Translators and EU parallel texts: Help or trap?
A corpus-based study of terminological differences between EU and national texts written in Italian

Sara Castagnoli
Università di Bologna
Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Moderne (LILEC)
Dipartimento di Interpretazione e Traduzione (DIT)
s.castagnoli@unibo.it

Recent technological advances in the field of translation have determined an increase in the use of parallel corpus data among translators. Parallel corpora – i.e. collections of texts in one language aligned to their translations in another language, mostly known by translators in the form of Translation Memories or of websites offering access to parallel texts (e.g. linguee.com, eur-lex.europa.eu) – are becoming all the more successful among both professional and trainee translators in that they allow to observe translation strategies and solutions adopted by previous translators, and apparently offer ready-made solutions to translators’ doubts (e.g. identification of bilingual specialised terminology).

Freely available, reliable parallel data is however rather scarce, and almost limited – as far as the Italian language is concerned – to texts produced by the European Union. Even though translation quality is not an issue, translators – especially unexperienced ones – risk losing track of the fact that the language/terminology used within European institutions is a special language, specifically developed to reflect the supra-national nature of the EU. This is particularly evident with respect with terminology belonging to social science fields such as law and economics, where European drafters need to use – or create – terms which are not linked to already existing national concepts.

The paper reports on a corpus-based investigation of the language of EU and Italian national institutions in the domain of banking, and more particularly of Basel III regulations. The study shows that there are considerable differences between preferred EU and national designations, especially as regards multi-word expressions (or complex terms) and their frequency. The paper aims to shed light on such differences and on possible reasons for the variability (i.e. non-standardisation) that can be observed even at the intracultural level, arguing that awareness of such differences is of paramount importance for translators.

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIO
Sara Castagnoli is a research fellow and adjunct lecturer at the University of Bologna - School of Languages and Literatures, Translation and Interpreting, where she teaches courses on Specialised Translation. Her research interests mainly revolve around the use of corpora for translation/translation studies, lexicography and terminology. She is currently working on the computational and lexicographic treatment of Italian word combinations.