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Mediating meaning hierarchies: Thematic relations in English-Polish translations of literary, media, and public discourse

This study explores the interface between syntax and semantics by examining the distribution of thematic roles across different text genres through computational means in the context of translation as a form of linguistic mediation. The research sets out to evaluate the accuracy of mapping syntactic categories (in particular those of subject and object) onto semantic roles of Agent and Patient using Natural Language Processing (NLP) approaches such as named entity recognition, CQL query and machine learning. The analysis is conducted across three distinct corpus samples: legal discourse, literature, and media publications. The results point to the very complex, non-isomorphic nature of the syntax-semantics interface, which may be interpreted as indicative of the application of deliberate mediatory techniques aiming to achieve a desired level of hybridity in the translated text.

Keywords: mediation, natural language processing, dependency relations, thematic relations, computational linguistics

Słowa kluczowe: mediacja, przetwarzanie języka naturalnego, relacje zależnościowe, relacje tematyczne, językoznawstwo obliczeniowe



1. Introduction and presentation of the concept of “thematic roles”

The existence of an interface between syntax and semantics has been postulated on numerous occasions and under various paradigms. The concept of thematic roles, with all its different forms and theoretical frameworks, is a particularly interesting tool which carries potential for defining verb classes, predicting grammatical processes and explaining morphological patterns. It is central to the notion of argument structure (Grimshaw, 1991: 4) and plays a crucial role in the theory of theta-role grids (Saeed, 2016: 163). In a nutshell, thematic roles are a way for speakers to classify participants of an event or situation in semantic terms. They are seen as arguments of verbs and therefore in the sentence *Martha locked the door with a key* it would be justifiable to identify the roles of Agent (Martha), Patient (the door) and Instrument (a key). A number of possible applications of a consistent theory of thematic roles have been identified so far. Some linguists, including Ferreira (2003: 170) and Price and Grossman (2005: 223) have postulated that the theory could be useful in investigating the processes of language comprehension, while others, including Alishahi and Stevenson (2010: 57), propose that a deeper understanding of the concept of thematic relations could reinforce the research into how language is acquired. Kipper et al (2008: 2) show that thematic relations (or *syntactic-semantic descriptions*) may be extremely useful in various natural language processing (NLP) tasks which, by extension, points to an entire spectrum of possible applications of this framework in computational linguistics, lexicography, machine learning and machine translation (Saeed, 2016: 164). For the purpose of this paper, the perspective on the notion of thematic roles will be narrowed down to translation studies, viewed through the lens of linguistic mediation. However, with additional research and appropriate interpretation, the findings discussed below may potentially be relevant for translation practice and the didactics of translation as well.

2. Development and main theories

The evolution of the theories of thematic relations reflects a long-standing effort to understand the interdependency between surface-level syntax and underlying semantic roles. While medieval scholars like Thomas of Erfurt (1300) first theorized a hierarchical dependency between subject and predicate (Seuren, 1998), it was the 19th-century “subject-predicate debate” that gave shape to the problem of misalignment between grammatical forms and semantic attributes. Steinthal, for instance, argued that traditional labels often failed to capture the true “logical” or “psychological” actor of an event

(Seuren, 1998; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This shift toward deeper semantic categories culminated in the 20th century with Fillmore's (1968) Case Grammar, which proposed universal "deep cases" as the primitive terms of linguistic theory, rather than surface-level subjects or objects. Subsequently, the work of Gruber (1976) and Jackendoff (1972) transitioned these roles from descriptive labels into explanatory tools by introducing "thematic hierarchies." By prioritizing semantic relations, such as Agent, Theme, and Goal, over fixed syntactic positions, these theories provided a functional framework capable of explaining complex phenomena such as passive transformations (Jackendoff, 1972; Goldberg, 1995).

Later on, thematic roles also became a central component of Noam Chomsky's Principles and Parameters theory, functioning within the conceptual framework of his Government and Binding paradigm. The theory posits the existence of a Universal Grammar (UG) which is realised by a number of "modules", including Chomsky's version of thematic roles, which he terms "Theta Roles". Importantly, Chomsky postulates the existence of a necessary condition known as the "Theta Criterion" which stipulates the need for a one-to-one correspondence relationship between noun phrases and thematic roles (Saeed, 2016: 153). However, Jackendoff, in his later work on thematic relations, proposes that one nominal should, in fact, be able to fulfil more than one role.

