultural differences. Klyukanov borrowed the notion from the Greek mathematician Euclid, who as early as the year 300 B.C. defined the Golden Ratio as a number which (rounded down to 1.6) “describes the proportionate or harmonious relationship between parts of something” (Klyukanov 2005:252). According to this ratio, two parts, no matter how large or small, can retain their identity as long as the proportion between them equals approximately 1.6. In intercultural communication, Klyukanov claims, the Golden Ratio reflects the ideal way for the different parties to relate — for example for different cultures how to interact while leaving space for intercultural dialogue. In combination with the translators’ linguistic insights, the Golden Ratio can function as an invaluable guide to decision-making in translation by highlighting the need and usefulness of identity awareness in the processes of developing self-esteem and understanding the Other.

Translation practice, by showing that differences in linguistic conceptualization are central to any language, is able to contribute a valuable take on the long-standing debate between universalism and linguistic relativity. The assumption in the present study has been that cognitive processing is determined by socio-cultural realities as they are experienced by the participants in the social interaction, and that meaning-making is both an individual and a collective experience (compare the cross-cultural variability that we can observe in conventions and norms, expressed as ‘placing the responsibility on the speaker vs. the hearer’,

‘making discourse easier/more difficult to process by highlighting/blurring adversative links’, ‘regarding security is an important, but value-neutral concept’; etc.). Linguistic anthropologists are often fascinated by their uncovering of variation in linguistic conceptualizations across (mostly exotic) languages; in this process, they somehow tend to neglect the European diversity. It is no wonder that routinely pressurized human translators are tempted to endorse this unfortunate attitude. If we agree, as a community, “about our intersubjective experiences” (Dirven and Verspoor 2004: 14), and if it is correct that the self is formed in social processes, translators should be given the chance, the freedom, and the help to allow them to reflect on the realities of their target languages and to allow their target versions to incorporate a metaphorically expressed, but reality-based understanding of language as power-related and socially determined action.<sup>6</sup>

## Notes

1. Such as Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005), concerning variation on the individualism-collectivism dimension attributed to Great Britain-Greece, respectively.

2. Halliday and Hasan (1976) mention reference, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion, and formal markers such as

- additive: *and, or, furthermore, similarly, in addition, etc.*
- adversative: *but, however, on the other hand, etc.*
- causal: *so, consequently, for this reason, if follows from this, etc.*
- temporal: *then, after that, an hour later, etc.*

3. Highlighting adversative relations in a target discourse (TD), when the source discourse (SD) has no overt indication of the adversative relation, presupposes some evaluation on the part of the translator, in that s/he critically identifies conflicting aspects of a situation which in the source version had been implicit: e.g. SD: *he was a friend and he betrayed her* > TD: *he was a friend but he betrayed her*.

4. Further instances of this preference for collectivity are visible in other cultural behaviors: for instance, I found that administrative decision-making in the context of my faculty at the university often favors a collectivist perspective, implicitly understood as preferable over a more individualistic stance.

The following is only a vague assumption, and needs further attention and elaboration. Those of my colleagues who have studied in the US (and are otherwise quite modest, hard-working people) seem to me to be more willing to highlight their professional achievements than are colleagues who have only studied in Europe. This may be due to the general US academic environment, which scores high on Hofstede and Hofstede’s individualistic scale. As these authors mention, “[e]mployed persons in an individualistic culture are expected to act according to their own interest, and work should be organized in such a way that this self-interest and the employer’s interest coincide” (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005: 99).

5. I'd like to thank Ms. Flora Kalogirou for drawing my attention to this example.
6. I am extremely indebted to the Editor and to my anonymous reviewers for valuable suggestions.

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## Appendix I: A sample of the data with shifts in bold

Official English EU text	Back-translation of the Greek version
<p>Why is an agricultural policy necessary?</p> <p><b>An economic sector of strategic importance</b> Farming is one of the most ancient of the human activities. Its products, which are mainly destined for human consumption are vitally important.</p> <p><b>This</b> is the reason why communities have always striven to develop and safeguard their agricultural production.</p> <p>[ ] The primary objective is to cover the highest possible proportion of food requirements from one's own resources, in order to reduce external dependence and to forestall the risk of shortages.</p> <p>[ ] <b>This</b> does not exclude trade in food with other countries, but such trade must be balanced and not lead to one-sided trade or [ ] critical dependence.</p> <p>[Agricultural policy should, therefore, be seen as a precaution — and as a contribution to <b>the security</b> of the Community.]</p>	<p>Arguments in favor of a <b>common</b> agricultural policy.</p> <p><b>Secure supply</b> The products of agriculture are destined mainly for human nutrition, <b>that is</b>, for the basic needs of the population.</p> <p><b>This role of agriculture</b> explains why all peoples have always attributed high importance to the development of their agricultural production.</p> <p><b>However, for us Europeans</b>, secure supply in human nutrition has over time become, <b>in the final analysis</b>, a matter of no concern, something which is <b>due</b> to the agricultural policy which allowed development of agricultural production.</p> <p><b>Of course, the goal of food supply</b> does not exclude international exchange, however, balance should be achieved and these exchanges shouldn't lead to one-sided and <b>consequently</b> to dangerous dependence.</p>

