Construal in approximations of caused-motion patterns

Abstract: This study investigates a role of construal (Langacker, 1987, 2008) in translation. It focuses specifically on alternate ways of profiling Figure, Cause, and Agent found in a range of Polish translations of the sentence “Tom sneezed off papers from the desk”. Since Polish language code does not offer a correspondent syntactic/lexical structure, translators dealing with this sentence have to first re-conceptualize the message in the source language, and then approximate its meaning for the target audience based on their construal of the scene. Based on 51 analyzed proposals, the results demonstrate that the target language message is shaped not only by the constructions available in the target language system, but also by the subjective construal of a translator, which affects picking up or devising particular target language forms to convey the meaning.

Keywords: construal, profiling, caused-motion events, translation, re-conceptualization, cognitive semantics

1. Introduction

One of the key factors in translation is related to the language typological parameter, which restricts the type of a linguistic construction in which the speaker can choose to convey a message. In some linguistic systems certain ontological categories are verbally marked and can be expressed, while in others they may be absent or left non-verbalized. This can be exemplified by the sentence “Tom sneezed off papers from the desk”, which belongs to what Goldberg (1996, 2006, 2013) sees as English caused-motion construction. Since this language snippet does not have a correspondent lexical/syntactic pattern in Polish (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2015, p. 21), translators dealing with this sentence have to interpret the Event Structure (cf. Davidson, 2001) it conveys to approximate its meaning for the target audience.

Moreover, it is plausible to assume that translators intending to stay within the paradigm of natural equivalence (Pym, 2014), can choose among different ways of rendering the meaning of a particular scene into the target language to achieve an optimal solution. Taking this into account, translation can be approached from the perspective theoretical cognitive-linguistic framework of re-conceptualization and approximation proposed by Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2010, 2012, 2015), which assumes the common level of reference required for the conceptual transfer between different languages cannot be assumed to be
exclusively linguistic. On the grounds of this framework, a proper account of translation must incorporate the totality of socio-cultural and psycho-physiological processes shared between different speakers participating in communication, as well as subjective preferences of individual translators in picking up or devising particular target language (TL) forms to render the meaning of the source language (SL) text. This study aims to explore a role of construal (Langacker, 1987, 2008) in carving the TL message to demonstrate that translation is guided, to a significant extent, by subjective preferences of individual translators in conceptual arrangement of structures used to express the meaning of the SL text.

2. Re-conceptualization as a theory of translation

As already mentioned, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2010, 2015) proposes to approach translation from the cognitive-linguistic perspective of re-conceptualization. She assumes that language interacts with the extra-linguistic reality not directly, but through establishing mental spaces (Fauconnier, 1985/1994, 2007), which take part in processes of conceptual integration (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Turner, 2007). From this perspective, the process of translation is affected by a number of elements relevant to a given communicative situation, which include both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. The extra-linguistic factors include, for instance, the encyclopedic knowledge of a translator, his/her psychological and emotional state, specific intentions and preferences, etc. In the outcome, our cognitive experience can be structured linguistically in different ways, which is dictated only in part by the language code we use. In another part, it is shaped by the context and discourse, and yet in another part, it depends on the speaker’s subjective choice of structures used to shape meaning.

On the grounds of this model, it is plausible to assume that the process of translation involves a number of cycles of re-conceptualization of the original source language message, which eventually are expressed in the target language. The first cycle of the process involves comprehension of the original SL message. At one level, a conceptualization of the original scene is structured by the SL convention. At another level, the message may be shaped by
cultural conventions of politeness and social conduct. At yet another level, a particular mental model of the original SL scene is shaped by the individual disposition and preferences of the translator as the SL message recipient, etc.

Then, the second cycle of re-conceptualization involves rendering the mental model developed upon hearing or reading a SL message into the target text in a manner that a translator considers most faithful to the original meaning of the message. At this stage, any linguistic form within the TL grammar which the translator takes into consideration as a possible SL equivalent brings about a new re-conceptualization cycle with an alternative mental model. Finally, the third general cycle of re-conceptualization takes place, when the TL message, structured according to the TL morphology and syntax as the SL equivalent, undergoes a new re-conceptualization with the TL recipient, whose conceptualization of the TL scene is shaped by factors parallel to those involved in the first cycle of re-conceptualization.

