

**TOPIC AND FOCUS ENTITIES IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH UTTERANCES:  
MISMATCHES AND TRANSLATION CHALLENGES.**

**BY**

**DORCAS WANGUI CEGE**

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## DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree examination in any other university

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DORCAS WANGUI CEGE

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DATE

C50/75689/2012

This project has been submitted for examination with the approval of the following university supervisors

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DR. HELGA SCHRÖDER

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DATE

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DR.CATHERINE AGOYA

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DATE

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to;

My husband

John

And our children

Debra

Purity

&

Gloria

Indeed you are a special gift to me. You made this possible.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am deeply grateful to God, for making it possible for me to write this work. This was beyond my ability; it is through Him that it came to be.

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Profound thanks to my Dad Ephantus Maina and Mum Mary Maina for believing in me.

May the almighty God bless you all.

## ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with a syntactic comparative analysis of information structure entities called topic and focus in German and English. Data for analysis has been extracted from two literary books namely „Das Leben kommt immer dazwischen” and its translation in English entitled, “And Then Life Happens”

The study has used the conceptual framework developed by Knud Lambrecht on topic and focus with the aim of seeking a better and in-depth understanding of the two notions. This provides a good background for comparing the way topic and focus are presented in German and English and their roles in syntactic structures.

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one gives the introduction and the aspects that are discussed here include; background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, hypothesis, rationale, scope and limitations, conceptual framework, literature review, methodology and significance of the study. A conclusion has also been provided.

In chapter two syntactic mismatches in marked constructions in German and English have been discussed. This provides information on how German codes the accented constituents in utterances. The way these have been rendered in English has also been displayed with the objective of highlighting the mismatches that occur in the process of translation.

Chapter three specifically deals with three properties of language namely; dislocation, contrastiveness and use of dummy subjects and how they influence the sequencing of information units in a syntactic structure, while also highlighting the differences that appear between German and English.

Chapter four goes on to share some light on the strategies that may be used for translating non-canonical syntactic structures. Encountered mistranslations have been analyzed and recommendations given.

Chapter five, the last chapter casts a glance on the whole study in that a brief summary of the research findings is given. Objectives and hypothesis have been tested, conclusions drawn and recommendation for further study in this area of syntax has also been made.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter casts a glance on the background of this study, statement of the problem, objectives, hypothesis, rationale, scope and limitations, literature review, conceptual framework, and research methodology.

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Different languages use different strategies for signaling information structure. This is because every language is governed by precise rules and principles. These govern the way in which words and phrases are strung together in order to realize meaning at syntactic level and eventually at the level of discourse. This study intends to undertake a comparative syntactic analysis of utterances in German and English in order to understand how each of them package information to construct meaningful texts in different contexts of use and to identify the mismatches, for example in word order in a clause or a sentence and the translation challenges that would be encountered.

This study is crucial since interference from native language in as far as syntactic structure is involved may lead to mistranslation. According to Winter (1961:98), one cannot always match the content of a message in language A by an expression with exactly the same content in language B. The reason is, what can be expressed and what must be expressed is a property of a specific language. This property must be expressed in much the same way as how it was originally expressed.

This means that it is always hard to find a notion that can be expressed in a uniform manner by different languages. According to Mona Baker (1992:84), differences in grammatical structures of the source and target languages often result in some change in the information content of the message during translation. The syntactic structure of a language imposes restrictions on the way the message to be conveyed is organized. English for instance relies so much on word order to signal the relationship between different constituents that make up an utterance.

Languages generally differ in the way they are equipped in order to handle various notions and express various aspects of experience or relevance. Some elements will therefore be given certain prominence than others within the language and between languages in order to realize certain effects. This is achieved through different strategies which will also differ from one language to another.

Nida (1994:95) states that it is impossible to say anything to anyone without indicating the relative degree of respect to which the speaker and the hearer are entitled in the community. This means speakers of different languages are aware of how different linguistic elements are used to portray coherent meaning in different contexts.

For instance the meaning of a sentence in English depends entirely on the order in which elements are placed. Let us consider the following sentence in German and the translation in English.

1) So oft wie möglich besuchte ich ihn.  
As often as possible I visited him

In the German sentence the verb precedes the subject while in the English one the verb comes after the subject. Through the canonical construction of the English sentence, one is able to

access the meaning. If this sentence was translated with adherence to the order displayed by the German sentence, distortion of meaning would occur. It would appear like this: “*As often as possible visited I him*”.

As indicated above the speaker or writer comes into the syntactic process with the aim of producing a sentence by supplying appropriate lexicon and phrases. S/he is able to do this through the grammar and the norms of the particular language. The message is tailored in accordance with the receiver’s needs. The ideal speaker has hypothesis of the mental representation of the receiver’s assumptions. He makes an assessment on how the receiver is going to process the information against a background of a particular context. The context may be of linguistic or extra-linguistic nature.

Speakers of English for instance will rely on word order to decipher what the speaker intends through an utterance. German on the other hand may depend on case inflections that help to signal the relationship between the communicative elements used to string up an utterance. This can be best explained through the following examples extracted from Auma Obama’s memoirs, which highlight how German and English differ in packaging information:

2) Meinen alten Käfer hatte ich Tante Zeituni verkauft(S.215)

I had sold my Beetle to Aunt Zeituni (page 214)

Due to the use of the accusative case the clause ‘meinen alten Käfer’ will be interpreted as the direct object although it is placed at the initial position of the sentence which is however not the case in the English sentence.

Prince (1981:124) defines information structure as information packaging which he further defines as the tailoring of an utterance by a sender to meet the particular needs of the intended receiver. That is, information packaging in natural language reflects the sender's hypothesis about the receiver's assumptions, beliefs and strategies. Stalnakers(1973:447) on the other hand talks about common ground and defines it as the knowledge that is shared by the sender and the receiver at the time of utterance. The common ground in the context of a given utterance is topic and builds the background upon which new information which is focus is grounded.

These two building blocks of information structure form the basis of this study. The presentation of topic and focus in a sentence is known as sentence articulation. The two notions determine the way information in a clause or a sentence is presented and this will influence the interpretation of the message conveyed. Information in a sentence can be organized into the known or presupposed information which is termed as topic, and the new or non-recoverable information which is focus. The order in which these notions appear in an articulation will also differ from one language to another.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The syntactic structure of German and English differ in several ways:

- 1) German syntax differs from English in that it has a flexible word order while English relies on a strict SVO (subject-verb-object) order. In German depending on the element at the initial position, for instance a temporal phrase, the verb precedes the subject. This is not the case in English since the subject precedes the verb.
- 2) If an element imparts new information, it would be natural in German to place it at the initial position for focusing; this would not be the case in English.

3) German uses case inflections which help indicate the relationship between elements in a clause. The meaning of the sentence in English is however dependent on the word order. The following sentences support this claim and indicate the mismatch involved.

3) Diesen Job kann ich wohl vergessen, dachte ich. (pg. 220)

I can forget this job, I thought. (pg. 219)

In the German sentence the inflected phrase is placed at the sentence initial position and signifies that it is however the direct object in the accusative case.

From earlier discussion we saw that information in an utterance can be organized into topic and focus. Therefore, these notions are automatically part of the structure of German and English languages. The way topic and focus appear is a property of each language which differs significantly between German and English.

The aim of this study therefore is to identify the difficulties encountered in translating topic and focus from German into English because of the divergent syntactic structures preferred by the two languages as shown above. The few examples given show that German compared to English has a flexible word order hence allows different elements in the sentence initial position or other positions. English which has a relatively fixed word order of SVO is constrained on the elements that may appear in the sentence initial position.