In summary, the evolution of thematic role theory represents efforts to detach semantic substance from surface-level syntax. From the early realizations of the medieval grammarians to the rigorous formalization of Chomsky's Theta Criterion, the central goal of researchers in this field has been to identify a stable and possibly universal platform for understanding meaning that exists independently of formal grammatical function. While proponents of the main theories of thematic roles arguably succeeded in elevating this concept from a set of static descriptive labels to an array of useful explanatory tools, there are certain areas where their theoretical frameworks diverge, which make universal applicability of these tools difficult and justify the need for further research into this issue.

3. Translation as a form of linguistic mediation – a voice in an ongoing debate

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume contains an extensive definition of the concept of mediation stipulating, among others, that

In mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes across modalities (e.g. from spoken to signed or vice versa, in cross-modal communication) and sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation) (Council of Europe, 2020: 90).

The document subsequently outlines what are called “mediation activities and strategies” where one of the subcategories of the *activities* section refers to “mediating a text” and lists translation as one of its functional components. This is further explained by stating that “mediating a text” involves “passing on to another person the content of a text to which they do not have access, often because of linguistic, cultural, semantic or technical barriers” (Council of Europe, 2020: 91). The document also defines translation by highlighting its purpose within the framework of mediation activities:

In both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of mediation make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly. Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access (Council of Europe, 2020: 34).

On the other hand, the Companion volume notes that the specific CEFR descriptors do not apply to the competences of professional interpreters and translators in the same way as they do to the language competences that reflect what a learner can do in the area of everyday, informal situations. This view seems to be supported by Dendrinou (2006: 16) who argues that

simultaneous and consecutive interpretation, on the one hand, and translation, on the other, are specialized activities which are not included in a general foreign language programme or examination battery assessing communicative competence or performance for general purposes (...). Naturally, interpretation and translation as professional and highly specialised activities can hardly be compared to ‘informal interpretation’ or better yet the act of relaying a message for friends and family when they have not understood the original message – something which can be done through paraphrasing or summarizing the gist of what was initially said or written (Dendrinou, 2006: 16).

Indeed, the professional competences of translators and interpreters are the subject of extensive research, regulation and certification. Standards such as European Masters in Translation and European Masters in Conference

Interpreting are not only well-known quality labels, but are increasingly becoming an industry standard in translator training. The ISO 17100:2015 standard defines industry-specific requirements for the rendition of translation services and is widely recognised on the European market by vendors and service providers alike. However, it may be argued that the above applies to a greater extent to translation as a professional activity undertaken by highly trained specialists, or a professional service provided on the free market in exchange for remuneration, and to a lesser extent to translation as an activity which is intended to “create bridges and help to construct or convey meaning sometimes within the same language, [and] sometimes from one language to another” (Council of Europe, 2020: 103). However, as mentioned above, section 3.4.1.1. of the Council of Europe document acknowledges the notion of “mediating a text” between languages (as well as between the different varieties and modalities of one language) and therefore appears to allow the conclusion that translation may be to some extent understood in terms of linguistic mediation (Council of Europe, 2020: 92). From this perspective, it may be useful to note that, apart from mediating language, the Council of Europe document places significant emphasis on the notion of mediating cultures, with both concepts being presented together as the grounds for so-called plurilingualism and pluriculturalism (Council of Europe, 2020: 11) which the Common European Framework sets out to promote. This further reinforces the view that translation, as an interdisciplinary activity which relies as heavily on culture as it does on language (Hejwowski, 2004: 144; Venuti, 2000: 468), may in certain situations be considered to either represent a form of, or bear a relation to, [cross-linguistic] mediation, and to be studied from this perspective as well.

