Thematic Progression in Translation from English into Norwegian

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1   Introduction

The focus of the present study is on thematic progression in texts translated from English into Norwegian. The objective is to analyze and compare thematic progression in an English source text and five different translations of the same English text. (See section 2 for a more detailed description of the material.)

According to Daneš, "text connexity is represented, *inter alia*, by thematic progression (TP)" (Daneš 1974: 114). Thus the study of thematic progression is interesting because it is one of the factors that contribute to making a text a text, as it were. The study of thematic progression in translated texts adds another dimension to this, insofar as it also sheds light on the translating process. A translation is meant to convey the same meaning as the source text; it should have the same communicative effect. This does not necessarily entail a process of word for word translation, in fact it rarely does. But does the freedom to choose other wordings extend to choice of theme? After all, if the theme is seen as the starting point of the clause, "the peg on which the message is hung" (Halliday 1970:161 as quoted in Fries 1995: 318) and "that with which the clause is concerned" (Halliday 1994: 37), then the choice of a different theme will alter, if only subtly, the meaning/content of the message (Ventola 1995: 88). Such a change will, in turn, cause a change in the surrounding sentences, since it will alter the progression of the argument. Alternatively, is it possible that word order, thematic progression, and the content of the message are not as closely linked as one would expect? It is questions like these that the present study aims to answer.

2 Material and method

The material used in this study has been taken from a multiple translation project initiated by Stig Johansson and Linn Øverås at the University of Oslo. For this project, ten different translations of the same English source text, a scientific article by Colwyn Trevarthen called "Communication and cooperation in early infancy: a description of primary intersubjectivity", were commissioned. The present study makes use of the source text and five of the target texts. Each text has 270 sentences, so the total number of sentences in the material is 6x270 = 1,620 sentences. The source text and the translations have been entered into a database and analyzed for various features to do with thematic progression; mainly whether the theme is a participant, process, or circumstance, whether it represents given or new information, and, if given, where it was last mentioned.

The advantage of this material is that it permits the comparison of different translations of the same source text. This is useful in that it enables one to see which features of the translations result from the translators' idiosyncrasies, and which are results of lexicogrammatical differences between English and Norwegian.

3 Definitions of theme and thematic progression

3.1 Theme

Theme has been defined in many different ways. The present study primarily makes use of Halliday's definition, which states that "the Theme extends from the beginning of the clause up to (and including) the first element that has a function in transitivity" (Halliday 1994: 53), i.e. a participant, circumstance, or process (Halliday 1994: Chapter 5). However, in a few cases it seems sensible to stray somewhat from this definition.

When it comes to the construction labeled *thematized comment* (equivalent to sentences with anticipatory subject *it* in Quirk *et al* 1985: 1391) and constructions with existential *there*, theme will be defined along the lines suggested by Thompson (1996: 129-130 and 138). In sentences with thematized comment, Thompson argues that not just *it* (as Halliday would have it), but also the verb and the comment should be included in the theme because "in many cases, thematised comment occurs at key transition points in the text and it obscures the method of development of

the text if one simply labels 'It' as Theme" (1996: 130). Example (1) shows the theme-rheme analysis of a Norwegian sentence with thematized comment (the topical theme (Halliday 1994: 52) is underlined).

(1) <u>Det er tydelig</u> at det fins en optimal tilpassning fra mors side overfor babyen. (TT4)

Similarly, with existential *there*, Halliday again holds that only 'there' is theme. Thompson, on the other hand, argues that the existence of the phenomenon is "signalled not just by 'there' but by 'there' plus existential process" and that including the process in the theme also "means that the Theme includes experiential content" (1996: 138). Thus he has shown, using Halliday's terms and criteria, that it makes sense to view the process as topical theme in sentences with existential *there*, as has been done in the analysis of example (2). In consequence, 'there' will be a structural theme, cf. Halliday (1994: 61-62).