Translation at the level of information structure has remained a challenge since it doesn't just entail a retrieval of an equivalent entity in the mental representation which is normally the case at the lexical level. The translator needs to process the sentence first which may involve segmenting it into relevant processing units and operations. This will be enabled by the

knowledge and the experiences one possesses in interpreting linguistic representations that may occur at the level of utterances which consist of functional units that are consciously strung together to bring meaning.. The states of affairs in the mind of the interlocutors cannot be taken for granted. Lambrecht (1994:37) states that the text internal world is the abstract world of linguistic representations created in the minds of the interlocutors in the process of communication. Manipulation of such representations allowsthe conveying of information.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.**

The study intends to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To identify the topic and focus elements in German and English utterance in two literary texts.
- 2) To identify and analyze the mismatches in reference to topic and focus entities at the level of word order between German and English.
- 3) To suggest translation strategies that can be employed to deal with the challenges caused by the mismatches in the syntactic structures of German and English languages.

### **1.4 HYPOTHESIS**

The study will seek to test the following hypothesis:

- 1) German uses left-detachment or dislocated constructions and foregrounding to indicate topic and focus, while English uses cleft-constructions and canonical constructions.
- 2) German has a flexible word order of SVO and OVS while English has a fixed and relatively rigid word order of SVO.

3) German uses non-default structures for focusing with much ease than English and this may call for divergent and complex syntactic strategies in the process of translation into English.

### **1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Interference from the native language for instance in the word order of the syntactic structures, may lead to mistranslation. Although one cannot always match the content of a message expressed in Language A by an expression with exactly the same content in Language B, a translator should aim at producing a text that sounds natural. The reader should not easily detect that it is a translation. According to Mona Baker (1992:111), the phraseology and the collocation patterning of the target version must conform to the language norms. These norms differ from language to language.

Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the translator understands the structures of both languages well, how they differ and how each best packages its information to meet the needs of the receiver. This comparative syntactic analysis is going to help young linguists and translators see how the patterns differ and how the functional elements are best strung up to bring out the intended meaning in German and English.

A closer study of the elements of topic and focus will accord language users and especially translators a chance to attain necessary knowledge and skills to enable them package information appropriately. Problems in translation occur due to the divergence in the syntactic structures of different languages which are also accompanied by different cultural backgrounds. Therefore translation involves more than replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages. If the translator seeks to communicate the same message s/he receives from the source text without distortion or ambiguity, there is need for proper knowledge of both languages involved.



In addition, the area of information structure compared to lexicon has not been widely researched on. I find this study important since the topic is at information level. This is crucial in translation since translation is best carried out at this level and not at the level of a single word.

## **1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

Data for the study will be extracted from two literary texts. The texts include the source text authored by Auma Obama in German namely: ‘Das Leben kommt immer dazwischen’ and the translated version namely: ‘And then life Happens’ that was translated by Ross Benjamin a German-English translator.

Mismatches between languages may occur through different linguistic signs. For instance variations may be observed in the phonological structure, the semantic representations, and in the relationship between lexical and actual meaning which may bring about the notion of denotative and connotative meaning of different linguistic signs as used in different languages.

The study will however be limited to topic and focus in information structure with special attention being put on word order. In word order the study will not venture into different structures of phrases but will focus on clauses and sentences. The data obtained from the two texts is believed to be adequate and will allow a detailed analysis of topic and focus in terms of their appearances and positions in German and English utterances. Other aspects as mentioned above and such notions as tense and aspect, coherence and cohesion will not be discussed.

## **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The review of literature is divided into three parts. The first part deals with literature related to topic and focus, the second presents scholarly opinions on translation theory and the third displays knowledge on translation strategies.

### **1.7.1 Literature on topic and focus**

Different scholars have contributed immense knowledge on the notion of syntactic structures that include topic and focus. These scholars include:

Enkvist (1978:178) who stated that, a sentence is not autonomous; it does not exist for its own sake but as part of a situation and part of a text. And one of the most important functions of information dynamics is precisely to link a sentence to its environment in a manner which allows the information to flow through the text in the desired manner.

Enkvist continues to assert that, a translator should be aware not only of cognitive meanings and basic syntactic structures in his text, but also of its information dynamics. By this, one can deduce that among other things there is need for an in-depth understanding of the syntactic structure of the language before any venture into translation of any discourse. This forms a relevant reference into the study since the aim of this study is to undertake a syntactic analysis between German and English and see how the variation in the syntactic structure of both languages may influence translation from German into English. The way the sentence is constructed in order to link it to other sentences is the concern of syntax which also forms the basis of this study. The study benefits a lot from this because, when differences and/or similarities between the syntactic structures of German and English are brought to light this will help in coming up with

appropriate strategies of translation. The study carries this process of comparison of the two syntactic structures physically whereby sentences are extracted from their context of use.

Levinson (1983:337) talks specifically about topic and terms it as relating to what has already been talked about in the clause/sentence or discourse. He describes it as the entity that has already been introduced. It also indicates that since this entity has already been introduced in previous context, it is therefore referential and recoverable when used in subsequent context. When a reference to an already established topic is used it is assumed that the topic is still active in the hearer's short term memory and therefore already exists in his/her mental representations, hence understanding of the information conveyed about the topic which is embedded in the proposition is not hindered. His major contribution to the study is based on the existence of a topic element in a clause or sentence that will contribute in the way the subsequent discourse is shaped and interpreted. This will entail usage of referential signals that will appear in varied ways in German and English. This is beneficial to the study in that identification of topic in a clause or sentence is a step to the interpretation of the information conveyed through the utterance.

Halliday (1967:212) shares the same view with Levinson but uses the term theme and calls it the point of departure. Theme may be equated with topic in that the point of departure in a sentence is that point of the utterance where topic is coded and all other information that will follow will be hinged to it. To add information about a referent, it must be already available in discourse as a starting point. This study is concerned with the syntactic structure of German and English. What Halliday displays by his observation is the exercise of creating syntactic structures namely clauses and sentences that are eventually used to create discourse. The exercise of putting the

units together from the point of departure touches on the heart of this study since among the constituents that are used is the topic entity.

Halliday (ibid) quotes Tyler who asserts that one can identify topic in an utterance through use of references such as individual names, deictic expressions or definite descriptions. For an expression to serve as topic it must have a referent, and this referent must be pragmatically established in discourse. Discourse context will help in the interpretation of subjects as either being topics or not. Interpreting an entity outside its context of use is difficult. According to Yule (1985:235) the linguistic context also called co-text has a strong effect on what we think a word probably means. While English may use definiteness to indicate an already established topic, definiteness in German may be used for emphasis. In this study context based interpretation will be used in differentiating between the entities that are already pragmatically established hence topic and those that are newly introduced hence focus. This is vital for the study since it involves identifying the topic in a German sentence and comparing it with one identified in the English sentence. Without this knowledge the study would not successfully achieve the stated objectives.

Chafe (1978:30) describes given or old information as that knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of utterance. The so called new information is what the speaker assumes he is introducing into the addressee's consciousness by what he says. The old information may be described as what is already in the cognitive field or mental representation of the receiver, which will help one interpret the new information appropriately.

Therefore it follows that identification of topic is the first step to interpreting an utterance without which translation may not be achieved. Generally speaking the addresser may opt to

sequence information in a way that topic comes before focus for ease in interpretation. However different languages may prefer to use other patterns other than the canonical topic- focus construction. The new information is expressed in the relation established between the denotatum and the rest of the clause but not in the focus denotatum only. Lambrecht (2001:477) shares this view and believes that the entire proposition has to be considered for accurate interpretation of a message. The moment these entities namely topic and focus are identified in both German and English, it will be possible to compare the patterns and highlight the mismatches, an action that this study is undertaking.

