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 desu.

Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies:
Three major assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics (Crefeld and Crafle 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

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

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 clue of the construal is: from (1) to (3) — from subjective to objective.
The "construal alternative" is a notion related to the speaker's construal of referents, and it says how the speaker assigns the same referent with different construal (the speaker is a conceptualiser to construe the situation).

Considering a situation of the above examples, the speaker is talking about a photo which shows the speaker and Vanessa 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 conceptualization).

Source Text Domain          Target Text Domain          Shifts of Subjectivity
Let us walk towards the top
So as not to spill tears
Spring day to remember
Let us walk towards the top
Counting the blurred star
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the sky

Subjectivity

Student 1
Let's walk looking up
So as not to spill tears
Remembering those spring days
Let's walk looking up
Counting the stars through my teary eyes
Happiness lies above the sky

Student 2
I hold my head up as I walk
So no one sees me crying
I remember those happy spring days
I hold my head up as I walk
Happiness lies above the sky

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.

Discussions:
The song in the Japanese source text uses no personal pronouns. The first verse "Let us walk" is a zero-encoding subject, which exists semantic ambiguity but also a possibility of multiple interpretations based on construal alternatives.

The clue of the construal is: 'Let us walk' is maximally subjective, because the conceptualiser construes them himself/herself in the concept of 'initiative' or 'active'. On the other hand, 'you walk' is maximally objective because of exclusiveness of the conceptualizer outside the event. 'I walk' is relatively objective, because it is a monologic style and the conceptualizer construes himself/herself as the listener.

Four students construed '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 15 students.

The significance of Yoko Ono's translation is explainable, not in the literal, 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 dramatically 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 'construal 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 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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Ethics Approval: From Human Ethics Northern Committee in Massey University, NOR 16/11 Sukiyaki project: an analysis of students' approaches to translations.

Bibliography:


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 rule.
The functional/pragmatic approach: recoverability of deleting disease information, which is based on the cooperative principles of the speak-act participators.
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.

Let us walk towards the top
So as not to spill tears
Spring day to remember
Let us walk towards the top
Counting the blurred star
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the sky

Let us walk looking up
So as not to spill tears
Remembering those spring days
Let us walk looking up
Counting the stars through my teary eyes
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the sky

I hold my head up as I walk
So no one sees me crying
I remember those happy spring days
I hold my head up as I walk
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the sky

Look at the sky as you walk through life
So the tears won't overflow your heart
As you remember the spring days so bright
On this lonely, lonely night
Look at the sky when you walk through life
See how the stars blur when your tears flow
Happiness may seem just out of sight
Beyond the clouds, try as we might

Google translation:
Let us walk towards the top
So as not to spill tears
Spring day to remember
Let us walk towards the top
Counting the blurred star
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies above the sky
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Translate by Yoko Ono (2014):
Look at the sky as you walk through life
So the tears won’t overflow your heart
As you remember the spring days so bright
On this lonely, lonely night
Look at the sky when you walk through life
See how the stars blur when your tears flow
Happiness may seem just out of sight
Beyond the clouds, try as we might

Let’s walk looking up
So our tears won’t fall
Remembering those spring days
Let’s walk looking up
Counting the stars through my teary eyes
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the sky

I hold my head up as I walk
So no one sees me crying
I remember those happy spring days
On this lonely night
I hold my head up as I walk
Counting the stars through my teary eyes
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The contrastive analysis of multiple translations: Sukiyaki song from Japanese to English

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