Therefore, re-conceptualization as the theory of translation assumes that while processing the linguistic input, first the SL author, then the translator, finally the reader construct some conceptual integration networks, which is associated with the emergence of new meanings. As summarized by Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2010):

Re-conceptualization is not only possible but unavoidable in translation, as it is dictated partly by new construal parameters in the target language form, different context (author/speaker – i.e. translator, time, place, addressee – TL audience), but also brought about by subjective preferences of the translator in picking up or devising particular target language forms, which do not profile the same entities (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2010, p. 108).

In all the cycles of re-conceptualization, meanings are constructed within the flow of discourse by forming conceptual integration networks that combine elements of TL and SL, as well as specific properties of subjective language users’ mental models. As a result, translators and their readers’ mental spaces are populated with characters bearing some resemblance to the
original ones, interacting in ways which remind us of the source interactions, but clearly
reconstructed. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2012) terms these reconstructions approximations.
She assumes that they arise from mental spaces constructed dynamically in communication
from the level of a conventional prototype up to a context-specific tolerance threshold beyond
which a communication breakdown occurs.

This approach to meaning in translation assumes that any linguistic unit is not merely
an objective structure of a conceived situation, but resides in the way its conceptual content is
construed and portrayed by the translator. This refers to Langacker’s (1987, pp. 487–488,
2008, Ch. 3) thesis that a linguistic expression imposes a particular construal, which reflects a
specific way of portraying a given situation.

3. Construal phenomena

Within the framework of his Cognitive Grammar, Langacker (2008, p. 43) defines construal
(also referred to as imagery in his earlier works) as “our manifest ability to conceive and
portray the same situation in alternate ways”. It reflects the assumption that an expression’s
meaning is not just the conceptual content it evokes. What is equally relevant to the meaning
is that every symbolic structure construes its content in a specific fashion, which involves a
number of dimensions such as specificity, focusing, prominence, and perspective.

Specificity (also referred to as granularity or resolution), refers to this dimension of
construal that is responsible for “the level of precision and detail at which a situation is
characterized” (Langacker, 2008, p. 55). For instance, sister is more specific than relative, and
Mars is more specific than planet. An expression that is highly specific describes a situation in
fine-grained detail, whereas expressions of lesser specificity are more coarse-grained
descriptions, whose lower resolution reveals only essential features and general organization.
The opposite of specificity is schematicity, which serves to elaborate coarse-grained
specifications.

Focusing is the dimension of construal which “includes the selection of conceptual
content for linguistic presentation, as well as its arrangement into what can broadly be
described (metaphorically) as foreground vs. background” (Langacker, 2008, p. 57). Langacker
emphasizes that it is a matter of degree, and is relative to particular purposes and levels of organization. A manifestation of focusing in perception is the distinction between figure vs. ground (cf. Talmy, 1975, 2000a, Ch. 5), e.g. a small cursor moving as figure against a computer screen as the stable background or a sudden noise standing out as figure against the background of silence.

Prominence (also referred to as salience) refers to various kinds of asymmetries observed in language structures, which includes the phenomena of profiling and trajector/landmark alignment. Langacker (2008, p. 66) defines an expression’s profile as “the specific focus of attention within its immediate scope”, which can also be characterized as “what the expression is conceived as designating or referring to within its base (its conceptual referent)”. When a particular relationship is profiled linguistically, the choice of profile within the same conceptual base makes a difference in meaning. For instance, the sentence The lamp is above the table profiles the lamp as the primary focus of attention, whereas The table is below the lamp, profiles the table as the focal point within basically the same scene. The most prominent participant, “construed as being located, evaluated, or described” within the profiled relationship (Langacker, 2008, p. 70) is called the trajector. Some other, less prominent participant, profiled as a secondary focus, is called landmark. Langacker (2008, p. 72) emphasizes that “trajector and landmark are defined in terms of primary and secondary focal prominence, not in terms of any specific semantic role or conceptual content”.

