CROSS-LINGUISTIC EQUIVALENCE, TRANSLATABILITY, AND CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

ERICA C. GARCIA—FLORIMON C. M. van PUTTE—YISHAI TOBIN

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we shall be concerned with the relevance of translatability to contrastive analysis. The reason for this focus is that (non-)equivalence among linguistic structures is crucial to contrastive analysis, just as assumptions concerning the locus of the equivalence (once this has been established) are crucial for the application of contrastive analysis to teaching. Now equivalence in the structural sense relevant to contrastive analysis appears frequently to have been equated (explicitly or implicitly) with translatability, which in itself is regularly (and correctly) viewed as proof of some common semantic content across languages. Any thorough contrastive analysis, thus, quite obviously requires a better understanding than we possess at present of what can in fact be viewed as language equivalence. We hope to contribute to this understanding by analyzing data derived from actual translations, on the basis of which a conclusion can perhaps be drawn as to where, in any case, equivalence should not be looked for.

2. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AND UNIVERSAL CATEGORIES

Contrastive analysis necessarily rests on the assumption that languages are comparable (Stockwell, Bowen and Martin 1965: 262—264, 283); in particular, that there is some common (semantic) content which is (differently) expressed in different languages. This assumption is prima facie self-evident, and vouched for by the possibility of translation. Consider e.g. the following remarks (Lehmann 1982: 279—280):


'Equivalent constructions are those constructions which, at least sometimes, are mutually translatable. The relation which holds between such equivalents is called textual equivalence. In order to discover textual equivalents in a given context or situation one has to rely on the authority of a competent bilingual informant or translator.'

But the equivalence that arises from (inter)translatability also plays a key role in the identification and study of linguistic universals, where it constitutes the ultimate basis for comparison (Jakobson 1963: 208—9; Greenberg, Osgood and Jenkins 1963: 255; the common ground between contrastive and typological linguistics is stressed by Lehmann [1982]); without such equivalence, typological comparison becomes impossible, as Ineichen (1979: 9) points out:

'Gegenstand des typologischen Vergleichs sind . . . die morphosyntaktischen Strukturen der Sprachen und nicht der Sinn, den sie ausdrücken. Die Semantik—oder einfach: das, was die sprachlichen Strukturen bedeuten und gegebenenfalls bezeichnen—muß als identisch gelten. Trotz möglicher Variationen im einzelnen fungiert die Semantik als Invariante des Vergleichs.'

Moravcsik (1978: 6) also relies both implicitly and explicitly on translation as guaranteeing the equivalence that makes possible typological comparison in the area of syntax.

Both contrastive analysis and typological studies thus appear to rest on the following basic assumption:

There is a set of cross-linguistic (or cognitive) categories or functions that are:
i) distinct from one another 
ii) recognizable in different languages.

Quite naturally, a particular universal category or function will be differently manifested in different languages, but with respect to semantic content it is still the same universal category, regardless of the differences in formal expression.

From this it follows necessarily that the local reflections (manifestations or exponents) observed in different languages will translate into each other, i.e. be translation-equivalents, since they all go back to the same semantic universal category. Consider, e.g. Clark's 1978 study of Locative, Existential, and Possessive expressions. The three concepts of Location, Existence, and Possession are viewed as

i) distinct universal categories 
ii) recognizable as such in a great variety of languages and, presumably, in all languages.

Consequently, what is "existential" in one language translates into what is "existential" in another: and indeed Moravcsik (1978: 6) remarks:

'Clark's paper studies the translation equivalents [emphasis ours] of English existential, locative, and possessive sentences [emphasis orig.].'

Given the considerable currency and obvious importance of this view of language equivalence the following two questions seem in order:

a) Is it indeed the case that universal categories are distinct? Distinctness is easy to establish in a particular language, since their formal expression can (and does) serve in linguistic analysis to determine what is same, what different (cf. Bolinger 1977 and, generally, all of structuralist linguistics). But what is the criterion in the absence of form, i.e. when no language in particular is being considered, but rather Language in general? Typological studies regularly fail to make clear on what basis universal categories are distinguished.

b) Is it indeed the case that universal categories have distinct, identifiable exponents in particular languages?

Should the answer to b) prove to be negative, grave doubt will be cast on the validity of the first assumption: perhaps the answer to question a) should be "no" as well.
3. IDENTIFICATION OF A TEST CASE

It is evident that the first question, concerning the distinctness of universal categories, is hardly answerable at present — if only because it is not clear what the locus and nature of those categories are. But the second question, concerning the language-particular reflexes of universal categories, is more readily reducible to experimental test. If universal categories do have distinct exponents in particular languages, these must be identifiable: unidentifiable exponents of universal categories are of no use at all, and have at best only mythical existence. Once it is established what the local (i.e. language-particular) exponents are, it follows, from the very fact that the same universal category is being manifested in the various different languages, that a relation of translation-equivalence must hold among the different exponents.

One may then proceed further, and inquire whether
c) it is indeed the case that in actual practice—not in the consideration of isolated sentences, but in the actual practice of professional translators, whose daily bread depends on the successful achievement of maximum message equivalence—the exponent of universal category C in Language1 does in fact always translate into the exponent of that same category C in Language2. And this last question, concerning inter-translatability, is very readily answerable.

All that is required is a test case, i.e. a set of categories for which the twin claim of universal distinctness and cross-language equivalence has been made. One can then see whether real translations of actual texts do bear out the expectation of equivalence between the various local exponents of the universal categories. Indeed, given the crucial role that translatability plays in the recognition of universal categories, translation data are not only highly relevant but in fact appear to be the most appropriate kind of material on which to test the assumption of equivalence.

In our opinion, Locative and Existential provide an ideal test case for the following reasons:

i) these are semantic categories that not only serve an obvious communicative need (Lyons 1977: 690), but are also claimed to be cognitively homogeneous (Lyons 1968: 496, 1977: 722—723; Clark 1978: 89), so that they can be expected to “correspond” across languages;

ii) they have been the object of a comparative-typological study
within the Language Universals Project at Stanford University (Clark 1978);

iii) locative/existential messages are in themselves so frequent that a high number of varied instances can be expected to occur in any text: the collection of a reliable corpus is thus facilitated;

iv) locative/existential messages are among the most frequent exploitations of particular forms (and/or constructions) which have been the object of independent, language-specific analysis in Dutch (Kirsner 1979), Hebrew (Tobin 1982), and Spanish (v. Putte 1983).

With the area of comparison established, it becomes necessary to identify the language-particular exponents of the (allegedly) universal categories "existential" and "locative", in order to see whether cross-linguistic equivalence does hold in actual translation.

It is essential to note that if circularity is to be avoided, the test must be carried out on the basis of, and through, specific forms identified as the regular exponents of the universal category in the particular languages. If this is not done, and the responsibility of expressing the universal category is not pinned on a specific form or construction in a particular language (so that mere translatability remains the criterion for equivalence) the test will necessarily come out right every time. It is only when equivalence is controllable via the identification of specific forms that we have a reliable means of testing the general assumptions concerning universal categories.

The next step, then, is the identification of the "regular" or "proper" language-particular exponents of Location and Existence. To establish this we cannot, of course, appeal to the practice of translators: if we do this, our test will once more become circular. We must therefore seek out, as best possible, Location and Existence "pure", and identify their prototypical expression in each of the languages to be used in the test. For this purpose the best data appears to be the translation-equivalence of decontextualized expressions. When this exercise is undertaken for Dutch, Hebrew, and Spanish, there emerge the following correspondences:

"Existential"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>Yeš uga (batanur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Er is (zit) een taart (in de oven)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>(En el horno) hay una torta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘There is a cake (in the oven)’
"Locative"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>Hauga Š batanur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>De taart is (zit) Š in de oven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>La torta está en el horno</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two sets of expressions clearly differ with respect to the following parameters:

1. Definiteness of the NP: indefinite in "existential" messages, definite in "locative" ones;
2. Word order: NP follows verb in "existential" messages, precedes it in "locative" ones;
3. Optionality of the locative specification in "existential" messages;
4. Lexicon: the specific (verbal and/or adverbial) morphology resorted to in the particular languages.

