Assessment of Marked Thematic Structures in the Two Persian Translations of "The Sound and the Fury"

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Abstract

The present study sought to investigate two cases in translation on the importance of thematic structure: (a) marked thematic sentences used in rendering English sentences into Persian language, and (b) the most frequent marked thematic structure applied in the two translations of English sentences. For the purpose of this study, William Faulkner's (1929) novel, The Sound and the Fury, and its two Persian translations by Hosseini (1371) and Sholevar (1383) were chosen for investigation. Marked themes were classified based on Grzegorek's (1984) classification on Topicalization, Left -Dislocation, Cleft sentences, and Pseudo-cleft sentences. Furthermore, Chi-Square test was employed to compare and contrast the obtained frequencies to see the statistically significant differences. The results revealed that there were no significant differences between marked thematic structures of both translations. Based on the findings of marked themes, the research hypothesis was maintained. In addition, the results of the Chi-Square test revealed that marked thematic sentences similarly were realized in the two Persian translations. Generally, topicalization was the most frequent types of marked thematic structure used in both translations. As a result thematic structure is a greatly useful and important tool in translation. Translators should have enough knowledge about marked thematic structures in the creation and interpretation of texts to convey the meaning, keep the style, and the intention of the authors.

Keyterms: Marked theme, Thematic structures, Theme, Persian translations, The Sound and the Fury

1. Introduction

Translation in terms of text processing and production mainly considers at least two texts: the source text, and the target text. The process involves highly sophisticated procedures of understanding the ST, no matter how highly specialized, as well as producing a text that can be acknowledged as a translation in the target language linguistic community by taking the source text as its point of departure. Hatim and Mason (1990) consider translation as part of communication process between source language and target language.

One particular area of interest, in translation studies, is Theme and Rheme structures, especially the relation between Marked and Unmarked thematic sentences to control the flow of information in the source language text. Theme is the element which the clause is going to be about and has a crucial effect in orienting listeners and readers. It is realized by whatever element comes first, and rheme is the rest of the message, which provides the additional information added to the starting point. Within the textual metafunction the two choices theme and rheme form the major system. According to Halliday (1985), theme plays an essential role in the way discourse is organized. He uses theme and rheme based on functional sentence perspective. In his opinion each sentence includes these which combine to form a message. The theme is the element which serves as the initial point of the message,
the part in which the theme is developed, is called in Prague school terminology the rheme. Halliday believes textual analysis takes care of theme–rheme arrangement in a text. Textual analysis is the analysis of the way theme–rheme structures are concatenated in a text. Theme for Halliday (1994) is the point of departure; it is that with which the clause is concerned. So, part of the meaning of any clause lies in which element is chosen as its theme. He elaborates further by stating that the textual function of the clause is that of constructing the message and the theme–rheme structure is the basic form of the organization of the clause as a message.

According to Hatim and Mason (1990), translators have to take into account thematic structures of the original text to keep the intentions and implications of text producers. Thematic structure, the theme and rheme system, gives the clause its character as a message. It can be changed or manipulated by the use of marked thematic structure. Marked and Unmarked thematic structures are one area of interest in translation to control the flow of information in the source language texts. Thematic structures, especially marked theme plays a fundamental role in the reproduction of an equivalent in the discourse through translation. In most cases it is not arranged at random and there are usually some meanings behind it. In other words, it is not only a grammatical phenomenon, but also a kind of writing ability employed by the writers that need experience to deal with. Preserving the thematic structure and achieving the thematic equivalence is a challenge for translators through the process of translation. In the present study translators faced with challenges that need attention to reproduce the original thematic structure, convey the meaning, keep the style, and intention of the authors.

This study aimed at finding out whether marked thematic sentences in the two Persian translations of English sentences were similar or different with Halliday's (1960) systemic functional grammar (SFG) as the theoretical foundation. To put it simply, the researcher was going to discover whether Marked thematic sentences similarly realized in the Persian translations of *The Sound and the Fury* or not. Furthermore, on detecting the most frequent marked thematic structure used in the two translations of the same text. For achieving this purpose, The Novel: *The Sound and The Fury* by Faulkner (1929) and its two Persian translations by Hosseini (1371) and Sholevar (1383) compared and contrasted to see whether marked thematic sentences have been kept in the process of translations or not. This study drew on the classification of Grzegorek's (1984), who has classified Marked themes into Topicalization (TOP), Left–Dislocation (LD), Cleft sentences (CL), and Pseudo-cleft sentences (PCL). These Marked classifications were exploited from the above novel and its translations.