In the context of clarifying the link between mediation and translation, it appears that a very useful tool is Bhabha’s notion of hybridity and the so-called “Third Space,” understood as “the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space that carries the burden of the meaning and culture” (Bhabha, 1994: 38). Being a concept associated primarily with postcolonialism, hybridity entails a core belief that cultural identity is born in the middle, rather than on either extreme of a binary dichotomy – thus “making cultural purity difficult to achieve” (Phanthaphoommee, 2023: 55). In essence, hybridity refers to the amalgamation of various and non-uniform cultural elements which, as proposed by Li (2016: 401), is reflected in the field of translation in the choice of a certain translation strategy. Thus giving rise to texts which will combat the binary oppositions between colonies and their suzerains, “reflecting the diasporic translator’s cultural mission” (*ibid*), and allowing them to escape the foreignization-domestication trap. Incidentally, linguistic hybridity is the

common denominator between translation and other forms of cross-linguistic mediation according to Dendrinios (2024:10) who states that “cross-linguistic practices always result in some form of hybridisation, whether it is during pluri-/translanguaging, cross linguistic mediation or in translation from one language to another. However, Dendrinios quickly remarks that the above does not necessarily mean that translation and mediation are alike, stressing that

to see mediation merely as a form of translation brings little additional understanding to translators’ work (...) and the same holds true for mediation, which is a conscious, purposeful intervention into the act of communication by social agents who, in exercising agency, are focussed primarily upon the communicative needs, rights and interests of the parties for whom the mediation act is performed (ibid)

apparently underlining her earlier view (Dendrinios, 2006: 16).

Notwithstanding, the concept of hybridity may be the key to understanding the interplay between translation and mediatory activities. Since the onset of the “cultural turn” in translation studies (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990: 4), the role of translation has been understood not only prescriptively, i.e. from the point of view of steps or procedures needed to achieve a satisfactory degree of adherence to the source text, but also descriptively, i.e. as “a fact of the particular target culture” (Toury, 1995: 21). Under this paradigm, a translator is no longer a secondary character with no agency of their own, but instead becomes “an important agent in the process of co-production and co-construction of meaning” (Polezzi, 2024: 177). As Asmann (1997: 21) put it in her article entitled Translation as Transformation, “in its narrow sense, the problem of translation is the preservation of meaning, in a wider sense, the potential of translation is the generation of meaning.” If translation is to be understood in this way, then there is no doubt that translators must be viewed as co-creators of meaning, and in doing so they will most certainly be exercising various forms of mediation (Polezzi, 2024: 177). However, this is obviously not to say that translation must always be seen as a form of linguistic mediation – a view so strongly condemned by Dendrinios (2006:16; 2024: 10), but rather that there most likely is a certain relationship between these two notions which should be given close consideration. Perhaps, for instance, the nature of this relationship varies depending on the particular mode, or setting, of the translation – or the social/socio-cultural objectives of the translation process. According to one of the definitions of *mediation* in the Dictionary of Translation and Interpreting (Laver, Mason, 2018: 82), the term denotes

the process, especially in public service interpreting, of interceding on behalf of a client, in addition to or as part of the translation process. Whereas some practitioners seek to draw a clear distinction between 'interpreting' and 'mediation', research has shown that in practice most public-service interpreting involves both to some degree.

This suggests that public service interpreting, or PSI, constitutes a translatory activity in which mediation is a priority, or at least one of the priorities. In fact, according to the definition of public service interpreting, this activity involves "the provision of a bilingual translation service by public agencies in a community with diverse languages, for people who either do not speak or understand the language used or do not feel confident with that language" (Laver, Mason, 2018: 106) which clearly implies that some form of mediation will inevitably be employed in this activity. On the other hand, the role of mediation in literary or specialized translation may be of a different nature and may, for instance, be focused on the hybridisation of the target text, allowing the translator to evade the postcolonial binaries - a strategy described by Venuti as "resistance" in translation (Venuti, 2000: 20). As mentioned above, it is likely that the role and significance of mediation will depend on the objectives of the particular translation situation and may represent a spectrum with the dominant role on the one hand and a specific technique on the other.

While it should be rather easy to detect that a community/PSI translator or interpreter is exercising a form of mediation, as this will require them to employ a broader range of competences extending beyond their cross-linguistic aptitude (competences which, incidentally, are well defined in the CEFR descriptors for mediation), the detection of mediatory techniques for achieving a desired level of hybridity of the target text may prove slightly more demanding. It is precisely because of their function as an interface between surface-level syntax and underlying meaning structures that thematic roles are hypothesised as the area where such detection may be possible.

