

Translation of Marked Word Order from English into Persian: Nida's Dynamic Equivalence in Literary translation

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 22 November 2016;

Received in revised form:

3 January 2017;

Accepted: 9 January 2017;

Keywords

Dynamic equivalence,
Word-order,
Discourse-pragmatics,
Thematic analysis,
Marked translation.

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how marked structures in an English literary text are translated into its Persian equivalents. The research questions in this paper focus on the problematic differences between the translation of thematic sentences from English into Persian. In doing so, a corpus of English novelistic prose (*The Heart of Darkness*) was investigated along with its Persian translation. The model guiding the analysis was Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence, which specifically emphasizes the effects that a translated text has on its target audience. To conduct the analysis, five categories of thematized sentences (passive, adjunct front, cleft, pseudo-cleft, topicalized) were considered. Results showed that passivation was the most frequently used thematized structure among the categories. Furthermore, it was found that translator had rendered original marked structures in the English text into both marked and unmarked Persian structures.

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1. Introduction

One of the major textual problems facing translators is how to deal with marked structures in the source text (ST). Are such structures important to be considered in the target text (TT)? Can they be simply ignored? Are there any similarities across languages in terms of thematized structures? These questions, of course, lead to more serious problems in literary translation, as questions of style and the response of the target audience have to be considered too in such texts. In fact, the focusing of sentence components with distinct syntactic and grammatical structures in translation are relatively unexplored problems, especially in literary translation.

The present study is a linguistic investigation that deals with the notion of word-order variations in English-into-Persian literary translation, with respect to focus-constructions. A central difficulty for translators in focus-constructions is discerning the difference between marked and unmarked word-orders. This problem in the context of English-into-Persian translation imposes serious problems, because "[m]arkedness 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). This study relies on Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence, as its theory, and uses five categories of thematized structures to conduct statistical analysis.

2. Preliminaries and background

2.1. Thematic structures, translation and equivalence

Since early 1990s, discourse analysis has been extensively studied in translation studies, while becoming popular among scholars and researchers interested in linguistic approaches to translation. Among various theoretical models, Halliday's (2014) model of systematic functional linguistics (SFL) has

proven to be one of the most effective ones, because it provides "a strong interrelation between the linguistic choices, the aim of the form of communication and the sociocultural framework" (Munday 2012a, 137). Along the same lines, recently newly developed linguistic theories, such as critical discourse analysis (CDA) and appraisal theory, have been employed in translation studies as well. For example, Schäffner (2012) has relied on certain concepts from CDA in her analysis of political discourse and translation, and Munday (2012b) has framed a critical study on translator decision-making with reference to appraisal theory and Fairclough's (1997) critical views on discourse.

According to Jalilifar's (2010) observation, analytical research into the notion of theme, as a linguistic concern, can help reveal various patterns of thematic progression. As a result, understanding thematic constructions helps us to shape coherent texts and connect them with the main theme. Meanwhile, such an understanding plays a significant role in re-producing equivalence in translation, especially as translators often face challenges in keeping the thematic structure and finding a thematic equivalence.

In fact, thematic equivalence suggests that the translator should pay attention to many items including recreation of the original thematic structure, expression of meaning, and the author's intention. As a result, theme can have a major function in transforming meaning from the source language (SL) to target language (TL). According to Nida, a TT must deliver an actual and urgent meaning (called obviousness), because the readers of the TT must experience the same response as the ST receivers do. In more accurate words, "[o]bviousness is not to be measured merely in terms of whether the words are understandable and the sentences grammatically constructed, but in terms of the total impact the message has on the one who receives it" (Nida & Taber, 1969, p. 22).

Word-order patterns of a language are one of the most obvious features that the learner of the language encounters for the first time. In this encounter, the learner or translator may face problems that emerge from cross-linguistic differences existing in word-order and its possible variability in basic structures. One of the important concerns about basic structures is the difference between marked and unmarked word-order patterns. Languages may have different default structures as their basic word-order format. For instance, in English, the fundamental word-order is SVO (Subject-Verb-Object).

In contrast, word-order patterns which deviate from the SVO word-order in English can be understood as discourse-motivated variations. The variations in word-order across languages further emphasize the need for a meticulous survey of the diversity of sentential format modes of expression. Such a survey, as far as cross-linguistic communication is concerned, can bring about fundamental benefits for the practice of translation.

