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# Read my Lips: Gaps in meaning between spoken and subtitled dialog.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the communicative meaning of the sentence structures used in spoken dialog is altered by the subtitling process. The paper will focus on the way in which emotional and emphatic sentences of spoken dialog are translated into English subtitles. As the structure of the sentences is determined by the communicative intention of the speaker they are defined as pragmatically or communicatively ordered sentences.

## 1 Introduction

### Purpose of this study

Because the sequence of the elements in a pragmatically ordered sentence differs from that in a standard or “unmarked” sentence a pragmatically ordered sentence is known as “marked”. Following Schmid’s observation that marked structures contain “elusive meaning components” (Schmid 1999: 4) which may be lost in the translation process this study will consider whether the translator’s sensitivity to the nuances of meaning conveyed by the use of marked structures in the spoken dialog can be increased by a closer study of the communicative function of the syntactic structure and whether this in turn can be used to inform the translation of the spoken dialog into written subtitles.

This study will begin to explore the hypothesis, which forms part of my ongoing research, that marked structures are particularly important in subtitled dialog as they can be used both as a form of shorthand for communicative meaning and also as a strategy for conveying some of the features of spoken language. It will aim to show that as spoken language has to be condensed in a subtitle the use of a marked structure can provide one method by which meaning can be expressed both succinctly and forcefully and it can also carry some of the emphasis of intonation in spoken dialog.

In order to place this topic within a theoretical framework the discussion will begin with a theoretical investigation of the connection between sentence structure and meaning in

language and in translation. The nature of the interaction between spoken and written language in the subtitle will also be briefly considered.

The paper will conclude with a case study of the French film *Read my Lips* where the structures used in selected sentences of spoken French dialog and their translation into English subtitles will be analyzed in detail and the communicative impact of both the spoken and the written forms of the dialog will be compared. The theories of Halliday and Firbas will inform the interpretation of the sentences examined in this analysis, which will examine the translation of spoken dialog into subtitles in the light of Schmid's claim that: "*If the source text deviates from the unmarked canonical word order, sentences carry an additional meaning potential that has to be explored and carried over into the target language.*" (Schmid 1999: 1).

It is a feature of both spoken and written communication that the verbal messages, which we convey are organized into structured segments or sentences. Whilst there are by definition differences between the types of sentences formulated in spoken and written communication there is in both cases a requirement to convey information in structured segments so that they can be processed by the recipient of the message. It is therefore instructive to begin by considering the link between sentence structure and meaning from a general perspective.

### **Syntax, sentence structure and meaning in translation.**

Scholars, including Givón (1993), Finegan (1994) Schmid (1999) and more recently many others, have noted how syntactic structure generates meaning in sentences. We will here limit ourselves to a discussion of these three authors. Finegan states that: "In all languages one principal function of syntax is to encode pragmatic information. What differs from language to language is the way in which pragmatic structure maps onto syntax." (Finegan 1994: 199). This has implications for the transfer of meaning when translating between languages with different syntactical rules for the structure of sentences.

## **2 Theoretical Background**

Givón's analysis of the connection between grammar and language in *English Grammar A Function-Based Introduction* (1993) is particularly relevant to the communicative focus of this research, as it identifies the link between grammatical structure and communication in language in a general sense. Givón (1993: 2) describes the rules of syntax as the means by which "coherent communication", in the form of grammatically correct sentences, is produced. Givón uses the analogy of a biological organism or an instrument to convey his view of the integral connection between the grammatical form and the function of language. For example, he stresses the interdependence of grammatical structure and language by comparing it with the interdependence of the structure and function of a biological organism (ibid.).

