Adversative Conjunctions in Spoken Lithuanian and English

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Introduction

• Focus - adversative conjunctions acting at the sentence level or above sentence level in spoken English and Lithuanian;

• Adversative - contrary to the expectation of what is being said (but, however, yet);

• Conjunctions - one part of discourse relational devices (DRDs);

• If used in the wrong way, the interlocutor may not establish a coherent interpretation of a discourse since it does not make sense and as a result the communication may be hindered.

Material and methods

• English-Lithuanian parallel corpus;

• only 1 parallel corpus exists;

• English - Lithuanian (70,813 parallel sentences);

• Lithuanian - English (1,614 parallel sentences);

• compiled by Vytautas Magnus University;

• not discourse-annotated;

• conjunctions studied within the framework of corpus linguistics and conversational analysis;

• relevance theory is used in order to better understand the pragmatic meaning of the conjunctions.

Results

Conjunction but (Lithuanian equivalent bet)

• the choice of a conjunction depends on each individual translator’s preference and professional knowledge;

• and incongruity between semantic functions of contrast and pragmatic meaning of contradicting or denying the interlocutor’s ideas or simply starting a new segment of discourse (Bielinskiene, 2010:121);

• in such cases the conjunction is changed into some other conjunction or discourse marker which is more natural in Lithuanian;

• translators need to analyse each utterance very carefully to identify if it is enough to translate the semantic meaning of contrast economy principle prevails in spoken language: the speakers know each other, know the situation, so they choose the shortest way of expressing their ideas which might be adequately deciphered by the interlocutor.

Conjunction yet

• may function both as a conjunction and as an adverbial;

• no exact Lithuanian equivalent;

• English-Lithuanian dictionary (Piesarskas, 2005):

  • tačiau (however), bet (but), vis dėlto (however/yet);

• analysis shows that in 9% of the examples, translator choices are not limited only to the options provided in the dictionary;

• speakers prefer a shorter word tačiau (however) (54%) to a two-word vis dėlto (however/yet) (16%) (economy principle in language);

• in Lithuanian tačiau is considered so much formal as in English and is used in spoken discourse;

• small percentage (10%) of yet being translated by bet (but) may indicate that translators try to avoid repetition which might arise in case both conjunctions but and yet were translated into the same Lithuanian bet;

• omission or paraphrasing are not always an easy choice for a translator, especially concerning rendering pragmatic relations.

Conjunction however

• no examples of however used in spoken language in parallel corpus;

• possible to conclude that the longer word however is changed into shorter words in spoken discourse in English.

Conclusions

• three main strategies were employed to render the analyzed conjunctions:

  1) translation of the conjunctions into its Lithuanian counterpart provided by a dictionary;

  2) paraphrasing it into other words, i.e. other conjunctions, adverbials, interjections or combinations of conjunctions and various particles;

  3) omission;

• bilingual dictionary provides the same meanings as the conjunctions under discussion manifested in the research;

• in almost 20% of the cases translators did not rely on the semantic meanings but chose either to omit or to paraphrase the conjunction in order to better reflect its pragmatic function;

• analysis of the cases of paraphrasing and omission reveals that in some cases the use of such techniques modifies the meaning and pragmatic relations in the target text.