



Textual Metafunction and Translation: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Systemic functional linguistics has provided a systematic approach to analyze texts. Different strata of Systemic Functional Grammar have shed light on studies. In this paper, the topic has been restricted to one aspect only, i.e. the textual metafunction, which is realized by the thematic structure. Marked thematic structure is the area of differences between source language and target language which challenge translation process. The present study is the contrastive study of marked thematic structure in English argumentative texts and their Persian translations. It has been benefitted from Shimid's classification of marked thematic structure. The data are extracted from the first 1000 sentences of two English argumentative texts and their translations into Persian. For each kind of marked thematic structure strategies used by translators were identified. It attempts to see what corresponding processes are actually used in Persian translation. The result of the study showed that construction with adjunct fronting posed more challenge for translators than passive sentences or cleft or pseudo-cleft sentences. The results can be useful for everyone who wishes to get familiar with the process of translation, in transferring not only the semantic contents, but also the thematic purports of the source into the target language..

Keywords: Textual metafunction; Theme; Marked theme; Rheme

1. Introduction

Translation is the process of reproduction through which the translators try to communicate the message of the source language author to the audience in the target language. This means that his/her involvement is more than purely semantic encoding of information of the SLT. The way additional meaning is created and understood, therefore, should also be regarded from a syntactic-pragmatic angle (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

When the sentences of the source language texts deviated from the unmarked word order, they carry an additional meaning that has to be explored and carried over in the target text. This particular aspect of thematic organization is of especial relevance in translation because understanding it can help to heighten our awareness of meaningful choices made by speakers and writers in the course of communication. Theme and thematic structure of the clause and text plays a fundamental role in producing the same SL discourse in TL. Theme as the point of departure of the

message plays a pivotal part not only in text interpretation but also in implications derived from the text (Ketabi & Mosaffa, 2004).

In this study, the researcher has tried to investigate whether Persian translators are aware of marked thematized constructions in translation or not. The purpose is to find whether the translators conveyed the marked thematized constructions of the source texts in the target texts during the translation process. This study provides students of translation with wider and more comprehensive viewpoint about the process of translation, concerning marked thematic structure of two languages under study. It may be of help to the translators and students of translation and everyone who wishes to get familiar with the process of translation, in transferring not only the semantic contents, but also the thematic purports of the source into the target language. The results can be useful for them to improve the quality of their translation based on theories.

2.Literature Review

2.1.Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is an approach to linguistics that considers language as a social semiotic system. The grammar of language is interpreted as a system which helps people to interact with each other and to make sense of their world experiences (Martin, Matthiessen, & Painter, 2010). Since the founding of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), various scholars have adopted this theory to study translation. Catford (1965) exploits Halliday's (1961) scale and category grammar which is an early version of Systemic Functional Grammar, and constructs a model of translation. He shows "how translation could be seen as a relationship between units in structures arranged in a hierarchy of ranks and levels" (Steiner, 2005 p. 485), and has thus been commonly recognized as one of the first scholars to apply systemic functional linguistics to translation. Different strata of Systemic Functional Grammar have shed light on a number of studies (e.g. Baker, 1992; Hatim and Mason, 1990, 1997; House, 1977, 1997, 2006; Malmkjær, 2005; Matthiessen, 2001; Steiner, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2004; Trosberg, 2002). For instance, some researches are oriented towards the stratum of semantics. Baker (1992) as well as Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997) adopt several concepts from SFL, such as genre, register, cohesion, and coherence to their studies on the textuality of translation. In this way, equivalence has been examined on lexical, grammatical, textual and pragmatic levels. House (1990, 1997) provides a framework of translation quality assessment based on the Hallidayan theories of genre and register. She also incorporates pragmatic and cultural ideas, and expands text evaluation to a wider content.

In order to account for the meaning-making potential of language, Halliday (1985) proposes three metafunctions at the lexico- grammatical level which include the ideational (clause as representation, which is realized by the experiential and logical meaning), the interpersonal (clause as exchange), and the textual (clause as message). With the help of a systemic analysis, these meanings would be jointly considered in the analysis.