Givón's recognition that syntax and meaning are inextricably related within one language leads to the logical question that if form and meaning are connected within a language, how then is meaning affected when translating between languages with different structures? Finegan (1994) categorizes three types of meaning in sentences: "referential" (what is actually described); "social" (the social content of what is described) and "affective" (the emotional connotation of what is said) (Finegan 1994: 127). This paper will be principally concerned with the translation of affective meaning as defined above by Finegan. Like Givón, Finegan describes syntax as "encoding" meaning in sentences (Finegan 1994: 218) and he recognises that word order can affect meaning in sentences in all languages (Finegan 1994: 127).

## 2.1 Word order: contrastive linguistics' different ways in which languages express meaning through structure

This study, will concentrate on how sentence structure, in the sense of word order, can affect affective meaning in the translation of spoken dialog into subtitles.

Sentences are composed of different elements, which can be combined in different ways to create different meanings. The organization of words in a sentence produces its meaning. The three basic elements in the structure of a sentence are the subject, the object and the verb and there are variations across languages in the way in which these elements are ordered.

In her study of linguistic typology, Jae Jung Song observes that there are two methods of ordering sentence constituents in languages; “Basic word order” and “flexible or free word order”(Song 2001: 1,2). Jung Song’s categories correspond to Johnson’s distinction between “syntactic” and “pragmatic” word order (Johnson 1998: 172) or Bally’s distinction between “ordre grammatical” and “ordre psychologique”(Bally 1944: 106).

In syntactically ordered sentences the sequence of the sentence elements is determined purely by grammatical function whereas in pragmatically ordered sentences the sequence of the sentence elements is determined by the communicative intention of the speaker.

(a) Example of syntactically ordered sentence:

Subject    Verb    Object

(a) She    kept    the weekends open for me.

(b) Example of pragmatically ordered sentence:

Object                    Subject                    Verb

The weekends    she                    kept    open for me. (Cornwall’s example cited in Schmid 1999: 118)

Thus whilst syntactic or basic word order is characterized by rigidity and focused on the information content of the message, pragmatic or communicative word order is characterized by flexibility and focused on the impact of the words, which goes beyond the factual content of the message. By altering the order of the sentence elements from the syntactic SVO (subject, verb, object) order in sentence (a) above to a pragmatic object subject verb order in sentence (b) the writer has introduced a new focus and emphasis on “the weekends”, which is not present in the syntactically ordered sentence.

This study will concentrate on the translation of pragmatically ordered sentences. It could be argued that pragmatically ordered sentences are particularly associated with spoken communication where emphasis and emotion tend to be expressed spontaneously by the speaker, which in itself has implications for the subtitling process.

## 2.2 Word Order and Information Structure

As Schmid observes; word order plays an important role in the information flow of the message: „information is predominantly coded by word order in most languages” (Schmid 1999: 27)

As Finegan explains, in contrast with syntactic structure, which is language-specific, categories of information structure are not language-dependent. As the encoding of pragmatic information is one of the main functions of syntax, the way in which this information is conveyed varies in accordance with the syntactic structures of different languages. (Finegan 1989: 199) The translator therefore needs to develop sensitivity to the pragmatic function of the word order which is determined by the syntactic constraints of the Source Language in order to be able to transfer it into the Target Language.

Similarly, the subtitler needs to be aware of the nuances of pragmatic meaning expressed by the word order in the spoken dialog as they may contribute to the characterization and plot development of the film. As the viewer has to assimilate the written information in a subtitle in the 5 – 7 seconds that the subtitle is on the screen, the subtitler needs to aim to retain the impact of the spoken word within the constraints of this medium.

Scholars including Doherty (2002), Schmid (1999) and Chafe (1979) argue that there is a universal tendency for information to be structured in accordance with the functioning of the cognitive processes. Chafe, for example, describes sentences as “especially crucial ways of organising cognitive material” (Chafe 1979:164) and suggests that language is structured in sequences of sentences, centered on “foci” or units of stored information (Chafe 1979: 180) which reflect the thought process.

In this sense, the movement from given to new information, which is described by Schmid (1999:44) as a common principle across languages, could be seen as a way of both reflecting the thought process and also of facilitating language processing. The structural division of a sentence into theme (given information) followed by a rheme (new information), proposed by certain theorists including Firbas (1972) and Halliday (1985) can also be explained in terms of the facilitation of cognitive processing.