(2) But there <u>is</u> an essential difference between a person doing things in relation to the physical world and the control of communication between persons. (sentence 15)

Men det <u>er</u> en avgjørende forskjell mellom hva en person kan utføre i forhold til den fysiske verden og det å kontrollere kommunikasjon mellom mennesker. (TT4)

There are also a few problems that arise when comparing theme and thematic progression in English and Norwegian texts. These problems stem from the fact that Norwegian, unlike English, is a V2-language; i.e. in the vast majority of cases the second constituent in any Norwegian declarative sentence will be the finite verb (Faarlund *et al* 1997: 859). This means that whenever a conjunctive Adjunct or a modal Adjunct (equivalent to conjuncts and disjuncts in Quirk *et al* 1985: 503) is fronted, the writer has no choice but to put the finite verb second. Since the present study focuses on thematic progression it seemed sensible to try and work around this problem so that the theme in such sentences could contain a participant or a circumstance. To this end it was decided to follow the strategy set out in Hasselgård (1998: 148): "In the present study, I choose to regard this finite verb as a structural theme[1], so that in cases where the fronted non-subject is a conjunct or a disjunct adverbial,

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[1] I.e. a textual theme, cf. Halliday 1994: 52-54 and 61.

the theme will include the first experiential element after the finite verb." Thus we get analyses like that in example (3):

> (3) Derimot kommuniserer <u>de</u> med mennesker ved uttrykksfulle bevegelser. (TT2)

3.2   Thematic progression

The concept of thematic progression (TP) was introduced in section 1 above. At this point, however, it would be useful to say something about the way in which Daneš's patterns of thematic progression (1974: 118) have been applied in the present analysis. Daneš outlines three main types of TP: *simple linear TP*, where the rheme of sentence 1 becomes the theme of sentence 2 and so on (see example (4), where "Sir Alexander Fleming" in the rheme of the first sentence becomes the theme of the second sentence as "He"); *TP with a continuous (constant) theme*, where consecutive sentences have the same theme (see example (5), where "The Rosseauist" is introduced as theme in the first sentence, and is also used as theme in all subsequent sentences); and *TP with derived themes*, where all the themes are derived from a hypertheme (see example (6), where "New Jersey" is the topic of the entire paragraph, and the theme of each sentence is related to this topic). Of course, one rarely finds just one such strategy in a text; most texts have a combination of strategies.

> (4) The first of the antibiotics was discovered by **Sir Alexander Fleming** in 1928. **He** was busy at the time investigating a certain species of germ which is responsible for boils and other troubles. (from Daneš 1974: 118)

> (5) **The Rosseauist** especially feels an inner kinship with Prometheus and other Titans. **He** is fascinated by any form of insurgency... **He** must show an elementary energy in his explosion against the established order and at the same time a boundless sympathy for the victims of it...Further **the Rosseauist** is ever ready to discover beauty of soul in anyone who is under the reprobation of society. (from Daneš 1974: 119)

> (6) **New Jersey** is flat along the coast and southern portion; **the northwestern region** is mountainous. **The coastal climate** is mild, but there is considerable cold in the mountain areas during the

winter months. **Summers** are fairly hot. **The leading industrial production** includes chemicals, processed food, coal petroleum, metals and electrical equipment. **The most important cities** are Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Trenton, Camden. **Vacation districts** include Ashbury Park, Lakewood, Cape May, and others. (from Daneš 1974: 120)

In the present study, the database used for the analysis was set up to include fields for these features, so that the topical theme of each sentence was labeled according to where it came from[2]. For the purpose of this study, only the origin[3] of the topical theme was considered relevant, as one would expect the progression of the argument to be carried out primarily by the element with experiential content. The categories were: 'theme from rheme in preceding sentence' (Daneš's simple linear TP), 'theme from theme in preceding sentence' (Daneš's continuous theme), 'theme from hypertheme' (Daneš's TP with derived theme), and 'other'. This makes it possible to calculate which strategy is predominant in each of the translations and the target text.

4   Topical themes

This section gives an overview of the texts in terms of what sort of topical themes were found. Table 1 shows the distribution of the various types of topical themes in the source text (ST) and the target texts (TT). The number of occurrences for the most frequent category in each text is in bold type.

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[2] Obviously, this is only relevant for sentences where the theme represents given information. For present purposes, 'given' is defined as something mentioned before, or inferable from the context (cf. Chafe's 'active' and 'semi-active' (1987: 25) and Jones's 'foregrounded frame' (1983: 50)). Anything that does not fit this description will be termed 'new' information. This may seem a somewhat subjective and haphazard way of judging what constitutes given information. However, great care has been taken to ensure that all the texts used in this study have been analyzed in the same way, thus ensuring the comparability of the resulting figures. Of course, there is no guarantee that these figures can be compared with those of other studies. This is clearly a problem, and one which is compounded by the fact that so many definitions of 'given' and 'new' exist as to make it almost impossible to ensure the general comparability of the different definitions. It is to be hoped, however, that by making readers aware of the problem one may avoid, at least in part, invalid conclusions and generalizations.

