Polysemy of English "But" and Challenges in its Translation into Kurdish

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Abstract

This study demonstrates an innovative method/practice of utilizing translation to study the linguistic phenomena, connectives (cf. Moeschler, 1989; Degand, 2009). Based on the Relevance Theoretic Framework and polysemy approach, this paper consolidates research that examines the polysemy of English but (cf. Wilson and Sperber, 2004; Fischer, 2006) and rejects the ambiguity account by Anscombe, and Ducrot (1977) and Hall (2004), and also establishes a paradigm of correspondences for but in Kurdish. Data for this study consists of 50 opinion articles from English and Kurdish online newspapers. All the occurrences of but and its equivalents in Kurdish are examined and translated, in order to build the paradigm of correspondences. The study suggests that there are four different interpretations of a general procedure encoded by but, namely; contrary to expectations, contrast, correction and dismissal, and that these procedural meanings are translated into Kurdish as: ke?i, be?am, be pêçewanewe and be?kû respectively.

Index terms—discourse analysis, relevance theory, connectives, translation.

1 Introduction

n between the two possible ways of dealing with the multi-functionality of connectives (monosemy and homonymy), the polysemy approach assumes that 'there are different distinct readings of a connective and that these different senses are related' (Fischer 2006: 13). I will adopt this latter position in this paper with respect to the analysis of but and its Kurdish equivalents. The current study explores the various meanings encoded by the connective but in English such as 'contrary to expectations', 'contrast', 'correction' and 'dismissal' (Lakoff 1971) Blakemore 1987, 2002; all 2007 (Horn 1989, Bell 1998 and Iten 2005). This study suggests that but is not an ambiguous connective and to argue the ambiguity account of but claimed by Anscombe and Ducrot (1977) and Horn (1989). Based on the Relevance Theory’s (RT) procedural meaning, the paper gives a unified account of the meaning encoded by but. Then it argues that but encodes a general procedure that can be implemented in four different situations to generate four different meanings. This is illustrated by its translation into Kurdish. Thus, but is not ambiguous but it is rather a linguistic expression with a general sense. The argument is supported by data from Kurdish language. The data show that there are four different linguistic expressions that can translate but in Kurdish. These are ke?i, be pêçewanewe, be?kû and be?am which represent the four different procedural meanings of 'contrary to expectations', 'contrast', 'correction' and cancellation respectively. I.

2 Theoretical Background

The English connective but has been dealt with widely by several researchers such as Lakoff (1977), Fraser (1995), Blakemore (1987Blakemore ( , 2002), ten (2000) and all (2007). It has been described with various labels such as 'discourse marker', 'connective', 'pragmatic marker' and 'cohesive device'. I will be drawing on
3 III. Translation and Linguistics

As far as translation and linguistics are concerned, the assumption is that translation data contain texts that are intended to express the same meanings and have identical or at least very similar textual functions in the two languages concerned, here English and Kurdish. Dyvik was one of the first to argue in favour of the use of translation data to establish the precise semantic values of words. He suggests that 'by successively using the source and target language as a starting-point, we can establish paradigms of correspondences: the translations can be arranged as a paradigm where each target item corresponds to a different meaning of the source item' (1998: 12). Simon-Vandenbergen likewise states that 'translations of pragmatic markers can serve as a heuristic for discovering contextual dimensions or for making more fine-grained divisions in these dimensions, because the translations force one to account for the contextual factors that lead to particular choices. ?? (2006: 111). These choices would pose a challenge for translators when translating a polysemous connective such as but into Kurdish. As of yet, there is little linguistic research regarding Kurdish connectives and hence there is no recognised list of Kurdish connectives from which to select an equivalent connective to but. The four choices available to translators are described in detail in sections (4-1, 4-2, 4-3 and 4-4).

6 Data and Methodology

The data comprise of translation of all occurrences of but in 30 English newspaper opinion articles along with all the equivalents' occurrences in 30 Kurdish newspaper opinion articles. These examples result in a corpus that can be used to identify the possible meanings of but in Kurdish. However, using translation corpora as base for analysis seems to be biased, because of the diversity of results and according to Degande 'not only is there a problem of context and typological differences, one should also be careful not to generalize individual instances of language use' (2009: 178). Nonetheless, in terms of the correspondence paradigm, it is possible to obtain suggestive results in assigning certain meanings to words, especially connectives. Aijimer et al argue that 'such semantic fields can be established by checking back and forth ?? (2006: 111). Thus, the correspondence paradigm is built by double checking the equivalences, i.e., through translation and back translation we can assign correspondence values to the functional equivalences. For instance, if but in English is translated by be?kû and keçi in Kurdish, then using Kurdish as a source language, we should be able to check for the translation of be?kû and keçi in English, which will become the target language. Such an analysis, Aijimer et al state would allow us
to show how the pragmatic marker X is related to other pragmatic markers, or to other linguistic items such as modal particles or response words, in the same language' (Ibid.: 112).