### **1.7.2 Literature on translation theory**

Translation challenges are always encountered where two distinct languages are involved for instance due to lack of equivalence as far as syntactic structures of languages are concerned. Sometimes more complex forms may be used. English for example uses cleft-sentences with much ease but these would sound unnatural in German. In translating discourse, one may find out that one language may opt for a strategy that may not apply in the other language and this causes a lot of challenges to translators especially if one does not possess adequate knowledge of both grammar structures. Divergent theories to the phenomena of translation have been advanced by many scholars.

As Roger Bell (1991:43) puts it, focus on the description of the process of translation and the translator form the twin issues which translation theory must address. This is in regard to how the process is carried out and what knowledge and skills the translators must possess in order to understand the facts in a text and feel its emotional connotations and be able to carry out translation or transfer of meaning appropriately. This study considers these two aspects namely

the translator who needs to have adequate knowledge and the process of translation which s/he is supposed to carry out accurately and consciously in order to communicate the ST message in TT. If language norms between two languages are divergent, the translator must be in a position to decide on the best strategy to employ to convey the message from ST to TT while appreciating the divergent structures.

Koller (1979:183) believes that translation as a process should entail investigation of conditions of equivalence and coordination of utterances and texts which are in two languages and to which the criterion of translational equivalence applies. Koller's view is important for this study since it touches on equivalence and coordination at the level of utterances which eventually translates into text or discourse. At the level of utterances, mismatches will occur where there is lack of equivalence for instance between German and English.

Translation is the active process by which discourse/utterances may be extended from one cultural setting to another. As readers however we make sense of such linguistic units partly because we perceive the connections within and among the sentences. Among these connections are those that are established through the arrangement of information and coordination of the functional units within each clause/sentence and the way this relates to the arrangement of information in preceding and following clauses and sentences.

Enkvist adds to the discussion on translation and asserts that a translator should be aware not only of cognitive meanings and basic syntactic structures in his text, but also of its information dynamics. Such awareness does not necessarily imply theoretical sophistication in linguistics, or an ability to analyze sentences into themes, rhemes, and focally marked or unmarked elements. Here too a translator must rely on intuition and 'Sprachgefühl'. But in situations where theory

may be of help, even in defining problems rather than in solving them, it should not be avoided. Enkvist (1978:178). What is vital for this study is the requirement for the translator to have an in-depth understanding of the grammar structures of the languages s/he is working with. This is what is going to enable one to produce a text that sounds natural though it is a translation.

According to Hatim& Mason (1990:182), translation consists of two phases which are comprehension of text and transfer of meaning. Comprehension of text entails dividing sentences/utterances into functional units that help in comprehending their relationship hence the meaning conveyed. It also involves access to especial knowledge and intended meaning. The way the units are combined to form meaningful statements is carried out intentionally since different patterns may bring out divergent meaning. Access to especial knowledge and the intended meaning could be relatively problematic especially since it calls for an in-depth understanding of the grammar and the lexicon of the language, and sometimes the culture where the language is embedded on and the physical content which may also be termed as the extra-linguistic content. This is a view that is shared by Enkvist as cited above and involves the requirement for a good understanding of the language system, a suggestion that is strongly supported by this study.

On the transfer of meaning, Hatim& Mason (ibid) believe that meaning is the total network of relations entered into by any linguistic unit for instance a syntactic unit. Therefore to get access to meaning conveyed by linguistic units, for example sentences one has to understand the functional units that are used to build them up. Through such understanding the author is able to achieve his/her intended meaning and the translator on the other hand will be able to transfer this meaning without any distortion. This is a vital point for this study since it ventures into

understanding why translators may face difficulties in the transfer of the intended meaning from German into English.

Newmark (1981:39) uses the terms semantic and communicative translations. He argues that communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original text. Semantic translation on the other hand attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning. Newmark agrees that there could be lack of direct equivalence due to the different endowments of languages which may bring about mismatches as this study has found out. The informed translator will however be able to use the appropriate strategies to transfer the meaning and communicate effectively in the TL.

### **1.7.3 Translation strategies**

Mona Baker is of the view that different languages use different devices for signaling information structure and translators must develop sensitivity to the various signaling systems available in the languages they work with (1994:151). Just as German and English differ in their syntactic structures they also differ in the strategies they use in translation. This view is of paramount importance for the study in that it intends to highlight and discuss the mismatches between German and English in their information structure specifically in the word order. Baker also reiterates the importance of the translator to be conscious of these divergent grammar structures of the languages.

Strawson (1964:97) on the other hand makes the observation that, assessments of statements as true or untrue are commonly topic-centered. In German and English and in many other languages definiteness is associated with given information while indefiniteness will be used where the



information is new. Interpretation of information is made easier where there is prior introduction of an argument which is recoverable in subsequent parts of discourse. The writer assumes that the reader knows what the references stand for and therefore is able to understand the message being conveyed. In reference to the study at hand definiteness or indefiniteness is a strategy that will enable the translator to interpret the information in the original text accordingly and therefore code it appropriately in the target language.

Firbas reiterates this view by asserting that a clause consists of different types of elements. Some elements lay the foundation on which other elements may convey a message. These foundation laying elements are context-dependent and can be interpreted as the topic (1972:78). Firbas, just like Halliday acknowledges that a unit of information consists of a given and a new element or just a new element in an utterance whose main function is presentation of all -new information, where both the argument and what is said about it is new. Due to the gap that exists between languages in how the given and the new information is presented to the readers in a syntactic linguistic unit, the work of translation becomes so challenging in trying to bridge this gap. There is therefore urgency in the development of translation skills that would help to close such gaps a process that this study ventures into

Halliday(1970:143) suggests that since language gives structure to experience and helps to determine our way of looking at things, intellectual effort is required in order to see them(these things) in any other way than that which our language suggests to us. This is important for the study for it aims at showing the need to adhere to and appreciate the divergent grammar rules of languages that one is working with in order to achieve a successful and acceptable translation. This is only possible if the translator possesses adequate knowledge and appropriate translation skills.

Lederer (2003:23) states that the linguistic component needs to be understood by reference not only to explicit but also to implicit meaning in an attempt to recover the authorial intention. The process of translation does not involve copying the source text pattern into the target text. For instance calquing a rigid English word order when translating into a language like German that allows a VS order or a relatively free word order would produce a text that sounds unnatural. German calquing of English cleft sentences; a strategy normally used in English for focusing would equally produce texts that will sound foreign. In this study we aim at suggesting translation strategies used in German and English that are destined to be divergent due to divergence in their grammar structures.

Due to such differences in the grammatical structure of the source and target languages, certain changes in the information content of the message during the translation process may be observed. Mona Baker (1992:86) believes that details that might be ignored in the source text but which have to be specified in the target language can pose a serious dilemma for the translator especially if they cannot be reasonably inferred from the context. Thus, an aspect may be regarded as optional in a certain language but may be obligatory in another. Such a mismatch may pose a translation challenge e.g. in German all nouns are classified as either masculine, feminine or neutral. If determiners like adjectives appear before the noun in a clause they will usually agree with the noun in gender and number. Translating such elements into English may not pose a big challenge than it would do if translating from English into German, since English rarely makes gender distinctions.

The study benefits from this view in that the use of the accepted grammatical structure and collocation patterns of a language will help enhance the readability and interpretability of individual utterances hence the entire discourse. A translator whose aim is for the reader to

accept a translation as a text in its own right will often have to adjust certain features of the source text organization to be in line with the preferred ways of organizing information, priorities and norms of the target language.