In the following, section 2 will discuss the concept of translation and will briefly review its theoretical and empirical backgrounds. Section 3 provides relevant information about the material, data collection, and analysis procedures. The findings regarding the number of marked themes are presented in section 4, followed by a discussion of the results in section 5. Finally, section 6 includes the conclusions, implications, limitations of the study and some suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

Whenever there is need for communication between two nations with different languages, translation as a medium of communication occurs. There are many definitions on translation. Although these definitions differ in some aspects, all of them have some common points; to render a message from one language into another one. The followings are some of these definitions.
Toury (1978, p. 200) suggests that translation comprises of two languages and two cultural traditions. Translation comprises two levels: first, reproducing the natural equivalent of the source language message, and on the second level, producing it in terms of style. According to Larson (1984), the form of language will be changed basically through translation; the form of language means exact words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs which are spoken or written. These forms are the surface structure of a language. The structural part of language is seen in print or heard in speech. He (1984); moreover, added that translation is changing the same meaning in the second language. But one must be aware that there are different kinds of meaning.

Various definitions of theme and rheme have been proposed by different researchers (e.g. Mathesius, 1939; Firbas, 1992; Danes, 1970; Halliday, 1994, 1985; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). The first definition is attributed to Weil (1844) who considers theme as a point of departure which is present to him who speaks and to him who hears. According to Firbas (1992), theme has the lowest degree of communicative dynamism within the sentence while the Rheme has the highest communicative dynamism.

A theme that is something other than the subject in declarative clause is referred to as marked theme. It is not conflated with the grammatical subject and being set off from the rest of the sentence. Different definitions of Marked theme have been proposed by different researchers (e.g. Baker, 1992; Halliday, 1985; Given, 1991; Grzegorek, 1984; Bell, 1991). Marked theme is considered as a cover term consisting of different classifications like Topicalization, Left –dislocation, Cleft and Pseudo –cleft sentences. According to Grzegorek (1984), the purpose of thematization is to adjust the sentence structure of a given utterance to the requirements of the speech situation in which this utterance is used. Grzegorek (1984) adds, a thematic structure is communicatively marked when it does not follow the sequence from the old to the new information.

The investigation of theme in different texts has done with (Forey, 2002; Wang, 2007; Jallilifar, 2009, 2010). The concept of marked theme has generated a lot of research in recent years. A range of recent studies in text analysis have been devoted to the grammatical role of marked theme in various genres including (Barzegar, 2008; Rajab Dorry, 2008; Battat, 2004). Barzegar (2008) has carried out a study on the differences between Marked and Unmarked Theme. He investigated whether the audiences translated marked thematized sentences in a form of marked or unmarked themes in Persian Having carried out the study, he concluded that there are some differences between marked and unmarked translation of English thematized sentences regarding their effect on the audience. Moreover, Rajab Dorry (2008) explored the relevance of foregrounding in literarily texts. The analysis of the data revealed that, on the one hand, it is significant to keep the marked thematic structure or foregrounding process of the source text in the target text; on the other hand, it is also necessary to make some appropriate alternations because of the differences between the two languages. Generally, it was established that, marked thematic structure or foregrounding, as an important textual features is of special relevance in translation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Material

For the purpose of this study, William Faulkner's (1929) Novel, The Sound and the Fury was selected. It is considered his first masterpiece and many regard it to be his finest work. The interest and familiarity of the researcher was the reason for choosing this novel. It is Faulkner's own favorite novel. Most critics admire this book for its universal and humanitarian themes. Two translated Persian versions of the above work by Saleh Hosseini (1371), and Bahman Sholevar (1383) were selected. Faulkner's book consists of four sections in 317
pages with Faulkner's picture and lacks preface, but contains a short description of Faulkner's speech on December 1950 about his noble prize. Sholevar's translation consists of four sections in 414 pages and doesn't have any preface. But at the beginning of the book there is a short description of Faulkner's speech about his noble prize.

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

The first step involved the collection of 730 English sentences from the novel published in 1929. This novel consisted of four sections. In this study, ten pages of four sections accompanied by their two Persian translations were analyzed. The second step was to read the original English text and to identify the sentences containing marked thematic sentences. The next step was to read the Persian versions translated by Hosseini and Sholevar to find the suggested equivalent sentences.

3.3. Data Analysis

Halliday's (1960) SFG was used as the framework of the study. It is one of the most powerful models of grammatical theory that has been constructed for the purpose of text analysis. SFG refers to how messages are organized in relation to other messages to create coherence and cohesion. Textual theme concerned with theme and rheme and was the focus of the present study. The analysis of the selected texts was closely based on Grzegorek (1984) taxonomy of marked themes which are Topicalization, Left-Dislocation, Cleft and Pseudo cleft sentences. After identifying and categorizing marked thematic structures, a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of marked thematic structures to find the differences between the four groups in this regard. Then, Chi-Square test was employed to compare and contrast the obtained frequencies to see the statistically significant differences. In sum, the data were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistics Package for Social Sciences). The data calculated with computational analysis. In fact, the Chi-Square test was employed to see whether the differences between the two sets of data with regard to the occurrences of Marked themes were significant.