Given the fact that translation is an extremely broad and diverse field, an analysis carried out from the perspective of a well-defined category such as thematic labelling should be narrowed down to a clearly delineated area in order to allow any form of consistency, and reliability of its findings. For the purposes of this study, emphasis will be placed on translation techniques (also referred to as *methods* or *procedures*), identified and classified by scholars such as Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), Newmark (1988) and Hejwowski (2004). Among the different translation techniques, particular attention will be given to various shapes and forms of what Hejwowski calls "syntagmatic translation" (Hejwowski, 2004: 138-139), which aligns with Newmark's

notion of the “literal translation” procedure (Newmark, 1988: 68-70) and with the same concept presented by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 32). According to Newmark, whose definition of “literal translation” Hejwowski relies on in his explanation of the “syntagmatic translation” technique,

It may be useful to distinguish literal from word-for-word and one-to-one translation. Word-for-word translation transfers SL [source language] grammar and word order, as well as the primary meanings of all SL words, into the translation, and is normally effective only for brief simple neutral sentences (...). Literal translation ranges from one word to one word through group to group, collocation to collocation, clause to clause, to sentence to sentence. The longer the unit, the rarer the one-to-one (Newmark, 1988: 69).

This description indicates that the technique involves, primarily, analysing the verb structure of the source message and recognising certain identifiable components such as words, phrases or sentence structures (Hejwowski, 2004: 95). This in turn implies that this technique should be sufficiently focussed on the role of syntactic structures in reconstructing the message in the target language and therefore should allow for easier detection of thematic role configurations.

The reason why the selection of translation techniques, rather than strategies, was targeted as the stage of the translation process at which interference with the topology of thematic labels is likely to be observed has to do with the notion of translation strategy as it is portrayed by scholars of translation and culture. Chesterman (2016: 112) explains the difference between a translation strategy and tactic by referring to the military origin of the term “strategy”, which in that context means a general plan to achieve a predefined objective. He then compares it with “tactic”, which denotes a specific action executed in accordance with a predetermined strategy. This indicates that the notion of translation strategy implies a set of decisions or determinations which are primary with respect to the performance of any specific actions intended to achieve a general goal. In this context, it is interesting to note what Venuti has to say about the preliminary stages of translation in his remarks on domestication:

The foreign text, then, is not so much communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interests. The inscription begins with the very choice of a text for translation, always a very selective, densely motivated choice, and continues in the development of discursive strategies to translate it, always a choice of certain domestic discourses over others. Hence, the domesticating process is totalizing, even if never total, never seamless or final (Venuti, 2000: 468).

Venuti is suggesting here that the choice of approach to the translation process, such as domestication (or foreignization), precedes the application of any actual syntactic, lexical or semantic procedures aiming to transfer meaning from source to target language. Likewise, Newmark, recounting his view of the translation process, notes that “[translation] begins with choosing a method of approach” (Newmark, 1988: 19), further adding:

There are two approaches to translating (and many compromises between them): (1) you start translating sentence by sentence, for say the first paragraph or chapter, to get the feel and the feeling tone of the text, and then you deliberately sit back, review the position, and read the rest of the SL text; (2) you read the whole text two or three times, and find the intention, register, tone, mark the difficult words and passages and start translating only when you have taken your bearings (Newmark, 1988: 20).

In light of the above, it seems legitimate to assume that the (re)distribution of thematic role labels is likely to occur at a stage following the translator’s selection of the overall approach to the task. Moreover, it is equally likely that it takes place at the stage of translating individual sentences of the source text, as it is the matrix of syntactic dependencies that determines the positions of the participant role slots. (Let us remember that the semantic lattice is portrayed as underlying the syntactic structure and, according to this paradigm, in order to convey deep meaning through translation, it is necessary to select the appropriate syntactic building blocks that would serve the same semantic purpose).