As an instance, investigating word-order patterns in Persian and English could unravel possible sentence structure occurrences in both of the languages, helping the translator make proper decisions about such issues. Despite the importance of such studies, however, research into the sub-topic of (un)marked translation of *marked* thematic structures is still undeveloped. The present study tries to find out more about this topic, providing results that can help translators decide which SL marked word-order pattern can serve as the best equivalent for a marked word order in TL.

2.2. Word-order

The systematic classification of word-order is concerned with the study of various formats based on which languages put their sentences in order and in relation to each other, considering the arrangement and agreement between the components involved. Most languages involve certain agreed-upon word-orders that recurrently occur. The ordering of such formats, however, is distributed differently across languages. In a relevant study, Fotouhinia and Bagheridoost (2013, p. 37) found the following structures:

There are six theoretically possible basic word orders: subject verb object (SVO), subject object verb (SOV), verb subject object (VSO), verb object subject (VOS), object subject verb (OSV) and object verb subject (OVS). The overwhelming majority of the world's languages are either SVO or SOV, with a much smaller but still significant portion using VSO word order.

Of course, in cross-linguistic studies, where mere formal structure is not the only effective variable, issues such as context and culture should also be taken into account. As a result, meaning in word-order is broken into linguistic meaning (based on structure), referential meaning (refers to dictionary denotations), and connotative meaning (context-dependent meaning). These specifications indicate that cross-linguistic studies on word-order, including translation, must consider many layers of meaning.

Given this important issue, in this study Nida's (1969) notion of dynamic equivalence is used. According to Nida word-order in a language should be as natural as possible to make sense, convey the spirit and manner of the original, involve a natural and easy form of expression, and produce a similar response to strengthen naturalness.

2.3. Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

The act of translation involves an exchange of information across languages and cultures, although a mere

formal match across languages may not necessarily contribute to communication. This presupposition guided Nida in proposing his notion of *dynamic equivalence*, a strategy of translation that helps the receiver (foreign reader) to get engaged in a meaningful communication. Based on this notion, the translator should implement formal and conceptual modifications, to transfer the message to the receptor perfectly.

By dynamic equivalence, Nida tried to propose a *science* of translation (Nida, 1964), along with a strong theory and practice (Nida, 1969). This notion shifted the area of the theory and practice of translation. According to Stine (2004, p. 135), it played a huge part in turning the studies of translation into an area of science, paving the way for linguistics to engage in theorizing on and assessing translation. In short, dynamic equivalence assumed that the effect the TL receptor experiences by the message should, as closely as possible, correspond to the effect which the SL original receptor experienced by receiving the same message.

As Newmak explains, Nida was conscious of the role of contexts in translation, believing that:

Visibly and linguistically, words are put into context by their collocations, their grammatical functions and their position in the word order of a sentence. Outside language, invisibly and referentially they are within a context of a real or imagined situation, a cultural background, a topic and a shared experience with the reader (Newmark, 1991, p. 87).

As a result, word-order is a topic addressed in Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence.

2.4. Marked vs. unmarked word-order

From the perspective of socio-linguistics, markedness is normally regarded as a visible construct which evokes an unusual or difficult sense compared to more common or regular forms (Johnson, 2008). Unmarked structures or forms, in contrast, are used more extensively and are expected to be seen more frequently in language use. In other words, marked features include normal linguistic units. Like other units, word-order can be modified in language, creating marked structures. For instance, one of the frequent reasons for rearrangement in word-order is topicalization.

Generally speaking, it is assumed that most languages have a main word-order pattern that is recognized as the unmarked word order. However, other patterns, which are modified to focus on specific sentence elements, are called *marked*. These latter structures are normally used to highlight style or manipulate meaning. English word-order patterns have been widely studied and are of different types (Fotouhinia & Bagheridoost, 2013, p. 37):

Sentence structure refers to the many ways that different parts of speech are put together to create semantic meaning. One mark of fluency and proficiency is how naturally one constructs original sentences in the target language.

English is SVO (subject-verb-object), as in "I don't know this", but other orders like OSV is also possible: "This I don't know." This common process is called topic-fronting (or topicalization). In English, OSV is a marked word order because it emphasizes the object, and is often accompanied by a change in intonation.

In Persian, the sentence structure is generally very regular. Under normal circumstances, the verb is always placed at the end of the sentence. The general word-order pattern is subject + object + verb (SOV), as in *من این کتاب را خریدم* (*I bought this book*, /mæn in keta:b ra: Xæridæm/). In the expanded sentence, *I bought this book in the market yesterday*,

the order of the words in English is as follows: subject + verb + object + place + time. As can be seen, to structure the order, "place" is put between "time" and "verb". In Persian, the rule is as follows: subject + object + time + place + verb, as in:

من این کتاب را دیروز در بازار خریدم.

