Comparison and Translation: Towards a Combined Methodology for Contrastive Corpus Studies

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ABSTRACT:

This paper describes a methodology which combines the use of original comparable texts and bidirectional translations for the contrastive study of linguistic phenomena. The methodology is based on the following procedures: (1) analysis of the preferred linguistic choices in original comparable texts; (2) analysis of the preferred linguistic choices in original texts and comparison with those occurring in translations; (3) analysis of the translation strategies used in both directions of the translation process. As an illustration of the proposed methodology, thematic head choices in English and Spanish are analysed contrastively using original and translated texts from three different written genres. The paper discusses the advantages and the limitations of using original and translated texts and advocates a combined use of both types of data to enrich contrastive functional descriptions.

KEYWORDS: methodology, corpus analysis, English-Spanish contrast, translation, thematisation, written genres

RESUMEN:

El presente trabajo describe una metodología que combina el uso de textos originales y de traducciones en ambos sentidos para el estudio contrastivo de los fenómenos lingüísticos. La metodología se basa en los siguientes procedimientos: (1) análisis de las opciones más frecuentes en textos originales; (2) análisis de las opciones más frecuentes en textos originales y en traducciones; (3) análisis de las estrategias de traducción utilizadas en ambos sentidos. Como ilustración de la metodología propuesta, se comparan las selecciones temáticas más frecuentes en tres tipos de géneros escritos en inglés y en español utilizando tanto textos originales como traducciones en ambos sentidos. A la luz de los resultados del análisis, se discuten las ventajas y las limitaciones del uso de ambos tipos de textos para el análisis contrastivo, y se propone un uso combinado que contribuya a enriquecer las descripciones contrastivas.

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PALABRAS CLAVE: metodología, análisis mediante corpus, contrastes Inglés-Español, traducción, tematización, géneros escritos

I. INTRODUCTION[2]

Most corpus-based contrastive work on textual phenomena uses original texts in both languages as linguistic evidence for the analysis. It is generally assumed that original texts are the best type of empirical data for contrastive analysis since original texts reflect the language-specific tendencies without the possible distortions that the translation process may exert on the target language. Translations are usually regarded as suspicious data sources for the purposes of contrastive functional analysis, and with some exceptions (see Hasselgaard 2004, Izquierdo 2008, Lavid in press), their use is often restricted to those studies which focus specifically on translation issues between a given source language and its target language. The result is that there is often little cross-fertilization between practitioners in the fields of contrastive linguistics and translation studies.

This paper presents a methodology for contrastive functional analysis which combines the use of original and translated texts focusing on the textual phenomenon of thematisation in English and Spanish as an illustration. The approach undertaken in this paper is functionally-oriented, using categories and notions from Systemic-Functional Linguistics. It is also a corpus-based investigation, since it uses the results of empirical corpus analysis to reach conclusions on contrastive and translation choices in English and Spanish. The study extends the results of a previous investigation of the thematic choices in these two languages in a bilingual corpus of fiction texts (see Lavid in press), focusing here on three different written genres (news reports, opinion articles, and descriptive essays) with the purpose of investigating the systemic potential of thematisation in both languages as well as the genre-specific features, as manifested in the genres under study. The present study is exploratory, based on a preliminary qualitative and quantitative analysis of a small bilingual sample. It is, therefore, a first step which will lead to more extensive investigations in the near future.

The paper is organised as follows. Section II presents the proposed methodology. The rest of the sections illustrate the proposed methodology through the analysis of the preferred experiential elements selected as Thematic Head in three written genres. More specifically, section III describes the categories used and outlines the research questions investigated; section IV presents the materials and the procedure used for the contrastive

corpus analysis; section V presents the results of these analyses across three different written genres. Finally, section VI discusses the advantages and limitations of the proposed methodology for contrastive functional description and provides some concluding remarks.

II. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The methodology proposed consists of the following steps:

1) Analysis of the preferred choices of a given linguistic phenomenon in original texts and different genres. The purpose of this analysis is to reveal both the systemic and the genre-specific intra-linguistic tendencies in the behavior of the investigated phenomenon.

1. Analysis of the preferred choices of the phenomenon in translated texts and comparison with choices in original texts. The purpose of this analysis is to reveal whether the language-specific tendencies observed in original texts are preserved in translations or not.

2. Analysis of translation patterns in both directions. The purpose of this analysis is to discover linguistic equivalences in specific contexts of use.

