Markedness Correspondence in Translation of Books' Titles

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Abstract

Translation is a multi-dimensional task which requires different aspects of competencies one of which is linguistics. Falling within the realm of linguistic competence is the ability to produce relatively similar degree of markedness throughout the translation. Such ability contributes to keep the thematic structure of sentences intact and make the same propositional meanings have different communicative meanings. The present study which is a descriptive analytical corpus-based one aimed to analyze the thematic structure of titles of all English books rendered into Persian from the beginning of translation in Iran to 2004drawing on Hallidayan linguistic taxonomy of marked sentences as proposed by Baker (1992). The corpus is a parallel one consisting of 141 marked English book titles and their Persian translations. Comparative analyses of items revealed that about 56.7% of all marked English sentences havebeen translated into marked Persian sentences, i.e. the thematic structure of ST has been preserved. The similar thematic structure entails corresponding communicative meaning of STand TT.

Keywords: Translation, Information structure (IS), Theme/Rheme, Markedness

1. Introduction

Throughout the history translation has undergone many debates by/from diverse scholars and perspectives; however, it is widely accepted to be an interdisciplinary practice, especially in relation to linguistics. During 1960s and 1970s there was an immense influential linguistic turn in translation which enriched translation studies tremendously. Discourse analysis (DA), a branch of linguistics, has also made its valuable contributions to translation. One of the subcategories of DA is information structure _known as structural linguistics_ which has to do with propositional meaning vs. communicative meaning: the former is the reality or proposition the sentence expresses whereas the latter is concerned with what a certain sentence form, in a communicative setting in relation with discourse factors, expresses besides the proposition it conveys. One of the most preponderant issues within the realm of IS is that of markedness that has been extensively explored and applied in various fields of linguistic studies such as syntax. Interconnected with the issue of syntactic markedness is the concept of word order. The order of words in sentences indicates the order of meanings and Languages differ in this respect. Any change in word order while translating source text, namely its title, is considerable since the titles are always the first thing that the audiences come to know about new books and very often serve as an introduction to the work reflecting the author's mind. A good rendering of book titles is supposed to obey principles such as faithfulness, cultural awareness or combination of commercial and aesthetic effects.

Briffa & Caruana state that (2009) textual titles very often represent writing in its most condensed and compact form, in which language is generally connotational rather than denotational mainly because of the metonymic nature of titles. Title translation permits a certain degree of creativity so that at times it takes the form of an artistic exchange – or what Roman Jakobson calls "creative transposition" (Jakobson, 1959: 143). The title of a novel is associated with the novel's content and thus it becomes part of the text. In other words, the title derives its identity from the context and translation must take this into account (Briffa & Caruana, 2009).Titles can be rather complex especially those that accommodate several latent meanings which can be discovered after experiencing the text. In contrast to this layered title we can mention the springboard title as when a poet uses a line or phrase from the poem itself for a title. In translation these functions have to be respected but at the same time the translated title must attempt to maintain a relation with the original work. Any changemay lead to distorting the meaning intended by the author. Therefore translators need an awareness of the markedness degree of different constructions in SL and the ability to produce sentences in TT with a relatively similar degree of markedness.

The present research was an attempt to objectively investigate the extent of correspondence between English titles and their Persian translations from the viewpoint of markedness and communicative meaning by the way of comparison. Ultimately the researcher aimed to analyze and explain the cases of correspondence and/or non-correspondence hoping for some generalizable results to be reached.

1.1 Significance of the Study

This study shed light on considering the importance of thematic structure in translation since turning a marked form into an unmarked one may result in change in the communicative meaning of ST and transferring something different from what the source text author intended. When the author puts his word in an abnormal way, there must be something unusual that he tries to express, for instance, he wants to make an emphasis and draw the reader's attention, or he intends to show his personal emotion or attitude. As Schmid (1999) has maintained, "if the source text deviates from

the unmarked canonical word order (CWO), sentences carry an additional meaning potential that has to be explored and carried over into the target language". The importance of this feature is made more obvious when one finds "the fact that two propositionally equivalent but structurally different sentences can differ contextually and communicatively, has largely been neglected in translational theories" (Schmid, 1999: 2).

The significance of study may also lie in teaching translation courses and translation quality assessmentsince one of the main criteria of a good translation is preserving the discoursal properties of ST one of which is Thematic Structure.