/mæn in keta:b ra: diru:z dær ba:za:r Xæridæm/

(I bought this book in the market yesterday)

In Persian personal endings are used to mark the person, the number, and the tense. Therefore, technically speaking, a verb and the appropriate personal ending may construct a complete sentence, or at least a clause. For instance, in the clause *miravam* (I go, I am going, or I shall go), the first person subject pronoun *man* (I) has been elided, and the personal ending *m* represents the person/subject), while the two elements of subject and verb are present.

Generally speaking, languages have a preferred word-order and use it most frequently than other word orders (Johnson, 2008). Many languages usually rely on either SVO or SOV. English is mostly an SVO language and has a strict word-order in which words can be presented in sentences. However, as far as word order is concerned, Persian is more flexible and its word order is relatively free (Ramsay et al., 2005). In Persian subjects can be freely omitted, there are not any distinctions between nouns and noun phrases. Contrary to English, which uses SVO, Persian mainly relies on the structure SOV (Oranski, 2007). Persian, then, has a free word-order, whereas English strictly prefers SVO, making difficulties for Persian learning English or vice versa. Studies on word-order can help learners and translators of both of these languages to find problematic areas and overcome difficulties they experience in language learning.

3. Research questions

The study tried to answer two questions:

1. How has the target text (Hoseini, 1994) rendered into Persian the marked structures in source text (*Heart of Darkness*, 1899 by Joseph Conrad)?
2. What are the similarities and differences in thematic structures between English and Persian?

4. Methodology

This study drew on Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence to find out how marked thematic structures in an English literary book (*Heart of Darkness*, 1899 by Joseph Conrad) were translated into Persian. This study regarded word-order as a textual strategy, rather than a grammatical feature, because the role of word-order was very important in processing information and controlling the information flow. As a result, the study focused on the TL's audience's response to the textual production.

4.1. Data collection

The sentences used in this study were selected randomly from three chapters of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and its Persian translation by Hoseini (1994). The reason why the first pages of each chapter were selected was that principally the first pages of every chapter in a given book are the point of departure designed so as to keep consistency of thematic development through lines and paragraphs. Through the collection process, marked ST structures were selected and then their Persian equivalents were traced to conduct to the analysis.

4.2. Data analysis

The English text and its Persian translation were analyzed according to the Nida's (1969) model to determine their thematic organization. According to Nida, meaning is dependent on context, and every receptor coming from a

different history and culture may construe various meanings while interpreting a given text. As mentioned above, Nida focused on dynamic equivalence based on regular coherence, contending that the base of translation must be adapted to the receptor's form to convey the meaning perfectly.

Using dynamic equivalence could in turn affect markedness in translation due to cross-linguistic differences. The basic issue for investigation in this study was to find how marked thematic structures in the ST were translated in the TT. In doing so, marked thematic structures were broken into five main groups: passivized structures, adjunct fronts, clefts, pseudo-clefts and topicalization. Clefts and pseudo-clefts, then, were treated in separate groups.

The frequencies of their occurrence were computed. Next their equivalent Persian translations were extracted and examined to verify the markedness of their structure in Persian. To do this, Nida's (1969) "Back-Transforms" model was used, which functioned like Chomsky's model of transformative grammar. The model involved three phases (Figure 1).

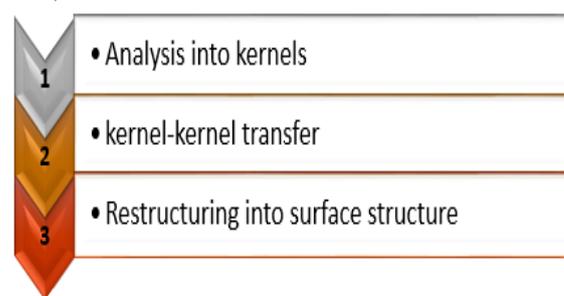


Figure 1. The Model of Translation Process by Nida (1969).

This process was conducted according to Nida's (1964) observation that through analysis complex and ambiguous structures (e.g. phrases and sentences) should be back-transformed into simple ones. Thus, in this process, following Chomsky's idea of Transformational Generative Grammar, deep meaning was extracted from surface structure. The notion of "kernel" was central in this analysis, referring to "basic structural elements out of which the language builds its elaborate surface structures" (Nida, 1969, p. 39). Next, the types of translation, whether marked or unmarked, were determined and again the frequencies were computed to clarify the statistical differences between thematic structures in English text and its Persian equivalent.