Perspective can be approached in the following manner: “If conceptualization (metaphorically) is the viewing of a scene, perspective is the viewing arrangement, the most obvious aspect of which is the vantage point assumed” (Langacker, 2008, p. 73). A viewing arrangement can be characterized the overall relationship between the viewers and the situation being viewed. For instance, if we take the sentence It’s warm here, in a face-to-face conversation, here typically refers to the area where both the speaker and the hearer are located, but in the context of a long-distance phone call, here designates the region proximate to the speaker alone (Langacker, 2008, p. 75).

Deckert (2015, pp. 148–149) illustrates Langacker’s (1987, 2008) thesis that the linguistic expressions imposes a certain construal on a scene by using the example of a glass
half-filled with liquid. This simple setup can be arranged conceptually in a wide range of fashions, and accordingly expressed in language. For instance, depending on the level of specificity, the glass’s color and shape may be characterized, e.g. a transparent champagne flute half-filled with liquid. Alternatively, the color and temperature of the liquid can be profiled, e.g. a glass half-filled with cool red wine. Moreover, depending on the choice which of the halves of the container’s interior will be profiled, the glass can be described as half-full or half-empty. This paper discusses the role of construal phenomena in translation on the basis of renderings proposed for the portrayal of a relatively unsophisticated scene described with the caused-motion construction.

4. Caused-motion construction

In generative approaches to semantics (e.g. Gruber, 1965; Jackendoff, 1972), predicate selection restrictions are considered to be a subset of semantic and syntactic information specified by a main verb. A verb such as throw, for example, would be classified as a three-argument verb: throw(arg₁, arg₂, arg₃), thus it can appear in expressions such as “The boy (arg₁: Subject) threw (Verb) a bone (arg₂: Object₁) to the dog (arg₃: Object₂)”. On the other hand, a verb such as sneeze, would be classified as profiling the participant role of a sneezer, i.e. a single argument: sneeze(arg₁) as in “The king (arg₁: Subject) sneezed”.

However, Goldberg (1995, 2006, 2013) points out that intuitively single-argument verbs, such as sneeze, can also appear in expressions with three arguments, such as “Tom sneezed off papers from the desk”. From the perspective of her construction grammar, this is not a violation of selection restrictions, but instead an example of a standard construction that functions in English, which she calls caused-motion construction. She argues that recognizing this construction enables us to avoid the problem of positing implausible verb senses to account for examples such as “She sneezed the foam off the cappuccino”, “He sneezed the napkin off the table”. To account for these sentences in the traditional terms, we would have to assume that sneeze, which intuitively is an intransitive verb, actually has a three-argument sense: “X causes Y to move Z by sneezing”. Assuming the existence of the caused-motion
construction independently of the verbs which instantiate it, allows to avoid positing arbitrary lexical stipulations on verbs that intuitively do not require the direct object complement, but can potentially occur in the construction, such as laugh, e.g. “The audience laughed him off the stage”, or cough, e.g. “He coughed a moth out of his mouth”, etc.

Goldberg (2006, p. 100) assumes that the verb sneeze can appear in the caused-motion construction “because sneeze can be construed to have a meaning, relevantly like other verbs that readily appear in that construction, as a verb that effects a causal force”. The basic semantics of the caused-motion construction is that the agent (or causer) argument directly causes the theme argument to move along a path designated by the directional phrase to a new location: 'X causes Y to move Z’. Goldberg (1995, pp. 75–76) adds that this central sense can be extended in various ways, allowing the construction to appear with a variety of related patterns, created by polysemy links (cf. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2007), which license expressions such as “Mary locked Bob into the room” (X causes Y not to move from Z), “Sue let the water out of the bathtub” (X enables Y to move Z), “Sam helped her into the car” (X helps Y to move Z), etc.