Finally, another reason why syntagmatic (or literal) translation specifically has been selected as a focal point in the analysis of thematic role manipulation is that this particular technique is widely considered to be the most suitable one for translating what Aixelá (1996: 56-7) termed “culture-specific items”. This view is shared by Chesterman (2016: 121), Hejwowski (2004: 131), and, perhaps most notably, Venuti (2000: 77), who is notorious for his criticism of domestication as a form of linguistic and cultural abuse (Venuti, 2000: 341). It is particularly important to emphasise this fact since the idea of translation representing a form of linguistic and cultural mediation is one of the important propositions of this paper. Therefore, the claim is made here that if successfully detected, active shifting of thematic roles in the process of translation may indicate a deliberate attempt by translators to apply appropriate translation techniques in the treatment of culture-specific items in the text. By doing so, they avoid the risk of mistreating the cultural content of the source text, as referred to above. Such deliberate attempts may in turn be interpreted in terms of the phenomenon of hybridisation of the target text. This is understood as a means of escaping

the constraints of postcolonial dichotomies which are prevalent in translations involving English, and therefore may represent a step towards verifying the hypothesis that in certain areas of translation, mediation is employed as a deliberate (or semi-deliberate) technique.

4. Corpus-based analysis of thematic relations in English-Polish translations

What follows is a computational analysis of the redistribution of thematic roles through their respective (or assumed) syntactic relations in the English to Polish translation of three types of narrative text, i.e. literary fiction, legal discourse, and media publications. The analysis focussed on the behaviour of roles of Agent and Patient. The detailed objectives of the study were as follows:

- 1) to investigate whether, and to what extent, thematic roles are redistributed in the process of translation. This objective deals both with the general question whether thematic roles are subject to deliberate shifts at all and, at a more granular level, whether specific properties of particular roles are shifted for the purpose of more effective transfer of meaning;
- 2) to compare the frequency of thematic role shifting between the studied types of text, which represent considerably different forms of discourse;
- 3) to test the usefulness, and recognise the limitations, of computational methods such as Corpus Query Language (CQL) queries, combined with machine learning, in the analysis of interfaces between syntactic structures and the underlying frameworks of semantic concepts.

The corpus under investigation consisted of three bilingual samples, each reflecting a different thematic area, i.e. media articles on current events, legal discourse, and fiction literature. This particular selection of corpus material was dictated by the expectation that the translation of texts which differ significantly in terms of their function, target group, stylistic constraints, tone and register necessitates the use of various different approaches and strategies. This, in turn, should render the study more comprehensive and attach more reliability and significance to its outcomes, as being able to compare the results of the analysis across different genres should allow for a deeper insight into the nature of and extent to which the studied phenomenon occurs. This approach, however, impacted heavily on the proportions within the sample and necessitated certain optimization procedures to be carried out. The media sub-sample comprised a selection of press articles on current world events

sourced from the BBC online news service (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world>) and consisted of a total of 17,593 tokens. This sub-sample was the smallest one in the corpus. Reliable translations of media articles were difficult to obtain, and therefore steps were subsequently undertaken in order to account for the difference in the sub-sample sizes. The legal discourse sub-sample consisted of a selection of EU directives and decisions adopted in the area of the European energy industry. They were originally posted on official websites of the European Union (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>) and consisted of a considerably larger sub-sample of 68,385 tokens. The fiction literature sub-sample included selected parts of the novel “The Overstory” by Richard Powers, (2018) and translated into Polish in 2021 by Michał Kłobukowski. The largest of the three sub-samples, it consisted of 215,740 tokens.

In order to perform the analysis, the text material was first converted into plain text files, and subsequently uploaded to Korpusomat.eu for initial processing. The Korpusomat.eu app was selected due to its capacity to apply advanced, multi-tier annotation based not only on part-of-speech tagging (which is the case for most commercial corpus builders), but also on universal dependency relations, which allow for a more precise, fine-tuned query result (Kieraś, et al., 2018: 25). Dependency tagging, as well as annotation for parts of speech (POS), are based on the Universal Dependencies Project, an extensive database of universal and language-dependent treebanks and POS tags for multilingual parsing, which evolved from the Universal Stanford Dependencies project (de Marneffe et al., 2014) and the Google Universal POS Tagset (Petrov et al., 2012).

