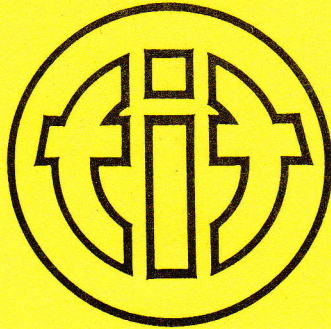


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**ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEMATIC PROGRESSION
AND DYNAMIC TRANSLATION**

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O. Introduction

Richards (1989) defines Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) as some linguistic analysis characteristic of the Prague school describing the many ways information can be distributed in sentences. It primarily talks about the effect of the division of a sentence into the broadly defined categories of "known" (or given) information versus new information. The known information, which is loosely synonymous with the "theme" in FSP, refers to a piece of information which is not new to the addressee. This stands in sharp contrast to the "new" information or "rheme". In other words, both the addressor and the addressee require some previously shared common knowledge for communication to be fruitful. Both are obliged to lean on something known prior to giving expression to something unknown.

V. Mathesius (Prague School) is regarded as the first to establish the terms "theme" and "rheme" meaningfully. To him, the "theme" is the known part of the sentence or the point of departure in a particular stretch of discourse, while "rheme" corresponds to the part carrying new information to be conveyed. It is a popular belief that theme and rheme are arranged so that theme precedes rheme (Vachek, 1966; Halliday, 1976, 1985, Dubois, 1990).

There are three major types of thematic progression (TP) pattern: "linear", "constant", and the one which is derived from the hypertheme (Maynard, 1986). In the simple linear TP each rheme becomes the theme of the next sentence to be made. It runs as follows:

Example 1.

T1-R1	.....	T2 (=R1) - R2	.....	T3 (=R2) - R3
S		S2		S3

Consider the following exemplification of the point:

He was busy doing his homework.
It took him half an hour.
An hour was too much for him to waste.

("His homework" is anaphorically referred back to by the pronoun "he").

In the second type of the thematic progression or the one in which there is a "constant theme" the same theme appears all through the utterances to be made.

Example 2.

		R2	
		.	
		.	
		.	
		.	
R1	.....	T1	.....
		.	
		.	
		.	
		.	
		R4	

Petroleum is one of the most important natural resources a country might have. Crude oil, as some prefer to call it, is used for many practical purposes. It is used for the production of many useful things including plastics, gasoline, etc.

(Here "It" and crude oil refer to the same entity, viz. petroleum).

In the third type or that of the "TP" with derived T's the themes are derived from a "hypertheme".

Example 3.

(T1-R1)	.....	T	.....	(T3-R3)
		.		
		.		
		.		
		.		
		(T2-R2)		

Iran is a country in Asia. The northern region is gorgeous and green. The southern part is mostly tropical. In the middle, however, there are two big deserts.

There are two types of relationships. If the same theme appears all through the text "dependency" happens to be the case. Where each rheme becomes the theme of the following utterance there is the "sequencing".

1. The Philosophy Underlying the Present Study

One of the main purposes of the present study is to prove that the range of the branch of linguistics advocated by the Prague School is far beyond and more extensive than what is generally assumed. It is of considerable significance that the issues to be discussed here are not intended to be exhaustive in any way. An attempt, however, has only been made to suggest the trustworthy headings in which to proceed. The study starts with relatively simple points, gradually working its way towards more complex ones. It is also crucial to bear constantly in mind that what may arise from the subsequent discussion is a probabilistic model rather than an absolute entity not being subject to change. As the text proceeds evidence accumulates in favour of the potential value behind the analysis of thematic progression patterns.

This view is upheld on scientific grounds by looking at different renderings of texts. In sum the present study aims to justify the "unfaithfulness" of a sample translated text.

2. The Theory Behind This Project

2.1. The Nature of Translating

"Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style". (Nida 1982). As can be inferred from the definition of translation, it is "meaning" which must be given high priority. It is the content of the message which is of prime importance. This is why Nida stresses the importance and superiority of "dynamic equivalence" over formal correspondence.

2.2. The "Who" to determine Faithfulness

All who are deeply engaged in translating agree that translators should be

adequately familiar with both the source and the target language, but there is less agreement on "faithful" translation and the way in which linguistics should be employed.