Halliday (1967:199) believes that cleft sentences enable the receiver's attention to be explicitly directed towards the news value of a particular information unit. This construction tends to receive a contrastive emphasis. For instance in a sentence it makes clear that something or someone and nobody/nothing else caused something to happen and therefore is depicted as the entity of newsworthiness. In German however foregrounding of the entity and the usage of the definite article can be interpreted as a strategy German uses for focusing or emphasizing on the news value of a particular information unit. The assertion made by Strawson that definiteness is associated with an already established topic may not apply in German since definiteness may also be used for focusing.

## **1.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study will use the conceptual framework as outlined by Lambrecht on topic and focus as the two basic units of information structure. Lambrecht defines information structure as a situation where components of sentence grammar are paired as propositions of conceptual representations of states of affairs with lexico-grammatical structures. This pairing takes place in accordance with the mental states of interlocutors, who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts, Lambrecht (1994:5). This entails construction and organization of utterances in order to achieve a communicative objective by the interlocutors. Some important aspects can be deduced from this definition;

Firstly, the speaker's hypothesis about the hearer's mental state is important and guides the speaker in the packaging of the information. Secondly, the grammar structure more specifically the sentence grammar is vital in the formal structuring of sentences which may differ from one language to another hence, may call for varied strategies as the grammar of the language may allow. Thirdly discourse context is another important factor that will aid in the interpretation of the message conveyed.

Lambrecht believes that syntax may be autonomous in its own domain but by its nature it must provide the resources for expressing the principles which determine its function in discourse. (ibid:11). He argues that certain formal properties of sentences cannot be fully understood without looking at the linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts in which the sentences having these properties are embedded.

According to him, information in a sentence is organized into topic and focus. He defines topic as that which the proposition is about. He points out that a referent is interpreted as the topic of a proposition if in a given situation the proposition is construed as being about the referent, i.e. the proposition expresses information which is relevant and increases the addressee's knowledge of this referent (ibid: 1994:131). This has also been defined as the known recoverable information.

The pragmatic relation that exists between the topic and the proposition can also be described as a relation construed within a particular discourse context. Since topic is an entity that has already been introduced in previous discourse it is pragmatically present in subsequent discourse. In order to determine whether an entity is a topic in a sentence or not it is often necessary to take into account the discourse context in which the sentence is embedded (Ibid: 1994:120). Lambrecht asserts that the topic of an utterance is not a proposition in nature but rather an entity.

The topic however is related to the proposition in that it plays a major role due to its status as a center of interest or matter of concern in the utterance. This is the property that distinguishes a topic argument from focus argument. Focus is what Lambrecht terms as another building block of information structure, whose role in the proposition is always unpredictable at the time of utterance. This will be discussed later.

The following extract shows where the center of interest is:

**4) Meinen alten Kafer** habe ich....Tante Zeituni verkauft. Nun lieh sie mir **das Auto**, damit Barack, Michele und ich uns abhängig von den öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln fortbewegen konnten. Es gab nur eine Schwierigkeit: **Der Wagen** war sehr wartungsbedürftig. (pg.215)

I had sold **my old Beetle** to Aunt Zeituni.....Now she lent me **the car** so that Barack, Michele, and I could get around on our own without public transportation. There was only one problem: **The car** was in need of a lot of maintenance. (pg.214)

Although the position of the topic entity highlighted in the above extracts differs significantly in German and in English (an aspect that has been discussed somewhere else), the point that the topic in an utterance is the center of interest is made clear. It is referred to severally in this discourse and the highlighted words support this. In addition Lambrecht distinguishes between specific notions of topic: Continuous and switch topic.

Continuous topic is a participant that is topic in each consecutive clause. In the sentences cited above 'das Auto' which was for the first time introduced in discourse as a new entity on page 184 in the following sentence, 'unter meinen Sachen befand sich auch ein Auto.....' is a continuous topic. 'Ein Auto' is a focus entity and it sets the stage for reference in subsequent discourse. It appears with an indefinite article to indicate its first appearance in discourse.

On the other hand switch topic is a participant that is re-introduced in discourse and is marked by a noun phrase, upon reintroduction. It is re-introduced in order to pragmatically re-activate it

in the mind of the addressee. The term 'meinen altenWagen' is re-introduced again after its first mention on page 184 and this time on page 215. This is switch topic and is reintroduced through a noun phrase and not a pronoun so as to achieve the goal of pragmatic reactivation. This shows that there is a correlation between the topic status of an expression and the presumed cognitive state of the topic referent in the hearer's mind at the time of utterance (ibid: 195).

Focus is defined as the complement of topic. It is the new knowledge hitched to the topic post. It is the new non-recoverable knowledge conveyed about the topic. This is the information in a sentence that is assumed by the speaker not to be shared by him and the hearer and therefore cannot be inferred without being told. Focus makes an utterance into an assertion. In the above extracts the information conveyed about the car under discussion is new. Lambrecht defines focus as that element of a pragmatically structured proposition which makes the utterance of the sentence expressing the proposition into a piece of information (1994:217). Through focus new information is added into the mind of the addressee and adds more information into the cognitive field. Lambrecht distinguishes between the following focus articulations; predicate focus, sentence focus and argument focus.

He defines predicate focus as a sentence construction that expresses a pragmatically structured proposition in which the subject is a topic hence within the presupposition and in which the predicate expresses new information about this topic. The focus domain is the predicate phrase.

In predicate focus therefore the proposition is construed as a comment about the topic. The focus is the predicate. The subject and any other topical elements are in the presupposition. It is also called the topic-comment articulation where the comment is the focus entity. The subject referent is conceptualized as actively involved in some situation. Topical post-verbal subject NPs occur

commonly in German when the preverbal slot is occupied by an adjunct or adverbial constituent, forcing the subject to appear after the verb. In English the topical element occurs before the verb hence preverbal position. The following examples depict that.

**Table1: The German post-verbal and English pre-verbal topic positions.**

<b>Position 1</b>	<b>Position 2</b>	<b>position 3</b>	
In den wenigen Tagen unseres Aufenthalts in Alego,	pendelten	wir	zwischen den Hofen hin und her
During the few days of our stay in Alego,	we	shuttled	back and forth between compounds

From the examples the topic in the German sentence is ‘wir’ which can also be interpreted as the subject or noun phrase and it appears after the verb. In the English sentence the topic is ‘we’ and it takes the preverbal position.

Argumentfocus presents answers to open presuppositions are given and the argument is the only new information in the sentence. In this structure a missing argument in a presupposed open proposition is identified. Argument focus is presented as identification articulation. In most cases the focused element is fronted as the following sentences indicate. The normal word order changes, and the focal object is placed near or at the subject position and this indicates certain prominence.

Sentence focus (SF) also known as presentational articulation involves introduction of an entity into discourse without linking its introduction to an already established topic or to some presupposed proposition (Lambrecht 1994:144)

This may be explained as a situation where an assertion extends over the whole proposition. This type of presentational articulation is mainly used in narratives to introduce the participants. This type of articulation is also referred to asthetic or non- binary structure. It is also associated with ‘eventive’ flavor of sentence focus. Lambrecht notes that the main function of sentence focus is presentation. Such articulations serve to introduce discourse-new referents or to introduce an event involving a referent which is new or contextually construed as such. Both the entity and the event are all-new in discourse. Due to its presentational function it is constrained in terms of the form of subject. Since the subject is not yet recoverable its semantic role cannot be one of an agent. I.e. the noun phrase is non-topical hence the proposition expressed by the sentence is not pragmatically construed as being about the referent of this noun phrase.

Therefore the predicate portion of the SF proposition is marked as asserted rather than presupposed. Presupposition will only be possible in such a construction as predicate focus since in SF the subject referent is not conceptualized as actively involved in preceding discourse. SF and PF differ in the absence versus presence of a topical subject hence of atopic comment or aboutness relationship between the subject referent and the proposition. The speaker/writer may use some grammatical properties that may entail specific linear position relative to the verb or full lexical coding and prosodic prominence which may however be used in spoken discourse.