In the following sections we will illustrate the steps of this methodology by focusing on certain issues concerned with the textual phenomenon of thematisation in English and Spanish.

III. THEMATISATION IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

The phenomenon selected for the illustration of the proposed methodology is the textual phenomenon of thematisation in English and Spanish. The theoretical framework used for the study of this phenomenon is the model proposed in Lavid et al. (in press), which extends and operationalises the original systemic-functional notion of Theme, as applied to the English language (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, Matthiessen 1992), to provide a more accurate treatment of the message structure of the clause in Spanish. In this paper we focus on the analysis Thematic Head elements within the Inner Thematic Field, i.e., those elements in clause-initial position with a function in the experiential and the interpersonal structure of the clause. The research questions investigated are the following:

2) What type of experiential elements are preferred as Thematic Head in English and Spanish original texts in three different genres (news reports, opinion articles and descriptive essays)? Are there any genre-specific preferences?

3) Are there statistically significant differences between original and translated texts in the three genres?

4) What types of thematic changes occur in the translation process? What types of translation patterns can be identified in both directions of the translation?

IV. MATERIALS AND METHOD

IV.1. Materials

The data used for analysis are three bilingual samples composed of three different types of texts in English and Spanish: original comparable texts, translations from Spanish into English, and translations from English into Spanish. The original comparable texts included sixteen original news reports (8 English and 8 Spanish) from the digital editions of the newspapers *el País* for Spanish and of *The Times* for Spanish; the translations from Spanish into English were two long descriptive essays from the *Ronda Iberia Magazine*; and the translations from English into Spanish were two opinion articles from the *Project Syndicate* collection of quality newspapers from different countries. The total number of clauses in original texts was 362 (181 English and 181 Spanish), and the total number of translated clauses was 158 (87 English and 71 Spanish).

IV.2. Procedure

The corpus analysis combined two complementary types of analysis: the qualitative and the quantitative. The qualitative analysis investigated three types of issues:

1. The types of elements from the experiential structure of the clause which function as Thematic Heads in the sample corpus. The systemic options can be 1st participant roles (e.g.: Senser, Actor, Carrier, etc…) or non-1st participant roles (i.e., Goal, Beneficiary, Circumstance, Phenomenon, Attribute, Verbiage, Empty, and Process).
2. The structural changes affecting thematic patterns during the translation process from Spanish to English and vice versa.

The quantitative analysis was carried out for the investigation of the first issue in order to reveal whether there were statistically-significant differences in thematic choice between English and Spanish across the three different genres, both in original texts and in translations. The analysis also revealed certain characteristic changes in the translation process, which can be considered as translation patterns in both directions of the translation.

V. RESULTS

The results of the empirical analysis are presented in graphical form, and explained in detail in each subsection. We begin with the preferred choices of experiential elements as Thematic Head in original texts in the three genres under study (V.1). This is followed by the presentation of the results of the overall comparative analysis between original and translated texts (V.2) in both languages. This is complemented with the presentation of the translation patterns identified in both directions of the translation process (V.3).

V.1. Experiential roles as Thematic Head in original texts

The choices from the experiential structure of the clause are 1st Participant roles (e.g. *Senser, Actor, Carrier*, etc...), and non-1st Participant roles (i.e., *Goal, Beneficiary/Recipient, Phenomenon, Attribute, Verbiage, Empty* and *Process*).

When comparing which experiential elements are selected as *Thematic Heads* in English and Spanish original texts across the three genres, the analysis reveals that some of the choices are common to both languages, while others are language-specific. For example, the most frequent choice common to both languages in the three genres is the *Actor*, taking up 31% of the distribution in the English and the Spanish data. *Actors* can be Mediums or Agents in both languages, as illustrated in (1) and (2) below (*Actors* as Thematic heads are in bold):

Actor/Medium:

(1.a)   **Revenue for the quarterly period** rose 9 per cent to $15.06 billion. (N3, E)

(1.b)   **El gasto de los consumidores, del que dependen dos terceras partes del crecimiento**, cayó un 3,1%. (N8, S)

Actor/Agent:

(2.a)   **The capital injection** will boost ING's core Tier 1 ratio, a measure of financial strength, from 6.5 per cent to 8 per cent. (N4, E)

(2.b)   **El anuncio** ha provocado una reacción inmediata en los mercados internacionales. (N2, S)

