

An Assessment of the Quality of Persian Translated Version of "White Fang" by Jack London Based on the Thematic Progression Analysis

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Abstract – This research is based on recent empirical studies in the field of translation and its aim was to investigate the rendering of thematic structure. So more specifically, it was concerned with (a) marked and unmarked 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. This study, therefore, compared an English text with its two translations into Persian in terms of thematic organization; namely, Jack London's (1906) novel, *White Fang*, and its two Persian translations by Ghazi (1953) and Shahin (1992) were chosen for investigation. First, the original sentences containing marked and unmarked themes along with their equivalents were identified. Then, marked themes were classified based on Grzegorek's (1984) classification on Topicalization, Left-Dislocation, Cleft sentences, and Pseudo-cleft sentences. Also Halliday's (1960) Systemic Functional Grammar was used as the framework of the study. Furthermore, Chi-Square test was employed to compare and contrast the obtained frequencies to see whether the possible differences would be significant. The results revealed that there were no significant differences between unmarked thematic sentences and marked thematic structures of both translations. In addition, the results of the Chi-Square test revealed that marked and unmarked thematic sentences similarly were realized in the two Persian translations. Moreover, topicalization was the most frequent types of marked thematic structure used in both translations.

Keywords: translation studies, thematic progression, theme, rheme, marked theme, unmarked theme, thematic structure

I. INTRODUCTION

Before the mid-20th century, most research studies on translation were limited to the theories of translation and no work was actually devoted to translating itself. In fact, as Toury says "they viewed translation as idealized, speculative entities, rather than observable facts" (in Baker, 1998, p.50). Translation theorists used introspection in research on translation instead of describing and explaining actual translation; therefore, their research were all subjective and qualitative and no objective research was actually done. The aim of this research was to draw attention to this void.

Theme and rheme structures are an interesting field in translation studies. It can be stated that the relationship between marked and unmarked thematic sentences is to control the information in source language text. Theme is the element that has effect on audiences and readers. It can be understood by the first element and the remaining is rheme which gives additional information. If we have different alternatives in the theme, it results in different meanings and the first clausal sentence may be used as a sign to take different meaning from the sentences. Halliday (1994) argues that the clause constructs the message and theme and rheme structure is considered as the basic form of the organization of the clause as a message. Theme is the information which depends on the contexts but the rheme is the information which does not depend on context and is the new information of the context and its role is more important.

“Theme and rheme are two terms which represent the way in which the information is distributed in a message” (Brown & Yule, 1983). “Translators have to take into account thematic structures of the original text to keep the intentions and implications of the text producers” (Hatim & Mason, 1990). The meaning of the clause comes from its thematic structures. By using marked thematic structures it can be changed. Conveying the given and new information and predicate are among the main functions of thematic structure.

“Markedness does not greatly vary in English thematized constructions compared to their Persian equivalents and there are some differences between marked and unmarked translation of English thematized sentences concerning their effect on audience” (Barzegar, 2008). “An analytical research made on theme and showed the similarities between different types of theme and patterns of thematic progression” (Jalilifar, 2010).

So, thematic structure helps to make a text coherent and orients a text around a central theme. It plays a significant role in reproducing equivalence in discourse. Translators usually have some challenges in keeping the thematic structure and finding a thematic equivalence. In this study, it can be seen that the translator should pay attention to many items including recreation of the original thematic structure, meaning conveyance and the aim of the author. Moreover, thematic patterning means the insertion of a recurring motif in a narrative. It plays an important role in transforming the meaning from the source language to the target language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Translation comprises of two languages and two cultural traditions” (Toury, 1978). There are different kinds of translation including Free Translation, literal translation, spiritual translation and Fiction translation. 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” (Larson, 1984); moreover, He added that translation is changing the same meaning into the second language.

It is clear that the thematic structure reflects the information distribution of a text. Then, when translated, the thematic structure of the original text should remain unchanged as long as

the translated text can be read fluently. As many people said, translation means translating meaning and the meaning of a text is created by use of information.