[3] I.e. where the referent of the thematic element was last mentioned, if the theme is analyzed as given.

Table 1: Realization of topical themes in the source text and the target texts

Topical theme	Occurrences ST	Occurrences TT 1	Occurrences TT 2	Occurrences TT 3	Occurrences TT 4	Occurrences TT 5
Participant	206 (76.3%)	197 (72.96)	193 (71.48%)	203 (75.19%)	198 (73.33%)	191 (70.74%)
Circumstance	48 (17.8%)	54 (20%)	51 (18.89%)	48 (17.78%)	49 (18.15%)	50 (18.52%)
Thematized comment	5 (1.84%)	4 (1.48%)	7 (2.59%)	6 (2.22%)	8 (2.96%)	13 (4.81%)
No theme	5 (1.84%)	5 (1.85%)	5 (1.85%)	8 (2.96%)	7 (2.59%)	5 (1.85%)
Process	4 (1.48%)	6 (2.22%)	13 (4.81%)	3 (1.11%)	5 (1.85%)	7 (2.59%)
Predicated theme	1 (0.37%)	3 (1.11%)	1 (0.37)	1 (0.37%)	3 (1.11%)	3 (1.11%)
Other	1 (0.37%)	1 (0.37%)	-	1 (0.37%)	-	1 (0.37%)
Total	270 (100%)	270 (99.99%)	270 (99.99%)	270 (100%)	270 (99.99%)	270 (99.99%)

It is perhaps not surprising that the overwhelming majority of topical themes in the source text are participants (see example (7)), or that the second most frequent type is circumstantial constructions (see example (8)). The category labeled 'no theme' may seem to contain more instances than one would expect in a formal text, but these are exclusively titles of subsections, and so are not as mysterious as they may at first appear (see example (9)).

(7) He does so by means of this delicate and specifically human system for person-to-person communication. (sentence 7)

Barnet gjør dette ved hjelp av et finstemt og særegent menneskelige system for mellommenneskelig kommunikasjon. (TT1)

(8) In the second month after birth their reactions to things and persons are so different that we must conclude that these two classes of object are distinct in the infant's awareness (Trevarthen forthcoming). (sentence 31)

I annen måned etter fødselen reagerer de så forskjellig på ting og mennesker at vi må gå ut fra at barna skjelner mellom dem (Trevarthen, kommer). (TT2)

(9) 1 Introduction (sentence 2)

1 Innledning (TT3)

It is evident from Table 1 that there are differences between target text 1 and the source text as regards types of topical themes found. The source text has 206 instances of theme = participant, target text 1 has only 197. As regards circumstances, the source text has fewer than target text 1, 48 vs. 54. When it comes to processes, however, the target text has two more than the source text.

We can see from Table 1 that target text 2 has fewer thematized participants than both the source text and target text 1. The number of processes in thematic position, however, is twice that of target text 1, 13 vs. 6, and over three times as high as the number of thematized processes in the source text (example (10)). The number of circumstances functioning as topical theme is slightly lower than in target text 1, but slightly higher than in the source text. In target text 2, as in target text 1, the three most frequently thematized constructions are participants, circumstances, and processes.

> (10) They seem to be trying to communicate feelings to things as well as to people. (sentence 35)

> Det virker som om de vil vise både ting og mennesker at de føler noe for dem. (TT2)

Target text 3 is the only text so far where the category of 'process' is not the third most frequently occurring thematized construction. Also, there are more "sentences" with no theme in this translation than in any of the other target texts involved in this study.

Target text 4 has the highest number of thematized comments out of the texts described so far. It follows the pattern set in target text 3 in that it has a low number of thematized processes, and a relatively high number of "sentences" without any theme at all.

The most notable aspect of the figures for target text 5 is that this text has an unusually high proportion of thematized comments (see example (11)). With 13 occurrences in this category, this text really stands out.

> (11) Blindness easily goes undetected in early infancy because looking movements seem normal (Freedman 1964; Fraiberg this volume). (sentence 128)

> Det er lett å overse blindhet i tidlig spedbarnsalder fordi blikkbevegelsene tilsynelatende ser normale ut (Freedman 1964; Fraiberg, i denne boken). (TT5)

To sum up, in the Norwegian target texts slightly fewer themes are participants. In most of the target texts, a slightly higher number of circumstances occur in the theme. Other differences are less constant.