However, Kay (2005, 2013) discusses reasons to reject the caused-motion construction as a true construction of the grammar of English. He argues that caused-motion expressions should rather be accounted as a pattern of coinage (cf. Fillmore, 1997). A basic distinction between the two is that: “A construction is reliably productive synchronically; a pattern of coinage is unreliably productive diachronically” (Kay, 2005, p. 91; see also Bybee, 2010, Ch. 6). A basic diagnostic that indicates that the caused-motion pattern is not productive is approaching it as a productive construction, which leads to overgeneration illustrated with the following examples:

- She screamed him out of her apartment.
- They coughed him off the stage.
- The bomb detonated the desk through the window.
- The storm raged the roof off the house.
Kay emphasizes that although these sentences, which are coined on analogy with other conventionalized examples of the caused-motion pattern, are readily understandable to English speakers, they are ungrammatical. According to Kay (2013), because each expression of this kind has to be learned and remembered on its own, the caused-motion construction proposed by Goldberg does not qualify as a part of English grammar. Instead, expressions of this type should be treated as more or less idiosyncratic lexicalizations based on the coinage pattern (Kay, 2005, p. 90). Notwithstanding this discussion, the caused-motion expressions can be interpreted from the perspective of cognitive semantics of motion events.

5. Cognitive semantic account of motion events

Motion of an object from one location to another can be characterized in terms of a SOURCE–PATH–GOAL image schema, which is one of the most common structures emerging from our constant bodily experience. As described by Lakoff (1987, p. 275), “Every time we move anywhere there is a place we start from, a place we wind up at, a sequence of contiguous locations connecting the starting and ending points, and a direction.” Accordingly, this schema is composed of four structural elements: a SOURCE, which is the starting point, a GOAL, which is the end point, a PATH, which includes a sequence of contiguous locations connecting the starting point with the end point, and a DIRECTION toward the destination.

Mandler (1992, 2004) proposes a typology of basic image schemas of motion which enable infants to make an initial conceptual division of the world into animals and artifacts. She argues that the image schema for CAUSED MOTION involves an additional trajector acting at the beginning of path, which can be represented schematically as a vector toward a point occupied by an object, and another vector leaving that point. The first trajectory ends or changes its course at the place and time at which the other begins its motion. Mandler (1992, 2004) adds that the cause of motion can be either animate, e.g. a hand picks up an object, or inanimate, e.g. a ball rolls into another, starting it to move.

Discussing lexicalization patterns of motions events, Talmy (1985, 2000b) assumes that a basic Motion event can be characterized as a situation consisting of four internal core components: (1) the presence or absence of motion (Motion), which refers to “the presence
per se of motion or locatedness in the event” (Talmy, 2000b, p. 25), despite the fact the in the latter the Figure does not change its position with respect to the Ground; (2) the moving entity (Figure); (3) the object with respect to which the Figure moves (Ground); (4) the course followed by the Figure with respect to the Ground (Path). Moreover, Talmy (1985, 2000b) distinguishes an associated co-event, which refers to (5) the manner in which the motion takes place (Manner); or (6) the cause of its occurrence (Cause). Talmy (1985, pp. 139–140) explains that the assessment of whether Manner or Cause is conflated in a verb depends on the verb’s basic reference to what the Figure does or to what the Agent (or Instrument) does. For instance, “He pushed the keg” expresses Cause because it refers to what the Agent did. In contrast, the sentence “He rolled the keg” expresses Manner since it basically refers to what the Figure (keg) did.

Mani and Pustejovsky (2012, p. 37) provide a list of roles which they consider relevant to the semantic description of motion events form a computational perspective, which includes, among other elements, Agent, i.e. the event participant that performs or causes the event, and Instrument, i.e. the event participant used by the Agent to perform or cause the event (see also Langacker, 2008, p. 357 for a brief review of archetypal roles associated with actions and events). Taking these semantic components into consideration, the sentence “Tom sneezed off papers from the desk” can be decomposed as follows: (1) Agent – Tom; (2) Motion+Cause – sneezed off; (3) Figure – papers; (4) Ground – the desk; (5) Path – from (the desk).

A parallel semantic composition can be attributed to other, probably more typical, sentences expressing somewhat similar motion events, such as “I blew off the dust from the archives [and came across this gem]”, “The wind swept tiny leaves off of the new oaks”, etc. Approaching these linguistic structures as descriptions of caused motion events from the cognitive semantic perspective opens a path to a systematic analysis of the construal processes taken by translators re-conceptualizing such expressions.