As Downing (1992) notes, certain theorists justify the theme-rheme sentence structure on the grounds that it corresponds to a cognitive tendency to proceed from known to unknown information. Gernsbacher and Hargreaves (1988), for example, consider this sequence to be a logical strategy for presenting old information as an “anchor” in the theme section of the sentence to which new thematic material can then be attached in the rheme (1988). Whilst Fox and Thompson suggest that the theme-rheme sequence enables the speaker to begin a sentence by “grounding” new information in the theme before going on to present it in the rheme (Downing 1992:15). Indeed, as Downing explains, Jarvella (1979) has demonstrated that the final element in a sentence tends to be the most memorable, which also supports the notion that the theme-rheme sequence facilitates cognitive processing (Downing 1995:16).

However, as Mithun explains, the theme-rheme sentence structure is not universal across languages (Mithun 1995: 388) and the reversal of this sequence can also be shown to be linked to the way in which information is processed by the recipient. For example, the speaker may choose to give prominence to new information or rhematic material by placing it in the initial position of a sentence and this corresponds to the tendency for intonation in a spoken sentence to decrease progressively from the beginning to the end of the sentence (Mithun 1995: 412). In this sense, the translation of the sentence-initial element from the spoken dialog into a subtitle could be said to be of particular importance in the subtitling process.

Thus, as mentioned above, the information conveyed by speakers is not purely propositional and different types of speaker- based, non -propositional meaning can be created through variations in the word order of a sentence. For example, the speaker may wish to; establish social position; express emotion or emphasis; or simply to convey information in a way, which corresponds to the receiver’s capacity to process information (Downing 1992: 9, Schmid 1999: 7, 43). These different types of pragmatic meaning could be said to correspond broadly to Cowan’s distinction between “cognitive” and “rhetorical” discourse principles to determine word order (Cowan 1995: 29), the rhetorical principle being applicable to the expression of emotion or emphasis.

As both theme-rheme and rheme-theme types of sentence structure can be shown to be related to the creation of pragmatic meaning in a sentence, the subtitler arguably needs to be able to interpret the pragmatic significance of the ordering of theme and rheme elements in sentences in the spoken dialog in order to be able to translate this into the written subtitle where possible. When analysing sentences in the discourse of a film it is therefore particularly instructive to be able to differentiate between marked and unmarked structures.

### 3 Marked Structures

The definition of a “marked” sentence or clause implies that it has features, which distinguish it from an “unmarked” type of sentence and indeed that the unmarked is the preferred or standard form (Schmid 1999:45). This also implies that the same sentence elements could be presented in either the marked or the unmarked order however the marked sentence stands out as unusual in implicit comparison with the conventionally ordered unmarked sentence. Although the “unmarked” sentence could be described as standard or conventional this does not mean that it is used more often than the “marked” sentence. Indeed, Dryer argues that unmarked word order is not necessarily used more frequently than marked word order and considers the term “default word order” to be a more accurate definition of pragmatically unmarked word order (Dryer 1995:105).

As the purpose of a marked sentence is to express the communicative intention of the speaker it is “cognitively more complex” than the unmarked version. The information content of both marked and unmarked versions of the same sentence may be the same but the use of a marked structure generally communicates a different shade of meaning (Haiman 1980:517)

For example, by changing the SVO sequence to OSV in the following sentence the object “you” is brought into sharp focus in comparison with the same word in the same sentence with the elements arranged in the standard SVO sequence:

**Marked word order:**

“Bua<t you we’ll miss said Cai regretfully.” (Peters 1977:238 cited in Schmid 1999:49)

**Unmarked word order:**

“But we’ll miss you said Cai regretfully” (ibid.).

This sentence also illustrates Schmid’s observation that variations on the basic structure can be used to perform different functions in the discourse including the expression of emphasis or emotion (ibid.).

