

Markéta Malá (2014) *English Copular Verbs: A Contrastive Corpus-Supported View*. Praha: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy. 254pp.

The monograph *English Copular Verbs: A Contrastive Corpus-Supported View* by Markéta Malá represents an important corpus-based contrastive study. The author presents the results from her long-term investigation of English copular verbs. The topic – the contrastive analysis of copular verbs in English and Czech – has proved to be well-chosen since the two contrasted languages are of different types and thus possess different means of expression for the category of copular predication.

Malá has worked with parallel corpora of English and Czech texts which were selected from the multilingual corpus *InterCorp* and which were, for the purposes of her study, supplemented with manual research of texts taken from the *British National Corpus*. This method has helped the author on the one hand to draw attention to interesting phenomena connected with the searching for adequate Czech counterparts of English copular predications and on the other to reveal certain specific features of English copular verbs when translating them back from Czech into English.

The study consists of ten chapters, which are concerned with the author's theoretical framework and the method applied in the analysis (Chapters Two to Seven) and thorough exemplifications of the results of contrastive analysis comprising above all a comparison of individual types of English copular verbs and their Czech counterparts (Chapters Eight to Eleven). I consider the fact that the author approaches her data from both English and Czech perspectives of crucial importance. This approach has enabled her to obtain important results concerning both formal and functional features of copular predications, which is, in my opinion, the author's greatest contribution, in particular for translation studies and further research of copular predications in both languages contrasted in the study.

In the introductory part (Chapter One) Malá outlines different existing views on the understanding of copular verbs with a special focus on the differences between English and Czech. The following two chapters (Chapters Two and Three) delimit the author's research in the fields of contrastive and corpus linguistics. She states clearly that she is a disciple of Vilém Mathesius (1928) in the area of contrastive linguistics and in agreement with him emphasizes the necessity to approach language data from a functional point of view, since it is the only perspective that enables an adequate exploration and comparison of expressive and communicative means of different languages. As regards corpus linguistics, Malá draws attention to Libuše Dušková (2012) and her favourable evaluation of the contribution of parallel corpora to contrastive studies. She also

provides a detailed description of her language data, in particular the English-Czech component of the parallel corpus *InterCorp*. It is necessary to appreciate here that together with, for example, Johansson (2007) and Aijmer (2008), Markéta Malá is aware of certain limitations which translation corpora can bring; these concern the types of texts that have been analysed in the study. All the texts are fictional texts, and thus, as Malá herself openly admits, her results represent only one genre. This limitation, however, does not lessen the significance of the results obtained and the contribution of the whole monograph to further research.

In Chapter Four, which is concerned with copular verbs, Malá explains and exemplifies in great detail what she includes in the category of English copular verbs, from both formal syntactic and semantic points of view, while drawing attention to possible problems in distinguishing certain types of copular verbs and different ways of interpretation of certain constructions. However, she does not provide her own definition of copular verbs. In harmony with Biber et al. (1999: 435-450) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 263-266) she stresses that copular verbs belong to a group of verbs which express existence or relation and which attribute a certain quality to the subject of the predication. This quality is, as a rule, expressed with a complement, mostly realized as an adjective phrase. Nevertheless the complement can also be expressed with a nominal and prepositional phrase, or a finite or non-finite clause. The possibility of expressing a complement with an adjective phrase is considered decisive in the author's understanding when determining whether a particular verb (e.g. *get anxious* vs. *get into the room*, *stay sober* vs. *stay at home*) is copular verb, or not. As Malá herself stresses, her main concern is to discover the meaning imported into the predicate by a copular verb, and that is why the 'copula proper', i.e. the verb *to be*, which does not contribute to the semantic content of the predicative phrase, is excluded from her analysis.

Based on the application of both formal and semantic criteria Malá distinguishes nineteen copular verbs, which have been selected from a list of copular verbs according to Dušková (2006); these verbs represent the core of the investigation. After excluding verbs which do not correspond to the criteria formulated for her study, i.e. they do not require an obligatory predicative complement (the verbs *continue*, *stand*, *rest* and *make*), Malá divides the copular verbs under her scrutiny into four classes according to their content features: 1. verbs of sensual perception, i.e. *feel*, *look*, *smell*, *sound* and *taste*, 2. epistemic copular verbs, i.e. *appear*, *seem*, *prove*, *turn out*, 3. durative copular verbs, i.e. *keep*, *remain* and *stay*, 4. resulting copular verbs, i.e. *become*, *come*, *fall*, *get*, *go*, *grow* and *turn*. In contrast to nineteen verbs in English, there is only one copular verb in Czech – *být* [*to be*], which clearly indicates that the search for the Czech

counterpart and, on the other hand, the identifying of English counterparts can bring many different findings from both formal and semantic points of view. The same chapter also gives a detailed and comprehensible account of English copular verbs. The author presents valuable results about distributional, collocational and colligational possibilities of the verbs under examination in different functional styles. Most of these results are drawn from her manual research conducted on texts taken from the *British National Corpus*.