Also, Dyvik states, in favour of this approach, that 'translators have no theoretic concern in mind, evaluate the interpretational possibilities of linguistic expressions [?], and then try to recreate the same interpretational possibilities in a target text serving a comparable purpose in another language' (1998: 7). Finally, a translation approach to examining linguistic phenomena seems to meet the criteria for most of the demands of contemporary linguistics, as Noël states that 'it is corpus-based, it is contrastive and thus has typological relevance [...], it is task-based, in as much as it treats translation data as a collection of informants’ judgments about the meanings of the linguistic forms in the source text' (2003: 759). Thus, I will adopt Degand’s approach which she calls 'mirror analysis' which takes 'back-and-forth translation as a way of establishing semantic field of equivalents in one language or across languages' (2009: 179). This will help me establish what is the most suitable Kurdish equivalent for English but, subject to relevant context, and also what semantic values can be linked to each connective.

7 IV.

8 But in Translation

This paper suggests that there are four distinct Kurdish connectives corresponding to these four implementations of the general procedure encoded by but which are: keçî, be?kû, be pêçewanewe and be?am. These findings are in line with Simon-Vandenbergen’s claims that ‘translations of connectives can serve as a heuristic for discovering contextual dimensions or for making more fine-grained divisions in these dimensions, because the translations force one to account for the contextual factors that lead to particular choices’ (2006: 111). This paper seeks to answer questions such as: Is the English connective but polysemous? What can translation add to linguistic studies? How are the Kurdish equivalences for the English connective but accounted for by a relevance-theoretic approach?

Figure 1: Procedural meanings of but One way of accounting for the functions of but and its meanings is to analyse it as encoding a procedural meaning rather than as a concept or conceptual representation. According to Hall the ‘function of but is to guide the hearer to the intended interpretation of the utterance’ (2007: 200).

The type of the implementation of but constrains the type of implicatures to be communicated in the text. I agree with Hall concerning the assignment of a superordinate meaning of but as ‘contrast’, because the other meanings seem to be more complicated and that all of the other three meanings of but have some degree of contrastive meaning in common apart from their main, more specific, procedural meaning. So, based on the general procedure encoded by but which creates the superordinate meaning as:

Treat the proposition communicated by the but-clause as contrasting with the assumption explicitly or implicitly communicated by the utterance of the preceding clause. ??Iten, 2005: 147) The next sections are going to examine the different implementations of this general procedure of but and will translate each implementation into Kurdish in order to disambiguate but and establish the Kurdish equivalences systematically.

9 a) ‘Contrary to expectation’ but

Allerton states that the connectives signaling the sense of contrary to / denial of expectations ‘show that the sentence has to be seen as detracting from what went before and thus either reducing the impact of the previous point or replacing it with a different one’ (1979: 277). The typical connectives that signal this subtype of adversative relations in English is but and its equivalence in Kurdish is ke?i. The implementation of the general procedure for this type is: what follows but denies and replaces an assumption or expectation communicated by what precedes it.


10 ke?i (but)

According to Tofq’s (2002) claim, there is no difference between ke?i and other adversative connectives. However, he had studied the ‘conjunction particles’, as he labels them, in a rather general sense and does not give detailed accounts for each connective. The data from opinion articles suggest that ke?i signals a different relation from other adversative connectives such as be?am, be pêçewanewe depending on the different procedures implemented in the text. The Kurdish connective corresponding to the ‘contrary to Depending on the RT framework, Blakemore states that but means denial, because ‘it encodes a constraint that triggers an inferential route involving contradicting and eliminating an assumption’ (2002: 95). However, this claim is not entirely true and it does not apply to diverse uses of but (See sections 4-1, 4-3, and 4-4). The S1 message in 1 (below) implies that ‘the rebels’ heroic actions were the cause of overthrowing the tyrant’. So, the reader expects the writer to elaborate on that. However, this expectation is denied in S2, as it is contrary to the expectations to see that ‘Nato had overthrown the tyrant’. This sense of ‘contrary to expectations’ is introduced by but as in 9.
expectations' meaning of but is ke?i as shown in 2. None of the other adversative connectives can substitute ke?i in a procedure such as in 2.