The use of the marked structure in this example can be interpreted as suggesting both emphasis and emotion.

### 4 Rigidity of the Structure of English

The English language has a rigid word order system: the normal or unmarked order of elements in an English sentence is SVO (subject, verb, object) and the information structure of a standard sentence proceeds from given to new information (ibid.). The sentence elements can be manipulated to express pragmatic meaning in English and the effect of changing the standard sequence of elements is particularly noticeable in comparison with the rigidity of the unmarked standard sentence structure

Creider identifies English as a language which manipulates the linear order of the sentence for discourse purposes (Creider 1979:15). However, whilst Firbas argues that the inherent inflexibility of the elements in an English sentence limits the capacity of the English language as a means of expressing emotion (Firbas 1992:135) this is surely dependant on the degree of skill with which the writer or speaker can manipulate the language within the constraints of the syntax.

Schmid identifies clefting as a structural device, which can be used to express the perspective of the speaker. In a clefted sentence the order of the sentence elements is altered in order to give prominence to one or more of the elements. For example:

**Unmarked word order:**

The cat chased the mouse. (my example)

**Marked word order using cleft construction:**

What the cat chased was the mouse.

It was the mouse that the cat chased.

Whilst the propositional content of both the marked and the unmarked sentences is the same there is a difference in perspective and focus. In the two clefted sentences the direct object, the mouse, is brought into focus by being shifted to the sentence initial position whereas in the unmarked sentence the subject, the cat, is the main focus of the sentence.

A clefted sentence illustrates the way in which the rigid English sentence structure can be manipulated to convey emphasis or emotion. It also demonstrates the fact that the use of a marked sentence in English stands out in implicit contrast with the standard unmarked sentence, which makes it a particularly effective method of conveying the speaker's communicative intention.

As the focus of this study is the translation of emotionally and emphatically ordered utterances into English subtitles it is important to understand the nature of the structural constraints as outlined above, which restrict the way emotion and emphasis can be expressed in written English. It is also important to be aware of the type of strategies like clefting, which can be used to manipulate the structural constraints of the language in order to express communicative meaning more effectively.

The contrasting theories of Halliday and Firbas will now be briefly examined to provide insight into the theoretical significance of the analysis of the structure of both spoken and written sentences.

## **5 Halliday's Approach to Theme-Rheme Analysis**

The systemic theory of language on which Halliday's analysis of sentence structure is based, echoes the communicative focus of my research, for it is a theory which examines the notion that meaning in linguistic expression is determined by the speaker (Halliday 1985). By examining the role of choice in the generation of meaning through language Halliday's approach tends to focus on the communicative intention of the speaker.

In Halliday's view every sentence contains a theme and a rheme, which combine to form a message (Halliday 1985:38). Halliday interprets the significance of the linear structure of the sentence in the light of systemic theory and divides the sentence into two sections: the Theme and the Rheme, which correspond roughly to the grammatical categories of subject and predicate: "the Theme is that with which the clause is concerned. The remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed, is called...the Rheme" (Halliday 1985: 38).

According to Halliday the linear sequence of the Theme and the Rheme is fixed in that the theme must always occupy the initial position in the sentence. However, Halliday's adherence to systemic theory is demonstrated by his observation that the speaker is free to choose which elements of the sentence fulfil these roles and that they can be manipulated according to his/her communicative intention.

Halliday equates the thematic structure of the sentence to its information structure and remarks that the Theme section includes the old or the given information, whilst the Rheme contains the new information and is consequently the most important part of the message (Halliday 1985: 56, 60). Halliday identifies certain variations on this sequence and demonstrates how they can affect the meaning of the sentence.