The selection of *Carriers* in relational processes is also similar in both languages (23,2% English and 18,6 Spanish), and it is the second most preferred thematic head choice, probably due to the high incidence of relational processes in the three written genres. Illustrative examples are given in (3) and (4) below (*Carriers* as Thematic heads are in bold):

(3)   **The bonds** are redeemable at any time at 150 per cent of the issue price and carry no voting rights. (N4, E)

(4)   Con todo**, el frenazo** es menor de lo que preveían los analistas, y quizá por eso las Bolsas estadounidenses reaccionaron con subidas moderadas. (N8, E)

By contrast, the selection of the element *Process* differs significantly: while in Spanish it takes up 17,5%, in English it only takes 1,1% of the total distribution. This difference can be explained by the typological features of Spanish where *Verbs* frequently appear in thematic

position since an overt marking of the Subject is not obligatory in this language, as it is in English.

Another language-specific difference is the selection of the element *Sayer* as *Thematic Head*: while in English this selection takes up 18,2% of the cases, this selection occurs only in 10,9% in Spanish, where it is often implicit or postverbal, as illustrated by the contrastive examples (5) and (6) below (*Sayers* are underlined):

(5)   The bank announced this morning that it will raise up to £2 billion pounds from Qatar Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) (N7, E)

(6)   "Estamos preocupados por la reciente excesiva volatilidad en el tipo de cambio del yen y sus posibles implicaciones adversas para la estabilidad económica y financiera", indican los ministros de Finanzas y gobernadores de los bancos centrales del G7. (N5,S)

Graphic 1 below graphically illustrates the distribution of experiential elements as Thematic Heads in original texts in English and Spanish. The difference in the overall proportionalities is statistically significant (p>0.05).
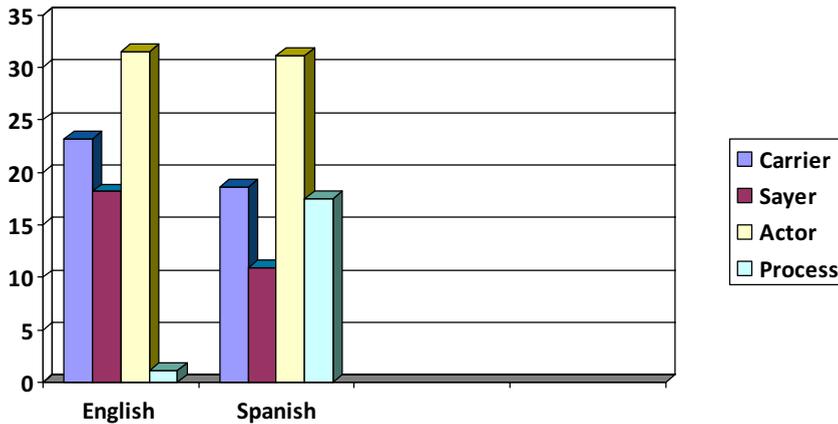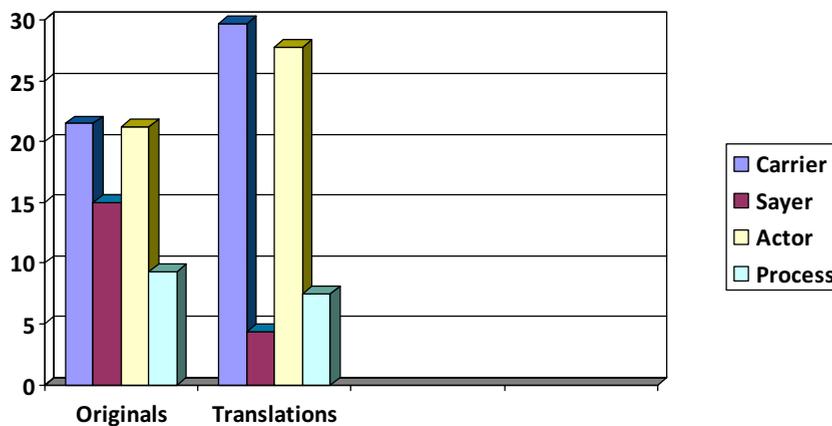

Graphic 1: Comparative distribution of preferred Thematic heads in original texts (p>0.05)

When we examine the occurrence of these experiential elements in each of the three different genres, the analysis only revealed statistically significant differences in the selection of *Sayers* as Thematic Heads. *Sayers* present a significantly higher incidence in news reports (20,7%) with respect to the other two genres (4,9%), both in English and in Spanish. Therefore, this seems to be a genre-specific choice in both languages, which can be explained by the abundance of quotations in this genre, where people report what they have seen.

V.2. Experiential roles as Thematic Head in translated texts

The purpose of this analysis was to discover whether the overall preferred thematic choices found in translations differed or not from the ones observed in original texts in both languages. To this aim, we performed a statistical analysis comparing the preferred choices in the selection of experiential elements as *Thematic Heads* in original texts (both English and Spanish) with those in translated texts (both English and Spanish). No statistically-significant differences were found between original texts and translations in the selection of these elements as *Thematic heads*. The analysis also revealed that the translated texts present similar tendencies to the ones observed in original texts: the most frequent experiential elements selected as Thematic Heads are *Actors* (27,8 %) and *Carriers* (29,7%) in both languages, while *Sayers* and *Processes* are comparatively less frequent. These results are displayed in Graphic 2 below:

Graphic 2: Comparative distribution of preferred Thematic heads in originals vs. translations (p = NS)

V.3. Translation patterns in English and Spanish

The purpose of this analysis was to find linguistic equivalences of the thematic choices investigated above in specific contexts of use. It was expected that an extended analysis of these equivalences would reveal characteristic translation patterns in the genres analyzed in both directions of the translation process. In spite of the fact that the sample used in this study is small, some patterns emerged from the analysis. These are presented in the subsections below.

V.3.1 English-to-Spanish translation patterns

In this section we present the most frequent translation patterns identified in the process of translation from English into Spanish. The patterns are presented in order of frequency.

1. SUBJECT + VERB -> SUBJECT + VERB

The most frequent translation translation pattern observed in declarative clauses is the one which preserves the *Subject + Verb* structure in both languages. This pattern occurs in 76,2 % of the cases. The preferred experiential element selected as Thematic head is the *Actor*, as in (7) below:

(7a)   **The CPA** ended Africa's longest civil war, which had left behind over two
             million dead. (E1, E)

(7b)   **El AGP** puso fin a la más larga guerra civil de África, que había dejado tras sí
             más de dos millones de muertos. (E2, S)

2. SUBJECT + VERB -> VERB (COVERT SUBJECT)

The second most frequent English-to-Spanish translation pattern in declarative clauses is the one where the lexical Subject is not mentioned, since it is encoded in the person and number markers of the verbal inflection. This occurs in 15,9% of the cases. Thus in (8b) below, the form '*poseen*' is made up of the lexical part of the verb '*poseer*' (possess) and the verbal inflection '*–en*', which encodes the *Subject* through the person and number marking.

(8a)   Together, <u>they hold</u> nearly 25,000 nuclear warheads – 96% of the global nuclear
             arsenal. (E2, E)

(8b)   En su conjunto, <u>poseen </u>cerca de 25.000 ojivas nucleares, o un 96% de arsenal
             nuclear mundial. (E2, S)

Example (8) concerns the translation of a clause in which the English thematic *Subject*, due to its pronominal nature, is simply dropped in the translation process. On other occasions, however, the change from thematic *Subject* in the source text to thematic verb in the target text happens because of a reversion of the SV structure in English to VS in Spanish, which can be considered as a sub-type of the SV → V conversion. Such is the case

in (9a, b), where the Actor *The time*, which precedes the Process in the English original, is found as *el momento* in Spanish, following the Process *ha llegado*.

(9a) **The time** has come for a fundamental change in the proceedings of the Geneva-based Disarmament Conference (E2, E)

(9b) **Ha** llegado el momento de un cambio fundamental en las medidas de la Conferencia de Desarme realizada en Ginebra (E2, S)

The Subject Themes in (8) and (9), above are a *Carrier* – involved in a relational process of possession– and an Actor –involved in a material process of happening. This is no surprise, as these two participants are, as we have seen, the two most frequent overall. More surprising is the rather frequent presence of *Sensers* as Theme in clauses with the SV → V conversion pattern in the translation. Of the ten SV → V cases registered in our corpus, three of them involve *Sensers*, which is all the most striking if we bear in mind that there are only four thematic *Sensers* in the sixty eight English original clauses. There is, however, a reason for this; mental processes tend to move from the *Senser* to the *Phenomenon* (reference) and the former is often realized pronominally in English, and therefore dropped in Spanish. The three cases involved are shown below (10-12).

(10a) **We** note with satisfaction that the new US administration has not turned a deaf ear to responsible statesmen and scientists who are calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. (E2, E)

(10b) **Notamos** con satisfacción que la nueva administración de EE.UU. no ha hecho oídos sordos a estadistas y científicos que llaman a la abolición de las armas nucleares. (E2, S)

(11a) **We** appreciate the proposals from the United Kingdom, France, and Germany as well, while Russia also signaled recently in Geneva its readiness to embark upon nuclear disarmament. (E2, E)

(11b) <u>Asimismo</u>**, apreciamos** las propuestas del Reino Unido, Francia y Alemania, mientras que recientemente Rusia también ha dado señales en Ginebra acerca de su disposición a abrazar iniciativas de desarme nuclear. (E2, S)

(12a) **We** trust that the US and Russian presidents, and leaders of all other nuclear powers, will show statesmanlike wisdom and courage and begin the process of freeing the world from the nuclear menace. (E2, E)

(12b) **Confiamos** en que los presidentes estadounidense y ruso, y los líderes de todas las demás potencias nucleares, muestren la sabiduría y la valentía de los verdaderos estadistas y den comienzo al proceso de liberar al mundo de la amenaza nuclear. (E2, S)

3. *CHANGE OF SUBJECT*

Here we include a number of translation changes observed which affect the *Subject* in the translation from English into Spanish. The most frequent one in our data occurs when the English Subject (underlined) is translated by an Adjunct in Spanish, as in examples (13, 14) below:

(13a) 'That agreement not only contains benchmarks that should lead to self-determination for Sudan's South; it also spells out a democratization process in Sudan itself.' (E1, E)

(13b) 'En dicho acuerdo no sólo figuran los parámetros que deben propiciar la autodeterminación del Sudán meridional, sino que, además, se expone un proceso de democratización del propio Sudán' (E1, S)

(14a) Recommendations presented recently to the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, suggested that security guarantees for Southern Sudan be given in order to deter a renewal of the civil war. (E1, E)

(14b) En unas recomendaciones recientemente presentadas en la Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores del Senado se proponía que se dieran garantías de seguridad al Sudán Meridional para disuadir una reanudación de la guerra civil. (E1, S)

Another frequent change of Subject occurs when the English clause has an Adjunct, typically temporal, somewhere after the Subject. This pattern is often translated into Spanish by thematising the Adjunct, as illustrated in (15, 16) below:

(15a) **China, a close ally of the government in Khartoum,** is now carefully weighing its oil interests and its strategic concerns in the South. (E1, E)

(15b) Ahora **China, estrecha aliada del gobierno de Jartum**, está sopesando cuidadosamente sus intereses petroleros y sus preocupaciones estratégicas en el Sur. (E1, S)

(16a) **A high-powered Russian delegation** recently arrived in Juba, the South Sudanese capital, with the proclaimed aim of "playing a more active role on the African continent." (E1, E)

(16b) Recientemente**, una delegación rusa de alto nivel** llegó a Juba, la capital del Sudán Meridional, con el objetivo declarado de "desempeñar un papel más activo en el continente africano". (E1, S)

English Subjects are also translated by clauses with the *se* clitic as Theme in Spanish, as (17) and (18) below. In (17b) and (18b) the *se*-clauses show a choice typically preferred to the passive in Spanish, and which is a usual translation for English passives such as (17b). Additionally, the translation in (18) also features the above-mentioned thematisation – as pre-head – of the Adjunct *hardly/difícilmente*.

(17a) **The arrest warrant for al-Bashir** should not be allowed to spur further attempts by his government to sabotage the CPA and the fragile process leading to the 2011 referendum. (E1, E)

(17b) <u>No</u> **se** debe permitir que la orden de detención de al-Bashir espolee más intentos por parte de su gobierno de sabotear el AGP y el frágil proceso que debe conducir al referéndum de 2011. (E1, S)

(18a) **The urgency** can hardly be exaggerated (E2, E)

(18b) <u>Difícilmente</u> **se** pueda exagerar su urgencia (E2, S)

The last translation change which emerged from the analysis is one consisting of a rearrangement of clause which also has an effect on the thematic head of the clause. In (19) the thematisation of a Complement in Spanish results in an OVS structure (19b) in contrast to the original English SV (19a). The pair of examples in (20) in turn illustrates another change in the communicative dynamism of the clause – i.e. the transition from Theme to Rheme. The English structure (20a) has a dummy-*it* Subject that allows the longer constituent *that…dangers* to be placed in clause-final position following the principle of end-weight. Spanish has no need of dummy subjects because the Subject can be placed after the verb, and dummy-*it* Subjects are dropped in translations. In (20b), however, the translator has opted for thematising the Subject, thus favoring end-focus over end-weight.

(19a) **Destabilization and chaos** followed, accompanied by a sense of uncertainty and unpredictability. (E2, E)

(19b) **Le siguieron** la desestabilización y el caos, acompañados por una sensación de incertidumbre e imprevisibilidad. (E2, S)

(20a) **It** gives us hope that US President Barack Obama recognizes these dangers.

(20b) **El hecho de que el Presidente estadounidense Barack Obama reconozca estos peligros** nos permite abrigar esperanzas.

V.3.2. Spanish-to-English translation patterns

If we now look at the Spanish-to-English translation changes, the following patterns emerge from the analysis:

1. *VERB -> SUBJECT + VERB*

The most frequently observed translation pattern is one where the Verb with a covert Subject as part of the inflection is translated by a *Subject + Verb* construction in English,

since in this language the Subject is an obligatory overt constituent, as illustrated in (21) and (22) below:

(21a)   <u>Cerraremos</u> los ojos, saturados de arena blanca, y veremos a Marcello Mastroniani caminando entre los pés de moleque del paraíso. (D2, S)

(21b)   <u>We shall close</u> our eyes, saturated with the glare of the white sand, and we shall see Marcello Mastroianni walking amongst the pes de moleque of paradise. (D2, E)

(22a)   <u>Es</u> un buen momento para caminar por esta plaza y por los alrededores, por calles flanqueadas por recias casonas que mantienen un empedrado centenario y en donde a cada paso parece surgir un palacio o una iglesia. (D1, S)

(22b)   <u>It</u> <u>is</u> a good time to walk around the square and its surroundings, exploring streets whose ancient cobblestones are flanked by imposing mansions. (D1, E)

As it is the case in the English-to-Spanish translations, not all Spanish structures with a thematized Process necessarily have a covert Subject. As (23) illustrates, it is sometimes the case that the participant acting as Subject appears after the Process, forming a VS sequence. In such cases, as seen in (23b), the sequence is simply turned around to the grammaticalised English SV. The VS sequence from the source text is occasionally preserved in the English translation, as when there is a pre-head Adjunct providing a circumstantial setting, notably one of location such as *on the same square* in (24b).

(23a)   <u>Aquí</u> **florecían** las iglesias, los conventos y los monasterios, pero también los hospitales y las escuelas, y llegó a tener universidad, lo que la convertía en un importante centro religioso, político y cultural. (D1, S)

(23b)   **Churches, convents and monasteries** flourished there (D1, E)

(24a)   <u>En la misma plaza</u>**, se levanta** la catedral, uno de los edificios más dañados por el gran terremoto y que sólo ha sido parcialmente restaurada. (D1, S)

(24b)   And <u>on the same square</u> **is** the cathedral, one of the buildings which suffered most damage in the great earthquake. (D1, E)

As in English-to Spanish translations, the Subject participants involved covertly in Spanish and overtly in English in this transformation are for the most part *Carriers* (22, 24) and *Actors* (21), and even participants that are halfway between one and the other (23). *Sensers* have a lower profile in this respect in the texts analyzed, as they tend to be expressed in the Spanish original –even when one would expect them not to be expressed, as in (25a)– and therefore they easily retain the same SV sequence in the English translation

(25b). The SV → SV translation pattern is, by the way, the most pervasive also in this direction (see table 1 below).

(25a)   Pero, <u>más allá del celuloide</u>, **nosotros** vemos perfectamente al cavaliere italiano caminando sobre una ciudad que tiembla nítida sobre el agua de la marea. (D2, S)

(25b)   <u>Beyond the celluloid</u>, however, **we** can plainly see the Italian cavaliere walking on a city that trembles, clearly visible, on the tidal water. (D2, E)

2. CHANGE OF SUBJECT

When translating from Spanish into English, there are a number of experiential elements which lose their 'subject-hood' in the translation, a different experiential constituent being thematized as *Subject.* A prototypical case concerns the clitic *se* when this is a participant, e.g. *Actor/Agent* in (26a) where English resorts to the passive (26b), with the Goal/Medium 'the traffic' as Subject Theme, or (27a) where the Circumstantial pre-head becomes the Subject Theme in the English translation.