Ideational - "constructing model of experience"

Interpersonal- "enacting social relationship"

Textual- "creating relevance to context"

(Halliday, 1985, p.36)

To translate a text, an understanding of three layers of meaning, ideational, interpersonal, and textual must be gained first and then followed by the next step that is the translation process.

2.2 Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction as it is the main focus of this study covers language used as an instrument of communication with which we build up cohesive and coherent sequences. Each clause carries a message, and so the textual aspect can be seen as fulfilling a message function of clauses and is therefore very closely connected to their information structure.

The textual metafunctionn features the Theme system network. Thematic structure is the

element of the clause that gives it its character as a message. In each clause, one element is given prominence i. e. one element of the clause is expressed as the Theme. In English, this is done by putting the desired element right at the beginning of the clause (Forey, 2002). In English, Theme is realized by what is placed in the initial position within the clause and this initial position gives the theme a 'special status' within the clause, for example in the following example, the writer has chosen to give special status to *the problem*.

Example (1)

The problem requires continued vigilance.

Theme Rheme

(Pakravane, 2004)

The writer could have chosen a different starting point, but consciously or unconsciously chooses to thematize *the problem*. The special status gives the initial position in English is not universal trait. Other languages have different ways of making the theme of the clause. The theme of the clause in Japanese, for example is followed by the particle *wa* or *ga* (Halliday, 1985 p. 37), and in Tagalog the particle *ang* is used to identify the Theme of the message (Martin, 1983).

2.3. Marked thematic structure

The concept of deviation from the norms refers to the use of marked thematic structure or less frequent constructions rather than the unmarked or more frequent use of the standard constructions (Tarrasoli, 1997). A communicatively marked order occurs if for the reason of special emphasis an element with the high degree of communicative dynamism is found at the beginning of the utterance (Grzegorek, 1984). Any deviation from this constitutes Marked Theme (Bell, 1991, p.152). Unmarked Theme is when Theme conflates with the Mood structure constituent that Mood class (Eggins, 1994, p.266).

Examples	Role conflation	Mood class
He bought a new car.	Theme/Subject	Declarative
Did he buy a new car	Theme/Auxiliary	Interrogative
What did he buy?	Theme /Wh-element	Wh- interrogative
Buy a new car.	Theme / predicator	Imperative

Marked Theme then is when Theme conflates with any other constituents from the Mood system. The commonest type of the Marked Theme is to have Theme conflating with an adjunct (Eggins, 1994, p. 266).

Example (5)

In China, the book received a great deal of publicity.

In this example 'in China' is a time adjunct, which is brought first for the sake of emphasis. If the Theme of a clause is unmarked, it means that the Theme is the normal and usual choice. Take declarative clauses as an example, in the majority of cases the Theme coincides with the subject, so the unmarked choice is the subject, on the contrary, "A Theme that is something other than the Subject, in a declarative clause, we shall refer to as a MARKED THEME" (Halliday, 1985, P. 44).

2.4. Schmid's Classification of Marked Theme

Schmid (1999) has classified marked theme into non-constructive and constructive operation. His constructive division which is the focus of the study and its categorization: a) passivization, b) cleft and pseudo-cleft, and c) adjunct fronting.

Passivization

Passive construction is an operation, which displace the object of the sentences putting it in the position that normally does not appear there. It is the syntactic device to reverse an ordering of the active sentences put information bits into the different pack (Hudleston and Pullman, 2002). Passive constructions are the most typical examples of this process, especially in English in which not only direct objects can be moved of the initial position and change into a grammatical subject, but also indirect and sometimes propositional objects. Passivization is a type of marked structure which is motivated by some of stylistic communicative and extralinguistic reasons. Passive sentences are marked in terms of thematic structure (Khanjan, 2002).