As noted earlier in this study any change to the normal word order is described as “marked” and can alter the perspective of the sentence. Halliday identifies a number of marked structures in English including the clefted construction. Any element in an English sentence can be shifted to the sentence’s initial position by means of a construction, which Halliday calls the “predicated theme” (ibid.). For instance, by using the “it cleft” construction as in: “It was the queen who sent my uncle that hat-stand” (ibid.). Or in the more colloquial statement:

**Spoken dialog:**

“C’est eux, ils se moquent de moi”. (Read my Lips scene 3)

**Literal translation:**

“It’s them, they’re making fun of me.”

Halliday explains that: “The predicated Theme structure is frequently associated with an explicit formulation of contrast: it was...it was not...who...” (Halliday 1985:60).

Halliday thus suggests a linear method for the analysis of the significance of sentence structure. However, whilst Halliday’s study demonstrates that the order of elements in a sentence can affect the meaning it is important to note that his arguments and analysis are based solely on the English language and do not take account of languages with different types of sentence structure. Therefore in this research Halliday’s analytical method is relevant to the analysis of the structures in the subtitles in English, the Target Language but less relevant to the analysis of the dialog spoken in French, the Source Language.

## **6 Firbas’ Approach to Theme-Rheme Analysis**

In contrast, the theories of Firbas are based on his study of several languages (Schmid 1999: 31), which could account for the difference in his approach. Firbas’ Theory of Functional Sentence Perspective and the related concept of Communicative Dynamism assess the distribution of information elements within a sentence according to their communicative value as well as their linear sequence. According to Firbas, what he terms the Functional Perspective of a sentence is determined by the communicative content or the Communicative Dynamism of the sentence elements rather than by their linear position.(Firbas 1999:130).

Firbas’ emphasis on the communicative meaning of sentence structure is particularly relevant to the analysis of pragmatically ordered sentences in languages with a less rigid structure than English.

Moreover, Firbas’ recognition that Communicative Dynamism can only be measured in a relative sense means that it “remains a rather intuitive way of classifying elements” (Schmid 1999: 30), which echoes my own perception that the analysis and translation of the emotional component of meaning in sentences may also require a degree of intuition.

## 7 Subtitling Marked Structures

### Subtitle a “crossover” genre

Due to the nature of the medium the subtitle like the dramatic text represents a shift between the oral and the written genres: it intersects both genres and the transfer from the spoken to the written mode is not straightforward. When subtitling the translator begins with both an oral Source Text and its transcript and produces a written Target Text, which is suitable for silent reading although it may include some features, which suggest “the oral origins of the Source Text.” This complex interplay between the spoken and written modes has led Hervey and Higgins to describe the subtitle as a “crossover genre” (Hervey and Higgins 1992:158)

### Subtitling Spoken Dialog

The subtitling of a film is principally concerned with the translation of spoken dialog into the constrained written form of the subtitle. The information content, the momentum and the emotional impact of the structures used in the spoken dialog need to be translated into a condensed text in a language with a different grammatical system and therefore a different potential for ordering the elements in a sentence.

In addition to the grammatical rules of the language concerned word order in discourse is also determined by the pragmatic role of the utterance in the context of the dialog. It is this combination of the syntactic and the pragmatic functions of the information structure of the dialog, which is of particular relevance to the subtitling process.

Whilst the words in written dialog in written texts need to suggest the shades of meaning conveyed by non verbal communication in spoken dialog in subtitled dialog meaning can also be conveyed by non-verbal signs and visual images on the screen. In order to analyze subtitled discourse it is therefore necessary to understand the tension between written and spoken language and visual images, which is peculiar to the audiovisual medium.

The notion of the transfer of emphatic meaning into subtitles raises intriguing translation issues. When interpreting the affective meaning in the subtitled text, the communicative function of the sentence structure also needs to be considered with reference to the role of the sentence structure in the spoken dialog. It is also important to be aware of the nuances of meaning in the linguistic expressions, which are not conveyed by the audiovisual elements of the medium.