In the past it was the critic who was largely responsible for the determination of faithfulness regarding translation. The role of the average receptor, however, has recently become far more important in judging the validity of translations (Brislin, 1976). This means that one cannot consider translation as a mere linguistic undertaking but as an aspect of communication. Hence we adopt a sociolinguistic method of analysis rather than a purely linguistic one. In sociolinguistic theories of translation the framework of analysis is communication (Brislin, 1976).

2.3. The Choice Between the Critic and the Common Receptors: The Dilemma

The problem with the critic is that a scholarly person is often too familiar with the source language version, and he judges the translated source language. As many have been noticed we are not actually faced with ideal judges but common receptors. The problem with most theories of translation is that they rely too much on ideal addressees.

It is a question of "The whom we intend the translation for". It is the target reader who is to judge the translation rather than the critic. The target reader or receptor provides the feedback by means of which one can meaningfully determine the faithfulness of a translated text.

2.4. The Previous Mission versus the New One

Previously the emphasis in translating was on the form of the message. Translators did their utmost to reproduce the exact details of the original. The new one, however, has shifted from form to the responses of the receptor. Therefore the response of the receptor to the translated message plays an important part in determining faithfulness. The same response must be compared with the responses receptors make towards the original message.

Faithfulness and correctness must be explained in terms of the average reader. Correctness is the degree to which the average reader reacts correctly to the translated message just as the receptor reacts to the original

(Nida, 1982).

2.5. Dynamic Equivalence As a Means to Check Translation

As may have been noticed Nida views translations in terms of the receptors and the impact the message has on them. That is, the L1 message is understood by an original receptor (R1). Having received the same message the translator converts it into the form of a new one (M2) in order for the final L2 receptor to understand it. Previously the judge of translation used to compare M1 and M2 to see if the translation was faithful. As has been previously mentioned, the inherent problem with this lies in the over-familiarity of the same judge, who cannot be considered as a reliable individual (The judge is too ideal a reader to judge).

Nida (1982) adds a new dimension to the checking of translation. He emphasizes the importance of comparing R1 and R2 responses. Therefore, the judge has to inquire from R2 just how he understands M2. In this way he is in a better position to judge the dynamic equivalence.

3. Instances of Unfaithfulness

3.1. Case I

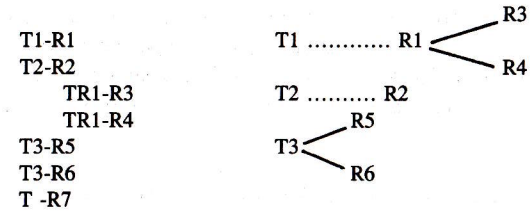
In almost all poor translations there exists an inevitable thematic progression change of pattern which is not permissible in that situation. Below is an example in which the unallowable and unconscious deletion of a pronoun in the translated text leads to a change in the original TP.

Example 4.

تیم ساعت است اینجا منتظر شده ایم به این جهت تصور نمیکنم بیاید، او همیشه دیر می آید یا اینکه به عقیده شما اتفاقی برایش افتاده است

We have been waiting for *him* for half an hour, so I don't think he will come. He always arrives late, or do you think something has happened to him? I don't know, but I think we have waited long enough (Pazargadi, 1983:107).

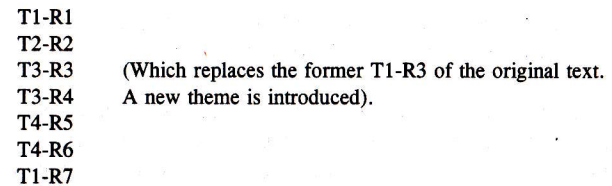
Deriving the source language thematic progression pattern we have:



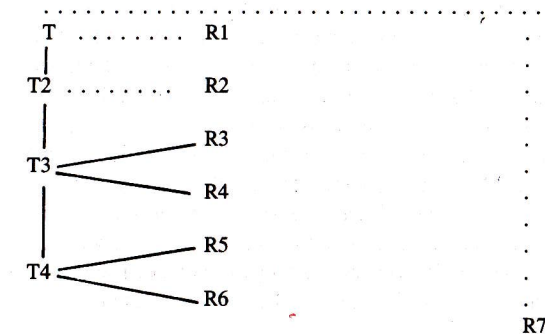
== Represents the "theme"

* * Represents the problem area in translation.