Before designing and executing the main corpus query, the material was initially processed in order to identify the nominals which would potentially occupy the Agent and Patient roles. For this purpose, an appropriate CQL query was submitted in order to match any and all named entities denoting institutions, organizations, persons and products or items. It is worth mentioning at this point that the use of the term “named entity” is not restricted to prototypical proper nouns and may include various types of noun phrases, adjectival phrases and even, in some situations, entire clauses (Kaunisto, 2024). The named entities identified according to the procedure referred to above were subsequently classified based on the criterion of normalized relative frequency (per 10,000 segments), out of which 15 entities with the highest relative frequency rating were extracted from each corpus sub-sample. This selection method was adopted due to the fact that the corpus sub-samples were not of the same size in tokens, as discussed above. At the next stage, each of the named entities extracted were included in CQL queries to identify occurrences of these entities at nominal subject position and at direct/indirect object position, which produced about 40 instances for each of the three

sub-samples. Occurrence was measured at sentence level, in line with the adopted approach of focussing on translation techniques, rather than strategies (thus the sentence was adopted as a unit of translation). The results were compiled into a database and analysed for thematic role alterations (i.e. deviation from the Agent or Patient role in the target language). The analysis was performed using a script developed in Python based on the “spacy” NLP library. Machine learning models, i.e. “en_core_web_sm” and “pl_core_news_sm” were used to study POS arrangement and dependency relations in the examined material. The findings were subsequently quantified and represented on graphs. The results for the individual corpora were compared in order to allow for certain generalizations of the obtained results.

5. Results and discussion

The study referred to above returned the following results for the categories of (i) media articles, (ii) legal discourse, and (iii) literary fiction. Each consecutive graph shows the differences and similarities between the source language text and the translated text for POS arrangement and dependency relations in the relevant sub-sample.

For the media articles sample:

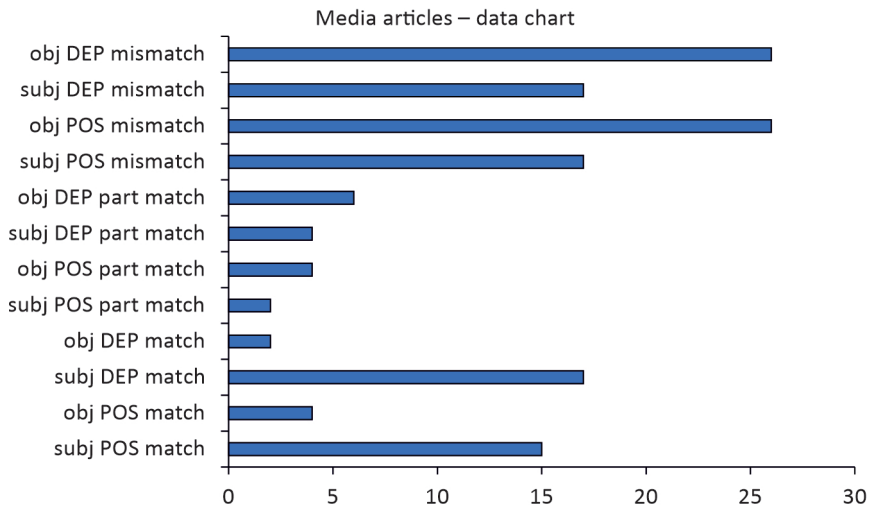


Figure 1. Degree of similarity between syntactic positions across categories (where POS stands for part of speech tagging and DEP stands for dependency relation analysis) in the media articles sample

Source: own work.

Media articles

| | subj POS | obj POS | subj DEP | obj DEP |
|---------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|
| match | 15 | 4 | 17 | 2 |
| partial match | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| mismatch | 17 | 26 | 17 | 26 |

Figure 2. Quantitative distribution of syntactic matches for POS and dependency similarities in the media articles sample

Source: own work.