6. Construal in approximations of caused-motion patterns
This paper aims to demonstrate an key role of construal in translation by showing disparate portrayals of a specific caused motion event. According to the re-conceptualization theory, any linguistic form which the translator takes into account as a possible equivalent produces an alternative mental model. Thus, examining alternative ways of rendering the same scene, which originate from different subjective re-conceptualizations, reveals different semantic models that can be considered by the translator upon reading a SL message. This study focuses specifically on alternate ways of profiling Figure, Cause, and Agent in a range of Polish translations of the sentence “Tom sneezed off papers from the desk”. In this case, a straightforward one-by-one conceptual transfer is blocked by restrictions of the Polish language code, which does not offer a parallel syntactic/lexical structure (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2015, p. 21). For that reason, translators dealing with this sentence must first re-conceptualize the message in the source language, and then approximate its meaning based on their subjective construal.

The research is based on 51 translations proposed by students of English philology at the University of Lodz who took the translation course as their specialization at the 1st year of the MA level of studies. The group included 33 females and 18 males. The age of participants ranged between 22–30, with the mean age of 24. At the time of the experiment, the translators had been learning English for 8–25 years, with the mean period of study of 14 years. The participants were asked to translate the above-quoted sentence “as precisely and naturally as possible” into Polish. Apart from making sure that all participants understand the meanings of constituent words, no other context for the event was given. This is because the overall aim of the experiment was not to evaluate individual translators but to elicit various proposals, without shaping them in one way or another (see Waliński, in press for a parallel study that reviews a range constructions proposed for rendering this structure).

6.1 Cause profiling construals
Some translators foregrounded, i.e. put in the focus of attention, the Cause that started the motion event. This can be observed in proposals based on a verbal nominal construction and a participial construction, shown in examples (1.1a–d). The foregrounding of the Cause is also
noticeable in comparative consecutive complementations, shown in examples (1.1e–f), which enhance the description of sneezing by emphasizing its unusual strength.

(1.1)

a. Kichnięcie Tomka strąciło papiery z biurka. (Verbal nominal construction)
[EN lit.: Tom’s sneezing knocked off papers from the desk]
b. Kichnięcie Tomka zdmuchnęło dokumenty z biurka. (Verbal nominal construction)
[EN lit.: Tom’s sneezing blew off documents from the desk]
c. Kichając, Tomek zdmuchnął papiery z biurka. (Present participial construction)
[EN lit.: Sneezing PRP, Tom blew off papers from the desk]
d. Kichnąwszy, Tomek zdmuchnął z biurka kartki papieru. (Anterior participial construction)
[EN lit.: Having sneezed ARP, Tom blew off from the desk sheets of paper]
e. Tomek kichnął z taką siłą, że aż papiery pospadały z biurka. (Comparative consecutive complementation)
[EN lit.: Tom sneezed with so much strength that papers fell down from the desk]
f. Tomek kichnął z taką siłą, że wszystkie papiery spadły z biurka. (Comparative consecutive complementation)
[EN lit.: Tom sneezed with so much strength that all papers fell down from the desk]

Interestingly, the two proposals that emphasize the unusual strength of the sneeze by employing a comparative consecutive complementation (1.1e–f), add information not available in the original sentence. This additional emphasis put on the semantic Cause may be interpreted as a kind of justification for the sneeze as a rather atypical originator of motion events.

In contrast, as shown in examples (1.2a–b), other translators re-conceptualized the Cause of motion as less relevant to the scene by putting it in the background of the message. Moreover, as shown in examples (1.2c–e), some translators replaced the original Cause with other actions that usually occur in such contexts.