5   Origin of topical themes

Let us now turn to the issue of where these themes come from. An overview of this is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Origin of themes in the source text and target texts

Theme from	Occurrences ST	Occurrences TT 1	Occurrences TT 2	Occurrences TT 3	Occurrences TT 4	Occurrences TT 5
Rheme in the preceding sentence	80 (30.19%)	83 (31.32%)	78 (29.43%)	75 (28.63%)	79 (30.04%)	81 (30.57%)
Theme in the preceding sentence	46 (17.36%)	40 (15.09%)	37 (13.96%)	47 (17.94%)	41 (15.59%)	35 (13.21%)
Theme referring to new information	46 (17.36%)	54 (20.38%)	57 (21.51%)	49 (18.7%)	52 (19.77%)	63 (23.77%)
Theme not in the preceding sentence	32 (12.08%)	29 (10.94%)	30 (11.32%)	32 (12.21%)	34 (12.93%)	29 (10.94%)
Rheme not in the preceding sentence	29 (10.94%)	30 (11.32%)	28 (10.57%)	29 (11.07%)	26 (9.89%)	27 (10.19%)
Hypertheme	21 (7.92%)	21 (7.92%)	22 (8.3%)	21 (8.02%)	21 (7.98%)	19 (7.17%)
Other	11 (4.15%)	8 (3.02%)	13 (4.91%)	9 (3.43%)	10 (3.8%)	11 (4.15%)
Total	265 (100%)	265 (99.99%)	265 (100%)	262 (100%)	263 (100%)	265 (100%)

Again, there are some unsurprising tendencies in the source text, like the fact that the most frequent origin of themes is the preceding rheme (Daneš's simple linear theme, see example (12)).

> (12) In the first few months, before manipulation is effective in exploring objects, an infant establishes the basis for a deep affectional tie to his mother and other constant companions. (sentence 6)
>
> He does so by means of this delicate and specifically human system for person-to-person communication. (sentence 7)

On the other hand, it is slightly surprising that the two categories of 'other theme' and 'other rheme' are more common than 'theme from hypertheme', although it is of course possible that many of these instances can be seen as examples of Daneš's TP with a continuous theme, despite the fact that they sometimes occur fairly far apart in the text (cf. example (13)). Alternatively, one might introduce a fourth strategy of thematic progression, one which comprises a more complex kind of linear progression (cf. Butt *et al* 2001: 142-143) where either the theme or rheme of a sentence can be used as the theme of a sentence later in the text. This seems a sensible way of explaining the occurrence of thematic origins such as the following, where the theme of sentence 40 is derived from a rhematic component in sentence 25.

> (13) <u>Acts of these kinds</u> have been found in research with infants that obeys the observational tenets of **Piaget** in his studies of cognitive development (1936). (sentence 25)

> <u>Piaget</u> (1936, 1946) records expressions of "pleasure in mastery" and "serious intent" with respect to cognitive tasks, and Wolff (1963, 1969) observed that smiling and cooing or crying of young infants may accompany and signal recognition of a familiar toy. (sentence 40)

If we compare the results for target text 1 with those of the source text, we see that they are somewhat different, though not dramatically so. Simple linear thematic progression is the most common strategy in target text 1, as it was in the source text. This is illustrated in example (14):

> (14) <u>Et seks uker gammelt barn</u> **kan vise glede** over en riktig forventning og mishag over å mislykkes, selv om det er tilfreds og avviser fysiologisk "belønning." (sentence 45, TT1)

> <u>**Uttrykk for glede**</u> er knyttet til den erkjennelsesmessige (subjektive) forutsigeligheten (Papousek 1969, Zalao 1972). (sentence 46, TT1)

However, the second most common thematic origin in target text 1 is 'new', and it is perhaps slightly surprising that this should be so. Whilst thematizing an element containing new information is useful insofar as it allows the writer to emphasize something or to establish a contrast, it nevertheless lessens the readability of the text, since it entails the loss of an explicit link to the preceding context (cf. Vande Kopple 1986:87). In such cases, the translator must decide which is more important: explicit discourse relations, or the achievement of the desired emphasis on some element. If one believes what Baker says about the universals of translated texts (1993: 243-245), one would expect the explicit

discourse relations to take precedence. However, one must also take into account the translators' idiosyncrasies and the nature of the texts in question.

Compared with target text 1 and the source text, target text 2 has a slightly lower percentage of simple linear thematic progression. On the other hand, target text 2 has a higher proportion of themes containing new information than both target text 1 and the source text. The figures for continuous theme show that target text 2 has fewer instances than both the source text and target text 1. The figures for theme derived from hypertheme, on the other hand, are almost identical for the three texts discussed so far.