(Online 2)

if council-of governorate free was-it would-able-it in budgetof this-year (4 to 5) thousand youth employ-would-it on-budget-of development-of regions-the, but obstacle for it made-has-been

If the provincial council was independent, they could employ 4 to 5 thousand youths on the regional development budget. But there were obstacles.

Thus, the implementation of the general procedure for keçi is: what follows keçi denies and replaces an assumption or expectation communicated by what precedes it.

11 b) 'Contrastive' but

According to Schwenter, 'contrast' is different from the other subtypes of adversative relations, as it guides the reader to find 'incompatibility between P and Q' (2000: 260) and indicates the writer's viewpoint as the only relevant one. Looking at the relation signaled in 3a, it is not about denial of / contrary to expectations. However, by using but, the writer guides the reader in S2 to interpret the relation between S1 and S2 as a contrast between two states: 'unrepresentative' and 'representative'. The implementation for the general procedure in this case is: what follows but contrasts a proposition communicated by what precedes it. 3a) ?the problem with Iowa is not that it's unrepresentative of the party's mindset but that it's too representative... (Online 3)

The connective but in 3a is represented in Kurdish as be pêçewanewe, because it is the typical connective to be used to convey contrast between S1 and S2 in Kurdish texts, such as 3b. 3b) Kê?ey Iowa ewe niye ke ñewnerayeti bîru?ai ?îzbeke nakat, be pêçewanewezor ñewneraneyey. Lakoff claims that when but is used in these contexts; showing contrasting ideas or features, it can only signal 'semantic opposition' (1971:133), and it is simply a contrastive relation between S1 and S2, which is also signaled by be pêçewanewe in 3b.

12 be pêçewanewe (but)

According to Tofiq, be pêçewanewe is the typical 'conjunction particle' that signals contrast between two sentences (2002: 230). His claim is based on the fact that the word is a prepositional phrase consisting of (be = with, pêçewanewe = contrast). However, there are reasons why it is considered as a connective and to suggest that it signals a contrastive relation. The data from Kurdish opinion articles suggest that be pêçewanewe operates in a procedure where S2 contrasts S1 by presenting incompatibility between two view points as in 4.

4) Serçawekani opozisyon prupagandei ewe dekan ke sarokayati heremi Kurdistan basi le jiyûnuewei Kurdistan k?réde le Erâqda. Be pêçewanewe le çendîn boneda seroki harem jexti leser yek parçeî Êraq k?rdotewe. (Online 4)

4 Source-of opposition propaganda this make-they that presidency of region Kurdistan talk about separation-of Kurdistan has-done in Iraq. But in many occasions president-of region Kurdistan insisted on one-piece-of Iraq have-done-he. The opposition sources argue that the Kurdistan Region presidency intends to detach Kurdistan from Iraq. But, in several occasions, the Kurdistan Region's president has insisted on a unified Iraq.

In 4, be pêçewanewe signals an incompatibility between two viewpoints; opposing unity' and 'supporting unity'. This incompatibility is a sense of contrast as it can be stressed contrastively with the presence of negation. Thus, there is a contrastive relation between S1 and S2 in 4, and it is explicated by using be pêçewanewe. So, the implementation for this Kurdish connective will be: what follows be pêçewanewe contrasts a proposition communicated by what precedes it.

13 c) 'Correction' but

Correction relations are recognised in the procedure such as: S1 is a misconception or a misunderstanding and is corrected by the correct information in S2. Hall claims that the correction may be in the conceptual content of the assumption in S1 and/or 'some aspect of the linguistic form used to express it' (2007: 201). The connectives that signal correction relation and replace the previous proposition in discourse with another include: but, in English and be?kû, in Kurdish. The English connective but can also signal correction relation as a subtype of adversative relations. For instance, the procedure implemented in 5a is; what follows but (S2) corrects an assumption put forward in what precedes it (S1). That is S1 is a false assumption and S2 is a correction of this false assumption with the help of but. Regarding the procedure in 29a, S2 'Hockey has hattrick' corrects a proposition in S1 (Only football has hattrick). Contrary to Fraser's claim that but 'cannot signal a corrective contrast' (2005: 18) between S1 and S2, it is observed in the translation data that but does signal correction between two text segments and as such it is translated into Kurdish as be?kû. Kurdish be?kû operates in a similar procedure to the one of 'correction but' as in 5b: 5b) Lem 'o?garêda, le hemû jore yarike yarîzân detwane sê go?i leser yakt?r tomar b?kat, nek tenha le yari topî pé be?kû le hokî.