Now of these four parameters, the last one is obviously the most interesting for our purposes, since it is the only one where the languages clearly differ from one another and where, consequently, equivalence in translation can really be tested. We will, accordingly, concentrate on the morphological differences as being the most language-specific properties of these expressions: they also are, incidentally, the ones of greatest interest for foreign language instruction. We do not deny that definiteness/indefiniteness, the word order of the locative, or even its presence vs. absence, constitute important clues as to whether the message transmitted is a locative or an existential one. Far from it: the importance of these clues (as well as their pervasive presence in a variety of languages) is duly brought out by Clark (1978). But the very fact that different languages coincide with respect to these (first) three parameters strongly suggests that there is a natural, motivated correlation between these traits and the message categories "location" and "existence". They cannot then in any real sense be viewed as language-particular exponents of the universal categories. Lexical differences, however, where the arbitrariness of the sign comes into play, do provide us with the specific language-particular exponents our test requires.

From correspondences like the ones set out above a hypothesis can be derived as to which specific lexical expressions should match across the particular languages under study, when existence
resp. location must be expressed. We accordingly list below the forms we reckon as “proper cross-linguistic equivalents”, inasmuch as they appear to be the normal exponents of the universal categories at issue in the three different languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existence</td>
<td><em>haber</em></td>
<td><em>er + Verb</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td><em>estar</em></td>
<td><em>zijn</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to stress that these correspondences appear to reflect also the judgment of other scholars. Van Dam (1966: 36 § 51) makes an explicit equation between *estar* and Dutch *zijn* in locative expressions; conversely, most of the translations provided for Spanish sentences with *haber* (van Dam 1966: 491 § 621) contain the combination *er zijn* (cf. also van Dam 1966: 34 § 49). Our correspondences also coincide with Clark’s list of lexical expressions, in the case of Hebrew and Spanish (Clark 1978: 103): Dutch is unfortunately not included in Clark’s sample, but she does give German *sein* ‘to be’ as the verb used in locative constructions in that language (1978: 103).

Some remarks are now in order with respect to the choice of “normal exponent” in particular languages. For Dutch we have opposed *er . . . Verb* (in either order)⁴ to *zijn* specifically, rather than to any plain, *er*-less verb, because it is clear that while the presence of *er* does contribute to the communication of “existential/presentative” messages (see below, and n. 9), the mere absence of *er* does not convey location by and of itself.⁵ Moreover, as already pointed out, *zijn* is traditionally singled out as the equivalent of *estar* (van Dam 1966: 36 § 51), which is given by Clark (1978: 103) as the Spanish exponent of location.

The equivalence listed for Hebrew (vis à vis Spanish) is also Clark’s, as already stated. We have furthermore counted *ein* (traditionally viewed as the negative present-tense copula) and the non-present copula as equivalents of either *haber* or *estar*, because that is what is suggested by their treatment in traditional grammars, as well as in transformational and structuralist analyses which rely on the traditional categories (Berman 1978: 220—225; Berman and Grosu 1976: 275—276; Rosén 1977: 101, 225—226, Williams 1976: 406—411).⁶
We are now, in principle, ready for the acid test of comparing original text with translations. However, before we proceed to do that, it will be useful to contrast the equivalences that result from the universal-categories approach (that relies on cross-language translatability) with the results of language-specific analyses that highlight the internal oppositional value of formally distinct categories.

Independent analysis of the relevant lexical/morphological distinctions in the three languages (Dutch: Kirsner 1979; Hebrew: Tobin 1982; Spanish: v. Putte 1983) show that the language internal value of er...Verb vs. $\emptyset$ Verb$^*$ is not the same as that of ye$^\exists$ vs. $\emptyset^8$ or that of haber vs. estar, as can be seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>er</td>
<td>low situational deixis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\emptyset$</td>
<td>absence of low situational deixis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>ye$^\exists$</td>
<td>existence of x is relevant at present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\emptyset$</td>
<td>no claim whatsoever is made (regarding X)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>haber</td>
<td>hearer, fix your attention on x!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>estar</td>
<td>x is guaranteed to be identifiable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that in the individual languages “existence” per se and “location” can at best be inferences drawn from the presence of forms whose core invariant meaning is not existence or location. Even in the case of Hebrew ye$^\exists$, where we come the closest to “existentiality” as a meaning, a restriction follows from ye$^\exists$ opposition to other forms. Indeed, Tobin (1982: 343 n. 6) indicates the existence in Hebrew of other particles to which ye$^\exists$ (and ein) may be opposed, and which highlight different views of restriction on existence. The derivative status of existentiality is clear in both Spanish and Dutch, as is that of location in all languages—most particularly in the case of Hebrew $\emptyset$, where all we have is the absence of any verbal or copulative element, and consequently an absence of any claim.

We shall now briefly discuss the oppositions in the three languages. To start with Dutch: Kirsner (1979: 3) analyzes er as the lowest term in a deictic scale which also comprises hier ‘here’ and daar ‘there’. The invariant meaning of er is low deixis, i.e. “least
urging that the hearer find the situation in question". Er is certainly exploitable for existential/presentative purposes (Kirsner 1979: 4, 80—81), but it can also be used to point (very weakly) to a location (ibid: 79). Finally, the contrast with the absence of er is clear in both "presentative" and "non-presentative" exploitations of er (Kirsner 1979: 2). Given the invariant communicative value of er, i.e. low (situalional) deixis, it makes intuitive sense that this form will be resorted to when an existential message is to be conveyed, but that more explicit place indications will be preferred for specifically locative messages.

Hebrew implicitly contrasts yeṣ with its absence. According to Tobin (1982: 347), yeṣ means existence of x is relevant at present. This signal alerts the addressee to the existence or presence of an entity X. When location is to be conveyed, however, the existence of X is necessarily presupposed, and yeṣ is accordingly unnecessary. "Location" is usually conveyed in Hebrew (in the so-called present tense) by the simple juxtaposition of what is most usually a definite (i.e. a presupposed, known, or identified) entity and the location.

The situation in Spanish is again different. The communicative contribution of haber is: hearer, fix your attention on x, while that of estar is: x is guaranteed to be identifiable (v. Putte 1983: 47). From these meanings there follows not only the extreme skewing in distribution observed for estar and haber with respectively definite and indefinite NP’s (v. Putte 1983: 244—245), but also other facts, irrelevant to the Existence/Location distinction, such as the exploitation of the two verbs in different syntactic environments (ibid: 51 and 294).

In short: there can be no doubt that existential and locative messages can successfully be conveyed in all three languages with the help of the forms discussed (inter alia: cf. our earlier remarks concerning the word-order and definiteness parameters!). But the different meanings and especially the different value relationships revealed by language-internal analysis strongly suggest that, as Langacker (1976: 336) puts it:

'semantically equivalent sentences in two languages often (if not always) have semantic representations that are not fully identical. Language specific details impose themselves in various ways in determining the precise semantic representation to be formed (via coding) when a given conceptualization is cast in linguistic form.'
We can now proceed to determine how equivalent (lexical) "semantic equivalents" really do turn out to be: not merely when comparing abstract possibilities in the translation of decontextualized sentences, but actually, in the translation of real texts. If er . . . Verb, yeś and haber (vs. ơ zijns, ơ and estar) are indeed the language-specific exponents of universal categories of Existence and Location (as is at least suggested in Clark 1978: 103), they should match or correspond when a text in one of these languages is translated into the others.