## 8 Read my Lips Analysis

The French film *Read my Lips* ( *Sur mes Lèvres*) directed by Jaques Audiard has been selected as a case study for this analysis as the deafness of the main character is an integral aspect of the theme of the film and it adds an interesting dimension to the subtitles. The main character Carla (Emmanuelle Devos) is deaf and her disability is carefully integrated into the plot and the dialog of the film. From the outset Audiard draws the attention of the viewer to Carla’s impaired hearing, indeed the importance of Carla’s deafness to the plot is suggested by the fact that the opening shot of the film shows her carefully inserting a hearing aid into her ear. As the dialog and sounds in the film are presented primarily from Carla’s perspective the subtitles have the added function of drawing the attention of the viewer to the way in which sound and spoken dialog is perceived by a deaf person.

## Scene 2: I know Sign Language

This short scene near the beginning of the film has no subtitles. It reinforces the theme of Carla's deafness as the entire scene consists of an exchange between Carla and a deaf man who communicate solely through sign language and facial expressions. The lack of subtitles in the scene subtly reminds the viewer of the necessity for subtitles and also gives a brief impression of a deaf person's experience of silent communication. The man places a key ring in front of Carla and the two characters proceed to communicate in sign language through a series of rapid hand gestures accompanied by facial expressions. Carla's expression appears to indicate her dissatisfaction with the man's suggestion.

As the scene is shown without subtitles it demonstrates that total reliance on visual images is insufficient to convey details of a conversation. Despite visual clues including the key ring and the facial expressions of the two characters the precise meaning of the exchange is not clear to a viewer who does not understand sign language.

By placing this scene near the beginning of the film the director also ensures that the ensuing subtitled scenes are framed by the context of sign language.

## Scene 3: Starting a new job, Lunch in the work cafeteria

Carla is having lunch with Paul, an ex convict and her new colleague at work. Over lunch Paul discovers that Carla is able to lip read as she is able to understand the conversation of colleagues at a table, which is too far away for the conversation to be overheard. He inquires why Carla appears to be concerned by their conversation.

**Paul** *“What’s up? Did I say something wrong?”*

**Carla replies:**

**Spoken dialog:** *C’est eux, ils se moquent de moi.*

**Subtitle:** *They’re making fun of me.*

**Literal translation:** *It’s them, they’re making fun of me.*

In this exchange Carla's spoken words emphasize the identity of the men who are speaking about her. The marked cleft structure “It is them” reinforces the theme that just as her deafness isolates her from the speaking, hearing world Carla is an outsider and a victim in the organization. By omitting the marked structure the subtitle misses this nuance of meaning or “elusive meaning component”, which subtly affects the characterization and the development of the plot.

In this example I would suggest that the literal translation “It’s them...” which includes a cleft construction could be used to succinctly convey the emphasis and to suggest the intonation of the spoken sentence. Moreover the colloquial ring and the imperfect grammar of the phrase “It’s them” is characteristic of spoken language.

A little later in the same scene Paul discovers that Carla needs to wear a hearing aid. He asks:

*“You mean you’re deaf?”*

Carla replies by pointing to her hearing aids and states:

**Spoken dialog:** *«C’est pour faire quoi ça? C’est pour faire joli?»*

**Subtitle:** *What are these? Ear rings?*

**Literal translation:** *What is that for? Is it to make me look pretty?*

The marked structure “*C’est pour...*” is repeated twice in the spoken dialog in the Source Language. The rhetorical force of the repetition of the marked structure and the intensity of the pointed questions reinforce the sense of Carla’s indignation as a plain woman who needs to wear a hearing aid.

The subtitle is enhanced by the visual image of Carla pointing at her hearing aids and her indignant facial expression but the questions “What are these ? Ear rings?” sound flat and neutral in comparison with the emotive force of the French dialog, which in turn alters the complex characterization of Carla, the central character in the film.

**Spoken dialog:** *C’est pour faire quoi ça? C’est pour faire jolie?*

**Literal translation:** *What is that for? Is it to make me look pretty?* (my translation)

**Subtitle:** *What are these? Ear rings?*

Again I would suggest that a more effective subtitle should attempt to repeat the emotional force and emphasis of the marked structures in the Source Language dialog.