Lambrecht points out that the sentence- focus subject is often case marked as an accusative (i.e. object) rather than nominative (i.e. subject) argument especially in the SF constructions of the existential subtype.

Lambrecht uses the principal of paradigmatic contrast to distinguish between predicate focus and sentence focus, Lambrecht describes this as depicting how the two entities differ in the presence versus absence of a topical subject hence, complete absence of a topic-comment or aboutness relationship between the subject referent and the proposition.

How a subject is coded in such a way that it will not be interpreted as a topic is by use of grammatical properties that are mostly associated with the focal object in a predicate focussentence. The noun phrase in a sentence- focus construction is not topical in nature and therefore the proposition expressed by the sentence cannot be pragmatically construed as being about the referent of this noun phrase.

Lambrecht uses the following table to distinguish between the three focus categories.

**Table2. The pragmatic articulation of the three focus-structure category (Lambrecht 1994:236)**

<b>Focus category</b>	<b>Argument in focus</b>	<b>Predicate in focus</b>
Predicate focus	no	yes
Argument focus	yes	no
Sentence focus	yes	yes

From the summary depicted in the table it is evidently clear that argument focus is the reversal of predicate focus. In the sentence focus every element is in focus.

Part of Lambrecht’s definition for focus and topic relies on the notion of presupposition

Concerning this notion, Lambrecht (2000:613) distinguishes different categories:

(I) Knowledge presupposition: A proposition is knowledge presupposed if the speaker assumes that the hearer already knows or believes it or is ready to take it for granted at the time the sentence is uttered. From this definition the proposition in argument focus category is knowledge presupposed.

(ii) Identifiability presupposition: An entity is presupposed to be identifiable if the speaker assumes that a representation of it is already stored in the hearer’s long-term memory at the time of an utterance. World knowledge or experiences that may differ from one individual to another, a variation that may be caused by ones origin and exposure may cause a person either to understand or not understand an entity used in certain discourse.

(iii) Consciousness presupposition:

An entity or proposition is consciousness-presupposed if the speaker assumes its mental representation is activated in the hearer’s short term memory at the time of utterance. In this case the speaker may use references including pronominal ones since the topical element being referred to still exists in preceding context though in different forms like noun phrases, hence in the memory of the hearer. To be conscious of something one must

have a representation of it in the mind. Therefore identifiability presupposition entails consciousness presupposition.

(iv) Topicality presupposition:

An entity or proposition is presupposed to be topical if the speaker assumes that the hearer considers it a center of current interest in the discourse and hence, a potential locus of predication. This means the known information precedes the new which is sometimes termed as the center of interest hence the focus. However, this is not always the case especially where foregrounding of the new entity occurs in German for emphasis.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study will adopt the descriptive qualitative analysis in order to display the syntactic mismatches in terms of topic and focus that may be identified between German and English. This will allow deductions to be made.

### **1.9.1 Data Source**

Data for study will be taken from two texts namely:

1. *Das Leben kommt immer dazwischen* ( *Original text in German* ) . This memoir is written in the German setting and it is authored by Auma Obama as a narrative hence conveys the story in an interesting manner.

2. *And Then Life Happens* ( *Target text rendered in English* ). Translation from the original book which is in German was carried out by Ross Benjamin an experienced German-English translator. It captures the message in the original book in the best way possible. These books provide the primary data for the study.

### **1.9.2 Data collection and analysis**

This will entail reading and identifying the most appropriate utterances that contain focus and topic elements used in various contexts. These utterances will be compared in order to identify the mismatches in the positions of topic and focus entities in the sentences. Appropriate translation strategies will be suggested in order to overcome the problem of translation of such elements. Data will be specifically extracted from chapters 21 and 22. In case more questions arise in the course of study more chapters will be sampled.

### **1.10 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter an overview of the study has been laid out. This consists of the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives, and hypothesis, the rationale of the study and the scope and limitations. The conceptual framework for the study has also been discussed together with literature review and the methodology to be applied in data collection and analysis.

## **CHAPTER TWO: SYNTACTIC MISMATCHES IN MARKED CONSTRUCTIONS**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with the mismatches that have been identified in regard to word order in the German and English syntactic structures. In order to observe the mismatches, examples of utterances in German will be given and compared with the translation in English. An analysis of the variations will be carried out in order to enable a better understanding of the mismatch and the position in which it occurs in the syntactic structures. The chapter is specifically organized in five sections. The first section deals with the German marked structures that consist of fronted temporal adjuncts. A mismatch emanating from the translation of German utterances that begin with locative adverbs will be covered in the second section. The third section will contain information on the mismatch that results from translation of German utterances that have adverbs of manner in the initial position. In section four we shall pay attention to the mismatch between German constructions that begin with prepositional phrases. The last section will concentrate on the analysis of German marked constructions that have fronted objects and the variation that occurs when these are translated into English. A tabulation of the same is provided at the end of every category of mismatch to allow a better view and clear summary.

### **2.2 MARKED CONSTRUCTIONS IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH**

German and English have quite a number of sentence processes which help in arranging information units into the right order for the right emphasis in specific contexts. While the first position of a sentence is important, being the starting point for what the speaker wants to say, the clause-/sentence-final position is normally taken as the position reserved for the new or most important idea in a piece of information.. A sentence is normally taken as most effective when

the main point is saved up to the final position, while the known information is presented first. This therefore becomes the unmarked/default configuration which presents information in an automatic mode. Although this is the normal sequence of information, the speaker may prefer to shift the focus of the message to an earlier position for instance sentence initial, if he/she feels that such information of special importance; in other words this is highlighted. In such a case, instead of the subject, another element may be moved to the front of the sentence in order to draw the attention of the reader/hearer or to convey emotions of some kind. This shifting gives the element a kind of prosodic prominence especially in spoken discourse. Such sequencing deviates from the ordinary default configuration in that the focus is moved from its normal predicate position (unmarked structure) into another position. When this happens, one speaks of marked structures. In conversational contexts prosodic marking will signal where the focus is, this however has to be supplemented with syntactic marking through word order in written discourse. The condition for marked, also called non-default structures arises when special emphasis or contrast is required. The beginning point of a construction is normally used for this and influences the hearer's interpretation of that which follows. The default/unmarked word order in German and English is SVO where the subject is normally fronted, hence becomes the topic while other elements which include the verb, object and any other complementary information units like adverbs, adjectives or even prepositional phrases among others are predicated. They give information about the subject in this normal word order. If this default word order is changed and the information units that are supposed to appear in the predicate are fronted then this becomes non-default in both German and English. This contrast is worth exemplifying. See the following examples of default and non-default structures in German and the translation in English:

### **Marked Structure**

5) **In diesem Augenblick** erschien Juliana(pg. 204)- (Juliana erschien in diesem Augenblick)

**At that moment**, Juliana appeared (Pg.201)

### **Unmarked Structure**

(Juliana appeared at that moment)

The instances of marked focus in (5), in both the original and the translation, involved putting the temporal adjunct before the subject, which is otherwise unusual here, hence making it the focal point. The comma in the translated construction indicates a break. The translator in this case maintains the marked structure in order to convey the emphasis attached to the fronted adjunct. The unmarked structure starts with the topic, in this case the subject 'Juliana', an element that does not receive focus since it is old information, referring to someone/ a referent already mentioned in previous discourse, in other words which is discourse-active. The rest of the proposition i.e. the predicate is on focus, since the peak of prominence falls on it, hence the difference between the two categories of sentence structures. One is marked and the other unmarked category.

