Adversative Conjunctions in Spoken Lithuanian and English

Prof. Dr. Jolita Sliogeriene, Giedre Valunaite-Oleskeviciene, Vilma Asijaviciute

Mykolas Romeris University

Ateities St. 20, LT-08303, Vilnius, Lithuania

Email: j.sliogeriene@gmail.com, gentrygiedre@gmail.com, vilma.asijaviciute@gmail.com

Discourse is characterized by the central feature of connectedness and the surface connectedness is ensured through cohesion which means connecting lexical elements into a cohesive discourse. Conjunctions function as a formal expression of cohesion; they are functional words connecting phrases or sentences. The paper focuses on adversative conjunctions (according to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification) in spoken Lithuanian and English.

According to the theory of relevance (Blakemore, 2002; Sperber & Wilson, 2004) conjunctions aid pragmatic functions which include contextual implication, strengthening of the existing assumption and contradiction to the existing assumption. At the same time conjunctions also carry semantic meaning which may overlap or intertwine with the pragmatic function or conjunctions may simply demonstrate pure pragmatic behaviour. In different languages different variations of conjunctions are used to ensure discourse relations and the differences become even more visible if the translations of the connectives are compared (Degand, Zufferey, 2013).

The aim of the research is to investigate by what conjunctions the most frequent English adversative conjunctions *but* and *yet* (Rudolph, 1996) are translated into Lithuanian and what might determine one or another translators' preference. The choice of the object of investigation is motivated by the fact that there is no comprehensive comparative study of English and Lithuanian adversative conjunctions.

The research methods include literature overview and corpus-based comparative analysis. First, the classification of the Lithuanian conjunctions into coordinating and subordinating according to their semantic functions in the sentences based on *The Computerised Lithuanian Language Manual* (Kniuksta (2004)) is presented. It should also be noted that form-words are abundantly used in the Lithuanian language and some of them are polysemic and perform multiple functions acting as conjunctions or particles or other parts of speech which makes categorization problematic. Following Marcinkeviciene (2000) in some cases desemantisation takes place.

After that the comparative discourse analysis is carried out trying to identify by what Lithuanian conjunctions English adversative conjunctions *but* and *yet* are translated. The study is performed using the English-Lithuanian part of the only parallel corpus in Lithuania compiled by Vytautas Magnus University (70,813 parallel sentences). However, the corpus is not discourse-annotated as there are no discourse-annotated corpora in Lithuanian so the research was carried out working with the full concordance of the researched words focusing on the cases when they act as discourse connectives. Although a multilingual approach cannot cover specific features of the researched languages it may give a starting point for comparison of conjunctions and making certain generalizations (Degand, Zufferey, 2013).

It is established by the research that translations of the conjunctions vary, they may be translated by the conjunctions provided by dictionaries, or, taking into consideration their pragmatic function, might be transferred into a different linguistic category like a particle, an adverb or might be omitted at all. The most frequent translations coincide with the meanings provided by dictionaries, for example *but* is most frequently translated to the Lithuanian language by *bet* (44%) and *tačiau* (31%). The higher percentage of *bet* is explained by the fact that in spoken language shorter words are preferred. Another observation concerns *yet* (*tačiau/bet/vis dėlto)* as it does not have a defined counterpart in Lithuanian. The English-Lithuanian part of *Anglonas* dictionary (Piesarskas, 2005) gives a number of possible choices, so according to the most frequently provided translations in the parallel corpus we may arrive at the conclusion that currently the most preferred counterpart of *yet* is *tačiau* (54% of translated cases in the present study), which, actually, according to *Anglonas* dictionary is the genuine counterpart of *however.* The English – Lithuanian parallel corpus does not provide any examples of *however* used in spoken language, thus it is possible to conclude that the longer word *however* is changed into shorter words in spoken discourse in English. In Lithuanian, the word *tačiau*, which is a direct translation of *however*, is not so much formal. It should also be noted that translators do not translate word for word because the pragmatic meaning of a conjunction does not necessarily coincide with its semantic meaning and thus conjunctions are translated into even different parts of speech (particles or adverbs, ~5% of total cases) or are simply omitted (9% of total cases). However, such strategies as omission or paraphrasing are not an easy choice for a translator, as they may imply a slight change of meaning.

References

Bielinskiene, A. (2009). Relevancijos teorija ir diskurso jungtukų bei jungiamųjų žodžių pragmatika. *Kalbų studijos*, 12, 53–62. [Relevance Theory and Pragmatics of Discourse Connectives.]

Blakemore, D. (2002). *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning. The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carston R. (2005). *Thoughts and utterances*. *The pragmatics of explicit communication*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Degand, L., Zufferey, S. (2013). Annotating the meaning of discourse connectives in multilingual corpora. *Corpus linguistics and linguistic theory*, pp.1-24.

Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. (1992). *Cohesion in English.* Longman: Longman group Limited.

Kniuksta P. 2004. *Kompiuterinis lietuvių kalbos žinynas. Nuo morfologijos iki reikalų raštų.* Vilnius: Sviesa. [*The Computerised Lithuanian Language Manual.*]

Marcinkeviciene R. (2000). Patterns of word usage viewed by corpus linguistics. *Kalbotyra*, 49 (3), 71–80.

Piesarskas, B. (2005). *Anglonas.* English-Lithuanian, Lithuamian-English Dictionary. Fotonija.

Rudolph, E. (1996). *Contrast: adversative and consessive expressions on sentence and text level*. New York: de Gruyter.

Wilson D., and Sperber D. (2004). Relevance Theory. In Horn, L.R. & Ward, G. (eds.). *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 607-632.

Sources

Center of Computational Linguistics - http://donelaitis.vdu.lt/main_en.php?id=4&nr=1_1_1
 The Online Corpus of the Contemporary Lithuanian Language - http://tekstynas.vdu.lt
The Parallel English–Lithuanian Corpus - http://tekstynas.vdu.lt/page.xhtml?id=parallelCorpus
The Corpus of Lithuanian Spoken Language - http://donelaitis.vdu.lt/sakytines-kalbos-tekstynas/
British National Corpus - http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk