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 as a comparison of multiple translations in terms of ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Construal Alternative’. Japanese is a SOV and topic-prominent language.

Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies:
Three major assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics (Crefel & Crouse 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 comparative 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 \(\rightarrow\) Foreignization \(\rightarrow\) Formal equivalence \(\rightarrow\) Category shifts
Sense for Sense \(\rightarrow\) Domestication \(\rightarrow\) Functional equivalence \(\rightarrow\) 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 Uno’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.

Subjectivity and Contral Alternatives in a Cognitive Linguistic approach

The notion of ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Objectivity’ proposed by Langacker:

(1) Venessa is sitting across the table.
(2) Venessa is sitting across the table from me.
(3) Venessa 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 “subjective construal” is from (1) to (3), which is subjective to objective.

The “contral alternatives” is a notion related to the speaker’s construal of referents, and it asks how the speaker assigns the same referent with different construals (the speaker is a conceptualizer to construct 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 contral alternatives, one of which is selected based on more or less the speaker’s subjectivity (subjective conceptualization).

Let’s walk towards the top
So as not to spill tears
Spring day to remember
lonely night
Let us walk towards the top
Counting the blurred star
Happiness is in the clouds
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies above the sky

The song in the Japanese source text uses no personal pronouns, because it is a monologue style and the speaker does not express a conceptual element of the event.

Concluding Remarks:
This case study demonstrates that the zero-encoding of the grammatical subject in Japanese can be reanalyzed in terms of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘contral 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 should have been on a syntactic role.

The functional/pragmatic approach: recoverability of deleting discourse information, which is based on the comparative principles of the speaker-addressant relationship.

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.

Subsections and Contral Alternatives in a Cognitive Linguistic approach

The notion of ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Objectivity’ proposed by Langacker:

(1) Vanessa is sitting across the table from me.
(2) Vanessa is sitting across the table from Veronica.
(3) Vanessa is sitting across the table from me.

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 “subjective construal” is from (1) to (3), which is subjective to objective.

The “contral alternatives” is a notion related to the speaker’s construal of referents, and it asks how the speaker assigns the same referent with different construals (the speaker is a conceptualizer to construct the situation).

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Google translation:
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So as not to spill tears
Spring day to remember
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Let us walk towards the top
Counting the blurred star
Happiness is in the clouds
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the clouds

Language and practice of a song called ‘Sukiyaki’ from Japanese to English

Translated by Ono Yoko (2014):
Let us walk
So as not to spill tears
Spring day to remember
lonely night
Let us walk
Counting the stars through my teary eyes
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies beyond the clouds
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the clouds

Preferences approaches to the zero-encoding subject in Japanese:

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

The clue of the contral is ‘let us walk’ is maximally subjective, because the conceptualizer construes himself/herself inclusive of the event with ‘inclusive we’ modality. 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 monological style and the conceptualizer construes himself/herself as the listener.

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

The significance of One Yoko’s translation is explicative, not as the literature 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 editorially editorialized her objective contral into her subjective contral (inclusive We) mode. That is, the aesthetic effect of her work are not minimized by regular construals.
The contrastive analysis of multiple translations: Sukiyaki song from Japanese to English

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