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 (Credz and Craue 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

Subjectivity and Construal Alternatives in a Cognitive Linguistic approach:
The notion of ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Objectivity’ proposed by Langacker:
(1) Yonemasu is sitting across the table.
(2) Vanessa is sitting across the table from me.
(3) Vanessa is sitting across the table from Veronica.

The cline of the construals is: from (1) to (3) = from subjective to objective.

The ‘construal alternative’ is a notion related to the speaker’s construal of events. It means how the speaker assigns the same referent with different conceptual elements of the event. The speaker is a conceptualiser to construe the situation.

Considering the 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 conceptualisation).

Cognitive Linguistic Approach in Translation Studies

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 Otsu’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.

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

Counting the blurred stars

Happiness is in the clouds

Happiness is in the clouds

Let’s walk looking up

So our tears didn’t fall

Remembering those spring days

And the lonely nights

I count the stars with teary eyes

Happiness lies above the sky

Happiness lies above the clouds

Indicates ‘Conceptualizer’

Let’s walk looking up

So our tears didn’t fall

Remembering those spring days

And the lonely nights

I count the stars with teary eyes

Happiness lies above the sky

Happiness lies above the clouds

Let us walk towards the top

Counting the blurred stars

Happiness is in the clouds

Happiness is in the clouds

Concluding Remarks:
This case study demonstrates that the zero-encoding of the grammatical subject in Japanese can be reanalyzed 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 construal 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.

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

The cline of the construals is: ‘let us walk’ is maximally subjective, because the conceptualiser construes both himself and the event with ‘subjectivity’ modalities. On the other hand, ‘you walk’ is maximally objective because of exclusiveness of the conceptualiser outside the event. ‘I walk’ is relatively objective, because it is a monologic style and the conceptualiser construes himself as the listener.

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

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

Acknowledgement: Funding support from the School of Humanities, Massey University and the students in the course 282107, Massey University.

Ethics Approval from Human Ethics Northern Committee in Massey University, NOT 16/11 Sukiyaki project: an analysis of students’ approaches to translations.

Linguistics Society of NZ Annual Conference, at Wellington campus, Massey University, 21-22, Nov, 2016

References:

Previous linguistic approaches to the zero-encoding subject in Japanese:

The formal syntactic approach: grammatical omission, which means that the absence of what should be expressed is on a syntactic rule.

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

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2016-11-21