Research Article

Thematic Organization in English Popular Psychology Texts and Their Corresponding Persian Translations

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ABSTRACT

Thematic organization plays a fundamental role in the message function of language. An important question is how translators deal with these thematic choices as textual devices when a text is translated into another language. Few studies have unfortunately brought their significance into focus. This study utilized primarily qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to examine the existence of thematic differences in English popular psychology texts and their translations in Persian. The researcher selected four hundred words based on Sical system from the first chapters of ten popular psychology books and investigated thematic development and progression in theme and their Persian translations.Applying Halliday'sthematic organization, the study revealed significant differences and similarities in the original texts and their translations regarding theme types. The study concluded thatthe results of this study can particularly inform translators in their decision-makings while translating in terms of selecting appropriate theme type, conveying the message more clearly as intended by the author, developing cohesion in discourse, and creating a cohesive text.

Keywords: thematic organization; theme types; discourse

I. **Introduction**

Research in translation studies has already focused on different linguistic features. One of the most attention-grabbing branches of linguistics, which can be of great interest in translation studies, is discourse analysis. According to Brown and Yule (1983) who phrase aptly that the discourse analysis is "necessarily, the analysis of language in use" (p. 68). According to Johnstone (2008) "people in a variety of academic departments use the term discourse analysis for what they do, how they do it or both" (p.1). From different points of view in discourse analysis, thematisation stood out for the researcher as it plays important role in forming a structure.Ventola & Mauranen (1991) also make this point: "thematic development is important for the readability and clarity of a text. In a well-formed text, the thematic patterns should reflect the organization of text-content and facilitate the reading process" (p.98 as cited in Mccabe, 1999). Theme and rheme "increases the relationship and connection between ideas in the text and so both writers and translators should have enough knowledge about thematic organization and progression in creation and interpretation of texts" (Jalilifar, 2009). Focusing on theme and rhyme structure especially at the level of sentence can have significant contribution to translation studies.To our knowledge, there is no study to date of the thematic development (Ghadessy,1997) in parallel texts, which the present research tries to carry out. The present study is going to analyze thematic structure of original English texts and their translations in Persian. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the type of themes in sentences in English and their translations in Persian is constant or different. Baker (1992 as cited in Munday, 2001) asserts that "thematic structures are realized differently in different languages" (p. 9).

There are cases in which the position and type of the theme differs in English as compared to its corresponding Persian. This difference sparked an idea to investigate the underlying cause of this phenomenon. Having in depth knowledge of grammar and structure of source and target languages is considered fundamentally important for translators, as stated by Jalilifar (2009) "in academic texts the theme/rheme patterns are important in guiding the reader through the logical paths constructed by the writer". Theme and rheme "increases the relationship and connection between ideas in the text and so both writers and translators should have enough knowledge about thematic organization and progression in creation and interpretation of texts" (Jalilifar, 2009). Munday (2008) asserts that "thematic structures are realized differently in different languages". Any changes in texture of the source text may lead eventually to different message. Another area, which benefits from the care of translator as reported by Jalilifar (2009) is "cohesion." He goes on to say, "the cohesion in texts can be improved if concentration is given to thematic organization and progression in texts. The connection between theme and rheme is a crucial point in creating a cohesive text.

II.   Research Method

*Sample***:** For selecting the texts and choosing the materials, the researcher adopts Sical system. Sical stands for the Canadian Government Translation Bureau's Quality Measurement System in which passages of 400 words are sufficient for a meaningful analysis of texts (Williams, 2009). There are ten texts of 400 words (Ghadessy & Gao, 2001), which are going to be selected randomly from the first chapters of twenty psychology books (ten English and their Persian translations). The selection is done with the aimof building a corpus representative of popular psychology books read by so many Persian readers. The rationale for focus on the first chapters was for the reason that the first chapter of a book is usually its point of departure.

*Design***:** The first step in our analysis was to identify theme rheme boundaries of sentences in both languages. Embedded clauses were not analyzed for the thematic organization. All together for the ten texts, there were 260 sentences in English texts and 280, in the Persian texts. Halliday's 2001 definition and methodology for thematic analysis was used with some modification based on Ghadessy (1997). "The theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned. The remainder of the message, the part in which the theme is developed, is called Rheme (Halliday, 2001).All sentences in both English and Persian texts were analyzed in relation to theme types. Appendix 1 provides an example of each of these types in the English sentence together with an example from Persian. All the examples come from the analyzed texts. Examples for some theme types did not occur either in the English or in the Persian texts. This may be due to the characteristic of the text-type or register under consideration. These types may very well occur in other registers of both languages. The themes for all examples in English and Persian have been underlined.

*Procedure***:** English examples (given first) are followed by Persian examples. Numbers preceding examples refer to the sentence numbers and text. If an English sentence is rendered into more than one Persian sentence, then additional numbers are added at the end of numbers for Persian examples. In the majority of cases, the Theme of the clause includes everything right up to the first finite verb of the sentence, i.e. it is the subject of the sentence. There are, however, differences if we have a Marked Theme, i.e. the theme is not the subject of the clause. All the possibilities are shown in the examples in Table I.

*Theme properties***:** The theme essentially comprises everything placed initially in a sentence right up to the first finite verb. It may have three elements, i.e. (1) ideational (topical), (2) interpersonal, and/or (3) textual. The ideational element is obligatory. It relates the topic of the sentence to the previous/following sentence(s). The interpersonal element is optional and

provides an expression of the speaker/writer's opinion on the proposition made. The textual element is also optional and overtly connects adjacent sentences.

*Purpose of the study***:** Theme shift, which is part of register in functional grammar, is an area in translation studies in which one can find some intriguing ideas.Recent studies of a text in one language and its translation in other language have proved the existence of many stylistic, semantic and discourse differences and similarities. The present study is going to analyze thematic structure of original English texts and their translations in Persian.The purpose of this study after all is to investigate the existence of shift in theme type from English to Persian and the any effect that this may have on the discourse analysis and translation. From a pedagogical perspective, translators can apply the results of this study in translating English texts. The results of this study can help translators in translation process in terms of selecting appropriate theme type, conveying the message more clearly as intended by the author, developing cohesion in discourse, and creating a cohesive text.Today, the significance of a systematic approach to theme-rheme organization of the translated texts is to some extent evident amongst most of scholars.Since we recognized that theme/rheme organization is under researched, applying stablished model can certainly help and informs translation studies in many aspects. The researcher tries to address the problem of shifts of thematisation directly.

*Theoretical Framework***:** Haliday's (2001) systemic functional grammar is used as the researcher's theoretical framework. The major rationale behind selecting this model is twofold: 1) as Martinez (2003) mentions, "the model in focus provides plausible and attestable mechanisms for determining the thematic structures of the texts correctly; 2) It is practical, reliable, and up-to-date model". In his model, Haliday (2001) renders different types of theme as a component of register in a comprehensive way. Multiple themes were not considered and analyzed amongst the other categories, because almost all of the theme types can have the properties of multiple and any other type at the same time. In order to classify theme types, multiple-theme was not certainly considered as an individual type.

1. Simple theme: (includes only the ideational or topical theme without the interpersonal and/or textual elements)

Simple themes e.g., I went to London last week,

2. Multiple themes:

A theme may comprise several themes, i.e. textual, interpersonal, and topical themes, and such a composite theme is referred to as multiple theme by Halliday(2001).

(Includes a textual element and/or an interpersonal element followed by an ideational Theme).

Well but then surely John wouldn't the best ideal be to join in.

3. Textual theme:

Textual Themes help to structure the text by developing links to other clauses and are realized by Conjunctive Adjuncts, e.g. *and*, *however*, conjunctions, e.g. *before*,and relatives, e.g. *how*.

That in fact he had signed on for three years.

4. Interpersonal Theme:

Interpersonal Themes function to explicitly construe the writer viewpoint and are realised by Modal Adjuncts, e.g. *unfortunately*, *in my opinion*, *generally*.

It was no doubt fear that he had never get away, rather than deceit, which made him mislead them.

5. Unmarked ideational Theme:

Halliday(2001) points out that the unmarked theme is the default choice and the subject is usually "chosen as theme unless there is a good reason for choosing something else".

George finally realize

6. Marked ideational Theme:

(Adverbial groups, prepositional phrases, and complements which arenominal groups that are not functioning as subjects).

Halliday(2001) continues to define marked theme as "a theme that is something other than the subject".

On Saturday night I, lost my wife.

7. Clause as theme: (the whole clause in a clause complex is taken as theme)

When china finally began with west, make negotiations par.

8. Ellipted Theme:

Some parts of the clause are presupposed from what has gone before, for example in response to a question. To put it in another word theme is omitted but can be recovered by looking at previous clause.

9. Predicated Theme:

"The predicated theme structure is frequently associated with an explicit formulation of contrast: it was not…, it was…, who/which…; in the other word, the ideational theme comes after an introductory it" (Halliday, 2001).

<u>It</u> was his teacher who persuaded him to continue

10. Thematic equative:

This type is equative because it sets up the theme+ rheme structure in the form of an equation, where theme = rheme.

The one who gave my aunt that teapot was = the duke

III.   **Results and Analysis**

Table II below gives all the statistics for text 10 in English and Persian. For each text in English and Persian the raw score for each feature and the percentage out of the total number of sentence Themes are provided. For example, text 10 in English has 28 sentences and hence 28 Themes. 16 of these 28 themes are simple, i.e. do not have either textual or interpersonal Themes in theme. Thus 57% of all the Themes in text 10 in English are of the Simple type.On the other hand, for the Persian translation of text 10; we have 32 sentences and hence 32 Themes. 7 of these themes are simple, i.e. they also constitute 21% of all the Themes in the Persian translation. If the themes in both English and Persian texts do not have the features in question, this is shown by (-) placed in each box.

In each box, first the raw number and then % (out of total sentence Themes) are given for the feature in question. Item 10 gives the total number of analyzed clause Themes for each text. The legend below this table gives the features considered.

Legend:

1. Simple theme, 2.textual theme, 3 interpersonal theme, 4.Unmarked theme, 5.marked theme, 6.clause as theme, 7. ellipted theme, 8 predicated theme, 9.thematic equative, 10. Total sentence themes.

IV.   **Discussion of the findings**

Unmarked and marked themes

Figure 1 illustrates that the number of marked and unmarked themes in English and Persian analyzed texts is generally the same. However, the details do not have one to one match in single sentences. Furthermore, this overall correspondence of marked and unmarked theme types might suggest that cohesion keeps constant from this particular point of view through the process of translation from English to Persian.

The following pie chart shows percentages of theme types in ten English texts, which have been analyzed. The most frequent type of theme is simple which accounts for fifty percent of the total theme types. Textual theme and clause as a theme are the second most frequent theme types in which both comprise 20.5%. The other types represent only small percentages of the total theme types.

The following pie chart shows percentages of theme types in ten Persian texts, which have been analyzed. The most frequent type of theme is clause as a theme, which accounts for thirty seven percent of the total theme types. Simple theme is the second most frequent theme type in which comprise 30.50%. Textual theme is the third frequent theme type by 27%. The other types represent only small percentages of the total theme types.

Figures 2 and figure 3 show that there are similarities and differences between the English and Persian theme types. Themes in the English sentences, which in the majority of cases are nominal groups (noun phrase), were translated into corresponding nominal groups in Persian. Then they were placed initially in the Persian sentences. The differences, on the other hand, relate mainly to the number of sentences in the two languages

Number of sentences: There are significant differences, indicated by **, in English and Persian texts in relation to a number of sentences. There were 260 sentences in the ten English analyzed texts that were translated to 280 sentences in Persian. The crucial question to be asked is: what happens to the English sentence when it is translated into Persian. A general answer is that in many cases the English sentence is rendered into more than one clause in Persian, each with its own theme.