### **2.3 OBSERVED MISMATCHES**

The mismatches encountered and that are going to be discussed in the subsequent sections are of the area of marked constructions focus category. This involves moving into initial position an item that is otherwise unusual there to echo what is most required or in other words the new information. The German examples used in this study indicate marked focus structures that involve fronting of different elements that include temporal and locative adverbs, adverbs of manner, prepositional phrases and objects. Fronting is therefore a term applied to the achievement of marked structures. The fronted element is prosodically marked as marked focus and reflects the speaker's decision to where the main burden of the message lies. Let us consider the following examples:

### 2.3.1 Fronted temporal adjunct

German being a relatively flexible language in as far as word order is concerned allows a variety of elements in the initial position of a clause/sentence. One example of such elements is the temporal adverb. It is common for German to have a temporal adverb preceding the verb and the subject in an utterance. This notion is illustrated in the following examples:

6) **Nun** wollte er noch das Examen in Jura absolvieren (pg.194)

(Er wollte **nun** noch das Examen in Jura absolvieren) (Unmarked)

**Now** he wanted to earn a law degree (pg. 191)

(He **now**wanted to earn a law degree ) (Unmarked)

In the German example, the temporal adverb „nun” is in the first position. This is followed closely by the modal verb „wollte” which precedes the subject „er” and the verb in the infinitive “absolvieren” appears at the end of the sentence. The rest of the proposition that is in the predicate depicts the information in focus which is new. By placing the temporal adjunct at the sentence-initial position it is focalised. The noun phrase „das Examen” is definite in form due to the usage of the definite article „das” but in the English sentence it is depicted as indefinite new information through the usage of the indefinite article ‘a’. In both cases though, this is new information, hence part of focus. Although the sentence in English starts with the temporal adverb ‘now’ which also becomes the focal point by being sentence-initial, this is followed by the subject ‘he’ that precedes the verbs ‘wanted’ and ‘to earn’, which appear together and this therefore differs significantly with the German structure. In German the word order changes from the unmarked order that is given in brackets to the marked order cited. From this example it is also made clear that fronting an element is associated with inversion in German.



This is displayed in the reversal of the subject and the verb in the German marked construction which changes from SV into VS.

In English though the SVO unmarked word order remains even when the adverb is fronted the sentence becomes marked due to the fronting of this adverb namely“now”. Therefore markedness is translated but inversion is not translatable since English does not allow this. See another example;

7) **Danach** drückte sie Barack fest an ihren uppigen Busen (pg.199)

(Sie drückte Barack **danach** fest an ihren uppigen Busen)(Unmarked)

**Then** she pressed Barack tightly to her ample bosom (pg.196)

(He **then** pressed Barack tightly to her ample bosom)(Unmarked)

As can be seen, in both German and English, the temporal adverb „danach” which is translated into “then” is fronted hence receives prominence. However this is followed by the finite verb „drückte” which precedes the subject „sie” in German. This differs with the English structure since “then” is followed by the subject “she” which appears before the verb “pressed”. In German therefore, a subject-verb inversion takes place, whereby the verb is moved before the subject, while in English other than the fronted adverb the normal SVO organization remains. The structure changes in German, from the normal default configuration of SVO (temporal adverb)..., to a non-canonical order of (temporal adverb) VSO. The new information presented through the verb ‘drückte’ is placed before the known information presented by the personal pronoun ‘sie’ a sequence associated with marked construction. While the translator retains the temporal adverb in the initial position, the verb (new information) only appears after the subject which is known information, hence adherence to the known-before-the new (Topic-Focus)

ordinary order. However it is not normal to front a temporal adverb in English therefore the translator translates faithfully. See the next example!

8) **Damals** durften die Lehrer die Kinder mit dem Stock züchtigen (pg.199)

(Die Lehrer durften **damals** die Kinder mit dem Stock züchtigen) (Unmarked)

**In those days** the teacher were permitted to cane children (pg.196)

(The teachers were permitted to cane children **in those days**) (Unmarked)

From the example above, the temporal adjunct „damals” which is translated as “in those days” appears in the sentence initial position in German and in English, therefore receiving focus. The adjunct is then followed by the modal verb „durften” in the German construction, which is then followed by the subject „die Lehrer”. The verb „züchtigen” which is in the infinitive and as the main verb appears at the end of the sentence, this marked word order may be summarized as AdverbAUXSOV.. And it changes from the unmarked one of SAUXAdverbO. Different from German, in the translation in English the adjunct is followed by the topical subject “the teacher” and then the auxiliary verb that precedes the main verb, the SVO word structure remains after the adjunct. English grammar does not allow subject-verb inversion like in German. Fronting the temporal adjunct in German and English makes them non-default hence preservation of the original message. See the following examples:

9) **Dann** wandte er sich zu dem Jungen.. (pg.206)

(Er wandte sich **dann** zu dem Jungen) (Unmarked)

**Then** he turned to the boy... (pg. 204)

(**Hethen** turned to the boy) (Unmarked)

„Dann” and “then” which are temporal adverbs are foregrounded in both German and English. In the German example however, the verb „wandte” precedes the subject „er”, while in the English example it is the subject “he” that appears before the verb “turned”, While English still maintains the SVO order after the adverb, in the German example subject-verb inversion occurs once again after the adverb, hence depicting a difference between the two grammar structures. German allows subject-verb inversion once again but this is not allowed in English. Fronting and subject-verb inversion produce a marked structure in German. Fronting of the adjunct in English also leads to this. This leads to accuracy in translation. Here are further examples:

10) Zunächst lief alles nach Wunsch (pg.205)

(Alles lief zunächst nach Wunsch)(Unmarked)

At first, everything went on according to plan (pg.203)

(Everything went on according to plan at first)(Unmarked)

The temporal adjunct „zunächst” which is translated as ‘at first’ appears before all other elements. However, in the German sentence the finite verb „lief” is positioned before the indefinite pronoun „alles” a structure that is non-default and that differs significantly with the English structure since after the temporal adverb the indefinite pronoun “everything” appears before the verb “went”, Subject-verb inversion structure found in the German statement is not transferrable into English due to its Grammar. However equivalence occurs in the translation of a marked structure in German to an equally marked one in English.

From these examples, the translator has tried to adhere to the syntactic structure used in the original utterances by retaining the temporal adverb in the sentence initial position hence successfully conveying the message in the original text. However, while German utterances

depict subject-verb inversion (VS), the English arrangement follows the obligatory SV sequence and abandons the German sequence as the highlighted elements show because English grammar does not allow this. However a non-default structure in German is translated with a non-default structure in English because of fronting the adverb hence achievement of equivalence.

The above mismatches are illustrated in the following tables:

**Table 3 and 4: The German marked structure**

<b>Temporal Adjunct</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>The rest of the proposition in focus</b>
Ex.( 7) Danach	drückte	sie	Barack fest an ihren uppigen Busen

**Table 3**

<b>Temporal Adjunct</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>The rest of the proposition in focus</b>	<b>Infinitive verb</b>
Ex.(9)Nun	wollte	er	noch das Examen	absolvieren

**Table 4**

**Table 5 and 6: The English marked structure**

<b>Temporal adjunct</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>The rest of the proposition in focus</b>
Then	she	pressed	Barack tightly to her ample bosom

**Table 5**

<b>Temporal adjunct</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>modal verb + infinitive verb</b>	<b>The rest of the proposition in focus</b>
Now	he	wanted to earn	a law degree

**Table 6**

There are two distinct structures exemplified here. One that is displayed in example (9) involves a German marked subject-verb inversion structure and the second represented in example (8) is an infinitive construction with a modal verb that can be summarized as AdverbAUXSOV, the main verb being sentence-final. Both structures have been rendered by marked English structure AdverbSV(AUX)O, preservation of the original message though different word order.