It might be objected that failure to translate by the "proper equivalent" in the target language is no argument against the existence of universal categories, or their reflection in particular languages: after all, local, context-bound considerations might force a departure from the original categorization, and prevent recourse to the "proper equivalent". There are two counterarguments to such an objection.

First: it is true that correspondence, or lack thereof, proves nothing, one way or another, in single instances, since considerations in essence irrelevant to the particular categories being tested may prove decisive in determining the particular form resorted to in translation. But numbers surely tell, and if the "proper equivalent" should fail to appear in a large number of cases, if equivalence, i.e. matching translation, should in fact not be observed in the overwhelming majority of cases, we can only conclude that languages do not have regular exponents of universal categories, and/or that such categories are perhaps not distinct, the way linguistic signs are distinct in particular languages. It is precisely because numbers tell that our test is conducted on a sizable body of data.

But (second), if the objection should be that match in translation (or lack thereof) is in principle irrelevant to claims concerning universal categories, the conclusion to be drawn can only be that the assumptions underlying such categories are declared untestable (and hence vacuous). Note that the assumptions tested in this study are no strawman set up for the purpose of the experiment: albeit tacitly and inexplicitly, they must and apparently do underlie much cross-linguistic comparative work. Whoever rejects our formulation of those assumptions (which, we readily grant, is not
necessarily optimal) is thereby committed to offering an alternative (and testable) formulation of the nature and status of universal categories.

We proceed, then, to the description of our testing procedure. In order to establish to what extent the “regular” language-particular exponents of Existence and Location do match cross-linguistically we have done the following:

i) located all the existential and locative uses of haber and estar occurring in García Márquez’ ‘Hundred Years of Solitude’ in the original Spanish text, *Cien años de soledad*;¹⁰

ii) located in the Dutch and Hebrew translations of that work the corresponding equivalents of the existential and locative constructions identified in the Spanish original;

iii) controlled whether either, both, or neither Dutch and Hebrew translations showed the corresponding (expected) proper equivalent of the Spanish original.

The comparison we have undertaken has three possible outcomes:

i) the Spanish original is *matched* in the translation, i.e. a sentence with haber (resp. estar) is translated with the form listed in Section 3 above as the “proper equivalent” in the target language; examples follow:¹¹

   p. 272 Es verdad que nadie ha estado en ese cuarto por lo menos en un siglo —dijo el oficial a los soldados—. Ahí debe haber hasta culebras.

   p. 279 “barur še-iš lo haya ba-xeder ha-ze mea šanim lefaxot,” amar ha-katsin la-xayalim. “Vadal yeš kan gam nesašim”.

   p. 322 ‘Inderdaad, in die kamer is al een eeuw lang niemand meer geweest,’ zei de officier tot zijn soldaten. ‘Ik wed dat er zelfs slangen zitten’.

   p. 289 “It’s obvious that no one has been in that room for at least a hundred years,” the officer said to the soldiers. “There must even be snakes in there.”

   p. 85 Hablaba el español cruzado con jerga de marineros. Le preguntaron dónde había estado, y contestó “Por ahi.”

   p. 85 diber sfaradit metahelet be-agat malaxim. šalułu hu heixam haya ve-hu hešiš: “ei-šam.”

   p. 98 Het Spaans dat hij sprak was vermengd met zeemansuitdrukkingen. Ze vroegen hem waar hij geweest was en hij antwoordde: ‘Overal en nergens.’

   p. 92 He spoke a Spanish that was larded with sailor slang. They asked him where he *had been* and he answered: “Out there”.

ii) the Spanish original is *not matched*: the translation shows a form other than the proper equivalent in the target language; we again provide examples for both haber and estar.

   p. 312 Un musgo tierno se trepó por las paredes. Cuando ya no hubo un lugar pelado en los patios, la maleza rompió por debajo el cemento del corredor.
pp. 319—320: Taxav rax paša ba-kirot mi-še-lo nišar makom panui be-xatserot ha-asabim ha-raim be-ritespat-ha-melet ṣel ha-misdaron.

p. 369: Het onkruid liet op de patio geen plek meer kaal en boorde zich daarna van onderaf door de cementen vloer van de waranda.

p. 331: A soft moss grew up the walls. When there was no longer a bare spot in the courtyard, the weeds broke through the cement of the porch.

p. 203: Hasta el último instance en que estuvo en la tierra ignoró que su irreparable destino de hembra pertiu-badora era un desastre cotidiano.


p. 240: Tot aan het allerlaatste ogenblik van haar verblijf op aarde ontging het haar volkomen, dat haar onontkombare lot van onrustzaaister elke dag opnieuw een ware ramp betekende.

p. 217: Until her last moment on earth she was unaware that her irreparable fate as a disturbing woman was a daily disaster.

iii) the Spanish original is cross-matched: e.g. a construction with haber (hence presumably an existential message) is translated into the target language with the proper equivalent for estar (the Spanish exponent for Location).

Cross matches are very serious. They reveal the inadequacy of either the translator, or of the allegedly universal semantic categories—in which case they constitute, in fact, counterexamples to the cross-linguistic equivalence hypothesis. Considerable attention will therefore be given to such cases as have been observed, which will be discussed in detail below. We consequently refrain from providing exemplification at this point.

6. THE DATA

We begin with the less problematic material, i.e. presenting the data on match vs. lack of match. In Table 1 below we show the number of three-way matches (both Dutch and Hebrew agree in translating with the proper equivalent), the number of two-way matches (either Dutch or Hebrew translates the Spanish form with the expected form), and the number of non-matches (both Dutch and Hebrew fail to translate with the proper equivalent). The non-match figures do not include cases of cross-match.

The figures reveal a surprisingly large amount of failure to match. This failure is highly significant because it is certainly possible and easy to produce matching (and, vice versa, non-matching) translations for the original Spanish sentences. Thus, the example given at the end of the preceding section (Spanish, p. 272), for which both the Hebrew and the Dutch translators produced match-
Table 1
Match vs. non-match in “existential” vs. “locative” messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Existential (haber)</th>
<th>Locative (estar)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-way match</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-way match</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Hebrew</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Dutch</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No match (3-way)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near matches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Hebrew</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ing translations, can be (grammatically and idiomatically) rendered in non-matching fashion as

'you can even find snakes in here'
efsar afilu limtso kan nexasim
ik wed dat hier zelfs slangen te vinden zijn.

Conversely, the non-matching example from Spanish p. 312 could have been rendered with a matching gloss as

mi-še-lo-haya makom panui be-xatserot
toen er op de patio geen kale plek meer was

which are modeled on the English translation (p. 331) with ‘there is’.

The translators, however, have opted for a matching alternative in the one case, for a non-matching one in the other. Two explanations suggest themselves:

i) the translators are bad and unreliable;
ii) in context (rather than when the sentences are taken in isolation) one or the other alternative proves more appropriate, in view of the general overall message.

The first alternative cannot be dismissed out of hand: mis-translations are possible and do occur. However, in our data there is only one case of mis-translation, i.e. the cross-match is due to a failure to grasp the sense conveyed in the original:
p. 182 ... escuchaba las escalas metódicas, tenaces, desconsoladas, y pensaba que esa música *estaba* en el mundo, mientras ella se consumía tejiendo coronas de palmas funébres.

p. 188 ... ve-hiskiva la-sulamot ha-sitatiim, ha-akšaniim, ha-medakim, ve-xašva še-be-zman se-yes muzika ka-zot ba-olam, hi mexala et xayeiha be-kliyat zerei-avlut ve-anfei arava.

p. 214 ... luisterde ze naar de methodische, hardnekkige, neerslachtige loopjes en bedacht dat die muziek tenminste in de wereld *was*, terwijl zijzelf verkommerde bij het weven van rouwwre.nnjes en rouwpalmen.

p. 195 ... she would listen to the methodical, stubborn, heartless scales and think that that music *was* in the world while she was being consumed as she wove funeral wreaths.