Regarding English and Persian, PAS is not used in Persian as much as in English. Also Persian passive does not include all the communicative features of English passive. Pakravan (2002) believes that one of the major reasons of using PASS in English is to put the object in sentence initial position. This point can be accommodated in Persian by shifting the direct object suffix 'ra', to initial position in an active sentence, rather than using PASS. This means that in translating PAS from English to Persian, the translator should be careful to observe all the aspects involved. Dabirmoghadam (2003) states that the true passive in Persian is the combination of past participle of the verb + *shodan*. Consider the example:

علي را كشتند ← علي كشته شد.

Cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions

Both operation therefore " provide a means for the producer of a sentence to place a certain words and phrases in the important sentence initial or final position , thus overcoming the limitation of word order rigidity"(Schmid,1999,p.71). both operation is communicatively marked because, it does not follow the sequence from the given to the new information the grammar of both operation is very similar by using more elaborate grammatical means , a sentence is divided into two clauses, each with its own verb (Huddleston & Pullman, 2002)

- a. I shall teach his lessons.
- b. It is his lessons that I shall teach. (CL)
- c. What I shall teach is his lessons. (PCL)

Hetzron cited in Grzegork (1984, p.71) summarizes the differences between cleft and pseudo-cleft in the following way:

Both constructions are instances of focusing which elevate the communicative importance of an element above the level of the rest of the sentence. Yet motivation for such focusing may be varied. When an element is focused because it fills the gap in previous knowledge, it is brought forward in a cleft construction or another type of emphatic construction. When the focusing is necessary for paving the way for the latter use of the same element in the discourse, or for a pragmatic reaction, the cataphoric construction that moves by the focused element to the end is created.

Generally whenever speakers or writers want to give especial prominence to the new and most prominent information they use cleft constructions. Clefts are specially used in written English where stress cannot be shown (Grzegorek, 1984). The two operations are divergent in some respects. CL sentences begin with "it" followed by the element which is being emphasized. In PCL, the "wh-clause begins the constructions and the emphatic element appear in the second clause.

In Persian, the same process seem to be applicable to break a sentence into parts whereby forming two clauses:

مريم آمد.

مريم بود كه آمد.

كسى كه آمد مريم بود.

The CL and the PCL operations are flexible in English, since different parts in the sentence can

be highlighted (Huddleston & Pullman, 2002). For example:

- A. John wrote a white suit at the pretty last night.
- B. it was John who wrote a white suit at the pretty last night.
- C. it was white suit that John wrote at the pretty last night.
- D. it was night that John wrote white suit at the pretty

In Hallidian terms these two operations are referred to as 'predicative theme' and 'thematic equative,' respectively (Thompson, 1996).

Adjunct fronting

Adjunct is one of the constituents, though not from the major ones-S, V, and O, that moves around easily in sentences to overcome the restriction imposed by the rigidity of word order. Adjuncts are grammatically realized by single word adverbs like, 'yesterday' or, 'unfortunately' or propositional phrase such as 'in the garage'. The same categorization may be followed in the Persian:

مهدی دیشب با آرامش خوابید.

دیشب، مهدی با آرامش خوابید.

با آرامش، مهدی دیشب خوابید.

Adjuncts are fairly flexible elements which are often chosen to be placed in the initial position in sentences. After analyzing the English texts and their translation in the Persian, these results have been gathered which are presented in the following tables. This study explores the use of marked thematic structure in the translation of two argumentative texts, to see how translators have dealt with such structures, aiming to answer the following questions:

1. What is the difference between marked thematic structure, which are used in the related two English argumentative texts of this study, and their translations into Persian?
2. What is the frequency of each kind of marked thematic structure in the related two English argumentative texts of this study and their translations into Persian?
3. What strategies can be used in rendering marked thematic structure of the two original English argumentative texts of this study into Persian to achieve functional equivalence?

3. Methodology

Theme as the point of departure of the message played a pivotal part not only in text interpretation but also in implications derived from the text (Ketabi & Mosaffa, 2004). In this study, the researcher tried to investigate whether Persian translators were aware of marked thematized constructions in translation or not. The purpose was to find whether the translators conveyed the marked thematized constructions of the source texts in the target texts during the translation process.