### **2.3.2 Locative adverbs**

It is also possible to find locative adverbs in the sentence initial position in German. This is not always the case in English as the following utterances exemplify:

11) **Dort** stiegen wir in einen Sammelbus, der in Alego Nyangoma Halt machen würde(pg.197)

(Wir stiegen **dort** in einen Sammelbus,.....)(Unmarked)

**There** we boarded a minibus that would stop in Alego Nyangoma (pg. 195)

(We boarded a minibus **there**...)(Unmarked)

From the following examples the locative adverb „dort” translated as “there” is the point of departure i.e. the initial element that is fronted in both German and English. In German however another subject inversion takes place, this is followed by the verb „stiegen” which precedes the subject „wir”, hence the occurrence of subject-verb inversion. In English the deictic adjunct is followed by the subject ‘we’ which appears before the verb ‘boarded’ hence maintaining the normal SV sequence. However due to the fronting of the adjunct the structure is marked. The

marked German structure has been rendered by a marked English structure. The difference in word order occurs however after the fronted adjunct. Let us consider another example:

12) **Überall** sah man grüne Felder (pg.197)

(Man sah **überall** grüne Felder)(Unmarked)

There were green fields everywhere (pg.194) (Unmarked)

In (12) while the locative adjunct in the German sentence namely „überall” is sentence-initial in English this adjunct that is translated as “everywhere” is sentence final, pushed to the end through a presentational construction. The element that is focal in German is the adjunct, while in English through the existential “there” that is used to construct presentational the focal element still everywhere is sentence final but highlighted. This element receives end focus hence prominence. “There”, takes the place of the topical subject. The German construction is a subject-verb inversion since the verb „sah” is moved before the dummy subject „man”. This is translated with athetic/presentational structure that serves to introduce a new event that cannot be linked to any topic or presupposed proposition that is already established that is however delayed till the end and focalised. By using the presentational “there” English succeeds in laying focus on “everywhere” hence successful translation through distinct strategies. German fronts the element while English uses presentational construction. See another example:

13) **Hier** hatten sich auch mein Vater und meine Mutter beim Tanzen in einander verliebt.(pg.200)

(Mein Vater und meine Mutter hatten sich **hier** beim Tanzen in einander verliebt)(Unmarked)

It was also **where** my father and mother had fallen in love in a dance. (pg.197)

(My father and mother had fallen in love **here** in a dance)(Unmarked)

The example above depicts two very distinct structures. While the sentence in German begins with the locative adverb „hier” which is also deictic, since it is already given in previous discourse, the English translation uses an It-cleft construction, that directs the reader to the element that is considered as the most important, hence giving it certain prominence and focus, in this case “where”. This is followed by the noun phrase and then the verbs i.e. the auxiliary “had” and the main verb “fallen” that appear together as a unit. In the German sentence, the auxiliary verb „hatten” appears before the noun phrase but separate from the main verb ‘verliebt’ that’s in the last position, hence a difference in the grammatical structure. German uses a marked structure namely, AdverbAUXSOto focus, while English goes for the It-cleft construction which is also marked and also used for focusing. Therefore, a marked construction in German is translated into a marked construction in English but of a different configuration. This brings about successful translation.

This is summarized in the following tables:

**Table 7: German marked Structure**

<b>Locative adverb</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Subject/dummy subject</b>	<b>Predicate in focus/object</b>
Ex. (11)Dort	stiegen	wir	in einen Sammelbus
Ex.(12)Überall	sah	man	grüne Felder

**Table 8: English marked structure**

<b>Locative adverb</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Predicate in focus</b>
There	we	boarded	a minibus...

Dummy subject	Verb	Object	Locative adverb
There	were	green fields	everywhere

The German sentences displayed above have a subject-verb inversion structure which can be summarized as (Adverb) VSO as also seen in other examples. The first one has been translated into a marked structure in English, depicting an (Adverb) SVO sequence where fronting is used and the second is rendered by an equally marked presentational structure hence a match in information transfer.

### 2.3.3 Adverbs of manner

The element in the initial position of a German utterance may also be a modal adverb. This will anchor the subsequent clause(s) to either something that is already in context i.e. to something accessible in the hearer's mental representation or to a totally new element. This structure is not so common in English like it is in German. Let us now consider the observed mismatch in the following examples:

14) **Normalerweise** ass ich in der Uni-Mensa (pg.192)

(Ich ass **normalerweise** in der Uni-Mensa)(Unmarked)

**Usually**, I ate in the university cafeteria (Pg.190)

(**Iusually** ate in the university cafeteria)(Unmarked)

„Normalerweise” and its translation “usually” represent modal adverbs. Both appear in the initial position of the sentences therefore making the constructions non-default by awarding these elements prominence. But while in German this is followed by the finite verb „ass” and then the subject „ich” a sequence that depicts subject-verb inversion, in English it is the subject “I” that



precedes the verb ‘ate’ which can be represented by (Adverb) SVO which is marked. It deviates from the normal structure by fronting the adverb. Let us see another example;

15) **Immer** noch loben wir hier die Engländer (pg.196)

(Wir loben hier die Engländer **immer** noch)(Unmarked)

We **still** praise the British here (pg.194) (Unmarked)

In this particular example the adverbs ‘immer’ and ‘noch’ which show the intensity in which the action occurs are foregrounded. This has been translated as ‘still’ in English but doesn’t retain its initial position like in the original utterance. The subject ‘we’ is the point of departure which is followed by the adverb ‘still’, and then the verb ‘praise’ hence depicting a topic-focus structure. The subject in the English construction is the one in the topical position and the predicate is in focus, a configuration associated with unmarked constructions in English. In the example in German, the verb ‘loben’ comes before the subject ‘wir’ resulting into a subject-verb inversion construction. The stress that is realized by foregrounding the adverb in German and that points into the newsworthy element is lost during translation, since in English the subject remains foregrounded and retains its normal prominence, the marked construction is not translated. Let us see a slightly different example:

16) **Absichtlich** hatte ich sie nicht ‘vorgewarnt’(pg.198)

(Ich hatte sie **absichtlich** nicht vorgewarnt) (Unmarked)

I had **intentionally** not ‘warned’ her (pg.195) (Unmarked)

In this example the element in the initial position in the German utterance ‘absichtlich’ is an adverb that draws the attention of the reader. This is followed by the auxiliary verb ‘hatte’ and then the subject ‘ich’. The main verb in the past tense namely ‘vorgewarnt’ appears at the end

of the sentence, hence the sequence AdverbAUXSOV. This portrays a marked construction since it deviates from the normal order of SAUXO(Adverb)V. The translator opts for the subject ‘‘I’’ followed by the auxiliary verb ‘‘had’’ and then the adverb ‘‘intentionally’’ order in the English utterance, which can be summarized as SAUX(Adverb)VO which is the normal word order in English.. The verb in the past tense ‘‘warned’’ is not placed at the end like in the German structure and the adverb which is sentence initial assumes a subordinate position in the English structure giving way to the subject. Markedness found in the German utterance is not translated. The following example is also worth consideration

17) **Pünktlich** erschienen wir bei der dritten Frau unseres Vaters(pg.201)

(Wir erschienen **pünktlich** bei der dritten Frau unseres Vaters)(Unmarked)

We arrived on time at the home of our father’s third wife (pg.199)(Unmarked)

Just like the prior example, the German sentence begins with the adverb „pünktlich” which is followed by the verb „erschiene”, then the subject „wir” which results into a subject-verb inversion construction. The point of departure is the adverbial in the German sentence. In English this attracts a completely different structure since the initial element is the subject ‘‘we’’ which is followed by the verb ‘‘arrived’’ and then the temporal adverb ‘‘on time’’ which precedes the object, hence retaining the normal SVO order. A marked construction is therefore translated into a non-default construction. See the following example:

