Cognitive Linguistic Approach in Translation Studies

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Objectives:
To present interdisciplinary analyses between Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies by using multiple translations from Japanese to English.

To describe the zero-encoding subject in Japanese in a comparison of multiple translations in terms of 'Subjectivity' and 'Construal Alternative'. Japanese is a SOV and topic-prominent language.

Zero-encoding subject in Japanese:
(a) I am Jun Nakamura,
(b) 0 Nakamura Jun de.

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Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies:
Three major assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics (Cf. and Crau 2004:1):
(I) Language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty
(II) Grammar is conceptualization
(III) Knowledge of language emerges from language use.

Translation Studies: a contrastive analysis between two or more different languages in terms of what is retained and what is lost from a source text to a target text. Two main streams of key concepts in Translation Studies:
Word for Word → Foreignization → Formal equivalence → Category shifts
Sense for Sense → Domestication → Functional equivalence → Cultural Norms

Case Study: Translation Project of the song called 'Sukiyaki'.
The project was conducted in the course of Japanese and English Translation Techniques in Massey University in 2015 and 2016.
The procedure: Students in the course had to do the translation practice of a song called 'Sukiyaki' from Japanese to English and explain their Skopos and techniques to be used. Then they compared their own rendition with Yoko Ono’s translation in the final examination of the course.

Students could prepare for their translations in advance. Over the two years, 19 students were involved.

Google translation:
Let's walk looking up
So our tears won't fall
Remembering those spring days
And the lonely nights
Let's walk looking up
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies beyond the clouds

Google translation (II):
Let's walk up
So our tears won't fall
Remembering those spring days
And the lonely nights
Let's walk up
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies beyond the clouds

Subj ectivity and Construal Alternatives in a Cognitive Linguistic approach:
The notion of 'Subjectivity' and 'Objectivity' proposed by Langacker:
(1) Veronika is sitting across the table.
(2) Veronika is sitting across the table from me.
(3) Veronika is sitting across the table from Veronika.

When the involvement of an event is expressed in a language it is a 'subjective construal', if the speaker does not express a conceptual element of the event.
The clause of the construal is: from (1) to (3) = subjective to objective.
The 'construal alternative' is a notion related to the speaker's construal of referents, and it asks how the speaker assigns a given referent with different construals (the speaker as a conceptualiser to construct the situation).

Considering the situation of the above examples, the speaker is talking about a photo which shows the speaker and Veronika sitting across the table, (1) and (2) are construal alternatives, one of which is selected based on more or less the speaker's subjectivity (subjective conceptualisation).

Discussions:
The song in the Japanese source text uses no personal pronouns. The first verse ‘U o matte aru’ is the zero-encoding subject, which contains semantic ambiguity but also a possibility of multiple interpretations based on construal alternatives.

The clause of the construal is: ‘Let us walk’ is maximally subjective, because the conceptualiser construes himself/herself as inclusive of the event with ‘inclusive We’.

On the other hand, ‘you walk’ is maximally objective because of exclusions of the conceptualiser outside the event. ‘I am walking’ is relatively objective, because it is a monologic style and the conceptualiser construes himself as the listener.

Four students constructed ‘Let us walk’ and two of them kept their construals in ‘inclusive We’ mode, but the other two shifted their construals into ‘monologic I’ mode, which was the same construal as the other 13 students.

The significance of Yoko Ono’s translation is explicit, not as in the literature but in the cognitive linguistic analysis. Firstly, she expressed a unique perspective in her construal (exclusive You’ mode), which has never been taken before. Secondly, she dynamically shifted her objective construal into her subjective construal (inclusive We’ mode). That is, the aesthetic effects of her work are not motivated by regular construals.

Concluding Remarks:
This case study demonstrates that the zero-encoding of the grammatical subject in Japanese can be reanalysed in terms of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘constructual alternatives’ in multiple translations, instead of finding various types of equivalences used in a standard model of Translation Studies.

Previous research of Translation Studies has used a linguistic approach to analyse a relationship between a source text and a target text. Therefore, the main field of translation analyses are often considered as applied linguistics or comparative literature.

However, the analysis of translation also has a potential for examining various linguistic hypotheses and concepts.

As a future direction, this case study demonstrates that Translation Analysis is not just for teaching language but can also be used for teaching linguistics.

Bibliography:

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Previous linguistic approaches to the zero-encoding subject in Japanese:
The formal syntactic approach: grammatical omission, which means the absence of what should be on a syntactic role.

The functional/pragmatic approach: recoverability of deleting discourse information, which is based on the cooperative principles of the speech-acit participants.

Translation Analyses: depending on translation directions
From Japanese to English, addition of a subject
From English to Japanese, deletion of a subject
Both strategies are aimed for ‘domestication’ with functional equivalences.

Source Text Domain Target Text Domain Shifts of Subjectivity
Let us walk
We walk
I walk
(© indicates ‘Conceptualiser’)

Translated by Ono Yoko (2014):
Let’s walk looking up
So our tears won’t fall
Remembering those spring days
And the lonely nights
Let’s walk up
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies beyond the clouds

Beyond the clouds, try as we might

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The contrastive analysis of multiple translations: Sukiyaki song from Japanese to English

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