Translation of a thematic structure is challenging for translations. This can show the significance of the thematic structure in translation. In this research the focus is on written translation, but the thematic structure issues are not limited to written works. Halliday (1994, p.19) states that the mode of interpretation is functional in which the grammatical structure is being explained referring to the meaning and there is a general principle in language that larger units act more directly in the realization of higher level patterns.

“Theme may be seen at a level between the grammatical constraints on allowable sentence patterns, and the high level, goal oriented discourse constraints” (Davies, 1988, p.179). “Theme choices are not only influenced by the genre, but that particular stages within a genre influence the choice of Theme” (Plum, 1988; Fries, 1995). The choice of Theme “constructs a particular angle of interpretation on the topic of each text which resonates with other aspects of discourse organization” (Martin, 1992, p. 12).

Thematic progression can be used for improving the coherence of students’ writing. Students should know the way of organizing Theme and Rheme in translation and their writings to create a good translation and have a coherent one. The act of organizing Theme and Rheme is called Thematic Progression.

Halliday developed Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) in the 1960s. It is a powerful model of grammatical theory in the service of text analysis. SFG considers structures as a non-arbitrarily network of potential choices; consequently, it is systematic. On the other hand, it explicates the communicative functions of a selection which is functional; therefore, it is functional.

According to Halliday (1985), a simple theme is one that consists of only one element. It is stated by just one constituent. This constituent may be one nominal group, adverbial group or prepositional group. The second type is the one that consists of two or more elements that together form a complex constituent. Any elements of the clause may be stated by two or more groups.

Thematization is the process of choosing particular topics as themes in sentence. As we said before, cohesion in a text and in a translation is significant. This cohesion can be provided through thematic patterning in text. She suggests that “what is a more thorough investigation of the theme/rheme and the role they play in creating textuality and cohesion in translation of texts” (Ventola, 1995, p.102).

One of the roles of language is to create the text. Indeed, the language has a structure that relates it with situational texture of the relationship and give the shape of text to it. This mechanism is based on the situation and the position of the content elements of the clause or on the way of ordering and organizing the information on clause. The structure that has this

meaning layer of the clause is called thematic structure. This structure is organized differently in different languages in order to be fit with the speech procedure.

Thematic equative occurs when there are two constituents that one of them is constructed by two or more elements which have equal identity in thematic structure. It means that theme or rheme can be organized in reverse order, and usually involves nominalization.

Thematic equative actually realize two distinct semantic features, which happen to correspond to the two senses of the world identify” (Halliday, 1985, p.42). On the one hand, it identifies what the theme is: on the other hand, it identifies it with the rheme. In English, a thematic equative is a thematic resource in which two or more separate elements in a clause are grouped together to form a single constituent of the theme-plus-rheme structure.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Material

For the purpose of this study, Jack London's (1906) Novel, *White Fang* was selected for this study. This novel is one of the most famous novels of this author and this was the reason for choosing it. The book consists of five chapters in 170 pages. Two translated Persian versions of the above work by Mohammad Ghazi and Dariush Shahin were selected. These two translated versions were available to the researcher.

B. Data Collection Procedures

The theoretical framework of the present research is basically associated with the Theoretical premises put forward by Halliday. Jack London's work was chosen as the primary ST to be compared closely with its corresponding translated TTs. The ST was wholly skimmed and 40 paragraphs were randomly selected as the corpus of the study. Through a sentence-by-sentence contrasting, each ST-TT pair of the corpus of the research was detected to be analyzed and categorized. Two translated Persian versions of the above work by Mohammad Ghazi and Dariush Shahin were selected. These two translated versions were available to the researcher. This study is a descriptive research.

C. Data analysis

The following steps were taken in order to carry out this study. The first step was to read the original English text and to identify the sentences containing thematic structures. The next step was to read the Persian versions translated by Ghazi and Shahin to find the suggested equivalent sentences. Halliday's (1960) SFG was used as the framework of the study. Forty paragraphs were selected randomly from the original text and the translated versions which will be analyzed based on theme patterns. All data were, then, grouped with their Persian equivalents.