The patterns of thematic progression in target text 3 are generally very similar to those of target texts 1 and 2. Target text 3 differs from the source text in the same way that target text 1 and target text 2 do, namely in that the second most frequent category of themes is that of themes referring to new information. In the source text the categories of 'new' and 'preceding theme' had the same number of occurrences.

Target text 4 clearly has very similar patterns of thematic progression to those of the other target texts. The main difference from the source text is once again that there are more themes containing new information in the target text, and fewer that are part of a TP strategy with continuous theme.

As regards the origin of topical themes, target text 5 very much follows the same pattern as the other translations. It does, however, have a slightly higher proportion of themes containing new information than any of the other target texts. It is not immediately clear what the reason for this difference may be, since, as mentioned, the thematization of an element containing new information leads to a potential decrease of readability through the loss of an explicit link with the preceding discourse. However, as will become clear from Tables 3 and 4, target text 5 differs in many ways from both the other target texts and the source text (except, perhaps, target text 2), and the higher proportion of themes containing new information in target text 5 could therefore result from the fact that this translation is relatively free.

6   Grammatical change leading to change of theme

The five target texts all exhibit a varying number of sentence changes that lead to a target-text theme which is different from that of the corresponding source-text sentence. Table 3 shows the various patterns of change. The most important of these are exemplified in section 7.

Table 3: Grammatical change leading to change of theme in the target texts

Type of change	Occurrences TT 1	Occurrences TT 2	Occurrences TT 3	Occurrences TT 4	Occurrences TT 5
Passive to active	3 (18.75%)	15 (28.85%)	1 (7.14%)	2 (8.33%)	7 (13.46%)
Fronting of circumstance	3 (18.75%)	3 (5.77%)	2 (14.29%)	5 (20.83%)	6 (11.53%)
Due to difference in preceding sentence[4]	3 (18.75%)	7 (13.46%)	1 (7.14%)	2 (8.33%)	12 (23.08%)
Into construction with 'det virker som' or similar	2 (12.5%)	6 (11.54%)	-	1 (4.17%)	4 (7.69%)
Noun phrase to adverbial clause	2 (12.5%)	1 (1.92%)	-	-	2 (3.85)
From existential 'there'[5]	1 (6.25%)	1 (1.92%)	1 (7.14%)	1 (4.17%)	2 (3.85)
Into existential 'det' (existential 'there')[6]	1 (6.25%)	4 (7.69%)	1 (7.14%)	2 (8.33%)	2 (3.85)
Active to passive	1 (6.25%)	-	-	-	-
Change in word order	-	5 (9.62%)	2 (14.29%)	2 (8.33%)	2 (3.85)
From fronted circumstance	-	3 (5.77%)	1 (7.14%)	3 (12.5%)	4 (7.69%)
Into thematized comment	-	3 (5.77%)	2 (14.29%)	4 (16.67%)	8 (15.38%)
Nominal construction to verbal construction	-	4 (7.69%)	-	-	1 (1.92%)
Sentence to phrase (no theme)	-	-	3 (21.43%)	2 (8.33%)	-
Other	-	-	-	-	2 (3.85)
Total	16 (100%)	52 (100%)	14 (100%)	24 (99.99%)	52 (100%)

Of the 270 sentences in target text 1, 16 (5.93%) have a theme that is in some way different from the theme in the corresponding sentences in the source text. However, not all of these have caused a change in the thematic progression. For instance, in some instances where the translator has chosen a different theme, both the source text theme and the new target

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[4] This category refers to instances where the themes are identical in the source text and target text, but because there are differences in the theme-rheme structure in the sentences they originate from, the themes are considered to have different origins.

[5] In this category we find translations where the source text has a construction with existential *there*, but where the translator has chosen a non-presentative construction, which makes an unmarked theme possible (cf. section 3.1).

[6] This category refers to instances where the translator has gone from a non-presentative construction in the source text to one with existential 'det' ('there') in the target text, i.e. the opposite of the one described in footnote 5.

text theme come from the preceding rheme. Thus, we only find 9 cases where the choice of a different theme has led to differences in the thematic progression (as defined by Daneš).

Target text 2 has 52 sentences (21.85%) with a theme which is different from that of their corresponding source text sentences. As with target text 1, though, only some of these thematic changes have led to a change in thematic progression. Target text 1 had 9 cases of change in TP; target text 2 has 39 such cases.