Simple themes: The two pie charts show the proportion of theme types in English and Persian texts in nine broad categories. In general, for English texts while a greater percentage of theme types are found in simple-type position average of 50%, there is a smaller percentage of this theme type average of 31% for Persian texts. It is evident that seemingly through the process of

translation from English to Persian this type has under gone a dramatic change. Analyzed texts reveal that Persian translators may be due to the Persian's grammatical structure or optionally prefer to change the simple theme to clause as a theme. The reason for this behavior can be a good research question for further studying in this area.

Textual themes: The percentage of textual theme in Persian texts is slightly larger than the percentage of this theme type in English texts. This type has comprises 20.50% of theme types, while in English it has the average of 27%.

Interpersonal theme: However, the difference between English and Persian in relation to interpersonal is not significant, average of 4.50% in English and 4% in Persian texts. The low percentages in both samples indicate that, in this register, the expression of the opinions, views, and modality is rarely included in the clause themes; it is to be found in the clause rhemes.

Ellipted theme: Ellipted theme types are not very frequent in both languages namely Persian and English. Even though ellipted theme are more frequent in Persian than in English as in the analyzed sentences the researcher found three theme types in Persian compared to only one in English. This however might be because Persian language verb structure provides possibilities for this kind of ellipses.

Clause as a theme: The most frequent type of theme in Persian is clause as a theme, which accounts for 37% of the total theme types. While in English analyzed texts 20.50% of themes were clause as a theme. The main reason for the significant increase in this type of theme goes back to the process of explicitness.Explicitation is the process of rendering information, which is only implicit in the source text explicit in the target text. Explicitation is obligatory when the grammar of the target language forces the translator to add information that is not vivid in the source text, but can occur voluntarily when, for no grammatically compelling reason translators distance themselves from the source text in a way that makes the target text easier to comprehend

Implications: The findings of this study have far-reaching implications for those individuals who are interested in the discourse analysis and translation studies. This study identified several relationships between English and Persian texts in terms of theme types. Individuals interested in discourse analysis, teachers, translators and translation students will find the evidence of relationships between theme types of English and Persian texts especially valuable. In teaching translations strategies from English into Persian, any of the similarities and differences established in the present study for thematic organization can be exemplified, discussed, and practiced. This can constitute an important part of the syllabus for the whole course. This study offers insight into what curriculums and resources are more likely to influence positively students in learning translations strategies. It will also give the teachers a good idea of which

strategies may influence students' achievement in the best equivalent theme type. The idea of difference between thematic organizations among languages might seem apparent at first sight. However, providing data for claims is the purpose behind almost all of academic studies. Furthermore, being aware of this difference might spark research into this question that to what extent thematic disparities between these two languages namely English and Persian might affect discourse in general and message in particular. Translators might benefit from this study as it feeds their decision making with the results demonstrating disloyalty to the source language theme type while translating. Theme is the given information and point of departure in the message to which any alteration might lead to a different result. This study will probably raise awareness among translators to give the matter more serious consideration of the theme types. Furthermore, as theme has a lot to do with texture of the message, understanding its role in translation decision making is of paramount importance.

V. Conclusion

The findings of this study expanded the work of previous researchers in the area of discourse analysis and particularly in thematic organization. This investigation revealed that as far as theme types are concerned, English, and Persian analyzed texts have differences. Although marked and unmarked themes had similar frequencies in both texts, however in English simple theme was the first most frequent type. Textual and clause as a theme illustrated the same percentages and represented the second most frequent types. When it comes to Persian, clause as a theme founded to be the first most popular theme type. Moreover, simple and textual themes although slightly different from each other were the second and third most popular theme types. Other types were not significantly different between two texts. A further comparison of the results found in this study showed that number of sentences from English to Persian has increased.Theme has a lot to do with texture of the message, understanding its role in the cohesion of the text is very important. To sum up any shift in the theme type may lead to a different message in the target text, which is very different from the source text in terms of cohesion.

TABLE I

SHIFTS IN THEME TYPES FROM ENGLISH TO PERSIAN

Theme type	English	Persian
Unmarked	190	151
Simple	129	85
Clause as a theme	53	103
Textual	53	75
Marked	21	17
Interpersonal	11	12
Thematic equative	8	1
Predicated	5	0
Ellipted	1	4

TABLE II

LIST OF GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF THE THEMES IN TEXT 10

Texts/features	English (%)	Persian (%)
1	16.57	7.21
2	2.7	13.4
3	2.7	4.13
4	21.75	18.56
5	1.3	3.9
6	6.21	9.28

7	-	-
8	1.3	-
9	-	-
10	28	32
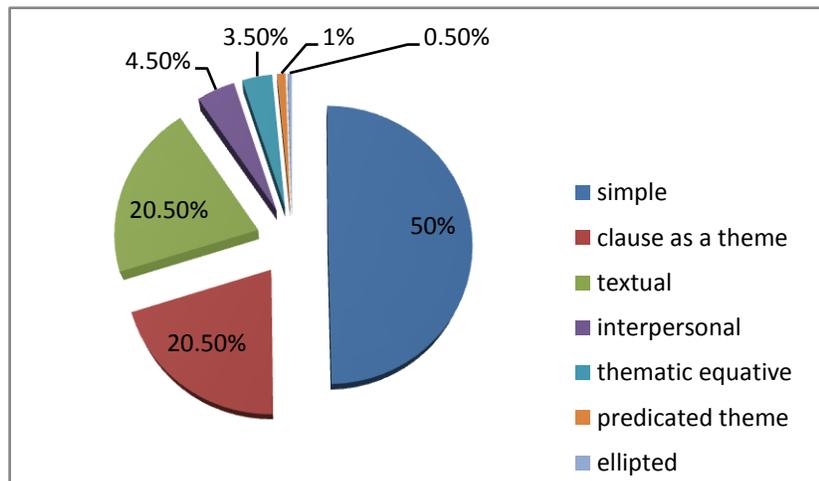
Figures:

Figure.1. Marked and un marked theme in English and Persian analyzed texts
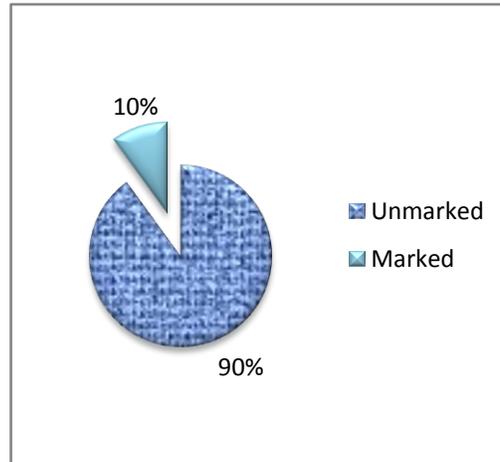
Figure.2. Theme types in English analyzed texts
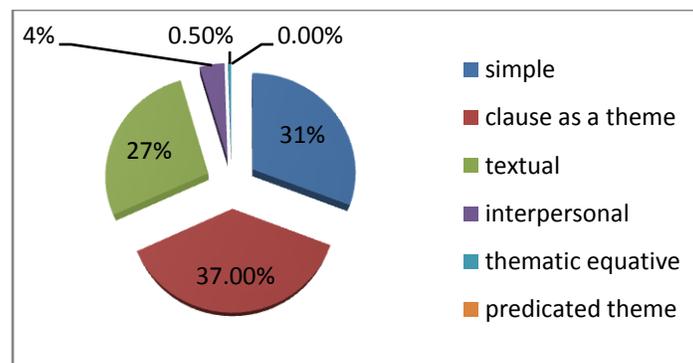
Figure.3. Theme types in Persian analyzed texts

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