1.2 Theoretical background of study

1.2.1 Information Structure

Why do speakers of all languages use different grammatical structures under different communicative circumstances to express the same idea? Languages generally offer a number of options for expressing any given propositional meaning. As Lambrecht puts it, there is a "[…] system of options which grammars offer speakers for expressing given propositional contents in different grammatical forms under varying discourse circumstances" (1994: 12). This is a common feature of almost all languages; even those languages with a relatively fixed word order still have various forms of word order and syntactic options. These options are not merely a matter of stylistic variation of random choice but are governed by some different factors; when considered in isolation, most of these options could be equally acceptable. Yet, when considered in a larger context (a larger discourse), the syntactic form of a sentence is determined by factors relating to discourse. It is strange that sometimes even those sentence structures which are considered as ungrammatical or unacceptable in isolation can become acceptable when considered within the larger discourse. It should also be noted that information structure is not signaled only by syntactic forms. Mulkern (2003) holds that information structure is formally manifested by aspects of prosody (stress and intonation), specific grammatical markers, word order, complex grammatical constructions, etc. Thus it interacts with other aspects of linguistic theory.

The theoretical approach to information structure originally began to develop at the Prague School of linguists before the Second World War. They have considered sentence as consisting of two elements of theme and rheme. The theme is the old or given information, and the rheme is the new information (Firbas, 1964). Information structure has to do with the flow of given and new information in discourse, basically called the interaction between topic and focus in the clause or the sentence, and how this interaction is influenced by the cognitive and pragmatic context. Information structure generally falls in the linguistic discipline of pragmatics, but its close links and interface with syntax and semantics make it something more than just a pragmatic approach to text.

1.2.2 Word Order and Markedness

One of the most preponderant issues within the realm of IS, which has drawn a great deal of attention from researchers, is that of markedness. Bloor and Bloor (1995: 82) have argued "Markedness is a concept which is useful in the language study as a whole" and not only with respect to information structure and thematic structure. The markedness theory has been extensively explored and applied in various fields of linguistic studies such as phonology, morphology, semantics, and syntax since last century; however, in this study syntactic markedness is intended rather than other types. Interconnected with the issue of syntactic markedness is that of word order which "is extremely important in translation because it plays a major role in maintaining a coherent point of view and orienting messages at text level" (Baker, 1992: 110). Speakers of a language intuitively know that there is a preferred order of clause elements. This preferred, usual, and frequently-expected word order is known as the "unmarked" word order. "Marked" word order, on the other hand, is where clause elements are placed in an unusual position to achieve cohesion, emphasis, stylistic effects, or else.

Firbas (1992: 112) argues "We feel instinctively that there is a kind of default word order for declarative clauses, that is, a word order which we use unless there is some good reason in the context for using a different word-order. This is known as the unmarked word order". Firbas (1992) in explaining his principle of emphasis alludes to this addition by saying that "The unusual order fulfills an additional communicative purpose not served by the usual order, and is in this sense marked" (Firbas, 1992: 118).

Greenberg (1966) assigns the terms "marked" and "unmarked" to opposing structural entities that exhibit a consistently asymmetric relationship in terms of distribution and/or syntagmatic structure and/or paradigmatic complexity, The one of the two entities that is consistently more widely distributed and/or simpler is called "unmarked"; its complement is the " marked" member of the opposition.

Schmid whose main concern in her book *Translating the Elusive* is the extent of translatability of different marked structures from English into German, presents an in-depth discussion of non-canonical word order constructions and investigates the structure as well as different discourse functions of these marked forms. She first makes a formal distinction between two major types of non-canonical structures:

"There are two notions of word order variation: a marked constituent order other than SVO (Subject-Verb-Object), e.g. subject-verb inversion, and sentences that are created by constructional rather than mere ordering operations under preservation of SVO e.g. left-dislocation" (Schmid, 1999: 49).

Dryer (1995: 112) postulates that markedness involves addition of a meaning component; for example "the meaning of lioness involves the meaning of lion plus an additional component of meaning", so lioness is marked and lion is unmarked.

Another idea is propounded by Hohle (as quoted in Muller, 1999) who has come up with a way of determining markedness based on the number of context types in which a sentence form can appear; the basic idea is that "the more context types a given sentence can occur in, the less marked it is" (Muller, 1999: 782).

