To the very end
A contrastive study of N-Rhemes in English and Swedish translations

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Abstract

The present study is an explorative, corpus-based contrastive study of N-Rhemes in English and Swedish original texts, as well as translations between the two languages. The aim is twofold, to describe the N-Rheme in English and Swedish Fiction and Popular Science texts, and to examine translation correspondences, and lack of correspondences, between English and Swedish N-Rhemes.

The first part of the investigation shows that N-Rhemes are very similar in the two languages and the two text types. The main differences are to a great extent related to word order differences between the two languages, e.g. the V2-constraint in Swedish and Subject prominence in English. However, word order is not the only explanation. Frequently, there is interplay between word order and information structure, as Swedish is more backwards-oriented and seems to follow the principle of end-weight more strictly than English.

The analysis of the translation (non)-correspondences: *Full Match, Reformulation, Movement* and *Restructuring* shows that more translation changes occur in the translations into English. Reformulations are most frequent and typically result in unit shifts, function shifts and explicitness changes. Furthermore, the results show that English and Swedish clearly have different clause structure preferences. English favours hypotactic structures where Swedish has paratactic structures, which is reflected in the translations. In the translations into Swedish, clauses are frequently split, resulting in T-units that are informationally less dense, whereas in the translations into English, clauses are merged, resulting in informationally denser clauses. When information density is increased or decreased, this frequently results in explicitness changes. Finally, many of the translation changes could be seen as related to the character of the N-Rheme. N-Rhemes are often long and complex, and present newsworthy information. The longer the N-Rheme, the more information that potentially could be changed in the translation process. The great number of Reformulations and Restructurings reflects how translation changes occur with a purpose to ascertain that the goals of the texts are preserved, and even made clearer in the translation.

KEY WORDS: N-Rheme, English, Swedish, contrastive, corpus-based, translation, parallel corpus, Systemic Functional Linguistics, information structure, information density, Rheme, Theme, transitivity, translation strategies, explicitation, fiction, popular science