Original Article

Comparing Marked Theme in English and two different Persian Translations (Based on SFG): A Study on Virginia Woolf's To the lighthouse

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Abstract

Marked thematic structure plays a major role in organizing the message and in producing the same SL discourse in TL. The present study sought to investigate two cases in translation on the importance of thematic structure: (a) the marked thematic sentences used in rendering English sentences into Persian language, and (b) the most frequent marked Themes applied in the two translations of English sentences. For the purpose of this study, Virginia Woolf's (1927) novel, *To the Lighthouse*, and its two Persian translations by Hosseini (1370) and Keyhan (1386) were chosen for investigation based on Halliday's SFG and Grzegorec's (1984) classification of marked Themes on: Topicalization, Left-Dislocation, Cleft sentences, and Pseudo-cleft sentences. Furthermore, Chi-Square test was employed to compare and contrast the obtained frequencies to see the statistically significant differences. The results revealed that there are significant differences, in English and Persian texts in relation to number of sentences. In some cases these differences were because of the syntactic structure of Persian sentences, there were no significant differences between marked thematic structures of both translations. Generally, topicalization was the most frequent types of marked thematic structure used in both translations. As a result thematic structure is a greatlyuseful and important tool in translation. Thus translators should have enough knowledge about marked thematic structures in the creation and interpretation of texts to convey the meaning, keep the style, and the intention of the author.

Key words: Theme, Marked Theme, Thematic structure, SFG, Translation

INTRODUCTION

Translation is an interdisciplinary practice, particularly related to the linguistics. Research in translation studies has already focused on different linguistic features, one of the most attention grabbing branches in translation studies, is discourse analysis. According to Brown and Yule the discourse analysis is "necessarily, the analysis of language in use" (1983:68). As a branch of linguistics, discourse analysis also made its valuable contribution, including the application of thematic structure.

One particular area of interest, in translation studies, is thematic structure. Halliday (2004) believes that textual

analysis takes care of Theme-Rheme arrangement in a text. Textual analysis is the analysis of the way Theme-Rheme structures are concatenated in a text. Different researchers have selected different grammatical units to study Theme, according to their purposes. For Halliday, the basic unit for thematic analysis is the clause/sentence.

The structuring of language as a message is realized in the thematic structures of the constituent clauses of a text. Theme for Halliday (2004) is the point of departure; it is that with which the clause/sentence is concerned. So, part of the meaning of any clause/sentence lies in which elements is chosen as its Theme. He elaborates further by stating that the textual function of the clause/sentence is that of constructing the message and the Theme-Rheme structure is the basic form of the organization of the clause/sentence as the message.

Thematic structures especially marked and unmarked thematic structures are one area of interest in translation to control the flow of information in the source language

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texts. Marked Theme plays a fundamental role in the reproduction of an equivalent in the discourse through translation. In most cases it is not arranged at random and there are usually some meanings behind it. In other words it is not only a grammatical phenomenon, but also a kind of writing ability explored by the writers that need experience to deal with.

Therefore, the researcher in the present study attempts to contrast two languages□ thematic structures (English and Persian) to find out the similarities and differences between them. Furthermore, in the present study Grzegorek□s (1984) classification of marked Theme has been used by the researcher. Marked Themes were classified based on Grzegorek□s (1984) classification on Topicalization (TOP), Left–Dislocation (LD), Cleft sentences (CL), and Pseudo-cleft sentences (PCL).

STUDIES ON MARKED THEME

The most important point for source text thematic analysis is that the translator should be aware of the relative markedness of the thematic and information structure. Different definitions of marked Theme have been proposed by different researchers (Grzegorek 1984; Halliday 1985; Bell 1991; Baker 1992).

Marked Theme is considered as a cover term consisting of different classifications like, the purpose of thematization is to adjust the sentence structure of a given utterance to the requirements of the speech situation in which this utterance is used. Grzegorek (1984) states, a thematic structure is communicatively marked when it does not follow the sequence from the old to the new information. She introduces four main types of thematization in English: 1- passivization, 2- clefts and pseudo-clefts, 3- topicalization, left-dislocation, focus movement, and 4- presentation sentences with preposed expressions. She compared these thematization types with those existing in Polish language. She says that thematization is governed by a variety of factors, most of which are of pragmatic rather than purely syntactic nature.

Hallidayan linguistics (1985) identifies three main types of marked Theme in English: fronted Theme, predicated Theme, and identifying Theme. According to Bell (1991), marked Theme in English is signaled by predicating, preposing, clefting or fronting of the Theme and combination of these options (other languages have, of course, different ways of marking Theme).

Marked Theme according to classification of Baker (1992) is as follows:

A: Fronted Theme (Fronting of the time and place adjunct; Fronting of object or complement; Fronting of the predicator), B: Predicated Theme, C: Identifying Theme. Such kind of unmarkedness and markedness should be preserved in the translated text as well. Because when the author puts his word in an abnormal way, there must be something unusual 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.

According to Eggins (1993) the term unmarked simply means "most typical/usual", while marked means "atypical/unusual". Eggins further noted Theme predication was another strategy to producing marked Theme. To her all predicated Themes were in some sense marked, since the subject of original clause is made Rheme in the predicated version.

THEORY OF THEMATIC STRUCTURE

Vilem Mathesius, put forward the ideas of Theme and Rheme in his work *Functional Sentence Perspective* (1939). According to him, Theme is the part that comes first in a sentence, and Rheme remains the following part. In general Theme holds the old information, and Rheme carries the new. In 1970, F. Daneš in his paper *On Linguistic Analysis of Text Structure* used the term thematic progression to signify the intricate relations between Themes in a text, and stated clearly that such thematic progression reflects the framework of the text. Based on these previous findings, M.A.K. Halliday (1994), the representative figure of functional grammar, conducted a full investigation on thematic structure. Halliday analyzed this subject from the perspective of functional grammar.

Since it is embedded in the framework of functional grammar, Halliday's theory of thematic structure is instrumental in analyzing a text from three metafunctions: experiential, interpersonal and textual. The textual metafunction covers language used as an instrument of communication with which we build up cohesive and coherent sequences. Each clause carries a message, and so the textual aspect can be seen as fulfilling a message function of clauses and is therefore very closely connected to their information structure. In his masterpiece *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Halliday (1994) indicated, as general guide, the Theme can be identified as that element which comes in first position in the clause. His definition is functional, as it is with all the elements in this interpretation of grammatical structure.

Halliday argues that, "one of the various structures which makes up clause and gives its character as message

is thematic structure. In all languages the character of a message; it has some form of organization, giving it status of communicative event. In English, as in many other languages, the clause as organized as a message, one element in clause is enunciated as the Theme, this then combines with the remainder as Rheme, so that the two parts together constitute a message. This organization is known as thematic structure" (1994:37).

PROCEDURE

In the present study, the text was broken into its constituent clauses according to Halliday clause/sentence is taken as the unit of analysis. About 360 clause/sentence(s) of Englishoriginal text (Virginia Woolf□s *To the Lighthouse*), were selected randomly and their equivalent translations in two Persian versions were analyzed based on their thematic structure, and all marked thematic structures were identified and investigated one by one.

In our analysis, the first step was to identify Theme/Rheme boundaries in both languages. Embedded clauses were not analyzed for the thematic organization. And also unmarked Themes were not investigated. The second step was to read the original English text and to identify the clauses/ sentence(s) containing marked Themes within text based on mood in two languages (English and Persian) which categorized to the following moods:
- Indicative: Declarative, Exclamative
- Indicative: Interrogative: yes/no, Interrogative: WH-
- Imperative

Declarative Clause/Sentence(s)
Similar to English, we shall refer to the mapping of Theme on to subject as the unmarked Theme of a declarative clause in Persian too. In Persian, a null subject language (a pro drop Lg), the verb template is responsible for agreement and number, and so subject may or may not be realized overtly.

Marked Theme in Declarative Clauses
Based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), in a declarative clause a Theme that is something other than the subject identified as marked Theme. Here are two examples from To the Lighthouse (Woolf's novel, written in 1927) and its two translations.

Both of translators do their best to preserve marked Theme of the original and translated sentences into marked thematic structure in Persian. In fact, thematic choices of unmarked or marked elements in the clause should be treated carefully by the translators because it is a meaningful choice made by writers to orient or guide readers properly.

Exclamative Clause/Sentence (s)
There is one sub-category of declarative clause that has a special thematic structure, namely the exclamative. These typically have an exclamatory WH-element as Theme.

Interrogative Clause/Sentence(s)
Based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), the typical function of an interrogative clause is to ask a question. The natural Theme of a question, therefore, is 'what I want to know'.There were two main types of question: one where what the speaker wanted to know was the polarity 'yes or no'.The other where what the speaker wanted to know was the identity of some element in the content.

Marked Theme in Interrogative Clauses
Halliday (2004), also states "In both kinds of interrogative clauses the choice of a typical unmarked thematic pattern is clearly motivated, since this pattern has evolved as the means of carrying the basic message of the clause. Hence there is a strong tendency for the speaker to choose the unmarked form, and not to override it by introducing a marked Theme out in front. But marked Themes do sometimes occur in interrogatives".

In English wh- is the unmarked Theme of the interrogative sentences but we found out that in Persian wh- is in-situ and the participant that functions as the subject of the sentence is the unmarked Theme.

Imperative Clause/Sentence(s)
Based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), the basic message of an imperative clause is either 'I want you to do something' or 'I want us (you and me) to do something'. The second type usually begin with *let's*, as in *let□s it should squake*; here, *let's* is clearly the unmarked choice of Theme. But with the first type, although the 'you' can be made explicit as a Theme (e.g. *you keep quiet!*, meaning 'as for you.,') this is clearly a marked choice; the more typical form is simply *keep quiet*, with the verb in thematic position.