Lambrecht views markedness in information structure:

> Information-structure analysis is centered on the comparison of semantically equivalent but formally and pragmatically divergent sentence pairs, such as active vs. passive, canonical vs. topicalized, canonical vs. clefted or dislocated, subject-accented vs. predicate-accented sentence, etc. Using a term introduced by Danes (1966), I will refer to such sentence pairs as pairs of ALLOSENTENCES. Differences in the information structure of sentences are always understood in the terms of contrasts between allosentences, i.e. against the background of available but unused grammatical alternatives for expressing a given proposition. (Lambrecht, 1994: 6)

Halliday (1994) is the one who best integrated the study of theme- rheme (thematic) structure into his comprehensive theory of functional grammar. In expounding on theme and its various types, he comments on the "standing-out or MARKED" (Halliday, 1994: 41) themes as well. Having made a distinction between Theme, Subject, and Actor he defines canonical theme as:

In a declarative clause, the typical pattern is one in which Theme is conflated with Subject […]. We shall refer to the mapping of Theme on to Subject as UNMARKED THEME of a declarative clause (1994: 43). Opposed to this, a Theme that is something other than the Subject, in a declarative clause, we shall refer to as a MARKED THEME. (ibid: 44)

Among linguists working within Hallidayan framework is Mona Baker based on whose taxonomy the present study is carried on. She suggests that "the degree of markedness will depend on the frequency with which the element in question generally occurs in theme position and the extent to which it is normally mobile within the clause. A given type of clause will therefore have one unmarked thematic structure, variations of which will produce different types of marked theme" (Baker, 1992: 129). She continues that "Meaning is closely associated with choice, so that the more obligatory an element is, the less marked it is. The less expected a choice, the more marked it is and the more meaning it carries" as well as "The more marked a choice the greater the need for it to be motivated" (Baker, 1992: 129-130).

1.3 Theoretical framework of the study

The model of analysis for this study is the Hallidayan linguist's taxonomy of marked structures (marked themes) as proposed by Baker (1992). In his model, Baker has identified three different types of marked theme in English: fronted theme, predicated theme, and identifying theme along with two other types which are not as frequent as the main three, i.e. preposed and postposed themes (Baker, 1992: 132). What follow are five different types of marked theme according to Baker:

1.3.1 Fronted Theme

Greenbaum and Quirk (as quoted in Baker, 1992: 132) define fronting as "the achievement of marked theme moving into initial position an item which is otherwise unusual there". Fronting could be further divided into smaller subcategories depending on the item that is moved into clause-initial position, i.e. Fronting of Time or Place Adjunct, Fronting of Object or Complement , Fronting of Predicator.

1.3.1.1 Fronting of Time or Place Adjunct

As the name implies, the adjunct is fronted or thematized here. It should be remembered that although this is a marked sentence, it does not have a high degree of markedness since both time and place adjuncts in English have a high level of mobility within the clause and are common in theme position.

1.3.1.2 Fronting of Object or Complement

Fronted objects and complements are much more marked than fronted adjuncts in English because the position of object and complement is much more restricted. Moreover, "to bring the object to the sentence-initial position foregrounds the expressive meaning of the utterance" (ibid., p. 134).

1.3.1.3 Fronting of Predicator

This is the least common and most marked theme in English. By fronting the predicator, a great deal of emphasis is conveyed.

1.3.2 Predicated Theme

This foregrounding process involves using an it-structure commonly known as cleft structure in which an item is placed in a near initial position after an empty pronoun (it) and the verb to be. Use of predicted themes (cleft sentences) usually serves to imply contrast (Baker, 1992).

1.3.3 Identifying Theme

This process is very similar to the previous one except that here we make use of a wh-structure rather than an it-structure. Identifying themes are also known by the name pseudo-cleft sentences. Both clefts and pseudo-clefts are used to imply a kind of contrast and to add "a semantic component of exclusiveness: the meaning is "this and this alone" (Halliday, 1994, p. 42). The difference, however, is that in clefts, the item contrasted with other possible candidates is in theme position whereas in pseudo-clefts, the item singled out from a limited set is in rheme position. This is rooted in the fact that from an information-structure viewpoint, in cleft sentences, the thematic element is presented as new and the rhematic element as old (known) while in pseudo-cleft sentences, the contrary is the case (theme is old information and rheme is new information).

1.3.4 Preposed Theme

This is when the gloss tag is attached to the beginning of a clause.

1.3.5 Postposed Theme

This is different from preposed theme in that the gloss tag is attached to the end of the clause.

1.4 Research Questions

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do the English titles (ST) correspond with Persian titles (TT) in terms of markedness feature?