Then, each group was reviewed and the data were analyzed by comparing and contrasting the original sentences and their suggested equivalent counterparts. Next, the frequency of each marked and unmarked thematic sentence was compared and the results were presented via tables and charts. Afterwards, chi-square test was employed.

IV. RESULTS

This part represents the results for MTs and UMTs in English and two translated versions.

Table 1. Frequency of Marked and Unmarked Thematic Sentences in “White Fang” and its Two Translated Versions

	UMTs		MTs	
	No	%	No	%
Jack London	582	79.72	148	20.27
Ghazi	509	69.72	221	10.27
Shahin	513	70.27	217	28.76
Total	1604		730	586

Note: UMTs: unmarked themes; MTs: marked themes

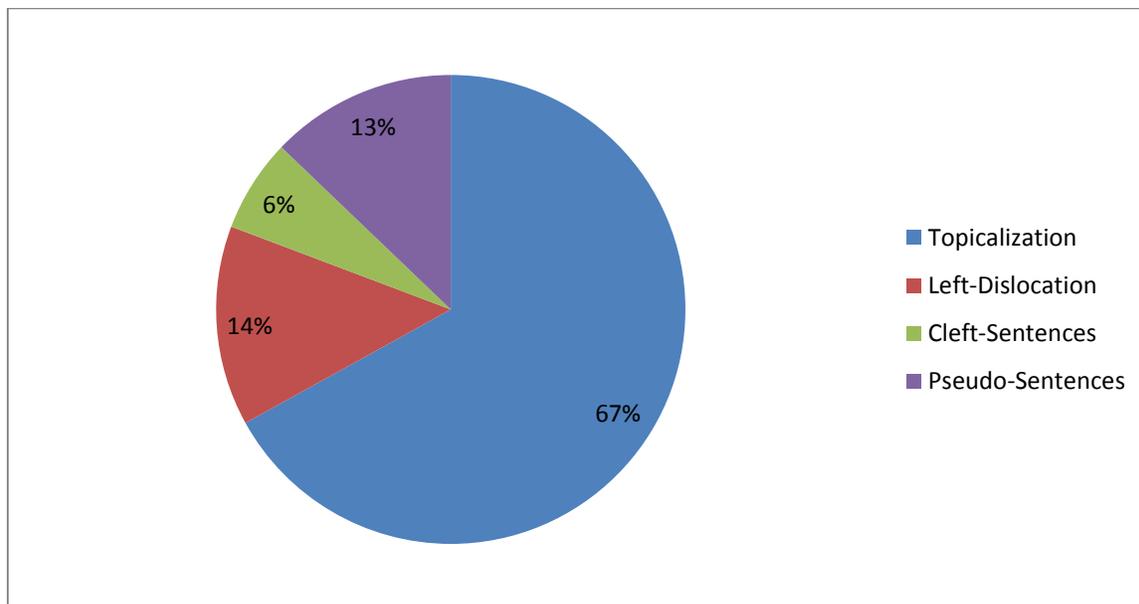
Based on table 1, Out of 730 English sentences in 40 randomly chosen paragraphs which were investigated, 582 sentences (79.72%) including UMTs, 148 sentences (20.27%) containing MTs. In translation of Ghazi, there were 509 sentences (69.72%) including UMTs, 221 sentences (30.27%) containing MTs. In Shahin’s translation, there were 513 sentences (70.27%) including UMTs, 217 sentences (28.76%) containing MTs. The number of unmarked sentences in both translations was more than marked sentences. Chi-Square test was employed to compare and contrast the obtained frequencies to see the statistically significant differences between the two translations.

There are 109 cases of marked thematic structures in Ghazi’s version while there are 103 cases of marked thematic structures in Shahin’s version. TOP was at the highest level in both versions, 73 cases in Ghazi’s version and 70 cases in Shahin’s version. Ghazi has applied TOP (66.97%) more than other classifications. He then has used LD (13.76%) and PCL (12.84%) more. Also, CL has low frequency in his translation (6.42%).