This study drew on the classification of marked theme made by Schmid (1999). He classified marked theme into non-constructive and constructive operation. His constructive division which was the focus of the study and its categorization: a) passivization, b) cleft and pseudo-cleft, and c), adjunct fronting hence elaborated and transitivity of each of theme from English to Persian in the corpus of this study was analyzed.

3.1. Material

This study carried out by preparing a corpus of two English argumentative texts together with

their Persian translations. These parallel corpora were analyzed with focus on marked themes, kinds of marked theme in original texts to see whether they were handled properly in translation or not. The texts were as follows:

1. The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and Palestinians (1983), by Chomsky, translated by Shahida (1369).
2. Globalization: A Critical Introduction (2000), by Scholte; translated by Karbasiayn (1382).

In this study, the first 1000 sentences of these two argumentative texts accompanied by their translation in the Persian analyzed. The corpus consists of 1000 English sentences 507 of which were marked and 493 of which were unmarked. In Persian, the corpus consists of 1009 sentences of which 358 were marked and 651 of which were unmarked.

3.2. Procedure

In this study, clause was taken as the unit of analysis. The influence of discourse on the translator's choice was not taken into account. The procedures of study include the number of steps as follows:

Step One

For the start, the selected English texts and their Persian translations were studied to detect the number of unmarked and marked sentences in each clause. In the case of data collection, only declarative sentences were of concern.

Step Two

The marked English sentences were matched against their corresponding Persian translations. The marked constituents found were Passivization (PASS), cleft construction (CL), and pseudo-cleft construction (PCL).

The process that moved adverbials of all kinds leftward may be termed as Adjunct Fronting (AF). This stage provides us with two situations: a) one in which the translator has offered marked Persian translations for marked English sentences, and b) the other parts, where the translator has presented unmarked translation for the marked English sentences.

Step Three

This step deals with the cases in which the translator has translated English marked sentences into Persian marked ones. The English Marked thematic structure found have been compared with their Persian equivalents, the data was examined to see to what extent the translator faces challenge.

Step Four

Here, having been compared with their Persian equivalents, the data was examined to see what strategies the translators used in rendering the constructions to achieve functional equivalence. Therefore, this step deals with the amount of adjustment made by translators. In fact the data was examined so that we could find out in what cases adjustment was compulsory and in what cases it was not. The amount of adjustment was demonstrated in percentage.

The way translators have treated marked thematized constructions was investigating by pinpointing the linguistic choices of the translators and ultimately their strategies.

It should be emphasized that the type of the study that has been undertaken is data- based. In addition, the researcher was guided by the data emerging from the case study.

4.Result

Thematic structures are considered one of the differences between SL and TL, which challenge

seriously translation process in achieving functional equivalence. In addition, because in the marked thematic structure, elements other than the subject come at the beginning, it is hypothesized that translators face a great challenge in rendering these constructions.

The comparative text analysis of English texts and their respective Persian translations are given in the following tables:

Table 1. *Summary of Marked and Unmarked Sentences in English and Persian Texts*

	No. of Sentences	No. of Unmarked Sentences	No. of Marked Sentences	Marked sentences %
English	1000	493	507	50.7%
Persian	1009	693	358	35.48%

Table 2. *Summary of Marked Thematic Structure in English and Persian Texts*

	No. of Marked Sentences	AF	PASS	CL, PCL
English	507	411	69	27
Marked Theme %	*	81.6%	13.60%	5.3%
Persian	358	310	38	10
Marked Theme %	*	86.95%	10.61%	2.79%

(Adjunct Fronting, PASS: Passive Sentences, CL, PCL: Cleft, Pseudo Cleft Sentence)

As the results in Table 1 show, English argumentative texts hold a higher percentage of marked sentences than their Persian counterparts do. Table 2 shows that in marked English sentences of the corpus, 81.6% of the marked thematic structure belong to adjunct fronting. The rest was divided into passivization (PASS), 13.60%, and cleft and pseudo-cleft (CL, PCL), 5.3% respectively. In marked Persian sentences of the corpus, 86.95% of the marked thematic structure belongs to adjunct fronting. The rest was divided into passivization (PASS), 10.61% and cleft and pseudo-cleft (CL, PCL), 2.79% respectively. It can be concluded from the results in Table 2 that, English texts and their corresponding Persian translations use AF more than other marked thematic structure.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As the results of this study show, it can be concluded that English argumentative texts use a higher percentage of marked thematic structure than their Persian translations Table1 In other words, the translators have failed to render a number of English marked sentences into Persian marked sentences.