In target text 3 there are 14 sentences (5.19%) where the translator has changed the theme. The most surprising point in connection with this aspect of target text 3 is the fact that the most frequent change is a change from a verbal construction to a nominal construction (see example (14), where the verb has been left out in the translation). The translator has thus reduced the number of verbal constructions in the target text as compared to the source text. This is in stark contrast to the results of Fabricius-Hansen (1998), who showed that Norwegian relies more heavily on verbal constructions than English does. However, because there are so few occurrences of this, and because it mostly does not occur in the other target texts, it is impossible to draw any conclusions, except to say that this may well be an area in which the translator's idiosyncrasy shines through.

> (14) This is because they fail to support the infant's expressions of pleasure or his prespeech and gestures. (sentence 235)
>
> Dette fordi de mislykkes med å støtte spebarnets gledesuttrykk eller dets førtale eller gester. (sentence 235, TT3)

In 8 of the 14 cases mentioned above the alteration in topical theme leads to a change in thematic progression.

The translator of target text 4 has changed the theme in 24 sentences (8.89%). As Table 3 shows, the changes are distributed over a wide range of categories, with only a few instances in each. This makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions, but it should be noted that for the first time, the most frequent grammatical change leading to a change of theme is the fronting of a circumstance in the target text. Of the 24 sentences with a different theme from their corresponding target text sentences, only 15 lead to a change in the thematic progression as compared to that of the source text.

Target text 5 has the second highest number of changed themes out of all the target texts analyzed in this study. The theme has been changed

in 52 of the 270 sentences (19.26%). As noted above, thematized comments feature quite prominently in target text 5. In the source text there are only 5 such constructions (cf. Table 1), so it is not surprising that the remaining 8 in the target text are listed as causes of change in thematic position. Also, there are quite a few instances of change from passive to active in this text.

7   Grammatical change leading to change in thematic progression

As mentioned, not all of the grammatical changes causing a change in theme result in a different pattern of thematic progression. Table 4 below shows the number and distribution of changes in thematic progression in the five target texts (for explanations of the types of change, see Table 3 (footnotes)).

Table 4: Grammatical change leading to change in thematic progression in the target texts

Type of change	Occurrences TT 1	Occurrences TT 2	Occurrences TT 3	Occurrences TT 4	Occurrences TT 5
Due to difference in preceding sentence	3 (33.33%)	6 (15.38%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (13.33%)	10 (27.78%)
Into existential 'det' (existential 'there')	1 (11.11)	4 (10.26%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (6.67%)	2 (5.56%)
Passive to active	2 (22.22%)	12 (30.77%)	-	2 (13.33%)	4 (11.11%)
Into construction with 'det virker som' or similar	2 (22.22%)	5 (12.82%)	-	1 (6.67%)	4 (11.11%)
Fronting of circumstance	1 (11.11)	1 (2.56%)	-	3 (20%)	3 (8.33%)
Into thematized comment	-	2 (5.13%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (13.33%)	5 (13.88%)
From fronted circumstance	-	2 (5.13%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (13.33%)	3 (8.33%)
Change in word order	-	3 (7.69%)	1 (12.5%)	-	2 (5.56%)
Nominalization to verbal construction	-	2 (5.13%)	-	-	-
From existential 'there'	-	1 (2.56%)	-	-	1 (2.78%)
Noun phrase to adverbial clause	-	1 (2.56%)	-	-	2 (5.56%)
Sentence to phrase (no theme)	-	3 (37.5%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (13.33%)	-
Total	9 (99.99%)	39 (99.99%)	8 (100%)	15 (99.99%)	36 (100%)

Table 4 shows that target text 1 has 9 instances where the change of theme leads to a change in thematic progression. Of these 9 instances, two result from a change of voice, from passive in the source text to active in the target text (see example (15)). Two are cases where the translator has chosen the Norwegian construction 'det kan virke som/det virker som' ("it appears that/it seems that"), one is due to the translator using the Norwegian equivalent of existential 'there', and one is a case where a circumstance has been fronted. The final three cases are sentences where the different origin of the theme is caused by a change in the sentence from which the theme is derived. In other words, the themes themselves are identical in the source text and the target text, but because there are differences in the theme-rheme structure in the sentences they originate from, these themes belong to different strategies of thematic progression.

