

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:

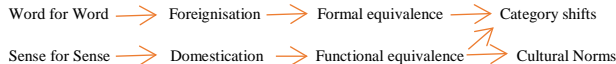
- (a) I am Jun Nakamura.
- (b) Ø Nakamura Jun desu.
COP

Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies:

Three major assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics (Croft 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:



Case Study: Translation Project of the song called 'Sukiyaiki'.

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 'Sukiyaiki' from Japanese to English and explain their Skopos and techniques to be used. Then they compared their own rendition 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 o muite arukō' 'Sukiyaiki'

Ue o muite arukō
up ACC facing walk-volitional
namida ga kobore-nai yōni
tears NOM drop-NEG in order to
omoidasu haru no hi
remember spring GEN day
hitoribotchi no yoru
alone GEN night
nijinda hoshi o kazoete
blurred star ACC counting
shiawase wa kumo no ue ni
happiness TOP cloud GEN up LOC
shiawase wa sora no ue ni
happiness TOP sky GEN up LOC

Google translation:

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

Student 1

Let's walk looking up
So our tears won't fall
Remembering those spring days
And the lonely nights
Let's walk looking up
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies beyond the clouds

Student 2

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
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the clouds

Translated by Ono Yoko (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

Subjectivity and Construal Alternatives in a Cognitive Linguistic approach:

The notion of 'Subjectivity' and 'Objectivity' proposed by Langacker:

- (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.

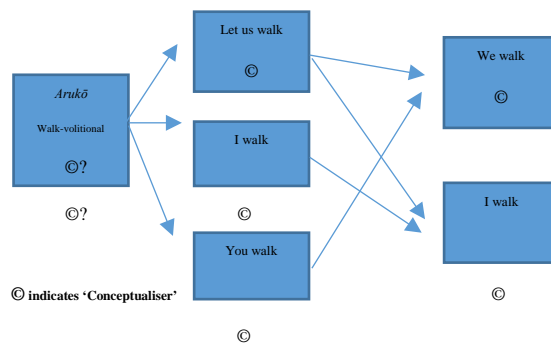
When the involvement of an event is expressed in a language it is a 'subjective construal', if the speaker does not express a conceptual element of the event.

The 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 referents, and it asks 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).

Source Text Domain Target Text Domain Shifts of Subjectivity



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 based 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.

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 creates 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 him/herself inclusive of the event with 'hortative' modality. 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 monologue style and the conceptualiser construes him/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 'monologue I' mode, which was the same construal as the other 15 students.

The significance of Ono Yoko's translation is explicable, not as in the literature 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 drastically 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 linguistics 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 contrastive 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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