Marked Theme in Imperative Clauses
And also Halliday (2004) argues, imperative clauses may have a marked Theme, as when a locative Adjunct is thematic in a clause giving directions. The Adjunct part of a phrasal verb may serve as marked Theme in an imperative clause with an explicit Subject, as in *Up # you get!*, *Off # you go — go and bond!*

There was not found any clauses in the selected sentences of the novel for marked Theme in imperative mood. And in their Persian imperative equivalents there were not used marked Theme.There were 360 sentences in the thirty English analyzed paragraphs that were translated to 375 sentences in Hosseini's translation and 395 sentences in

Keyhan☐s version. Thirty two (8.88%) clause/sentence(s) of the English novel have marked thematic structure that translated into 11.73% marked thematic structure in Hossini☐s translation and 12.91% in Keyhan☐s version. In fact two translators have used more marked Themes than the original author.Based on the findings of the above table and chart the numbers and percentages of marked and unmarked Themes in English and Persian analyzed sentences are somewhat similar. As it is quite clear, unmarked Theme was applied in both languages more than marked Theme. However, the details do not have one to one match in single sentences.

Besides, there is partly difference in two languages, and also between two translations in the numbers and percentages of marked Themes. In fact Persian applied more marked Themes than English. But in comparison two versions of translation, the difference between them in usage of marked thematic structures isn't salient.

In the next step we read the Persian versions translated by Hosseini (1370) and Keyhan(1386) to find the suggested equivalents, and identify the marked Themes in Persian. Grzegorek(1984) introduces four main types of thematization in English:
1- Topicalization
2- Left-dislocation
3- Cleft sentences
4- Pseudo-cleft sentences

The analysis of the selected sentences was closely based on Grzegorek (1984) taxonomy of marked Themes which are Topicalization, Left-dislocation, Cleft and Pseudo cleft sentences.

After identifying and categorizing marked thematic structures, a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of marked thematic structures to find the differences between the four groups.

There were 18 cases of marked thematic structures in Hosseini☐s translation while there were 16 cases of marked thematic structures in Keyhan☐s version. Hosseini applied TOP (66.66%) more than other classifications. Then he used CL (33.34%), in his translation of selected text. Also Hosseini didn't apply LD and PCL in the selected sentences. Keyhan in the other hand applied TOP (62.5%), and CL (37.5%) in her translation. She also didn't use LD and PCL in the selected sentences.

There was no salient difference between two translations in using of marked thematic structures. Both of two translators didn't apply LD and PCL in their translation. Hosseini used more topicalization than Keyhan. But, the frequency of cleft sentences usage in Keyhan☐s version was more than Hosseini☐s translation.

Based on the findings, among all the classifications of both translations, TOP has been ranked high. It was the most frequent marked thematic structure in the two Persian translations of the novel *To the Lighthouse*.The findings also, revealed that marked thematic structures were present in both English and Persian texts. These findings contribute evidence to support the view that thematic structure is a greatly useful and important tool in translation. It increases the relationship and connection between ideas in the text. Translators should consider the transfer of the thematic structure in translation after conveying the message. They also should get mastery over the grammar and structure of both source and target languages, particularly in terms of thematic structure. They should try to convert information effectively, clearly and creating cohesive text. The cohesion in texts can be improved by concentration on thematic organization in texts.

She says that thematization is governed by a variety of factors, most of which are of pragmatic rather than purely syntactic nature.

After gathering the data, based on the SFG (2004) and Grzegorek (1984), the results of tables and charts which presented the comparison between marked thematic structures in two languages were identified. And it was determined whether the Persian syntactic structure (word order) influences on the different selection of marked Themes, or the translators☐ style of writing.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data revealed that, on the one hand, it is significant to keep the marked thematic structure or foregrounding process of the source text in the target text; on the other hand, it is also necessary to make some appropriate alternations because of the differences between the two languages. This investigation revealed that as far as Theme types are concerned, English, and Persian analyzed texts have differences. But marked and unmarked Themes had similar frequencies in both languages and both translations to somewhat. However, the details do not have one to one match in single sentences.

Furthermore, this overall correspondence of marked and unmarked Theme types might suggest that cohesion keeps constant from this particular point of view through the process of translation from English to Persian.

The present study reveals that except those differences embedded in the grammatical structures, the thematic

structure bearing the author□s intention should always be reproduced in the translation. The results revealed that marked thematic structures were present in both English and Persian texts. These findings contribute evidence to support the view that thematic structure is a greatly useful and important tool in translation. It increases the relationship and connection between ideas in the text.

Translators should consider the transfer of the thematic structure in translation after convening the message. They should try to convert information effectively, clearly and creating cohesive text. The cohesion in texts can be improved by concentration on thematic structure in texts.

The obtained results can help them in translation process in terms of appropriate Theme selection, conveying the message more clearly as intended by the author, developing cohesion in discourse, creating a cohesive text, helping them to avoid the use of odd thematic structures that are not typical of the target language and make the text fuzzy, and helping readers to comprehend the text effectively.

Finally, the obtained findings taken from reviewing previously done researches attest to the fact that thematic structures and marked Themes are greatly effective and valuable tools in translation process. They let translators to be aware where they are losing their effectiveness in their arguments in terms of Theme/Rheme organization. Both writers and translators should have enough knowledge about thematic organization and progression in creation and interpretation of texts.

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