> (15) Facial expressions closely similar to those of adults for the emotions of pleasure, displeasure, fear, surprise, confusion and interest may be distinguished in newborns, or young infants (Charlesworth & Kreutzer 1973; Oster & Ekman forthcoming).
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> These movements are automatically perceived as "emotional" by adults. (sentences 41 & 42)
>
> Ansiktsuttrykk som ligner svært på ansiktsuttrykkene til voksne når de føler glede, mishag, frykt, overraskelse, forvirring og interesse kan skjelnes hos nyfødte, eller hos spedbarn (Charlesworth & Kreutzer 1973, Oster & Ekman, under utgivelse).
>
> Voksne mennesker oppfatter automatisk disse bevegelsene som "emosjonelle". (sentences 41 & 42, TT1)

Overall, the differences between the source text and target text 1 are neither many enough in number nor consistent enough in the patterns they exhibit to enable conclusions about the relationship between different structures of thematic progressions and differences in meaning.

Target text 2 has 39 sentences where the theme change has caused a change in thematic progression. Clearly, the fact that the number of changes in TP is so much larger in target text 2 than in target text 1 enables us to draw some tentative conclusions which we could not do based on the figures for target text 1. The change that most frequently leads to a change in TP is that from passive voice in the source text sentence to active voice in the target text sentence.

(16) **What they say** gives us access to how they perceive infants.

The content of baby talk to one two-month-old infant girl, in films taken under the conditions we have standardised, has been analysed by Sylvester-Bradley (Sylvester-Bradley & Trevarthen ·1978). (sentences 259 & 260)

Det de sier, viser hvordan de oppfatter barna.

Sylvester-Bradley (Sylvester-Bradley og Trevarthen 1978) har analysert · innholdet av småsnakk med en liten jente på to måneder, tatt opp på film under de forholdene vi har standardisert. (sentences 259 & 260, TT2)

It is not surprising that this change leads to change in TP, as it involves a complete reordering of sentence elements. But why does this change occur at all? The passive voice has been shown to be very frequent in academic texts (e.g. Biber *et al* 1999:938), so the change is not motivated by the genre of the texts. One explanation might be the tendency of translators to explicitate discourse relations (Baker 1993: 243-245); the change from passive to active entails the explicit mentioning of a subject which performs the action, and this makes the progression of the argument easier to follow. The change from passive to active accounts for over 30% of all the changes leading to a change in thematic progression, so it seems fair to conclude that the translator of target text 2 considered the need to have an explicit agent an important reason to stray from the source text. Compared with the other target texts, target text 2 has a much higher number of changes from passive to active. If the total number of changes made in all target texts is taken into account, the shift from passive to active is actually the second most frequent. However, as over half of these occur in target text 2 (12 of 20), it seems that, on the evidence of the present material at least, we must conclude that the change from passive to active resulting in a change in TP probably reflects the idiosyncrasy of the translator of target text 2. (It might also be useful to see how many similar sentences there are in the texts where the translator has not found it necessary to change the voice from passive to active. Unfortunately, this is outside the scope of the present study.)

As regards target text 3, there are 8 cases in which the alteration in topical theme leads to a change in thematic progression. As mentioned above, it is extremely surprising that a change from a verbal construction in the source text to a nominal construction in the target texts should occur at all. However, as many of the changes involve the headlines of subsections, this figure is not as strange as it might appear.

Target text 4 has 15 sentences where a thematic change leads to a change in the thematic progression as compared to that of the source text. Again, the fact that there are so few instances of these changes makes it difficult to base any firm conclusions on the figures presented above. It should be noted, perhaps, that the most frequent cause of change in thematic progression in target text 4 is the fronting of a circumstance (see example (17)), but the extremely low number of occurrences in each category makes it all but impossible to say that this suggests a general pattern.

> (17) <u>The techniques used</u> have been designed to obtain detailed records of both **mother** and infant while they are in close communication. (sentence 54)

> <u>Mothers</u> visit the laboratory from the time their babies are two to three weeks old. (sentence 56)

> <u>Fra tid til annen</u> kommer mødrene på besøk til laboratoriet sammen med barna sine fra de er to til tre uker gamle. (sentence 56, TT4)

In target text 5 we find 36 cases of change in thematic progression. Table 4 above shows that the various causes of change in thematic progression are more or less equally common in this text as far as the number of occurrences go, but the percentages vary somewhat more. Example (18) shows the change from a construction with 'seem' in English into 'det virker som' in Norwegian, which occurs four times in target text 5 (for more on the translation of English 'seem' into Norwegian, see Johansson (2001)). This way of translating 'seem' causes a more complex clause structure in Norwegian, where a matrix clause with an empty subject is introduced, thus leading to a change in TP.