The writer had some translators translate the text into Persian. Most frequent was the unaccountable deletion of the Persian pronoun equivalent to "he" in the translated versions. The corresponding thematic progression pattern of the Persian texts runs approximately as follows:



Or:



Now, compare the two patterns. As is evident there is slight difference in them. The problem areas have been set off by the notation *...* in the

texts. This difference arises from the translators' failure to include the Persian pronoun equivalent to "he". To test whether this resulted from the translator's slip, the writer included a multiple choice item analysis to make sure of the fact they did not have any other choice at their disposal. The question is as follows.

What is the best Persian equivalent for the following sentence: "We have been waiting for him for half an hour"? (Pazargadi, 1983)

This was immediately followed by the four Persian choices, two of which were easily ruled out and the other two marked by a clash with the Persian Pronoun equivalent to "he", i.e. one in which there was the pronoun and the other in which there was not. Samples of the same item were given to various persons engaged in translation. The results of this test were checked against another which was presented a short time afterwards (mixed with other questions and in some other format).

What do you think about the inclusion of "him" in a possible translation of the same sentence into fluent Persian? A) A must, B) Omit.

To everybody's surprise most of the subjects preached what they never practised thus turning out to be inconsistent in what they normally did. One comes to the conclusion that there are translators who are not faithful to their own methodology let alone their faithfulness to the original text.

In sum, the above-mentioned analysis is intended to show that a simple slip would result in a change in the thematic pattern. This, in turn, may also lead to a change in the amount of presupposition (the background knowledge the reader is supposed to have). In this particular case the background knowledge the reader is supposed to possess is in a lesser degree for the English text because it makes the reader already familiar with "him" in the first sentence and this is exactly what the Persian text fails to do, as a result of which we obtain a higher degree of presupposition on the part of the Persian reader reading the Persian text, especially when he is faced with the third sentence. The would-be Persian reader reading the Persian translation is not fully acquainted with the newly introduced "he" in the Persian text.

In brief, in almost all poor translations there occurs an inevitable thematic change which is not permissible in that situation.

3.2. Case 2

In yet another task, the author had some translators translate a text into Persian. The original described a prison and a P.W. looking for a way out. In the long run he found the blind spot, which is later referred to as being the "field track". As the text proceeds this field track is replaced by the demonstrative "this". The English text is firmly and nicely woven together to enable the reader to follow the plot of the story. Analysing the English text we derive the corresponding TP:

Example 5:

... Suddenly I saw the *blind spot* in the defences that I had been looking for. As long as the guards were inside the changing rooms, there was nothing to prevent anyone from dropping out of this window onto a *field track*. This seemed deserted, being probably forbidden to civilians, and fifty yards would bring one to the outskirts of a wood with tangled undergrowth (Pazargadi, 1983:155).

ناکمان متوجه شدم که نقطه ضعف در این خط دفاعی که دنبالش
 میکردم چیست. مادامیکه نگهبانان داخل محوطه رخت کنی بودند
 هیچ چیز مانع این نمیشد که کسی از پنجره بر روی راهی که
 از میان صحرای میگذشت بپرد. این راه ظاهرًا "متروک مانده
 و شاید آمد و رفت در آن برای افراد غیرنظامی قدغن شده بود
 و انسان پس از طی پنجاه متر مسافت میتواندست خود را به
 حواشی جنگلی که از بوته زار درهم برهمی محصور بود برساند.

English	Persian
..... the blind spot	TR-R11 T2-R11... "noghte-ye-zaa'f"- (tender point)
I	T2-R12 T2-R12
As long as	T4-R13 T4-R13
..... to a field track	T8-R11 T8-R12... "rahi" (a way)
This seemed	TR11-R12 TR12-R13... "in rah" (this way)

How comes it that the "R11" in the English text is repeated for a second time while this does not occur in the translated (Persian) text. R11 is repeated for a second time in the English text because they have enough in common to be linked and to refer to the same thing: that is, the "blind spot", "field track", and "this" all refer to the same thing having the essence of "invisibility" in common. But some degree of unfaithfulness occurs with "noghte-ye-zaa'f", whose translation in English would be "tender point", which lacks the feature of invisibility. As a result a disrupted and discontinuous TP is obtained which fails to make the ideas of the source flow easily, and a TP change is the result.