2. How does the communicative meaning of English titles correspond with that of Persian titles according to IS approach?

2. Research Design

This study is a qualitative, descriptive-analytical, corpus based one. It attends to describe, analyze and explain the object of study using corpus driven data.

2.1 Corpus of the study

Information structure is a separate component of sentence grammar (Lambrecht, 1994). Consequently, it was decided that "Sentence" is the most appropriate unit of analysis in the present study. By sentence, we mean a stretch of language that is a meaningful grammatical unit separated from the rest of discourse.

Thus the corpus consisted of 1744 sentence-type English titles among which 141 titles were selected as the marked ones along with their respective translations into Persian in order to be analyzed in terms of markedness correspondence. They were extracted from *"The catalogue of translated books into Persian from the beginning to 2004"* published by "Astan Quds Razavi" organization (2011) and the website of "National Library and Archives of I.R of Iran".

2.2 Procedures

Having aligned the English sentences with their Persian counterparts _ taken out from "The catalogue of translated books into Persian from the beginning to 2004" published by "Astan Quds Razavi" organization (2011)and the "National Library and Archives of I.R of Iran"_ the research proceeded with examination of pairs from the view point of thematic structure, or better worded (un) markedness, based on the taxonomy of marked structures proposed by Baker (1992). If the translations had the same markedness degree as the original, they were regarded as a case of correspondence suggesting that a marked English sentence was translated into a marked Persian sentence. Wherever a difference observed in marked word order, it was considered as a case of markedness non-correspondence. In the next step the likely change of the communicative meaning of ST titles according to markedness approach was investigated.

Special care was exercised in the selection of books' titles and for the inter-rater reliability to be established the data were given to a colleague to test and the same results were achieved.

3. Results

The Markedness is best explainable on a continuum rather than on a binary concept. The classification of Markedness employed here, was that divides sentences into two broad classes of Marked and Unmarked. It is by no means claimed that all marked sentences are equally marked; rather researcher has tried to clarify marked sentences based on formal and functional properties. Here the taxonomy used for analyzing data was thought by the researcher to be effective for the present study's purpose. Considering this fact the following data was obtained:

The proportion of marked sentences to unmarked ones in the original component of the corpus was found to be 141 to 1603.This clearly proves that marked cases are considerably less frequent than their unmarked counterparts. The results also made it clear that 56.7 percent of the ST marked titles had marked counterparts while 43.3 percent of them were rendered to unmarked Persian titles. It would be fruitful to mention the frequency of different marked structures in comparison with one another. The fronted object/complement and predicated theme were the most and the least frequent marked categories respectively. About 76.5% percent of marked sentences fall within the first category, i.e. fronted themes and predicated themes, identifying themes, preposed themes and postposed themes constitute 0.7%, 2.1%, 16.4% and 4.3% of the collected items respectively. The following figures and tables illustrate the results more.

Table 1. Markedness Correspondence in Translation

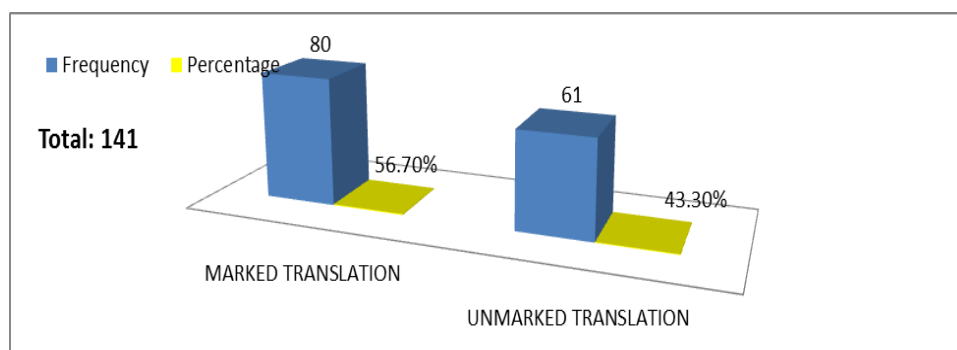|	Total	Marked translations	Unmarked translation
Frequency	141	80	5730.7
Percentage	100%	56.7%	43.3%