Here *estar* is properly translated with (plain) *zijn* into Dutch and, of course, no *er*, given the definiteness of the entity referred to, and the importance of indicating its place, so different from that where Fernanda found herself. Hebrew, however, shows *yes*. In our opinion the translator has failed, in this one case, to grasp the message of the original, which stresses the contrast between the scales’ freedom—they are in the world—and Fernanda’s seclusion. This contrast fails to come across in the Hebrew version, which, rather irrelevantly, stresses the existence of (the) music in the world.

Nevertheless, inadequacy of the translators cannot be the reason for the high percentage of non-matches, and for two (equally strong) reasons. First, on the basis of our (near) native knowledge of the target languages as well as of Spanish we can confidently assert that the translations used in this study are not only faithful but good, well-written and idiomatic renderings into Hebrew and Dutch of the Spanish original. They are in fact more accurate translations than the English one we have resorted to for the English glosses.

Second, and even more important: if the translators had in fact been incompetent, we should, necessarily, expect a random distribution of match and non-match throughout the text. This, however, is not the case. On the contrary: as will be demonstrated below, match, versus lack thereof, proves to be highly sensitive to contextual factors.

We begin with the first instance of non-randomness. It is interesting that the failure to match is proportionately greater in the case of Spanish *estar* than of Spanish *haber*—*estar* being precisely the more frequent of the two. It is also with *estar* that we have observed a very large number of what we might call “near matches”, i.e. *estar* is translated not with *zijn* but with Dutch *zitten 'sit', liggen
'lie', staan 'stand', hangen 'hang' and zich bevinden 'to find oneself', or with Hebrew כ-ם-ד 'stand', י-ט-ט 'sit'. These near-matches have been excluded from the non-matches reported in the upper part of the table: this makes the high percentage of non-match with estar even more significant.

An explanation for the different behaviour of the Spanish verbs haber and estar readily suggests itself when we consider the (language-internal) meanings of these forms. The meaning of estar (cf. section 4 supra) is extremely imprecise: it merely guarantees the identifiability of its subject, which is not saying much, given the normal definiteness of subjects generally. Estar can thus be viewed as a basically unmarked form, whose use is negatively determined, by opposition to more precise forms. Haber, in comparison, is much more specific, and lends itself better for a specialized message. And indeed, haber (=hearer, fix your attention on x!) is severely restricted in its exploitations, while estar is much more versatile (Ramsey-Spaulding 1956: 308-315, 362, 403-406; v. Putte 1983: 294). This difference in degree of specificity between the two verbs accounts, at one and the same time, for the different number of instances (estar is more frequent than haber) and for the greater divergence in the translations observed for estar: the less specific the meaning of the form, the greater the chance that the surrounding context may determine the message perceived, and thus favour translation by something other than the "proper (locative) equivalent" in the target language.

Now it might be supposed that this difference between haber and estar is primarily due to our failing to restrict ourselves to purely locative messages. Our point is, precisely, that with estar there is no such thing as "pure locative" (vs. "pure non-locative") messages. Nonetheless, in the interest of the exercise, and in order to submit the cross-linguistic equivalence hypothesis to the severest test, we have striven most conscientiously to identify not only all the (most) locative uses of estar, but only these. And it is this hand-picked set of uses that shows so high a percentage of non-match, and so very many near-matches.

Even more damaging to the cause of cross-linguistic equivalence (based on universal categories) is the non-negligible number of cases where cross-matching occurs: cf. Table 2 below.

Not surprisingly, the less specific estar is now less often cross-matched than the more specific haber—but what is interesting to
Table 2
Cross-matches with haber and estar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>haber</th>
<th>estar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-way cross-match</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-way cross-match</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Dutch</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Hebrew</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

note is that Dutch cross-matches Spanish *haber* more often than Hebrew does. The reason becomes clear when we compare the language-specific meanings of the alleged existential equivalents. The meaning of Hebrew *yeS* (i.e. existence of x is relevant at present) is hardly compatible with X’s existence being irrelevant, or to be taken for granted. In consequence, the assertion that the existence of X is relevant at present can be understood as implying a request that attention be paid to X. This is fairly close to the demand for attention signalled by *haber* in Spanish (i.e. *hearer, fix your attention on x!*). In the case of Dutch, on the contrary, the equivalence between the two “proper equivalents” can only be established via a fairly indirect inference, to be drawn from the presence of a weak deictic. Indeed, the meaning of *er* (i.e. low situational deixis) opposes the use of this form to either strong situational deixis (in which case the locative aspect of the message is foregrounded) or to no deixis at all (i.e. the absence of *er*). In this last case the setting becomes totally unimportant and X, by contrast, appears to be foregrounded with respect to the backgrounded setting. The “existential” exploitation of *er*, then, results from striking a delicate balance of attention between setting and X—an inferential mechanism obviously very different from the more direct contributions of *yeS* and *haber*. The overall structure of the cross-match data can thus be understood if we start not from the assumption of equivalence, but rather from the language-internal value of the (allegedly equivalent) forms.

We shall now inquire more closely into the match, non-match, and cross-match data, seeking for generalizations that characterize these three groups of examples. Comparison of the 24 cases of three-way match with the 22 cases of non-match for *haber* (Table 1) show a striking skewing: the majority of the three-way match cases
consists of instances where X (the entity introduced, whose existence is worthy of attention) is presented by itself; on the other hand, most of the cases where haber fails to be matched show the X to be relevant to another event—or entity—i.e. X does not exist independently. Before presenting the relevant figures we shall give examples of either type, for both three-way match, and for non-match. Since what is crucial is the type of context in the Spanish original, we shall limit ourselves to the Spanish original and the English gloss.

**Three-way match**

**X presented by itself**

p. 67 Al conocer el nombre de la novia, sin embargo, Jose Arcadio Buendía enrojeció de indignación. "El amor es una peste", tronó. "Habiendo tantas muchachas bonitas y decentes, lo único que se te ocurre es casarte con la hija del enemigo."

p. 72 When he learned the name of the fiancée, however, José Arcadio Buendía grew red with indignation. "Love is a disease," he thundered. "With so many pretty and decent girls around, the only thing that occurs to you is get married to the daughter of our enemy."

p. 219 Fernanda se dio cuenta, sin embargo, de que había un sol de clair-videncia en las sombras de ese desvarío, pues Ursula podía decir sin titubeos cuánto dinero se había gastado en la casa durante el último año.

p. 234 Fernanda, however, realized that there was a sun of clairvoyance in the shadows of that wandering, for Ursula could say without hesitation how much money had been spent in that house during the previous year.

**X relevant to something else**

p. 253 Una noche, mientras Meme estaba en el baño, Fernanda entró en su dormitorio por casualidad, y había tantas mariposas que apenas se podía respirar.

p. 271 One night, while Meme was in the bathroom, Fernanda went into her bedroom by chance and there were so many butterflies that she could scarcely breathe.

p. 40 Había por aquella época tanta actividad en el pueblo y tantos trajines en la casa, que el cuidado de los niños quedó relegado a un nivel secundario.

p. 44 At that time there was so much activity in the town and so much bustle in the house that the care of the children was relegated to a secondary level.