For the legal discourse sample:

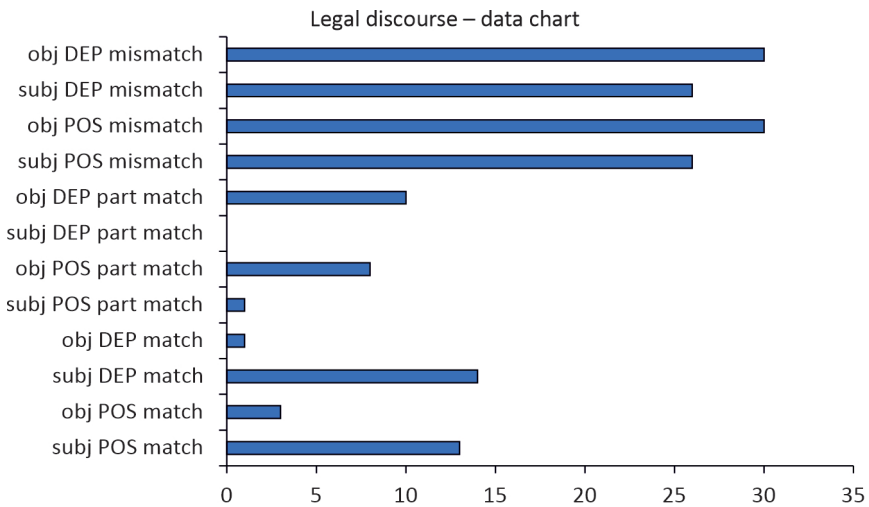


Figure 3. Degree of similarity between syntactic positions across categories (where POS stands for part of speech tagging and DEP stands for dependency relation analysis) in the legal discourse sample

Source: own work.

Legal discourse

| | subj POS | obj POS | subj DEP | obj DEP |
|---------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|
| match | 13 | 3 | 14 | 1 |
| partial match | 1 | 8 | 0 | 10 |
| mismatch | 26 | 30 | 26 | 30 |

Figure 4. Quantitative distribution of syntactic matches for POS and dependency similarities in the legal discourse sample

Source: own work.

For the literary fiction sample:

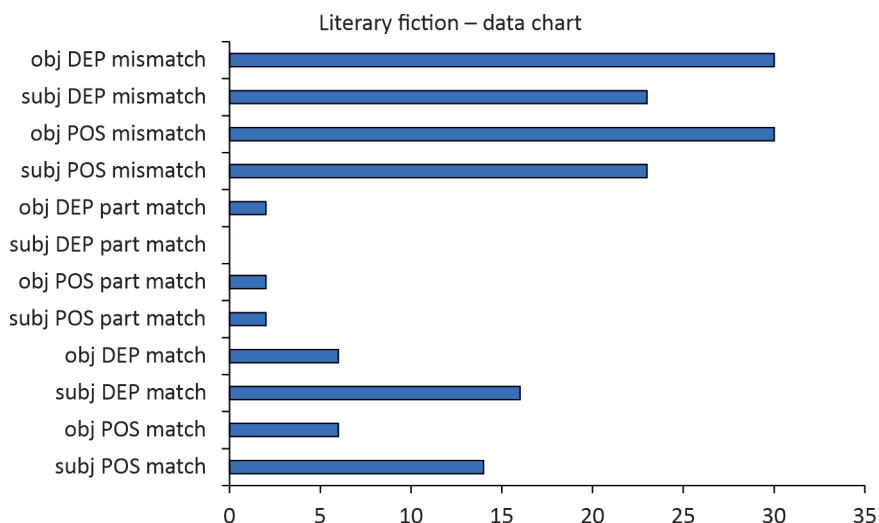


Figure 5. Degree of similarity between syntactic positions across categories (where POS stands for part of speech tagging and DEP stands for dependency relation analysis) in the literary fiction sample

Source: own work.

| | subj POS | obj POS | subj DEP | obj DEP |
|---------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|
| match | 14 | 6 | 16 | 6 |
| partial match | 2 | 2 | 0 | 20 |
| mismatch | 23 | 30 | 23 | 30 |

Figure 6. Quantitative distribution of syntactic matches for POS and dependency similarities in the literary fiction sample

Source: own work.

