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) O Nakamura Jun desu.

Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies:
Three major assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics (Caffet and Cruse 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 → Foreignisation → Formal equivalence → Category shifts
Sense for Sense → Domestication → Functional equivalence → Cultural Norms

Subjunctivity and Construal Alternatives in a Cognitive Linguistic approach:
The notion of ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Objectivity’ proposed by Langacker:
(1) Yonas is sitting across the table.
(2) Yonas is sitting across the table from me.
(3) Yonas 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 class of the construal is: from (3) to (2) to (1) from subjective to objective.

The “construal alternative” is a notion related to the speaker’s construal of referents, and it indicates how the speaker assigns the same referent with different construals (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 conceptualisation).

Subjectivity and Construal Alternatives

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
Lonely night
Let us walk towards the top
Counting the blurred star
Happiness is in the clouds
Happiness is in the clouds
Happiness is in the clouds
Happiness is above the sky
Happiness is above the sky
Happiness is above the clouds

Google translation:
Let’s walk looking up
So our tears won’t fall
Remembering those spring days
And the lovely nights
Let’s walk looking up
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 clouds

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 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 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 equivalences.

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

The presence of ‘subjectivity’ is maximally subjective, because the conceptualiser construes himself/herself as the listener of the event. On the other hand, ‘we 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 conceptualizer construes him herself as the listener.

Four students construed ‘let us walk’ and two of them kept their construals as ‘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 explicable, not as in the literature but in the cognitive linguistic approach. Firstly, she expressed a unique perspective in her conceptual ‘inclusive 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.

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.

Acknowledgement: Funding support from the School of Humanities, Massey University and the students in the course CLT101, Massey University.
Ethics Approval: from Human Ethics Northern Committee in Massey University, NOE 16/11 Sukiyaki project: an analysis of students’ approaches to translations.

Bibliography:

Average grade: 3

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

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2016-11-21