**No match**

**X presented by itself**

p. 17 La ciénaga grande se confundía al occidente con una extensión acuática sin horizontes, donde había cetáceos de piel delicada con cabeza y torso de mujer, que perdién a los navegantes con el hechizo de sus tetas descomunales.

p. 19 The great swamp in the west mingled with a boundless extension of water where there were soft-skinned cetaceans that had the head and torso
of a woman, causing the ruination of sailors with the charm of their extraordinary breasts.

p. 23 Dentro sólo había un enorme bloque transparente, con infinitas agujas internas en las cuales se despedazaba en estrellas de colores la claridad del crepúsculo.

p. 25 Inside there was only an enormous, transparent block with infinite internal needles in which the light of the sunset was broken up into colored stars.

X relevant to something else

p. 77 Se fijó un mes para la boda. Apenas si hubo tiempo de enseñarla a lavarse, a vestirse sola, a comprender los asuntos elementales de un hogar.

p. 83 A month for the wedding was agreed upon. There was barely enough time to teach her how to wash herself, get dressed by herself, and understand the fundamental business of a home.

p. 298 Muy poca gente asistió al entierro, en parte porque no eran muchos quienes se acordaban de ella, y en parte porque esa mediodía hubo tanto calor que los pájaros desorientados se estrellaban como perdigones contra las paredes.

p. 316 Very few people were at the funeral; partly because there were not many left who remembered her, and partly because it was so hot that noon that the birds in their confusion were running into walls like clay pigeons.

It is clear that in the cases we have categorized as "X presented by itself", the existence of the entity is asserted by itself, and no consequences follow therefrom, whereas the examples classed under "X relevant to something else" show the existence of X being asserted for the sake of the relation that this has to other entities or events. Thus, one could not breathe because there were so many butterflies, birds died because there was such a high degree of heat, etc., while the manatees were merely present, existed, in the ocean, there were many pretty and decent girls in Macondo, and so forth. Now it is interesting to note that—as pointed out earlier—these differences with respect to the existence of X—whether it is self-contained, or relevant to something else—are not without consequences for the translation, as can be seen from the data in Table 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>X presented by itself</th>
<th>X relevant to something else</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-way match</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No match</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 17.076 \quad p < .001 \]
We observe a significant skewing: “X presented by itself” favours matching translations, while “X relevant to something else” favours failure to match. This skewing suffices to counter any suggestion that the failure to resort to the proper equivalent of existentiality is due to poor translation. If failure to match were merely due to an (occasional) inadequate rendering of the sense of the original Spanish we should expect random failure to match. But, as we have just seen, this departure from the original is not random: why should a poor translator systematically reveal his ineptitude under specific circumstances? The assumption of poor translation is, thus, obviously absurd, and we must face the question as to what it is that induces a translator to opt for a “proper equivalent” under certain circumstances, but not in others.\(^\text{13}\)

Why matching should be sensitive to whether X is presented by itself, vs. as relevant to something else, can be readily understood if we regard Existence not as a distinct, absolute (universal) category but as an inference creatively drawn by the language user. The less the context contributes to highlight existence pure and simple, the less likely it is that this (cross-linguistically) comparable inference will be drawn: the less reason, then, for the translator to resort to a form whose meaning may in fact suggest existence. Contrariwise, when the point of the message is precisely the (mere) existence of X, the entire context will point in that direction—thus prompting the translator to resort to the form which—in the particular language—can best suggest existence.

It is hardly surprising, then, that match vs. non-matching translation should be so heavily dependent on the contribution of the context (i.e. on whether X is presented by itself, or as relevant to something else). “Equivalence”, it would thus appear, is a property of global messages—which are, perforce, heavily context-dependent. But in that case grave doubt is cast on the possibility of identifying specific linguistic forms as the local reflexes or exponents of universal categories.

The same conclusion is arrived at when one considers the data for estar. If estar were indeed the Spanish exponent of Location it should match, in translation, with the respective regular exponents of that category in Dutch and Hebrew. What we find, however, is that matching translation, or failure to match, are—again—heavily context-dependent. Indeed, what contextual parameters should
favour matching can in fact be predicted from the concept of location itself. What is presumably relevant here is whether or not the entity is presented (in context) as located—not necessarily that the Spanish original has recourse to estar. We accordingly give below examples of cases of three-way match, as well as of no match, for two contextual conditions: the specification is strictly locational (time and/or place are specified) or it is not, i.e. though a place may be mentioned, other information is relevant as well.

**Three-way match**

*Only the location is relevant*

p. 292 . . . porque no quería ver el tren de doscientos vagones cargados de muertos que cada atardecer partía de Macondo hacia el mar. “Son todos los que están en la estación”, gritaba. “Tres mil cuatrocientos ocho.”
p. 310 . . . because he did not want to see the train with two hundred cars loaded with dead people which left Macondo every day at dusk on its way to the sea. “They were all of those who were at the station”, he shouted. “Three thousand four hundred eight.”

p. 357 Llamó a la puerta de la botica, donde no había estado en los últimos tiempos, y lo que encontró fue un taller de carpintería.
p. 379 He knocked at the door of the pharmacy, where he had not visited lately, and he found a carpenter shop.

*Other circumstances are relevant as well*

p. 225 Sin embargo, cuando Petra Cotes llevó a la mesa dos pavos asados, Aureliano Segundo estaba a un paso de la congestión.
p. 240 Nevertheless, when Petra Cotes brought two roast turkeys to the table, Aureliano Segundo was a step away from being stuffed.

p. 237 Aureliano Segundo aplazaba entonces cualquier compromiso para estar con Meme, por llevarla al cine o al circo, y le dedicaba la mayor parte de su ocio.
p. 254 At that time Aureliano Segundo postponed any appointments in order to be with Meme, to take her to the movies or the circus, and he spent the greater part of his idle time with her.

**No match**

*Only the location is relevant*

p. 148 La primera vez que estuvo en Manaure después del fusilamiento del general Moncada se apresuró a cumplir la última voluntad de su víctima.
p. 159 The first time that he was in Manaure after the shooting of General Moncada, he hastened to fulfill his victim's last wish.

p. 292 Sólo entonces comprendió Ursula que él estaba en un mundo de tinieblas más impenetrable que el suyo.
p. 310 Only then did Ursula realize that he was in a world of shadows more impenetrable than hers.
Other circumstances are relevant as well

p. 91 Se votó con entera libertad, como pudo comprobarlo el propio Aureliano, que estuvo casi todo el día con su suegro vigilando que nadie votara más de una vez.

p. 98 The voting was absolutely free, as Aureliano himself was able to attest since he spent almost the entire day with his father-in-law seeing that no one voted more than once.

p. 236 En aquellos ratos de esparcimiento se revelaban los verdaderos gustos de Meme. Su felicidad estaba en el otro extremo de la disciplina, en las fiestas ruidosas, en los comadreos de enamorados.

p. 252 During those moments of relaxation Meme’s real tastes were revealed. Her happiness lay at the other extreme from discipline, in noisy parties, in gossip about lovers.

It is clear that in the examples we have categorized as “only location is relevant”, the main point of the message is the localization of an entity (frequently a concrete one) in time and space, while in the instances classified as “other circumstances also relevant”, it is either the case that other information is provided by means of adjectives or adverbs, or that the entity is placed not so much in time and space as relative to particular circumstances — for instance, in the example from p. 255, with respect to a possible apoplexy. The quantitative data — presented in Table 4 below — show clearly that the contextual contribution has a strong influence in favouring (or not) matching translation.

Table 4

Correlation between match (vs. non-match) and the (non)relevance of non-locative elements in original estar context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Locative elements</th>
<th>not relevant</th>
<th>yes relevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-way match</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No match</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 11.24 \quad p < .001 \]

The data of Table 4 strikingly confirm what was already observed in Table 3 for haber. Both haber and estar thus show the same principle to be operative: where the context limits the message to “existence pure” or “location pure” the translations match in the overwhelming majority of cases, showing the “proper equivalents” in the target languages. But where the context is such that other conceptual elements intrude, so that existence and location are
overshadowed, no match is observed in the overwhelming majority of cases.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, then, the translators have done a fine job of rendering the original global message. But it is crystal clear that this original message is not to be identified with any specific language-particular elements: Existence and Location clearly are not equivalent to haber and estar in Spanish. Conversely, Spanish haber and estar cannot be identified with Existence and Location respectively: cross-linguistic equivalence clearly fails to hold at the level of specific lexical forms.