Shahin has applied TOP (67.96%) more than other classifications. He, then, has used LD (15.53%) more. Furthermore, PCL has low frequency in his translation (10.67%). The least the

frequency of classification of MTs, the low the frequency of the PCL (10.67%). The least frequency of classification of MTs refers to the CL (3.82%). In the following table, frequency of the above mentioned classifications was presented.

Among all the classifications of both translations, TOP ranked high according to the below Figure. It was the most frequent marked thematic structure in the two Persian translations of the novel *White Fang*.



V. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to analyze whether marked and unmarked thematic sentences similarly realized in the process of translations or not. In this regard, three questions were posed. The data was analyzed and the following results were obtained.

The first question dealt with marked and unmarked sentences in both translations. Simply put, the question was:

- 1- Are marked and unmarked thematic sentences similarly realized in the two Persian translations of *White Fang*?

Based on the obtained results, frequency of all marked and unmarked thematic sentences were somehow the same in both translations. Chi-square test was used to confirm this difference. As the Chi-square test indicated, there was no significant difference between unmarked themes and marked thematic structures of both translations. In other words, there was no association between

Ghazi and Shahin's translation. Therefore, marked and unmarked thematic sentences similarly realized in both translations.

The second question was about the most frequent MT applied in both translations. In other words, the question was as follows:

- 2- What is the most frequent marked thematic structure in the two Persian translations of the novel *White Fang*?

As for the second research question, the results of this study revealed that TOP was the most frequent type of marked thematic structure in both Persian versions. TOP posed more challenges for translators than LD, CL, and PCL.

And the third question was about the difference between the patterns of the source text and its Persian translations. The question was as follows:

- 3- Are theme/rheme patterns in the Persian translation of *White Fang* different from those in the source text?

As for the third research question, the results of this study showed that there is no significant difference between their patterns in English and Persian ones.

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 conveying the message to readers. Wang's research (2007) was in line with the present study. The results of both studies can be effectively applied in classrooms to diagnose student's weaknesses. Their weaknesses in their arguments were due to problems with thematic selection. 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 in their own work.

VI. CONCLUSION

The results of this study are inconsistent with Barzegar's (2008) and Jalilifar's (2009) research results. Barzegar's results showed that there were some differences between marked and unmarked translation of English thematized sentences regarding their effect on the audience. Jalilifar's results revealed significant differences between original sentences and translated texts while in the present study there were no significant differences between the two translations.

Dorry's (2008) research results are consistent with the results of present study to some extent. In both studies, MTs should in all probability play a fundamental role in the reproduction of an equivalent in the discourse through translation. The analysis of his study showed that in both English and Persian texts, AF was the highest percentage of occurrence while the analysis of the present study showed that TOP was the highest percentage of occurrence in both translated versions.

The obtained findings indicated that translation is certainly a complicated activity. It can help translators in decision-making about translation equivalence. Regarding similarities, the study showed that marked and unmarked thematic sentences were present in both translations. In fact, although studies like this are not enough to eliminate all the problems of translation, but it contributes having a better understanding of languages and accordingly a better translation. 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. Both translators and writers should have enough knowledge about thematic structure in creation and interpretation of texts.

Translators should consider the transfer of the thematic structure in translation after conveying 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.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study, like other researches in this field, was faced with some limitations. Lack of specific software in order to count the sentences including marked and unmarked sentences is one of the limitations of this study. 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 40 paragraphs of five chapters of the novel *White Fang* by Jack London and its two Persian translations. If more paragraphs of the original book along with their Persian translations had been analyzed, the results would have been more comprehensible.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research restricted itself to one novel and its two Persian translations. Other researchers can work on different texts such as short stories, poems, religious books and so on. They can use these MTs and UTM to solve the problem of translation of thematic structures.

Researchers can find another novel with more than one Persian translation, two novels with two translations and carry out the same research. Researcher can find one novel with one translation, compare the original version with its translation and do the same research. Similarly, they can extract more samples of marked thematic constructions and conduct the same research. Researchers can investigate the most frequent marked themes in poetry and compare it with its Persian translation to see how they have been presented. Other modes of meaning such as interpersonal, ideational functions in different texts can also be analyzed.

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