(26a)   **Se** corta el tráfico (D1, S)

(26b)   **The traffic** is cut off (D1, E)

(27a)   <u>En este último</u>**, se** guardan las primeras imprentas de toda América Central. (D1,S)

(27b)   **The latter** preserves the earliest printing presses in Central America. (D1, E)

Finally, changes affecting not so much the Subject as the Theme (whether Subject or not), and which affect the whole communicative dynamism of the clause, are found when a non-circumstantial Adjunct such as '*A esa agua perfecta'* in (28a) – which is a *Beneficiary* – is pushed in the translation to the end of the clause and the Subject regains its non-marked thematic status in the English version. It could be argued, however, that the English translation (28b) is too bland compared to the marked Spanish original (28a), and something like '*to that perfect water owes Paraty much of its charm'* or a less demanding '*that perfect water is responsible for much of Paraty's charm'* would arguably be more felicitous translations.

(28a)   **A esa agua perfecta** es a la que debe Paraty gran parte de su hechizo. (D2, S)

(28b)   **Paraty** owes much of its charm to its perfect water. (D2, E)

Table 1 below graphically displays the translation patterns observed in both directions of translation:

	Eng-Spa	%	Spa-Eng	%	Total
SV → SV	48/63	76.2	40/74	54.1	88/137
SV → V (S)	10/63	15.9	N.A.		10/137
Change of Subject					
V → SV	N.A.		14/74	18.9	14/137
Se → S	N.A.		5/74	6.8	5/137
Other minor strategies combined	5/63	7.9	15/74	20.3	20/137
Total	63/63		74/74		137/137

Table 1: Distribution of most recurrent translation patterns in English and Spanish

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results of the corpus analysis presented in this paper illustrate several advantages and limitations in the use of original and translated texts as data for the study of textual phenomena contrastively.

The analysis of English and Spanish original comparable texts has proven to be a fundamental tool to discover certain language-specific features. Thus, for example, the higher incidence of *Processes* as Thematic Heads in the Spanish data points to a systemic language-specific feature which characterizes this language where the *Subject* can be covertly encoded in the verbal morphology. Other features, such as for example, the higher incidence of *Sayers* or *Carriers*, points to genre-specific features which characterize the genres analyzed. The use of original comparable texts from different genres can, therefore, be considered as an empirically-reliable method for investigating broad language-specific tendencies –both systemic and genre-specific– in the behavior of a given linguistic phenomenon. However, the analysis of original texts does not provide sufficient information to establish concrete linguistic equivalences in specific contexts of use. For that purpose we need to analyze translations in both directions.

The analysis of translations provides two important types of information. First, when comparing overall thematic choices in original and translated texts, the analysis revealed that there were no significant differences in the thematic selections occurring in original texts versus those occurring in translations. This indicates that in the genres studied in this paper, translators tend to preserve the overall language tendencies observed in the target language, rather than being influenced by the source language.

Second, the analysis of translations also revealed concrete linguistic equivalences of thematic choices in specific contexts of use, allowing the analyst to derive certain characteristic 'translation patterns' which may be useful not only for the teaching of translation, but also for enriching the contrastive functional description. However, the single use of translations without contrasting the choices with original texts would be an incomplete strategy for contrastive functional description, since it would rely on data that

can be subject to multiple non-systemic factors (e.g:: translators's textual decisions, command of both the source and target languages, knowledge of the genre, etc.).

Despite the preliminary nature of the empirical results presented in this study, we hope that it serves to illustrate how a combined analysis including original texts and translations belonging to different genres may prove to be a useful strategy for enriching the contrastive functional analysis of thematic patterns in English and Spanish. Further empirical analysis on a larger sample, including other thematic features of the clause in both languages will, hopefully, confirm the methodological proposal outlined in this paper.

NOTE

[1] It may be the case that a more extensive analysis on a larger sample and including multiple themes may yield different results. However, other studies on different data and comparing different languages have also confirmed the use of similar thematic features in original texts and translations (see Ghadessy 2001).

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