Following the analytic process, each individual type of thematic structure of marked thematic structures including passive, adjunct front, cleft, pseudo-cleft and topicalized, were put in separate tables along with their type of translation, their frequencies, and percentages. To find any difference between the categories, chi square test was conducted in SPSS. Table 1 below shows a sample of each type in analysis. Here is a brief definition of each type.

- **Passive:** passive verbs are used to say what happens to the subject, while who or what causes the action is often unknown;
- **Adjunct front:** an adjunct is a word or a set of words (i.e., a phrase or a clause) which can be removed without making the sentence grammatically wrong;
- **Cleft:** cleft sentences (also called *it*-clefts) result from changing the normal sentence pattern to emphasis a particular piece of information. The emphasis in the resulting cleft sentence is on the phrase after *it + be*;

Table 1. A sample of the Analysis for Each of the Sentence Types.

Sentence type	English	Persian
Passive	It was struck by the fire of his eyes.	آتش چشمها و آرامش و بی حالی قیافه اش نظر را جلب کرد.
	It was fringed with white surf,	با کف و جوش حاشیه دوزی شده بود،
	The bundle of papers given me by Kurtz, were kept	بسته ای را که کورتز به من داده بود نگه داشته بود.
Adjunct front	His name, you understand, had not been pronounced.	آن دو یکبار هم نامش را به زبان نیاورده بودند.
	I was surprised to see how near they were.	در کمال تعجب دیدم که آنها خیلی نزدیک هستند، درست در زیر من.
Cleft	I was seduced into something like admiration	به چیزی مثل تحسین-مثل رشک- برانگیخته شدم.
	It was a blue sea whose glitter was blurred by a creeping mist.	دریای آبی رنگی که مه کندپایی درخشش آن را تار کرده بود.
	It was near a water that surround by forest and scrub.	کنار مردابی قرار داشت که خارزار و بیشه دور تا دورش را گرفته بود.
Pseudo-cleft	It was his office which built of horizontal planks,	دفتر کارش را با تخته چوب های افقی ساخته بودند.
	When an opportunity offered at last to meet my predecessor,	ولی عاقبت که فرصتی دست داد و به دیدن سلف خودم رفتم.
	What the voice of the surf is heart now and then was a positive pleasure,	به گوش رسیدن گاهگاهی صدای کف و جوش، مانند گفتار برادر، مایه لذت مطلق بود
Topicalized	When the foundations of our intimacy were being	لحظه ای که شالوده صمیمیت ما ریخته می شد.
	'Dark human shapes could be made out in the distance'	"هیكل تیره آدمها از دور به چشم می آمد."
	Black rags were wound round their lions,	لنگرهای سیاهی دور کمرشان بسته بودند.
	The narrow strips of light of sun makes him barred from top to dawn.	باریکه های نور خورشید از گردن تا قوزک پایش را راه راه می کرد.

- **Pseudo-cleft:** a pseudo-cleft sentence is a kind of cleft sentence in which the subordinated clause is a relative clause headed by an interrogative pro-form;
- **Topicalized:** a structure in which emphasis is placed on the topic or focus of a sentence by placing it at the beginning of the sentence.

5. Findings and results

In this section, both descriptive and inferential statistics are used to report research findings. Table 2 shows the distribution of marked thematic structure in the ST, and also their rendering in Persian with mentioning percent.

Table 2. Marked Thematic Structures Distribution (Heart of Darkness).

Type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Passive	73	50.0	50.0
Adjunct	37	25.3	75.3
Cleft	21	14.4	89.7
Pseudo	8	5.5	95.2
Topical	7	4.8	100.0
Total	146	100.0	

To find any differences between the categories of thematic structure, multiple Chi-squares were conducted. The following Tables show the findings.

Table 3. Chi-square Result for Topicalization.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
marked	4	3.5	.5
unmarked	3	3.5	-.5
Total	7		

Table 4. Chi-square Result for Passivized Structures.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
marked	23	36.5	-13.5
unmarked	50	36.5	13.5
Total	73		

Table 5. Chi-square Result for Adjunct.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
marked	4	18.5	-14.5
unmarked	33	18.5	14.5
Total	37		

Table 6. Chi-square Result for Cleft Structures.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
marked	10	10.5	-.5
unmarked	11	10.5	.5
Total	21		

Table 7. Chi-square result for Pseudocleft Structures.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
marked	4	4.0	.0
unmarked	4	4.0	.0
Total	8		

Table 8. Chi-square Result for All Categories Kept as a Whole.

	total	topicalization	passive	adjunct	cleft	pseudocleft
Chi-Square	21.479 ^a	.143 ^b	9.986 ^c	22.730 ^d	.048 ^e	.000 ^f
df	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.705	.002	.000	.827	1.000

As the above Tables show the sig. values for topicalization, cleft and pseudo cleft categories are all above .05 which indicates that, descriptive statistics taken into consideration, there were not significant differences between the frequencies of marked and unmarked Persian equivalents used for marked thematic structures.