Figure 1. Markedness Correspondence in Translation

Table 2. The Classification of Marked/Unmarked Translations

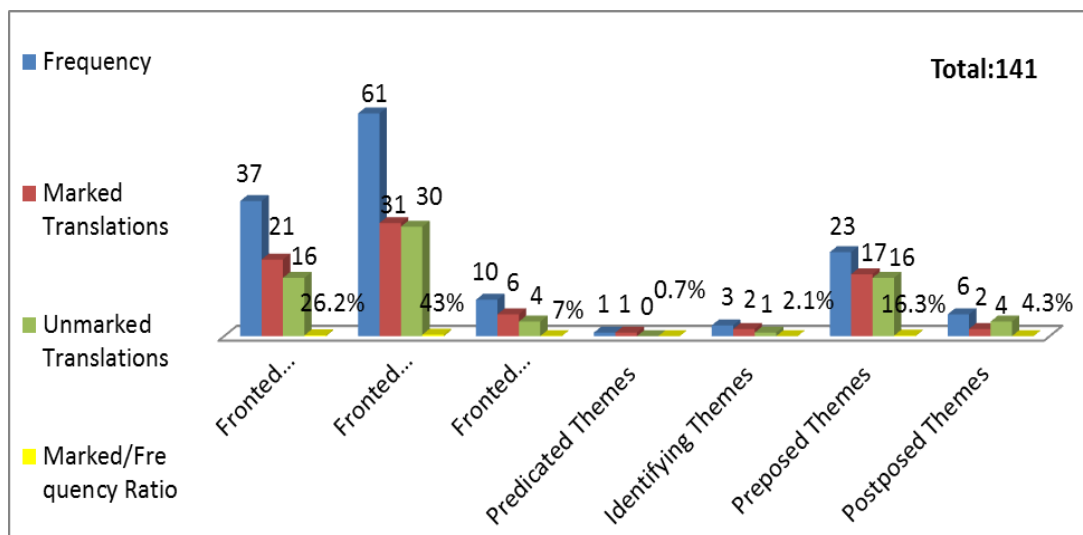| Frequency	Marked Translations	Unmarked Translation	Percentage
Fronted Time/Place Adjunct	37 21	16	26.2%
Fronted Objects/Complements	61 31	30	43%
Fronted Predicators	10 6	4	7%
Predicated Themes	1 1	0	0.7%
Identifying Themes	3 2	1	2.1%
Preposed Theme	23 17	16	16.3%
Postposed Theme	6 2	4	4.2%

Figure 2. Classification of Marked Structures

4. Discussion

There is no doubt that translators need to have a good mastery over the two languages from and into which they translate. Part of this linguistic mastery is related to linguistic forms and functions. Familiarity with information structure as a sub-domain of discourse pragmatics (Lambrecht, 1994), awareness of the difference between propositional meaning and communicative meaning, awareness of marked and unmarked forms and their functions and properties in two languages, and familiarity with distribution of information over sentence are a few of the issues which demand attention by translation teachers and designers of translation curriculum.

Translator evaluators could make use of this grammatical feature as the touchstone for educational or evaluating purposes (translation quality assessment) and it could also be included in the guidance books of translation evaluation devised for the practitioners working in this area.

5. Conclusion

It's a fact that all the analyses and calculations made on data aim to provide the researcher with the answers to questions raised regarding the topic of study.

The first research question sought for the markedness correspondence of English and Persian titles and the derived data revealed that from the total number of 141 marked English titles 57% had marked translation in Persian and the other 43.3% had been rendered into unmarked forms.

As far as research question number 2 is concerned, the analyses clarified that those cases which failed to keep the thematic structure of source titles lacked the same communicative meaning. This fact leads the researcher to summate that any change in thematic structure of sentences would certainly result in changing the communicative meaning.

The results obtained from the study advocates the fact that distorting the thematic structure of sentences would definitely make some part of meaning to be lost especially when translators deal with the title as the first thing capturing

the readers' eyes and consequential in deciding whether they read a book or not.

After all, for those cases of non-correspondence, the justification may lie under the free word-order of Persian language (Givi&Anvari, 1985). Due to the relatively unfixed word-order of Persian language, the translators don't feel bound to a fixed word-order when translating from a foreign language with a more rigid word-order like English and consequently fail to produce the same degree of markedness. The failure may be also explainable in respect of translation universals. The three important universal features are explicitation, simplification and normalization and what is related here is normalization. Normalization is a tendency to exaggerate features of the target language and to conform to its typical norms and is most evident in the use of grammatical structure. As Baker (1992) mentions marked structures are often normalized in translation and this is a universal feature of translation language entitled third code. Therefore we can say that in this study translator's tendency to render marked structures into the unmarked is a feature of translation language and it is predictable to say that most of translators are inclined to normalize marked structures in translation.

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