*The Common Agricultural Policy and its Reform*, ISBN 92-825-6821-0/ Periodical 1/1987:7

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Official Greek EU text

Επιχειρήματα υπέρ μιας κοινής γεωργικής πολιτικής

Ασφαλής εφοδιασμός

Τα προϊόντα της γεωργίας προορίζονται κατά κύριο λόγο για τη διατροφή του ανθρώπου, δηλαδή για τις βασικές ανάγκες του πληθυσμού.

Ο ρόλος αυτός της γεωργίας εξηγεί το λόγο για τον οποίο ανέκαθεν όλοι οι λαοί απέδωσαν μεγάλη σημασία στην ανάπτυξη της γεωργικής παραγωγής τους.

Όμως για μας τους Ευρωπαίους ο ασφαλής εφοδιασμός σε είδη διατροφής έχει γίνει στο μεταξύ κάτι το αυτονόητο, πράγμα που οφείλεται σε τελευταία ανάλυση με μια γεωργική πολιτική, που επέτρεψε την ανάπτυξη της γεωργικής παραγωγής. Βέβαια, ο στόχος του εφοδιασμού με είδη διατροφής δεν αποκλείει τις διεθνείς συναλλαγές, όμως πρέπει να επιτευχθεί ισορροπία και να μην οδηγούν οι συναλλαγές αυτές σε μονομερή και κατ'επέκταση επικίνδυνη εξάρτηση.

*Κοινή Γεωργική Πολιτική για τη Δεκαετία του '90*, ISBN 92-826-0634-1/Περιοδική έκδοση 5/1989:9

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## Appendix II. Some apparent counter-evidence

There seems to be some reservation concerning the potential of certain EU linguistic features to manifest identities. It refers to variation manifested between original and translated production. The intensity of the tendency for lexical repetition may differ in translated from original production. Sosoni (2003), for instance, traces a stronger tendency for lexical repetition in translated Greek EU texts than in original Greek production; however, I wouldn't take this finding to be canceling the importance of findings in this research. Following Baker, I would assume that enforced cohesion, on the Greek side, manifests the EU Greek translators' subconscious resources for restoring naturalness in the Greek parallel version. Baker (in Olohan 2004:91) claims that translators subconsciously tend to favor some simplification, explicitation, normalization (or conservatism) and leveling out. 'Normalization' means that translators tend to stress the features of the target language which are assumed to be *typical* of that language, and 'leveling out' means that if a range of options are available in a target language, translators seem to prefer the most central rather than peripheral features of that language. This is to say that translated texts do carry some subconscious preference for features which are typical of the target language (even though somewhat distorted) — an observation which translation theoreticians could exploit for intercultural research. After all, conclusions may be drawn on the grounds of comparable data, which does not have the luxury of content uniformity.

Enhancement of the logical relations, lexical repetition, and referential link expansion may not occur to the same extent in original production, they do, however, reveal the most readily available option which translators, as intercultural mediators, would resort to in their efforts to get the message across.

This type of variation has been anticipated in pragmatic research. Tyler (1992: 15) claimed that there are languages which attribute the responsibility for message processing to the hearer (American English) or to the speaker (Chinese, Japanese, Athapascan). Greek seems to prefer to place the responsibility on the speaker (Sidiropoulou 2004). This trait is in agreement with the earlier mentioned positive politeness character of Greek (Sifianou 1992) vs. the negative politeness attributed to English (Brown and Levinson 1987). The text producer in Greek is contributing his/her own perception or evaluation of the situation to facilitate processing. The English text producer leaves the task to the addressee. Another indication that the responsibility for tracing logical relations in discourse falls on the speaker is the *that is* expansion in the extract given in Appendix I. The Greek version is reorganized to provide explanation for addressees: *The products of agriculture are destined mainly for human nutrition, that is, for vital needs of the population.* This responsibility-on-the-speaker feature on the Greek side is a manifestation of the first dimension of the Hofstede and Hofstede model discussed earlier.

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