(1.2)
a. Tomek zdmuchnął kartki z biurka kichnięciem. (Instrumental construction)  
[EN lit.: Tom blew off sheets (of paper) from the desk (by) sneezing_INS]
b. Tomek zrzucił dokumenty z biurka kichnięciem. (Instrumental construction)  
[EN lit.: Tom knocked off documents from the desk (by) sneezing_INS]c. Tomek zdmuchnął papiery z biurka. (Simple sentence: Cause alteration)  
[EN lit.: Tom blew off papers from the desk]d. Tomek zmiótł kartki z biurka. (Simple sentence: Cause alteration)  
[EN lit.: Tom swept off sheets (of paper) from the desk]e. Tomek zrzucił papiery z biurka. (Simple sentence: Cause alteration)  
[EN lit.: Tom knocked off papers from the desk]

What is particularly compelling about the latter three renditions (1.2c–e) is that they simplify the meaning of the original sentence by replacing the original Cause of the event, i.e. a sneeze, with other Causes. In these proposals the Agent blew off, swept off, or knocked off papers from the desk. It is plausible to presume that these translators, in their re-conceptualizations, did not recognize the original Cause as a particularly vital component of the message, therefore substituted it in their construals with a different Cause as a potentially more ordinary prime mover for events of this kind.

6.2 Figure profiling construals

As shown in the example (2.1a), one translator used a sequential adverbial phrase, which enabled her to foreground papers as the Figure to the prominent position of the sentence Subject. Moreover, the Figure foregrounding can also be observed in those coordinate proposals which, immediately after introducing sneezing as the initial Cause, refer to motion of the Figure with a verb of Manner, as shown in examples (2.1b–d).

(2.1)

a. Dokumenty spadły z biurka po kichnięciu Tomka. (Adverbial sequencing construction)  
[EN lit.: Documents fell down from the desk after Tom’s sneezing]
b. Tomek kichnął a dokumenty spadły z biurka. (Coordinate construction: Figure profiling)
The coordinate proposals that profile motion of the Figure as the ensuing entity in the event chain (2.1b–d) contrast with other coordinate proposals that instead use two consecutive motion verbs of Cause to profile actions of the Agent, e.g. “Tomek kichnął i zdmuchnął papiery z biurka” [EN lit.: Tom sneezed and blew off papers from the desk], which is discussed further in Section 6.3.

On the other hand, some translators approached the Figure as less relevant to the event description by putting it far in the background. This can be observed in a range of different constructions shown in examples (2.2a–c).

(2.2)

a. Kichnąwszy, Tomek zdmuchnął z biurka kartki papieru. (Anterior participial construction)
[EN lit.: Having sneezed_ARP, Tom blew off from the desk sheets of paper]
b. Tomek kichnięciem zdmuchnął z biurka dokumenty. (Instrumental construction)
[EN lit.: Tom (by) sneezing_INS blew off from the desk documents]
c. Tomek skichnął z biurka papiery. (Non-standard caused motion construction)
[EN lit.: Tom sneezed off from the desk papers]

In all the above-listed proposals, the Figure of motion (papers or documents) is backgrounded, i.e. profiled as less relevant, and as such it is disclosed only as the final element of the message.

6.3 Agent profiling construals

As shown in examples (3.1a–g), numerous translators promoted the Agent to the prominent position of the sentence Subject by using different constructions.
Some translators nominalized the verb *sneeze* to gerund, which they put in the instrumental case (3.1a) to mark semantically the Agent’s action as the direct Cause of the event. Others put the verb into participial forms (either present or anterior) to foreground Tom as the Agent who caused the motion event (3.1b–c). Still others used a coordinate construction (3.1d–e), simple sentence (3.1f), or coined a non-standard for Polish caused-motion construction (3.1g) to profile the Agent in the foreground. What these proposals additionally have in common is that the TL structure essentially parallels the order of the original sentence.

However, some translators decided to background the Agent by demoting it to a secondary role of the Genitival modifier, as shown in examples (3.2a–c).
b. Kichnięcie Tomka zdmuchnęło dokumenty z biurka. (Verbal nominal construction)
[EN lit.: Tom’s sneezing blew off documents from the desk]

c. Kichnięcie Tomka zwiało papiery z biurka. (Verbal nominal construction)
[EN lit.: Tom’s sneezing blew away papers from the desk]

d. Dokumenty spadły z biurka po kichnięciu Tomka. (Adverbial sequencing construction)
[EN lit.: Documents fell down from the desk after Tom’s sneezing]

Additionally, as shown in the example (3.2d repeated from 2.1a), one translator, for the sake of foregrounding the Figure, decided to put the Agent completely in the background by employing an adverbial sequencing construction. Not only does it demote Tom to the role of Genitival modifier, but additionally reports the Cause of the motion event as the final element in the message.