> (18) <u>Experiments with artificial stimuli</u> show that even **neonates** prefer to look at simplified face-like patterns (Fantz 1963).

> <u>They</u> seem to explore the configuration of the face, being most attracted to the eyes (Lewis 1969; Carpenter et al. 1970; Wolff 1963, 1969). (sentences 161 & 162)

> <u>Forsøk med kunstige stimuli</u> viser at til og med nyfødte foretrekker å se på enkle ansiktslignende mønstre (Fantz 1963).

> Det <u>virker</u> som de er opptatt av å finne ut av ansiktets form, og særlig er de opptatt av øynene (Lewis 1969; Carpenter et al. 1970; Wollf 1963, 1969). (sentences 161 & 162, TT5)

8   Summary and conclusion

In the introduction to this study two opposing hypotheses were introduced. One stated that the choice of a different theme from that of the source text would alter the content of the target text message. The other introduced the possibility that word order, thematic progression, and the content of the message may not be as closely linked as has been assumed. Through the discussion of the five target texts it has become clear that the number of thematic changes made by the different translators varies considerably, and, furthermore, that not all of these changes lead to a change in the thematic progression of the texts. This is partly due to the fact that a theme can be different from that of its corresponding source text sentence, but still come from the same part of a preceding sentence (for instance, if two different parts of the same rheme have been thematized). However, despite the fact that some of the texts have what seems to be a fairly large number of changes in thematic progression, they nonetheless follow the pattern of the source text pretty closely, excepting the general trend that the proportion of themes containing new information is slightly larger in the target texts than in the source text. In other words, the percentage of sentences belonging to each of Daneš's strategies of thematic progression is almost identical. This could be seen as a hint that the translators try to the best of their abilities to follow the thematic progression of the source text, and could thus be taken as proof of the importance of TP in ensuring the communication of a message that is equivalent in meaning to that of the source text. However, as mentioned, there are quite a few instances where the translator has chosen a different theme from that of the source text, but since both themes come from the rheme, say, of the preceding sentence, no change in thematic progression is recorded. Thus, it is impossible to say anything about the link between word order and thematic progression without looking at each theme in more detail. In other words, it is still possible that the second hypothesis outlined above is correct, namely that word order, thematic progression, and the content of the message are not closely linked.

Ventola (1995) gives examples of "thematic changes in translation which are likely to complicate the reading process of a translated academic article" (1995: 102). She seems to take this as proof that changes in thematic progression will alter the content of the target text message, or at least the way the message is perceived. However, although this seems to hold true for the examples she gives, there is no clear evidence that this is the case in general. Ventola's paper contains examples from only a few

texts, which makes generalization difficult, but she nevertheless concludes that a failure to closely follow the theme-rheme structure of the source text will complicate the target text to a point where it may be extremely difficult to read. This conclusion seems a bit premature; at the very least, the study of a much higher number of texts is required to allow such a general conclusion. Another point to bear in mind is that the problems concerning translations between English and German are not necessarily the same as those concerning the translation between other languages. Clearly, the evaluations of the target texts will always have to be based on subjective criteria, and the definition of theme employed by Ventola (1995: 87) is not the same as the one used in this study. I cannot, however, at this point find conclusive evidence in my material to support Ventola's broad claim that a thematic change as compared to the source text will make the target text considerably more difficult to read. The claim that the choice of a different theme will change the viewpoint of the sentence certainly seems to hold true, though, and might be an indication that one needs to distinguish between the clause level and the discourse level when discussing the readability of sentences with thematic changes. In other words, while choosing a different theme from the source text will subtly change the content of the sentence in question, it will not necessarily change the content of the target text message as a whole.

As mentioned above, it is impossible to say anything about the link between word order, thematic progression, and the content of the message conveyed without a closer investigation of each theme. This is due to the fact that Daneš's patterns of thematic progression, as applied in this analysis, do not distinguish between themes coming from different parts of the same rheme (for instance), so that even if, as in this case, the English and Norwegian sentences have a different theme, it has not been analyzed as a change in thematic progression if both themes came from the same rheme. What is needed is a more detailed analysis of the rhematic components. With such a system of labeling in place, one could more clearly see the connection, if one exists, between changes in word order/thematic progression and changes in the content of the message. This seems to be a fruitful area for further research.

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