It was noticed that both languages take advantage of adjunct fronting more than other marked thematic structures Table 2, and the AF sentences are practically equal in both languages on the other. This is not surprising since adjuncts are the easiest sentences constituents to move in these two languages. According to table 2, the rate of frequency of marked thematic structures from the highest to lowest is the following: in English AF, PASS, CL, PCL, and in Persian: AF, PASS, CL, and PCL. It proves therefore, that the frequency of marked thematic structure is the same in both English and Persian argumentative texts.

Adjunct fronting is a process in English through which a circumstantial constituent is moved out of its place and is located sentence initially. In the case of AF, according to the samples extracted, and after examining the translations, it is clear that forth of English AF has been translated into Persian marked sentences. In other words, in most of sentences the theme-rheme organization of

the English sentences has been transferred thoroughly to the target language.

In the following tables (Table 3 and Table 4) number and percentage of AF sentences in English and Persian are presented. The number of marked translation or unmarked translation and types of unmarked translation with their percentage are also shown there.

Table 3. *AF and Translation*

	Number	Percentage
AF	411	-
MT.of AF	309	75.16%
UMT. of AF	102	24.81%

(AF: Adjunct Fronting, MT: Marked Translation, UMT: Unmarked Translation)

Table 4. *Types of Unmarked Translation of AF*

Types of UMT	Number	Percentage
Alternation in thePoint of focus	8	25%
Omission of AF	25	80%
Thematizing Noun Phrase from AF	5	60%
Thematizing Subject Pronoun	60	75%
Addition of noun phrase from rheme	4	50%

AF: Adjunct Fronting, MT: Marked Translation, UMT: Unmarked Translation))

As Table 3 shows, out of 411 AF sentences of the corpus, 309 or 75.16% of sentences were translated properly, i.e. the marked thematic structure of source language sentences was preserved in the translation. Adjunct fulfills a wide range of semantic roles: a) those like *'today'*, *'in the garden'* that contribute to the experiential meaning of the sentences telling us things like when, how, where, or why the event happened, b) those like *'on the other hand'* that signals a textual function, c) those like *'fortunately'* that tells us about speaker's feeling. When AF English sentences were translated properly, such semantic roles are preserved in translation. In the case of AF, out of 411 samples extracted, 102 sentences were translated unmarkedly, i.e. marked thematic structure of original sentences was not preserved. Therefore, the application of adjustment would be examined.

In Table 4 it is shown that in the case of AF, out of 411 samples extracted, in 101 sentences, AF was not preserved in the translation. The translators used five strategies for unmarked translation of AF.

In 8 cases, translators made movements in some elements of adjunct, which is fronted, i.e. some alternation in the point of focus of the fronted adjuncts were made. For preserving thematic structure and at the same time achieving functional equivalence in two cases (25%) of it adjustment was compulsory.

In 25 cases of AF, sentences, which were translated unmarkedly, fronted adjuncts, were omitted. In 20, (80%) of the sentences of this kind in order to preserve the meaning and function of the sentences, adjustment would be made. Out of 101 AF sentences, in 5 cases noun phrase from the rheme was thematized, in 3, (60%) cases of such sentences through adjustment which were proposed, marked thematic structure can be preserved.

In 60 cases, the subject pronoun is thematized. In 45 (75%) of such sentences, adjustment would be made properly. Out of 101 AF sentences, in 4 cases, noun phrase was added to the theme position, in 2 cases (50%) of such sentences, adjustment was compulsory. Considering these results, it can be concluded that those sentences in which AF is omitted cause more challenges to the Persian translators, while in the case of alternation in the point of focus of AF caused less challenge to the Persian translators.