As Table 8. Demonstrates the sig. values for passive structures and adjunct fronts are below .05 which indicates that, descriptive statistics taken into consideration, the Persian equivalents used were significantly more unmarked.

6. Discussion

Using Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence, the present study tried to find out how marked structures in an English literary text (Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, 1899) were rendered in its Persian translation (by Hoseini, 1994). As the result showed (see Table 2) that from among the five fundamental types of thematic structures, passivation was found to be the strongest type in the TT. Results also revealed that the translator rendered marked discourse structures in the ST both markedly and unmarkedly into the TT, although he tended to use unmarked structures more.

Based on the findings of this study, the translator preferred unmarked translation based due to some advantages. Unmarked translation showed the faithfulness of translator to the ST and his awareness of the SL readers' cultural preferences. The degree of marked and unmarked translation for different types of thematic structures was found to be different, because there were significant differences between structures of these two languages and some structures could not be exactly rendered in translation.

Based on the findings of other studies (e.g., Fotouhinia, & Bagheridoost; Barzegar, 2008), which investigated this area of linguistics, there could be other reasons that might affect the application of marked or unmarked translation; these factors are translator's style, the format of the text (book, essay, and so on), the relation between clause structure and text, and emphasis on some special elements and genre.

Because these factors could affect the markedness of thematic and discourse structures (Teun, 2006), they could be regarded as effective features of English and Persian textual linguistics as well. As it was discussed previously, English has a relatively fixed word-order. Subject, verb and object are comparatively fixed and any displacement faces the limitation (Karimnia & Nouraey, 2015). Contrary to English, Persian has a relatively free structural arrangement and its elements could be displaced to some extent. This characteristic allows Persians to choose the desired word-order according to their communicative goals.

These usual displacements do not necessarily create marked thematic structures. The word-order in English is SVO (Subject, Verb, and Object) and in Persian it is SOV (Subject, Object and Verb). Both languages are the same in position of subject, framing unmarked themes in this position. But structures such as PP and Adv.P function differently in the case of markedness. These structures have different positions in sentences in every language. Considering the findings of the study, some implications can be expressed as follows.

The differences in the application of marked thematic structures in English and Persian depend on their speakers' cultural and universal points of view and their thinking frames. Users of these languages have their own native points of view. They come from different linguistic cultures and two different perspectives to the world. Their cultural viewpoints affect the structural preferences of their language. In translating thematic structures, translators must be aware of these differences to render the correct meaning and sense. These structures have a special role in texts and need special treatment. Missing or ignoring such structures in translation and applying an inappropriate method of translation may lead to loss of meaning.

This study also implies that even seemingly unimportant features of texts, such as word-order and use of pronouns, convey a meaning in texts and have their own role in shaping the flow of discourse. It could be advantageous to translators to enhance their knowledge by investigating discourse structures, specially marked ones in texts.

The main point, however, is that the English word-order is different from that of Persian. Therefore, in translating from English into Persian, if a translator intends to thematize features of English clauses in TT, two consequences may follow: Either Persian word-order does not allow for this transference, or even if it does, thematized elements in English clauses may be marked but their equivalents in Persian may be unmarked and consequently this unmarkedness reduces the information load or emphasis.

6. Conclusion

The present study investigated markedness of thematic structures in an English-into-Persian literary translation based on Nida's notion of dynamic equivalence. Considering its purposes, it could be argued that the study provided in a clear analysis of marked thematic structures in English and Persian texts. Results illustrated that in dealing with different variations of thematic structures, the translator used different tendencies.

The fact is that in adjunct fronting, cleft and pseudo-cleft structures, both languages approximately functioned similarly in using thematic structures. The result of data analysis and high frequencies of using marked structures in the translation provided an obvious reason to assert that in translating such structures in the literary book, the translator's tendency was towards using equivalent marked thematic structures in Persian.

Regarding passive and topicalized structures, the results illustrated a major variety between the structures in English and Persian, which was due to the limitations and restrictions of languages in applying such structures. Nida's translation procedure and research policy guided the study by its emphasis on the fact that modifying ST message to TT message should guarantee that the points of messages were the same.

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