Possible alternative translations would be:

*What are these for? For my looks?* (my translation)

or

*What are these for? For decoration?* (translation suggested by Penny Eley)

#### Scene 4

In this scene Carla is dismayed that a male colleague takes over the project, which she has been working on and which is near completion. When she protests the colleague, who is incidentally the same character who had previously mocked her in the restaurant, dismisses her protest contemptuously. Carla returns to her office in a state of hysteria crying and throwing files onto the floor whilst exclaiming.

**Spoken dialog:**

*Ça fait 3 ans que je travaille ici...*

*Ça fait trois ans que je fais la bonne.*

*Ça fait trois ans que je monte leurs dossiers de A à Z que je mens à leurs femmes.*

**Literal translation:**

*“That makes three years that I’ve been working here.*

*That makes three years that I have been the maid.*

*That makes three years that I have been filing their documents from A to Z, that I have been lying to their wives...”* (My translation)

**Subtitle:** *For 3 years I’ve slaved for them, doing all their work, lying to their wives...*

In the Source Language dialog Carla’s bitter disappointment and frustration are reinforced by the repetition of the marked structure “*Ça fait 3 ans que...*” In the subtitle the repetition of this phrase is omitted and the rhetorical force of the repetition of three short, sharp pointed sentences is diluted by being condensed into one longer sentence spread over two frames.

This means that the emotional force and the rhetorical effect of Carla's desperate tirade are diminished in the Target Text.

The marked structure "*Ça fait trois ans que*" corresponds to Halliday's concept of the predicated theme, which conveys emphasis or contrast or to use Firbas' terminology the Communicative Dynamism of this sentence is located in the fronted initial element. By placing the marked phrase "*Ça fait trois ans que...*" at the beginning of three consecutive short sentences in the spoken dialog the amount of time, which Carla has spent working in the company is strongly emphasized and her subsequent anger and frustration is more understandable.

Thus the sentence structure in the Source Language dialog reinforces the emotional impact of Carla's words and contributes to the characterization and the development of the plot for Carla's frustration at her contemptuous treatment by her colleagues in the organization leads her to seek revenge. The emphasis of the marked structures in the Source Language dialog is lost in the subtitle, where Carla's words become a more generalized complaint.

Alternative translations, which attempt to duplicate the rhetorical force of the repeated marked structure in the Source Language dialog could be:

*"For 3 whole years I've worked here".*

*"For three whole years I've been their maid".*

*"For three whole years I've lied to their wives..."* (my translation)

or

*"Three years I've worked here. Three years as their skivvy. Three years doing their filing, lying to their wives."* (translation suggested by Penny Eley)

Moreover, it could be argued that the alliterative repetition of a short sharp phrase as a fronted element in a written subtitle represents a possible strategy for conveying some of the emphatic intonation of the spoken dialog in the written form.

## 9 Conclusion

This investigation is an initial exploration into how the communicative meaning of marked structures in spoken dialog is affected by the process of being translated into subtitles. Through the detailed examination of a small number of examples a pattern is beginning to emerge, which suggests that an analysis of the function of the marked structure in the Source Language dialog could be used to inform the translation into subtitles and that it could help to prevent the loss of nuances of meaning, which contribute to both characterization and plot development in the film.

Despite the constraints of space and the complex process of transferring spoken language into written text it still appears possible that certain strategies can be used to retain some of the flavour and emotional impact of the spoken dialog in the written form. In this study clefting has been identified as one strategy which may be used to succinctly express the emotional connotations of spoken utterances and also to retain some of the features of spoken language in the written subtitle.

Further research is required in this direction but it appears that an understanding of marked structures in both Source and Target Languages may assist the translator to transfer more "elusive meaning components" from the Source Language dialog into the Target Language subtitle.

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