It is quite clearly visible that, overall, the dominating tendency is for the syntactic positions which are expected to represent the thematic roles of Agent and Patient (most notably nominal subject, direct object and indirect object) to be shifted to some extent in the process of translation. It appears that the highest degree of retention of the original syntactic configurations was observed in the case of the media articles sub-sample, which may normally stem from a number of factors ranging from journalistic rigour to editorial requirements. In fact, it was later discovered that the Polish-language

media articles included in the sub-sample had been machine-translated and although required human post-editing was ensured and the process arguably took place according to industry standards, this may have been one of the reasons for the significant retention rate. This in itself is an interesting finding which warrants additional research into the way machine translation works and how post-editing influences the semantic landscape of the translation. Legal translations also featured a relatively high rate of retention of the original syntactic positions, usually corresponding to the Agent and Patient roles. This, in turn, may be explained by the rigid requirements of legal discourse in terms of structure, syntax and style. In legal discourse, the syntactic positions that represent clearly delineated (also referred to as *prototypical*, for example in Dowty, 1991: 551) semantic roles cannot be freely rearranged without loss of the underlying meaning. For example, the role of prototypical agent may only be fulfilled by an entity which in fact possesses a sufficient degree of agency. Literary fiction appears to exhibit the highest tendency to differentiate the sentence structures, which should not be surprising given the considerable amount of leeway afforded to translators of literature in reconstructing meaning in fiction. More importantly, however, this finding might also be associated with the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural phenomena this study sets out to investigate. In line with Venuti's criticism of domestication (2000: 341), translation scholars are increasingly calling into doubt the legitimacy of certain cultural adjustments in translation, as procedures which are believed not only to carry the risk of diluting or blurring the valuable cultural content of the original text, but which also distort the very message the text is intended to transmit (Pantuchowicz and Warso, 2018: 16). As stated above, a strong tendency for thematic roles to shift was noted in the translation of literary text. This was expressed as a dominance of cases where the syntactic structures underpinning such thematic roles were modified in the process of translation, as opposed to situations where those structures were retained in line with the grammatical patterns of the source text. Therefore, this may indicate that translation practitioners were in fact attempting to evade cultural adjustments through the use of the literal (or syntagmatic) translation technique, as discussed in section 3 above (Newmark, 1988; Hejwowski, 2004). If confirmed, this phenomenon may be understood as a step towards justifying the claim made earlier that the interplay between translation and mediatory activities represents a spectrum rather than a clear-cut delineation. In addition, specifically in terms of literary translation, traces of deliberate, targeted mediatory techniques may be detected by the prevalence of certain syntactic reconstructions that aim to realign thematic role configurations. This, in turn, would liken such efforts to what Lawrence Venuti calls "resistance" in translation (Venuti, 2000: 20) and

what is referred to as hybridity by Bhabha (1994: 38), Phanthaphoommee (2023: 55), and Dendrinios (2024:10).

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that the mapping of thematic roles onto syntactic structures is heavily influenced by the genre of the text. The quantitative analysis revealed a prevalence of mismatches, which may suggest that thematic roles do not maintain a simple, one-to-one relationship with syntactic positions. This, in turn, allows the conclusion that the shifting of thematic roles may be a deliberate move on the part of the translator, which in certain cases may be interpreted as the employment of targeted mediatory techniques aiming to avoid specific, undesirable effects in the target language. This conclusion warrants further research which could probe more deeply into the nature of these mediatory techniques in order to rule out the possibility that the process of shifting thematic roles is random, rather than deliberate and targeted, or that it results from stylistic or pragmatic optimisations not affecting the semantic layer. Further research could also study in more detail how mediatory techniques are applied in a given translation assignment. Ideally, an extended version of the study would include an additional stage of human verification of the computationally selected material, with two consecutive reviewers (in accordance with ISO industry standards for translation services) for the purpose of ensuring greater objectivity of the findings. A reference corpus should also be incorporated as a baseline dataset to analyse semantic role rearrangements in thematically similar TL texts which have not been translated. Another interesting research avenue discovered in the course of this study was the potential for analysis of thematic role reconfigurations in machine-translated texts. Such research might constitute a step towards answering important questions about the way in which AI models process meaning, which seem to be posed less frequently than those about the way in which they transform data.

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