4. Results

This section elaborates the total frequency of classification of Marked thematic structures in both translations. Out of 730 English sentences which were investigated, 221 sentences (30.27%) including marked themes and 217 sentences (28.76%) containing marked themes in Hosseini and Sholevar's translations.

Table 1.

Total frequency of classification of marked thematic structures in the translated versions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marked Thematic Structures</th>
<th>Hosseini</th>
<th>Sholevar</th>
<th>Chi-Square Test Asymp.Si g. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topicalization</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>66.97%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-Dislocation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.76%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleft sentences</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.42%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

.948
Based on Table 1, there are 109 cases of marked thematic structures in Hosseini's version while there are 103 cases of marked thematic structures in Sholevar's version. Hosseini has applied TOP (66.97%) more than other classifications. He then has used LD (13.76%) and PCL (12.84%) more. Also, he has employed low frequency of the CL (6.42%). According to Table (4.1), Sholevar has applied Top (67.96%) more than other classifications. He, then, has used LD (15.53%) more. Furthermore, he has employed a low frequency of the PCL (10.67%). The least frequency of classification of marked themes refers to the CL (5.82%). TOP was at the highest level in both versions, 73 cases in Hosseini's version and 70 cases in Sholevar's version.

Chi-Square test was employed to compare and contrast the obtained frequencies to see the statistically significant differences between two translations. As the Chi-Square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicated, the value of .864 was larger than the alpha value of .05, so the researcher concluded that the result is not significant. This means that there were no significant differences between Hosseini and Sholevar's translation. There was no association between them. In the following, the frequency of the overall marked thematic structures employed by both translators was shown in figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudo-cleft sentences</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>12.84%</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>10.67%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of marked thematic sentences</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the figure, among all the classifications of both translations, TOP has been ranked high. It was the most frequent marked thematic structure in the two Persian translations of the novel *The Sound and the Fury*.

5. **Discussion**

As the Chi-Square test indicated, there were no significant differences between marked thematic structures of both translations. In other words, there was no association between Hosseini and Sholevar's translation. Therefore, Marked thematic structures similarly realized in the two Persian translations. Based on the results obtained from the analysis of data, the research hypothesis maintained.

The findings of this research were in line with Forey's (2002) study. He concluded that, theme plays an important role in organizing the text. The present research also emphasized identification of theme by translators in organizing the text and conveyed the message to readers. Wang's (2007) research was in line with the present study. The results of both studies can be effectively applied in classrooms to diagnosis student's weaknesses. Both concluded that, by analyzing theme in a text students can learn to perform the same analysis in their own writings, translations, and thus improve cohesion and coherence in their own work.

Barzegar's (2008) research was in total contrast with the present study. The results of his study showed that there were some differences between marked and unmarked translation of English thematized sentences regarding their effect on the audience. The present study showed that there weren’t any significant differences between marked thematic structures of two Persian translations of the original book. Rajab Dorry's (2008) research was somehow similar to the present study. In both studies marked play a primary role in the reproduction of an equivalent in the discourse through translation.

6. **Conclusion**

This paper was an attempt to examine marked thematic structures in the English novel and its two Persian translations. The results revealed that marked thematic structures were present in both English and Persian texts. These findings contribute evidence to support the view that thematic structure is a greatly useful and important tool in translation. It increases the relationship and connection between ideas in the text. Translators should consider the
transfer of the thematic structure in translation after convening the message. They also should get mastery over the grammar and structure of both source and target languages, particularly in terms of thematic structure. They should try to convert information effectively, clearly and creating cohesive text. The cohesion in texts can be improved by concentration on thematic organization in texts.

Translators can apply the results of this study in translating English texts. The obtained results can help them in translation process in terms of appropriate theme selection, conveying the message more clearly as intended by the author, developing cohesion in discourse, creating a cohesive text, helping them to avoid the use of odd thematic structures that are not typical of the target language and make the text fuzzy, and helping readers to comprehend the text effectively.

It can be assumed that implications of this study will be helpful for translators as well as those who teach English grammar to Persian language. The findings of this study hopefully help the students of translation with a wider and more comprehensible viewpoint about the process of translation and those who are interested in translation studies to get familiar with the possible challenges in the translation process, practice in their translation, preserve marked thematic structures, and convey the correct message.

The findings of the study might have been influenced by a number of limitations. One problem was the lack of specific software for counting the sentences including marked thematic sentences. The researcher had to count the sentences manually. As a result, it was possible that the researcher did not count some sentences. Another limitation was that the data of the study was collected from ten pages of four sections of an English book and its Persian translations. If more pages of the original book along with their Persian translations had been analyzed, the results would have been more comprehensible. Future studies can be carried out to extract more samples of marked thematic constructions and conduct the same research. Other contrastive studies may be conducted to investigate the most frequent marked thematic structures in poetry and compare it with its Persian translation to see how they have been presented. Concerned researchers may also choose to analyze other modes of meaning such as interpersonal, ideational metafunctions in different texts.

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