So far we have been concerned with the extreme cases, i.e. with total (i.e. three-way) match vs. failure to match. But it is also of interest to examine the cases where one language — but not the other — matches the original. Here the reason for match cannot lie exclusively in properties of the Spanish original: it must be sought, also, in the appropriateness of the respective target form for the general message to be conveyed. That is, the Hebrew, say (but not the Dutch) “proper equivalent” will be resorted to in translation when the meaning of the Hebrew (but not the Dutch) form is congruent with the original Spanish form-in-context. We shall try to show that this is indeed the case in the following discussion where, because of limitations of space, we shall confine ourselves to analysis of two-way matches for Spanish haber, of which we provide examples:

with Hebrew
p. 15 Ahí mismo, al otro lado del río, hay toda clase de aparatos mágicos, mientras nosotros seguimos viviendo como los burros.
p. 11 “kan al-yadeno, me-ever le-nahar, yéš kol minci maxširim maqimm, ve-anamnu xayimin ke-xamorim.”
p. 14 Daarginds, aan de andere kant van de rivier, bestaan allerlei magische apparatus—terwijl wij hier maar leven als ezels.
p. 17 Right there across the river there are all kinds of magical instruments while we keep on living like donkeys.

with Dutch
p. 121 Era una versión difícil de creer, pero no había otra más verosímil.
p. 122 kaše haya lehaamin le-girsa zo, aval lo nimtsa axeret, mitkabelet yoter al ha-duat
p. 140 Deze lezing van de gebeurtenissen viel moeilijk te geloven, maar er was geen verklaring die aannemelijker was.
p. 129 It was a difficult version to believe, but there was no other more plausible.

If we compare the cases where Spanish haber is matched by its proper equivalent in Dutch only, vs. those cases where it is matched
only in Hebrew, a striking skewing emerges: the two groups of examples are characterized by different properties.

For most of the two-way matches with Hebrew, the Spanish original shows a concrete X, and/or explicitly mentions a place, as in the following example:

p. 267 No había un espacio libre en el vagón, salvo el corredor central.
p. 284 There was no free space in the car except for an aisle in the middle.

There are very few instances of exclusively Spanish-Hebrew match where neither is the case: one such example is:

p. 307 No hay humillación que no la merezca una concubina
p. 326 There is no humiliation that a concubine does not deserve

In Table 5 we present the relevant quantitative data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>two-way matches</th>
<th>Spanish-Hebrew only</th>
<th>Spanish-Dutch only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete S and/or Specific place</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither condition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 4.065 \; p < .05 \]

The Spanish-Hebrew matches clearly show an overwhelming preference for explicit location and/or concrete X: the Spanish-Dutch matches, on the other hand, are equally divided between the two conditions. Concreteness of X, or its relation to a specific place, favour, then, an "existential" categorization in Hebrew, but fail to do so in Dutch. This makes considerable sense when we take into account the language-internal value of the respective equivalents. Hebrew yes builds existence into the very grammar of Hebrew, while the meaning of er (i.e. low situational deixis) makes no direct claim as to existence. The contextual factor we have considered (concreteness of X/mention of a specific place) favours the recognition of existence, and as such finds an echo in Hebrew, which makes existence relevant per se, rather than in Dutch, which does not.
We turn now to the cases where Dutch, but not Hebrew, matches Spanish. Examination of the examples reveals the relevance of another parameter, namely, whether or not there is a locative expression in the utterance at all and whether (if present) it precedes the verb and the NP. An example where the locative is absent (Spanish p. 121) was provided earlier as an illustration of two-way match with Dutch; the other two possibilities are illustrated below:

**Locative present, follows**

p. 198 ... protestando en español trabajoso porque no **había** un cuarto libre en el Hotel de Jacob.
p. 213 as he protested in broken Spanish because **there were** no rooms at the Hotel Jacob.

**Locative present, precedes**

p. 198 En un pueblo escaldado por el escai-miento de los gitanos no **había** un buen porvenir para aquellos equilibristas del comercio ambulante.
p. 212 In a town that had chafed under the tricks of the gypsies **there was** no future for those ambulatory acrobats of commerce.

In Table 6 we present the relevant quantitative data.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locative absent or post-posed</th>
<th>two-way matches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-Dutch only</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-Hebrew only</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locative present and pre-posed</th>
<th>two-way matches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-Dutch only</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-Hebrew only</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 10.289 \quad p < .01 \]

We note that the majority of the Spanish-Dutch matches show the locative either absent, or following verb and entity, i.e. a downplaying, back-grounding, of the locative information in the Spanish original. Why this should favour Spanish-Dutch match is easy to grasp when we take into account that *er* (essential ingredient of the “regular exponent” of Existence in Dutch) precisely presupposes a defocussing of locative information: *er* means low situational deixis. The Hebrew-only matches, on the contrary, are much less sensitive
to this contextual factor: if anything, preposition of the locative is more frequent than its backgrounding. This also makes sense: the connection between the categorization peculiar to Hebrew (yeḥ ́ = existence is relevant at present) and fore- respectively back-grounding of a location via word order is at best indirect. There is, accordingly, no reason to expect any strong skewing of the Spanish-Hebrew matches with respect to this contextual factor — and indeed, there is none.

We see, once again, that there is a reasonable explanation for the facts of translation (i.e. where match is observed with one language or the other): both the contextual properties of the Spanish original and the meanings available in the target language must be taken into account. But the very plausibility of the divergent distributions — Hebrew matches when concrete X’s and specific places are involved; Dutch only when the location is defocussed — demonstrates, once more, that match is not with Spanish haber as such but, rather, with the overall, global, context-derived message.

We turn, finally, to the cases of cross-match, beginning with those instances where haber is translated with an estar-equivalent in both Hebrew and Dutch:

- p. 256 . . . las barracas . . . en cuyos portales había niños verdes y escuálidos sentados en sus bacinillas.
- p. 264 ha-terifim . . . u-ve-fitxeihem yeḥ ́vim yeladim yerukim mezuzhamim al sereihem ́
- p. 304 barakken . . . waar in de portieken zeer jonge, vervuilde kinderen op hun potjes zaten ́
- p. 273 the miserable huts . . . in the doorways of which there were green and squalid children sitting on their pots.
- p. 271 Habia la misma pureza en el aire, la misma diafanidad, el mismo privilegio contra el polvo . . .
- p. 279 ba-xeder andu oto avir tahor, oto zox šakuf, ota xasinut me-avak ́
- p. 321 In de lucht hing dezelfde reinheid, dezelfde doorschijnende ́
- p. 289 There was the same pureness in the air, the same clarity, the same respite from dust . . .