"noghte-ye-zaa'f" lacks the degree of dynamic equivalence needed to make R2 receptors (receptors of the translated text) respond, visually, in approximately the same way as R1 receptors (receptors of the source) respond to the original English text.

Several subjects were asked to read the text with comprehension, we had them relate the story. The subjects relating the English text quickly found out what the relationship between "the blind spot", "this", and "field track" is. The reason is quite evident: the three items shared the meaning of invisibility in common to make them refer to one another; "The blind spot" was strong enough, in terms of "invisibility", to make them refer to that. This was not the case with the translated text. The subjects relating the Persian text seemed to develop their ideas beginning with "Rahi" and "in rah" rather than "noghte-ye-zaa'f". It took them much more of an effort (in comparison with the subjects relating the English text) to establish the relationship between the three and most of them failed. There were some, even, who linked "noghte-ye-zaa'f" to the "pandjereh" or window. The reason for this is that the loss of visibility is not indicated by the translator. These were only some of the problems which resulted in "noghte-ye-zaa'f" not being a dynamic equivalent for the "blind spot". Should the definition of dynamic equivalence be applied here, we see that there is less of a degree of accordance between R1 and R2 reactions to the two texts.

Sample multiple-choice questions were undertaken to test the results.

The target subjects came from three groups: The R1 group (subjects having sufficient knowledge of English), the R2=T group (the would-be translators), and R3=J group (critics having the command of both the source and the target language). All agreed that the essence of invisibility must be

included in the equivalent of the word "blind spot" to make it link successfully with "field track" and "this", in spite of the fact that some translators were not consistent and failed to establish this relationship. Thus they proved to be inconsistent. The poor translators simply failed to establish the view you have when you look out of a window searching for a possible way out the prison.

Highly polar questions (Yes/No ones) proved them to be guilty of unfaithfulness. Here are some examples.

Example 6.

Is there any visual relationship previously intended by the author between "the blind spot", "this", and "field track"? (Circle the best choice).

Yes No

Example 7.

Are we going to include this visual relationship in translation?

In which group is the visual relationship far stronger?

- a) "The blind spot"? "this", and "field track".
- b) "noghte-ye-zaa'f", "in rah", and "rahi".
- c) Identical.

By way of conclusion it is evident that equivalents which are not dynamic by nature cannot make TP run successfully. Following Nida and the diagram we compared R1 and R2 reactions (and not the former M1 and M2) to arrive at the ultimate unfaithfulness of the above-mentioned translation, in which there is an unallowable and unconscious TP change subsequent to an unfaithfull translation.

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Abstract

It may be popularly held that thematic progression patterns have little to do with translation. This paper issues a strong call for the reconsideration of the potential applications of thematic progression patterns in the process of analysing a text with special regard to translation. This paper can be conceived of as a comprehensive reply to this call. Evidence will be presented in support of the fact that thematic progression patterns can serve as one of the many tools by means of which to assay translation, especially its unfaithfulness. While the bulk of the existing study concerns theory, some attempts have been made to translate theory into practice.

Résumé

On pense souvent que les paradigmes de la progression thématique n'ont pas de véritable lien avec la traduction. L'article invite le lecteur à revoir les utilisations potentielles des paradigmes de la progression thématique à la lumière de l'analyse d'un texte à traduire. La suite du présent texte peut être considérée comme une réponse complète. Des éléments seront apportés qui confirment que les paradigmes de la progression thématique permettent d'évaluer une traduction, surtout en ce qui concerne son manque de fidélité. La présente étude traite en grande partie de l'aspect théorique mais elle s'efforce également de mettre la théorie en pratique.

About the author

As a BA student, Abdol Mohammad Jahangiri showed great interest in etymology thus giving expression to a new-method fast-find mini-dictionary covering some interlingual words which draws upon a contrastive analysis of English and the other languages of similar families (French, English, Greek, Latin, Old Persian, etc.) to find the missing links between the languages. Up to the end of the BA programme he managed to establish the scientific errata of several dictionaries including "Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English", "Merriam Webster", "Collins English Paperback Dictionary", etc. He received his MA from the Azad University of Shiraz. Among his current research interests are Old Persian, text analysis, translation theory, F.S.P. and translation, markedness theory, Core/Noncore vocabulary and translation, politeness forms, the translation of technical texts, etc.

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