In the two following theoretical parts (Chapters Five and Six), Malá explains her conceptualization of equivalence and correspondence of translation counterparts and ‘translation paradigms’ as used in her work with parallel corpora. Within different types of correspondence, she distinguishes zero correspondence, in which case there is no Czech counterpart of the English copular verb (e.g. English *dignity seemed to give way* vs. Czech *důstojnost se zhroutila* [*dignity collapsed*]), and overtly expressed correspondence, in which case three different types can be distinguished: 1. ‘one-to-one correspondence’, 2. analytic correspondence, and 3. synthetic correspondence. In ‘one-to-one correspondence’ it is possible to find for the English copular verb and its complement a corresponding Czech counterpart, i.e. a copular verb and a nominal part of the predicate. The author subdivides this type of overtly expressed correspondence into two subtypes, namely a) congruent and b) divergent correspondence. The former entails that there is correspondence between English and Czech counterparts with regard to the syntactic functions of the sentence elements involved in the copular predication (e.g. English *was* vs. Czech *byl*), while the latter is expressed with different sentence elements in the two languages (e.g. English verb *appear* vs. Czech adverb *zjevně* [*evidently*]). As regards analytic correspondence, this type is automatically divergent, since the meaning of the English copular verb is divided between two Czech components (e.g. English *feel* vs. Czech *mít dojem/pocit* [*have an impression/a feeling*]). By contrast, in the synthetic type of correspondence (i.e. fusion), the English copular verb and its complement are expressed with one sentence element in Czech, mostly a verb with a prefix (e.g. English *turn brown* vs. Czech *zhnědnout*).

The method of evaluating and searching for translation counterparts in the two languages under discussion can be considered of crucial contribution for the author’s as well as further research in the field of parallel corpora. Malá conducts her detailed and profound analysis in two directions. This means that on the one hand she starts with English copular verbs and searches for their Czech counterparts, while on the other she investigates which English counterparts exist in the English language for the Czech counterparts found in her data. This method leads to the delimitation of the so-called ‘translation paradigms’.

Since Malá employs a method of three steps in her investigation, the three following chapters of the monograph (Chapters Eight to Eleven) are divided into

three parts, each describing in great detail the results obtained in the individual steps of the method applied. All results are broken down in numerous tables and demonstrated with many examples. In the first step, the author works with English texts while trying to understand all the features typical of the selected copular verbs, including the realization forms of the nominal parts of the predicates and formal and semantic attributes of the subject. For example, in the case of perceptual verbs, she also attempts to identify formal and semantic qualities of the recipient. In the second step, Malá searches for Czech counterparts of English copular verbs, i.e. the ‘translation paradigms’ for the translation correspondences in Czech. She assumes that formally different constructions which share the same content also have the same translation counterparts. In the third step, which starts with Czech texts, Malá attempts to find out whether it is possible to discover a translation counterpart in English for a typical Czech translation counterpart as a marker of a certain meaning. This means that she starts from a Czech marker of a certain meaning and then proceeds to different realization forms of its expression in English. In order to enhance this method, she uses original English texts, in which she searches for certain constructions with the aim of finding out whether they have the same meaning (aspectual and epistemic) as the copular verbs selected for the analysis. Nevertheless there is a question of the extent to which it is possible to rely on individual translators and their endeavour to express and translate in an adequate way a meaning which is in agreement with the original author’s communicative goal in a given text. This problem, however, does not impair Malá’s valuable contribution to further research. She is well aware of these difficulties and that is why she suggests possible ways for future investigation.

I am convinced that the results of these detailed analyses supplemented with numerous exemplified samples from the two contrasted languages and accompanied with sound commentaries will be of great interest and relevance not only to experts working in the fields of English and Czech discourse analysis, but also to translators of texts from English into Czech and/or from Czech into English. The study can also be a valuable source of data and inspiration for Czech students of the English language and, last but not least, for the general public interested in translation studies.

Finally, let me state that Malá’s monograph, which is based on sound argumentation and supplemented with interesting results from the author’s own extensive research into authentic language data, is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to contrastive studies of foreign languages.

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