

TRANSLATING “EXISTENCE”: WHAT A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS TELLS US

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Translations in contrastive studies provide a unique insight into the relationship that exists between two languages. Toury (1981:257) claims that “an exhaustive contrastive description of the languages involved is a pre-condition for any systematic study of translation, and, on the discipline level, a developed CL [contrastive linguistics] is a necessary pre-condition for translation studies“. Generalized contrastive facts regarding specific features of two different languages offer a possibility to create a reliable source of data for building up translation competence (cf. Ebeling 1999). With this broader aim in mind, the present article focuses on the analysis of translation patterns of English existential constructions into Lithuanian. This small-scale study is corpus-based. The data are drawn from the parallel English-Lithuanian corpus, i.e. a collection of English original texts and their translations into Lithuanian (www.donelaitis.vdu.lt). The English-Lithuanian parallel corpus contains 70,813 sentences. The specific research questions taken up in the paper concern several issues. First, the frequency and position of the locative element in English ESs and their translations into Lithuanian are looked at to see whether the translated material follows the established patterns of the existential construction in Lithuanian (Kalėdaitė 2002). Another issue of considerable interest is rendering of the English existential verb *be* into Lithuanian; it is a characteristic feature of Lithuanian ESs that they more often incorporate a verb with its full lexical meaning than do their English counterparts. Finally, non-equivalent translations are given some consideration to find out what other constructions are chosen by the translators to relay the meaning of an English ES.