Alpheios test case for the Rosetta stone project

Julia Jushaninowa

As stated before, the project aims for a digital edition of the Rosetta stone. The platform we are using for the alignment is Perseids which allows its users to collaborate on digital editions and annotations in an integrated online environment. Perseids itself is a collaborative editing platform. To explain how our team produces a digital alignment of the three texts on the Rosetta stone and also of translations into modern languages, I will be focusing now in this part of our paper on the Alpheios software.

To start your translation alignment you need to register on *sosol.perseids.org/sosol/* first. On your main page you can either chose to select a publication to work with, start with a new alignment or choose one of the texts you have been working on previously from the list. When you click on "New Text Alignment" it takes you to the new publication page where you enter the metadata for your annotation.

Here you can either hit "Retrieve passage" to search for a text passage and select a range of lines or enter a new translation in two languages with a short title for your annotation as I did. Hit the "Align" button under your new annotation after that to enter the *Alpheios alignment editor*.

For this test case in Alpheios, we chose a text passage from the Hieroglyphic part on the Rosetta stone that is as intact as possible from the end of line 7 till the beginning of line 8. This passage chiefly appeals to the priests and requests them to *[..] fashion a cult statue of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Ptol[emy…][and an] august [shrine] in electrum, inlaid with every true precious stone, in all temples in question, to rest in the sacred room with the shrines of the nome gods.*[1]

From this short passage, it becomes apparent that an image and shrine should be set up in every temple as focus of the royal cult. The Rosetta stone is by the way the least damaged source among the priestly decrees establishing the cult of Ptolemy V which is of great interest to historians, especially because such a large-scale cult for a living king did not exist in Pharaonic Egypt and therefore demonstrates the application of a Greek practice instead.[2]

With that background information, I have started experimenting with the manual word by word alignment within Perseids. For two reasons I divided the text passage in small sentences. Firstly, for easier comparison and most importantly because you cannot change the translation after starting the alignment. If you want to correct any mistake in your translation you have to delete the current annotation and start everything from the beginning. Therefore, it is best to come up with a translation of the text first, then divide it in small sections and start the

---

[1] After S. Quirke and C. Andrews, *The Rosetta stone: facsimile drawing with an introduction and translation*, London 1988, esp. p. 13, 20-21.
[2] S. Pfeiffer, *Herrscher- und Dynastiekulte im Ptolemäerreich: Systematik und Einordnung der Kultformen*, MBP 98 (2008), p. 79-82.

alignment after that. Aleph and Ajin in the transcription are displayed as Latin characters, I am in the process of correcting that.

Clicking on a word selects that word as the anchor. To align, you click on the word in box1 than on the corresponding word in the other language and again on the word you initially selected to lock it. You can align multiple words with multiple words, leave words unaligned, align one word to 2 etc. Once linked by clicking on one word in one text, the word in the other text will be highlighted. To delete the cross-link, one needs to exercise the same steps backwards.

In the example you can see how I aligned groups of words in both Transcription-English and English-German. Apparently, alignment works with simple sentences but when the text becomes more elaborate it brings up issues which I would like to mention briefly in the following.

To start with, word by word linking is difficult because Alpheios does not allow to add and display notes on the grammatical elements or to add substantial comments or the translation to one single word so we will have to think of other ways allowing the implementation of more features to the textual annotation. Take, for example, the Berlin Rosetta stone online project which provides word by word translation allowing the non-Egyptologist reader to understand the chain of thought during the translation process and compare it with a regular translation. However, information on grammar in our case is being added through treebanking by Giuseppe Celano.

To be able to use Alpheios when working on this passage, I had to use a translation that is as close as possible to the phrasing of the original text and not a smoothed one otherwise the cross-linking wouldn`t work. Furthermore, you might find it useful to hit the 'Show interlinear text' box. As you will see, the rendition of the interlinear text does not look satisfying yet. One would wish to have only one naming of a word for all words linked to it in the other language instead of repeating the same term. In addition, one needs to think of a way how to mark the lacunae, brackets and characters. To fully use the Alpheios reading tools we need to work with Unicode and think of a way how the hieroglyphic rendering can be viewed in the alignment editor. So these are enhancements that we should very much like to add to our texts in the future.

After finishing the alignment one can share it with a wider audience and reuse it or integrate it into teaching thereby facilitating many other kinds of features, including searching and analysing. It is up to us how to apply it.