14 be?kû (but)

The Kurdish connective corresponding to 'correction' but is be?kû. The adversative relation signalled by be?kû is specifically correction. That is, S1 presents an assumption which is ordinarily false and S2, with the help of
be?kû, corrects that false assumption, such as in 6: Be?kû has been studied in ??hwani’s (2003) work. He states that ‘be?kû is a conjunction particle that has the function of signalling contrast between two sentences’ (2003: 99). According to the data in this study, however, be?kû signals a correction of a previous statement. That is, the procedure in which be?kû operates is as such (S2 corrects a misunderstanding in S1). For instance, S2 in 6 which is introduced by be?kû is forms a correction to a misunderstood situation. Thus, the implementation of the general procedure is also applicable to be?kû such as: what follows be?kû corrects an assumption communicated by what precedes it.

15 d) ‘Dismissal’ but

The implementation of the procedure in which but signals dismissal or cancellation is: what follows but (S2) cancels and dismisses the importance of what precedes it (S1). This type of relation is typically signaled by but in English and the Kurdish equivalence is be?am.

Consider but in the translation procedure implemented in 7a, in which S2 cancels or dismisses the importance of the topic forwarded in S1. The proposition expressed by S1 in 7a and indirectly contradicted and dismissed by S2, and it is introduced by but. So, in terms of RT’s procedural approach, but can also signal dismissal in English texts. This claim is supported by the fact that in such contexts but is translated into Kurdish as be?am as in 7b. This type of relation is not found in other procedures in which but signals other subtypes of adversative relation. Bach (1999) claims that the different interpretations of but have proven but to be ambiguous. However, these different readings of but should not be considered as ambiguous, because each interpretation can be attributed to different procedures.

16 be?am (but)

The procedure in which be?am is used is similar to the one where ‘dismissal’ but is used. S1 is cancelled and dismissed by a more important statement in S2. For instance, be?am in 8 introduces a positive statement ‘the region is now trouble free’ which dismisses a negative statement put forward in S1 ‘catastrophic events happened’. 7a) Our troops will be stuck in the front line of a strategy that has an end date but has no clear end game. (Online 7) 7b) Hêzekanman le hê?i pé?ewei strati?iyêk gir dexon ke kotai heye be?am conîyêt kotayekei çoniyeti kotayekei ?ûn nîye. 8) Ew ?ûdawane zor karesatbar bûn, be?am ésta doxi herêmakeman zor arame. (Online 8) that events very unpleasant were-they, but now situation-of region-the-our very quiet-is-it. Those events were catastrophic, but now our region enjoys tranquility.

Considering the procedural meaning of be?am in 8, it is obvious that implementation of the general procedure in 8 is: what follows be?am cancels an assumption communicated by what precedes it. Thus, be?am is the most suitable Kurdish equivalent for dismissal but.

17 Conclusions

The claims about the ‘ambiguity’ of the English connective but are not entirely true ??Anscombe and Ducrot, 1977: 26). Based on a relevance-theoretic approach and according to the different translation options, this paper concludes that but is a polysemous connective and that it has four distinct, yet interrelated, procedural meanings. These meanings shall cause minimal ambiguity when translating from English into Kurdish, because each of the four distinct meanings fits into a specific interpretation of the general procedure. However, having no detailed research about Kurdish connectives would pose a challenge to translators, as they need to be aware of the textual functions of each connective and the contexts in which they are used in order to have a flawless final product in their translation. Based on the Relevance Theory’s procedural account, there are four distinct interpretations of the general procedure associated with but, namely: denial, contrast, correction and cancellation, which are translated into Kurdish as ke?!, be pêçewanew, be?kû and be?am respectively as shown in Figure 2.
17 CONCLUSIONS

Figure 1:

Figure 2: 6 )

http://xebat.net/detail_articals.php? id =13739&z=4&l=1, March 5, 2012.


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