The cross-match becomes readily understandable when we note that one example (Spanish p. 271) involves a definite NP, while the other (Spanish p. 256) contains a participal description of the entity. These two circumstances are perfectly compatible with the meaning of haber, which calls attention to the X introduced (not, be it noted, to the introduction of X!) but less so with the corresponding Hebrew and Dutch “equivalents”. The specificity of the entity favours recourse to more specific verbs (in the case of Hebrew) and it disfavours backgrounding in general (via er) in Dutch.
Spanish haber is cross-matched in Hebrew alone in only three cases:

p. 150 Siempre había alguien fuera del circulo de tiza.
p. 154 tamid amad mišehu mi-xuts le-maagul ha-gir
p. 161 There was always someone outside of the chalk circle
p. 228 . . . desde el amanecer había frente al excusado una larga fila de muchachas.
p. 235 ki le-min alot ha-šaxar amad tor arox šel banot beit-ha-kisei
p. 244 . . . because from dawn on there was a long line of girls, each with her pot in her hand.
p. 244 . . . y a las tres de la tarde había en la sala un cajón lleno de cartas
p. 252 . . . u-ve-saa šalos axar ha-tsohorayim kvar amda be-traklin ha-orxim teiva melea mixtavim
p. 261 . . . and at three in the afternoon there was a whole carton full of letters in the parlor

In all three instances Hebrew shows ‘stand’ — i.e. a near-equivalent of estar — while Dutch has er staan. The three examples have one trait in common, namely the order

(time specification (past) — Verb — Location — (NP)

in the original Spanish. The word order suggests that the location of X is relevant only at the specific time mentioned. Dutch — not surprisingly — has recourse to er, adequately rendering the back-grounding of the location suggested by the Spanish word order. Hebrew, however, opts for a specific verb ‘stand’, instead of the “existential equivalent” of haber, namely yeš, or a non-present copula form.

The reason, we believe, is twofold: in the first place, the back-grounding of the specifically locative information. We saw, in the discussion of two-way match (Spanish-Dutch) that this factor, if anything, disfavours Spanish-Hebrew match. To the down-playing of the locative information must be added another factor, namely the specificity of the event. Note that all three examples involve past events, for which the relevant time is mentioned. Now more information is generally available about what has already happened than about non-past events — not only with respect to the time of occurrence, but in general. This contributes, we believe, to the translator’s having recourse to a lexical item that is, clearly, more specific than the “proper equivalent” for Existence.

We shall now consider the thirteen cases where Spanish haber is cross-matched in Dutch (but not in Hebrew), i.e. translated by zijn (or ‘locative’ verbe such as staan, liggen, zitten i.e. “near equi-
valents of *estar* without any *er*. Of these thirteen cases, nine show the Location preceding *haber* in the original Spanish. An example follows:

p. 357 La anciana que le abrió la puerta... insistió en que no, que allí no había *habido* nunca una botica.
p. 424 Een oude vrouw... bleef... volhouden dat daar nooit een apotheek was *geweest*.
p. 379 The old woman... insisted that, no, *there* had never *been* a pharmacy there.

It makes sense that in contexts of this type, where the place is defined, or assumed to be known, a form like Dutch *er* (= low situational deixis) which rather de--emphasizes the setting, should not be resorted to. And indeed, among the cases where *haber* is properly matched by Dutch *er*...*Verb*, we do not find a single instance of the type *Y donde habia* *X* ‘*Y* where there was *X*’ in the Spanish original.

The position of the locative is of course not the only factor relevant to the presence of *er* in the Dutch translation: equally important is what we might call the presupposedness of the *X*. We give below an example — there are in all four of this type — where a Locative does not precede *haber*:

p. 163 A los doce años le preguntó a Ursula qué *había* en el cuarto clausurado.
p. 192 Toen hij twaalf jaar was, vroeg hij aan Ursula wat zich in het zorgvuldig afgesloten kamertje *bevond*.
p. 175 At the age of twelve he asked Ursula what *was* in the locked room.

In these cases Hebrew does show matching forms (*yes*, *ein*, non-present copula) but Dutch fails to exhibit *er*. What the four cases have in common is the specificity of the *X*, in the sense that it is known that something exists in the place at issue — as can be seen from the English translation of Spanish p. 163 — or the kind of thing that is supposed to be in the place is known (this is the case in the remaining three examples). These kinds of entity may well deserve to have attention called to them (and for this reason Spanish *haber* is used) or to have their existence asserted or denied (Hebrew *yes*/*ein*): but their presuppositional status is incompatible with the backgrounding effect of *er*, as shown by the following alternative translations of Span. p. 163:

hij vroeg wat *§* zich in het kamertje *bevond*  
‘he asked what *was* in the room’

hij vroeg wat *er* zich in het kamertje *bevond*  
‘he asked what *there* *was* in the room’
In the first case he knows that there is something in the room, and asks what that is; in the second he asks, simultaneously, whether, and what (cf. Kirsner 1979: 125 and 144--147 for enlightening discussion of precisely this difference). The greater uncertainty is efficiently suggested by the low deixis (i.e. backgrounding effect) of er. However, such a defocussing effect is clearly out of place in the cases listed above, where there is no doubt that entities such as the ones described can be expected at the place mentioned.

We shall now discuss the cross-match data for estar, limiting ourselves to the one case of cross-match with Hebrew, which is particularly striking. Cross-match with Dutch is due, every time, to the presence of er. As pointed out above (section 4), however, er is frequently (and legitimately, in view of its meaning !) used in Dutch as a weak locative.17 There is no reason, then, why it should not be resorted to in sentences conveying a locative message. This explains the considerable number of cases where sentences with estar in Spanish show er in their Dutch translation. An analysis of the distribution of er in Dutch translation of estar — particularly with regard to the choice of verb in Dutch — unfortunately exceeds the bounds of this study.

We turn, then, to the one example of Spanish-Hebrew cross-match with estar:

p. 305 “Aqui está la Divina Providencia”, pregonaba.
p. 313 “hine ha-mazal ha-elohi,” haya maksir.
p. 323 “here’s Divine Providence,” he hawked.

In this case the entity (Divine Providence) is clearly being introduced by the raffle seller, and the assertion of its existence is thus relevant. Hebrew relies in this case on hine, meaning existence of x is asserted (Tobin, in prep.).

This case of Spanish-Hebrew cross-match can profitably be compared with cases of match, such as

p. 15 Aquella mujer de nervios inquebrantables ... parecía estar en todas partes
p. 12 ... hayta ota iša ba-lat itsbei-ha-plada ... ve-nidme še-hi še-xol makom be-et u-ve-onu axat ...
p. 18 That woman of unbreakable nerves ... seemed to be everywhere, from dawn until quite late at night.
p. 87 “Perdone,” se excusó. “No sabia que estaba aquí.”
p. 87 “slixa”, nista lešaber et ozno. “lo yadati še-ata še kan”
p. 94 “Excuse me,” she said, “I didn’t know you were here.”

Here Spanish estar is translated, as expected, with Hebrew še because the existence of the entity in question is presupposed within
the context. This, however, is not the case with our example of cross-match (Spanish p. 305), and this is the reason why Hebrew is justified in drawing attention to the existence of the Divine Providence manifested in the raffle-tickets.

All the data presented, then, i.e. match (total, partial, or lacking) and cross-match, lead to the following conclusions:

i) the expectation of regular and systematic match among the alleged "proper equivalents" has not been realized;

ii) it has always (save in one clear case of mistranslation) been possible to bring into correlation contextual traits of the Spanish original with the meanings of the relevant forms in the target language, thus explaining why the translation goes one way or the other.

7. CONCLUSIONS

It follows from the preceding, then, that the actual translation data we have examined do not warrant the uncritical and naive assumption of cross-linguistic equivalence — the necessary consequence of assuming the existence of distinct universal linguistic categories, i.e. universal categories which nonetheless have regular, identifiable exponents in particular languages.

The many instances of lack of match (and particularly the cases of cross-match) suggest that existence and location (if indeed they are universal cognitive categories) cannot be identified with particular predicates in the different languages, nor do they allow us to understand what translates into what. To the degree that it exists at all, equivalence is global, between message and message, at best.

We conclude, then, that match (as well as lack of match) among particular forms can be understood only if we take into account their specific value in the particular language — i.e., how Hebrew yeṣ or Dutch er fit into the respective larger systems of which they are a part. To understand the details of (non)matching translation is tantamount, ultimately, to understanding why the form is used at all in the particular language. But for this we need local, language-particular analyses.

