Cognitive Linguistic Approach in Translation Studies

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Objective:
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 ‘Constraint Alternative’. Japanese is a SOV and topic-prominent language.

Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies:
Three major assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics (Credid and Cruze 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 renditions 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.

‘Ue a mate arukō’ ‘Sukiyaki’

Let us walk towards the top
Remembering those spring days
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies above the sky

Let us walk the top
Happiness lies beyond the clouds

Subjunctive and Contral Construal Alternatives in a Cognitive Linguistic approach:
The notion of ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Objectivity’ proposed by Langacker:
(1) pierwsza, siedząca na stole
(2) pierwsza, siedząca na stole
(3) pierwsza, siedząca na stole

The subjective construal
The objective construal

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

Previous linguistic approaches to the zero-encoding subject in Japanese:
The formal syntactic approach: grammatical omission, which means that the absence of what there 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-act 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 equivalence.

Discussions:
The song in the Japanese source text uses no personal pronouns. The first verse ‘Ue a mate arukō’ is the zero-encoding subject, which exists semantic ambiguity but also a possibility of multiple interpretations based on contral alternatives.

The signifi cance of Yoko Ono’s translation is explicable, not in the language but in the cognitive linguistic analysis. Firstly, she expressed a unique perspective in her contral ‘exclusive You’ mode, which has never been taken before. Secondly, she dramatized her objective construal into her subjective construal (exclusive You mode). That is, her aesthetic effects of her work are not motivated by regular construals.

In Other Words: A Course Book on Translation Studies

Subjectivity and Construal

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

However, the analysis of translation also has a plenty of 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.

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Bibliography:


Source Text Domain Target Text Domain Shifts of Subjectivity

Let us walk
We walk

Let’s walk
I walk

© indicates ‘Conceptualiser’
Arki
Walk-informal

You walk

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

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