Out of 504 marked sentences of the English texts 69 sentences are passive. In the process of translation from English to Persian, passivization (PASS) is more tricky than the other marked constructions, since the translators is obliged to choose from among different constructions in the RL, the form that sounds most natural to the Persian readers (Pakravan, 2004). Consider the following table (Table. 5).

As Table 5 shows and according to the samples extracted and after examining their translations, it is clear that in translating passivized constructions translators used five strategies. In 45 cases or (65.21 %) translators used passive or pseudo-passive structures. Out of 45 cases found in 33 cases, translators of two English argumentative texts should have made adjustments. In other words, in 73.33% of passive and pseudo-passive structure in Persian adjustment- making could have occurred.

Table 5. *PASS and Translation*

Type of Translation	Number	Percentage	Percentage of adjustment
Pass, Pseudo-Pass	45	65.21%	73.33%
Active Structure	9	13.04%	55%
Intransitive Verb	4	5.79%	0
TOP of obj	4	5.79%	0
Subjectless	11	15.94%	0

PASS: passive sentence; TOP of obj: Topicalization of object)

In the case of passivized constructions which have been translated into active sentences, out of nine cases or 13.4% found in five cases adjustment making should have occurred. In other words, in 55% of cases translators could have made adjustment.

For translating passivized constructions in 4 cases or 5.79% of passivized constructions, translators used intransitive verbs. In all of cases, translators preserved the thematic structure and achieved functional equivalence. Therefore, adjustment was not compulsory at all. Regarding English texts and their translation into Persian, PASS is not used in Persian as much as in English. Pakravan (2004) believed that one of the major reasons of using PASS in English is to put object in sentence initial position in order to make it marked. This point can be accommodated in Persian by shifting the direct object suffixed by particle ' *ra* ' to initial position in an active sentence, or by using subjectless constructions with the third person plural verb rather than using passive structure.

In the case of PASS, out of 69 samples extracted in 4 cases or 5.79% an object was topicalized in 38 cases of passivized constructions translator made adjustment. In other words, in 55% of passive sentences adjustment making could have occurred. In the cases that adjustment was compulsory the translator could have both preserved the thematic structure of the English sentence and achieve functional equivalence by using intransitive verb or topicalization of object, or by using subjectless construction with the third person plural verb.

Cleft and Pseudo-Cleft processes (CL, PCL) were two other complex processes which added some additional meaning to the basic meaning of the sentence. In CL, the highlighted constituent was the subject, the complement or the adjuncts. The PCL operation was mostly employed to highlight predicate (Pakravan, 2004).

The additional meaning added to the basic meaning was more emphatic or contrastive focus. When the additional meaning of CL, PCL sentences was the emphatic one structure – preserving translation (SPT) was preferable. In structure- preserving translation, when the additional meaning of CL, PCL were strong, inclusion of "in" not as the demonstrative marker but as a discourse marker contributes to the reading of exclusiveness in Persian. When the additional meaning of CL, PCL was less emphatic, free translation (FT) was preferable. In the FT, it is not necessary to bring "in" in the translation of CL, PCL sentences.

According to the samples extracted and after examining them with their translations it was

clear that CL sentences deserved more attention than PCL while being translated into Persian. This is partly due to the lack of dummy 'it' in Persian. As for the English PCLs it seemed that SPT was more sufficient in rendering the intended meaning and structure to the reader.

Table 6. *CL, PCL & Translation*

	Number	Percentage
SPT	18	66.6%
FT	9	33.3%

SPT: Structure – Preserving

(Translation, FT: Free Translation)

As the Table 5 shows out of 27 CL, PCL sentences of the corpus 16 sentences or (66.6%) should have had structure- preserving translation (SPT) because the emphatic meaning of such sentences was strong. For the rest of sentences (9 sentences, or 33.3%) free translation (FT) was preferable.

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