A wide range of renditions profiling Figure, Cause, or Agent that were proposed by the translators dealing with this relatively unsophisticated scene demonstrates that the linguistic description of events can potentially focus on a number of different roles encoded in distinct semantic particles. The results show that foregrounded and backgrounded elements are defined not in terms of any specific semantic role or conceptual content, but rather in terms of primary and secondary focal prominence dictated by subjective construal. Neither is their profiling strictly determined by the use of a particular construction. For instance, both of the following sentences are based on the instrumental construction: “Tomek kichnięciem zmiótł kartki z biurka” [EN lit.: Tom (by) sneezing_INS swept off sheets (of paper) from the desk] and “Tomek zdmuchnął kartki z biurka kichnięciem” [EN lit.: Tom blew off sheets (of paper) from the desk (by) sneezing_INS]. Evidently, the former sentence puts the semantic Cause in focus to a much greater degree than the latter. As summarized by Langacker (2008, p. 73), “each structure in a symbolic assembly makes its own assignments of focus, so an entity focused in one structure need not have comparable salience in another”.

7. Conclusions
The results obtained in this study demonstrate that although the original subjective conceptualization of the author constitutes a common ground for all the operations involved in translation, translators re-create the original SL message according to their own re-conceptualization, which is strongly affected by their subjective interpretation of its meaning. For that reason, translation is shaped not only by the constructions available in the target language system, but also by the subjective construal of a translator. A translator attempting to stay within the paradigm of natural equivalence (cf. Pym, 2014) can choose between various TL forms to profile the situation in a manner that he/she considers the most optimal way of rendering the meaning for the target audience. Although it might be tempting to evaluate the proposals analyzed in this research, for a single contextless sentence it is impossible to decide which proposal actually renders the meaning of the text more effectively than others. For each respective translator, his/her own subjective construal was the optimal solution for rendering the meaning of this particular sentence into Polish.

Paradoxically, the only proposal that is semantically equivalent with the SL sentence is the lexical/syntactic loan based on the English caused-motion pattern, i.e. “Tomek skichnął papiery z biurka”, which happens to be not lexicalized in Polish. The fact that it was proposed by four translators rises the question about the role of L2 transfer in proposing this construction. Tomczak and Evert (2015) found that Polish advanced speakers of English rate the meaningfulness of fictive motion sentences translated from English higher than monolingual speakers of Polish, which suggests that a high proficiency in English may have significantly contributed to importing this pattern into Polish. A discussion on the possibility of importing the caused-motion construction to Polish (cf. Otwinowska-Kasztelanic, 2000) expands beyond the scope of this study, however, it is worth noting that solutions of this kind potentially give rise to translationese language occurrence (Duff, 1981).

In more general terms, the results indicate that Event Structure (cf. Davidson, 2001) can be re-conceptualized and parsed linguistically in a wide variety of ways, which constitutes a problem in translation (cf. Tabakowska, 2000). Even such an unsophisticated scene as a cat walking across the room, can be construed in a number of ways. For instance, it is possible to refer to the figure of the cat separately from the ground of the room, to trace the cat’s
trajectory for a different vantage point (along or across), to express the manner of movement (running or jumping), or to indicate whether the motion was externally caused or spontaneous. What makes the problem even more complex is that different languages provide different ways of encoding motion events (see Papafragou, Massey, & Gleitman, 2002 for an example of empirical study). Since it is impossible to find exhaustive one-to-one correspondences between English and Polish motion verbs (Kopecka, 2010), translating event description between these languages is sometimes a challenging task for translators. What can aid them in performing such tasks is a cognitive analysis of the semantic roles and conceptual conditions that underlie such expressions (see Waliński, 2015 for an example).

References