The implications of our study for contrastive analysis and language teaching are fairly obvious — and not particularly novel since, after all, the point of foreign language teaching is to get across the different articulation of semantic content that characterizes dif-
ferent languages. We must beware of concluding that mere comparability yields, eo ipso, an identical semantic structure of cross-linguistic validity. While the common communicative need can be used as point of entrée in teaching, what should be highlighted from the beginning are the facets relevant to the opposition characteristic of the particular language: students should be sensitized to the contextual aspects which — in the particular language — cohere with the one or the other form.

In short: there is no doubt that comparing languages is the only way of getting at the deeper, general, principles that underlie the functioning of all languages. But we can hope to make serious progress in the search for language-relevant universals only if our feet rest on the solid ground of an adequate understanding of how particular languages work.

Authors’ addresses: Erica C. García and Florimon C. M. van Putte
Dept. of Latin-American Studies
Leiden University, Postbus 9515,
NL-2300 RA Leiden (The Netherlands)
Yishai Tobin
Dept. of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics,
Ben Gurion University of the Negev,
P.O.B. 653, Be’er Sheva 84105 Israel

NOTES

* This is a much expanded version of a paper presented at the 7th. AILA Congress in August 1984, under the title “Contrastive Analysis: the Problem of Equivalence.” For helpful commentary on earlier versions of this paper we are indebted to R. S. Kirsner, S. Thompson and W. U. Dressier.

1 The identification of ‘translatability’ with ‘equivalence’ is quite common within contrastive analysis, cf. Nickel (1971: 37), Di Pietro (1971: 48—49); when it is not made, the issue appears to be explicitly avoided, cf. Pit Corder (1973: 240, fn. 1); Lado (1957: 77); Nickel (1971: 5).

2 Ineichen (1979: 11) appears to make a distinction between the global signification of an utterance, i.e. the message conveyed, and the categorial meaning of the constituent parts, which is bound to the language-particular structure of the utterance.

3 Both yes (the existential particle) and ein (its negative counterpart) are traditionally considered to be ‘present tense suppletive forms’ of the copula h-y-y (Tobin 1982: 341).

4 We are counting as the Dutch equivalent of haber, constructions which contain er, regardless of the order of er vis à vis the verb. Thus, both

Er blafte een hond in de tuin ‘a dog barked in the garden’
and

Niemand war er op die weg ‘there was nobody on that road’
convey existential messages.
Consider, for instance:
Er worden terroristen gefusilleerd 'Terrorists are being shot' versus Terroristen worden gefusilleerd 'Terrorists get shot (not hung)' The "plain" sentence communicates a generic message in which location plays a role, but in which the main point does not seem to be a locative one. I.e., the event, as such, must "take place", but the entities involved in it are not being placed. (R. S. Kirsner, p.c.)

The fact that non-present copula and *in* can span the opposition between locativeness and existentiality already shows how tenuous the dividing line between these two (ill-defined) universal categories actually is.

Since the language-specific analysis naturally works in terms of oppositions, there is no reason to expect that *er* . . . *Verb* should prove a relevant category in opposition to specifically *zijn*. Kirsner's analysis is, thus, of the effect brought about by the presence of *er*, so that the relevant contrast is *er* . . . *Verb* vs. absence of *er*.

The "existential particle" *yeh* is inflected for (at least) number and gender (*yehno* [masc. sg.], *yehna* [fem. sg.], *yehnam* [masc. pl.], *yehnan* [fem. pl.]). Since none of the inflected forms occur in our data we will deal here only with the *yeh* / 0 "opposition". The *yeh/yehno, a, am, an* opposition is discussed in Tobin 1982.

The introduction of an entity on the scene—what is achieved in the "presentative" exploitation of *er*—is what most appears to correspond to the assertion of existence of that entity. Consider, for instance, the correlation of *er* with indefinites (Kirsner 1979: 113), particularly for the order Loc-Verb-NP, claimed to be characteristic of existential constructions (Clark 1978: 91—94; 88).

In view of the fact that *estar* also lends itself to non-locative uses, such as *María está muy contenta 'Mary is very happy'* or as *María está muy contenta en Londres 'Mary is very happy in London'* where a locative expression is also present in the utterance, we have classified the message as locative or not depending on the importance of the place in the global message. The normal reflex is word order: closer grouping of the verb with the locative expression. Cf.:

*María está podando las rosas en el jardín 'M. is pruning roses in the garden' vs.

*María está en el jardín podando las rosas 'M. is in the garden, pruning roses'*

Examples of the second, but not of the first, type, were considered as instances of locative use. The decision as to the importance of "location" in the global message constitutes, of course and inevitably, a subjective judgement, based on the authors' (native) understanding of the Spanish text. In this our study can and should not differ from any other work in semantic analysis.

The difference is not statistically significant, but it is a suggestive pointer in the direction of greater latitude with *estar* than with *haber*. As will be seen below, this can be explained on the basis of the language-particular difference in meaning between *estar* and *haber*.

Since matching is found (or not) depending on the context, it is obvious that no local exponents of the universal categories are "normal" enough to guarantee translation into another "normal exponent" in the majority of cases. It also follows that equivalence across languages reduces to the simple fact that, under favourable contextual conditions, the existence of an X can be inferred from the meanings signalled by the—different—forms in the three languages.

We have counted as instances of cross-match cases where Hebrew and/or Dutch translate *haber* with a near-equivalent of *estar*, such as *y-8-v 'sit', zitten 'sit'*. 
We again view as cross- rather than non-match, the recourse to a locative
near-equivalent of *estar*, such as 'stand' (in Hebrew), or 'hang' (in Dutch) to
translate *haber*.

Five of these nine cases involve relative clauses where the "existential"
expression, with *haber*, provides further information about a place, as in
... en la mesa, donde había un libro '... on the table, where there was a
book'.

This short-circuiting of existentiality and locativity in Dutch casts
doubt not so much on the procedure we have followed in this study, as on
the distinctness of the alleged universal categories, regular exponents for
which in fact turn out to be unidentifiable in particular languages.

It is pointed out by Berman (1978: 201—202, et passim) that the analysis
of pronouns as external manifestations of the copula in the present tense,
(i.e., as zero copula suppletives similar to *yes* or *ein*), has been proposed by
various grammarians and linguists. We agree with her and others' rejection
of this hypothesis (Tobin 1982: 341—345). Note that the use of pronouns is (cor-
correctly) not included in Clark's list of Hebrew "locative" expressions.

This, however, does not entail a misuse by García Márquez of Spanish
*estar*, nor a mis-analysis of *estar* in van Putte (1983). The meaning for *estar
there proposed is: *identifiability of x is guaranteed*. *Estar* consequently says
nothing, one way or the other, about the existence of the entity in question.
It is generally the case that entities which are identifiable are also those
whose existence is presupposed by the context—but this is not necessarily so.
Of the Divine Providence being hawked around—whose actual existence is,
in fact, dependent on chance—it can be said, with equal truth, that its
existence is not guaranteed by the context (so that Hebrew is justified in
precisely calling attention to its existence) and that it is—by its very nature—
unquestionably identifiable, so that Spanish is justified in resorting to
*estar*.

The belief in universal (linguistic) categories naturally runs parallel
with a sentence-based approach to grammar: inasmuch as a sentence is the
"expression of a complete thought", it must reflect the cognitive result of a
synthesizing process. What is properly linguistic, however, are the individual
(sign-encoded) categorizations on the basis of which the integrative inferential
process can take place. For insightful discussion of language acquisition
as it is relevant to the basic issue discussed in this paper, cf. Bowerman
(in press).

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Corpus