18) **Wahrscheinlich** ahnte er auch, dass ich mit meinen Ausführungen noch nicht fertig war  
(pg. 208)

(Er ahnte **wahrscheinlich** auch, dass ich mit meinen Ausführungen noch nicht fertig war.  
(Unmarked)

He probably also suspected that I was not yet done with my comments (pg.205)(Unmarked)

„Wahrscheinlich“ is a foregrounded adverb in the German non-default utterance. This is followed by the finite verb „ahnte“ and then the subject „er“, hence a subject-verb inversion. The default structure is „er ahnte wahrscheinlich....“. In the English clause the subject “he” precedes the adverb “probably” and the two appear before the verb “suspected”, therefore maintaining the canonical SVO order. While stress is placed on the fronted adverb in German, the adverb in English is denied this by retaining the subject in the topical position. Another marked construction is rendered by an unmarked construction. See another example of this nature:

19) Diffus spürte ich, dass sich das Ende unserer Beziehung näherte(pg.213)

I vaguely sensed that the end of our relationship was approaching (Pg.212)

The adverb „diffus“ precedes the verb „spürte“ and the subject „ich“ in the clause in German bringing about subject-verb inversion but a highlight on the fronted adverb in the translation the subject “I” starts off the clause followed by the adverb “vaguely” and then the verb “sensed” resulting into the default SVO order, hence a structural mismatch.

As the examples indicate, all the utterances in German begin with an adverb of manner which is followed by the verb then the subject, depicting subject-verb inversion and therefore this displays markedness. In the English translation, other than example (14) the position of the adjunct in the rest of the examples is after the subject and/or after both the subject and the verb so that it doesn't receive any special highlight, but the normal unmarked structure of SVO is retained where the location of the focus accent is in the predicate, hence a structural difference. The original German non-default structure with special emphasis on the adverb has not been

transferred during translation. Rather, the translator has abandoned fronting and opted for English unmarked structures where fronting is not used. This has led to a mismatch where markedness is not translated. See the following summary:

**Table 9: German marked structure**

<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>The rest of the proposition:known information</b>
Ex. (15)Immer noch	loben	wir	hier die Engländer

**Table 10: English unmarked structure**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Verb</b>	The rest of the proposition:known information
We	still	praise	the British here

### 2.3.4 Fronted prepositional phrases

Another element that may be foregrounded in a German utterance is a prepositional phrase. A whole lot of such non- default constructions were encountered in the course of the study and these have been translated into English using a completely different syntactic structure as illustrated by the following examples:

20) **Durch meine Arbeit** kann ich nur sehr wenig bewirken(pg.194)

(Ich kann **durch meine Arbeit** nur sehr wenig bewirken)(Unmarked)

There is only so much I can achieve **through my current work** (pg.191)

(I can only achieve so much **through my current work**) (Unmarked)

The prepositional phrase „durch meine Arbeit” appears first and is focused. It is followed by the modal verb „kann” which precedes the subject „ich”. The main verb in the infinitive „bewirken” is in the last position of the German sentence. The prepositional phrase “through my work” is placed at the end of the English sentence only after the subject “I” and the verbs “can achieve” in the normal focus position. Through the English presentational construction the element in focus namely: through my current work is pushed to the end and receives end-focus. Both i.e. fronting in German and presentational construction are used for focusing. The two however present two distinct structures.

21) **An der Tür** stand noch eine zweite Person(pg.202)

(Eine zweite Person stand noch **an der Tür**)(Unmarked)

Another person was standing **at the door**, too (pg.199)(Unmarked)

Just as the prior example, the German sentence begins with the prepositional phrase „an der Tür” as the foregrounded element that takes the topical position for special emphasis. This is followed by the verb „stand”. The subject „einezweite Person” is predicated and takes the position normally taken by focus domain in normal word order. This configuration leads to subject-verb inversion. In English it is the subject “another person” which represents argument focus that starts. The focus domain is on the noun phrase namely “another person” and the accent marks this as the focus of the proposition. This is followed by the verb “was standing” and the prepositional phrase “at the door” is positioned at the end of the sentence. The normal SVO structure is maintained in English, hence two varied structures where one (German) is non-default while the other (English) default.

22) **Über Mr. Odengo** in Bonn bekam ich eines Tages die Möglichkeit, als Dolmetscherin zu

arbeiten (pg. 219)

(Ich bekam **über Mr. Odengo** in Bonn eines Tages die Möglichkeit, als Dolmetscherin zu arbeiten(Unmarked)

I got an opportunity **through Mr. Odengo** from the Kenyan embassy in Bonn to work as an Interpreter (pg. 218) (Unmarked)

In this example the prepositional phrase „über Mr. Odengo” is fronted and therefore given prominence (structurally) in the German construction. The reader’s attention is drawn here. This is translated as “through Mr. Odengo” but placed in a structurally subordinate position i.e. within the sentence, hence losing its focal character. The element in the initial position of the English sentence is the Subject “I” a point that indicates that English is a subject prominent language. The German marked structure has been rendered by an unmarked category in English. This shows significant difference in the way the intended information is conveyed in both languages, since German uses a marked structure with subject-verb inversion and accent placement on the prepositional phrase, while English maintains the normal SVO normal sequencing where the subject which is an active denotatum remains in its topical position, while the constituent containing new information is predicated. Markedness is once again not translated. Let us consider another example:

23) **In einer solchen Situation** sollten wir nicht noch einmal geraten, Schwesterchen (pg.216)

(Wir sollten **in einer solchen Situation** nicht noch einmal geraten,Schwesterchen)

(Unmarked)

We shouldn’t get **into a situation like that** again, ‘sis’ (pg.215)(Unmarked)

„In einer solchen Situation” is a prepositional phrase that is sentence-initial in the German expression. This becomes the accented constituent but nevertheless not the new information.

This structure is not replicated in English, the prepositional phrase “into a situation like that” appears after the subject and the verb. The German marked structure is, prepositional phrase followed by modal verb that precedes the subject, and the main verb being sentence final. This has been translated into subject-modal verb-main verb-prepositional phrase-sequence, which is the normal structure in English; hence unmarked category. The translator abandons the German marked structure and opts for the unmarked category. Consider this too:

24) **Von einem Bekannten** lieh ich mir ein Klappbett(pg.192)

(Ich lieh mir ein Klappbett **von einem Bekannten**) (Unmarked)

I borrowed a cot **from a friend** (pg.189) (Unmarked)

The mismatch displayed here is just like the one cited in some of the examples above, since the prepositional phrase, „voneinemBekanntem” begins the German sentence and causes subject-verb inversion to occur. The verb therefore precedes the subject. In the translation, the subject remains fronted and it is followed by the verb then the prepositional phrase “from a friend” ends the English sentence. The SVO (PP) remains the preferred English organizational structure, while German prefers the order (PP) VSO which is not natural but used in this context for purposes of emphasis.

From the examples given above, all the utterances in German start with a prepositional phrases. When translated into English it is the subject that becomes the point of departure, hence usage of the unmarked order. This shows lack of equivalence in the delivery of the intended message that is carried in the special marked structure in German. Markedness is not translated. See an exemplified summary in the tables below:

**Table 11: German marked structure**

<b>Prepositional Phrase</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Ex.(21)An der Tür	stand	eine zweite Person

**Table 12: English unmarked structure**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Prepositional Phrase</b>
Another person	was standing	at the door

### 2.3.5 Fronted object

Just as adverbials and prepositional phrases are foregrounded in German, fronting of an object is relatively normal and acceptable in German. In the translation in English however, objects are fairly restricted in position as can be seen in the following examples:

25) **Diesen Kommentar** musste ich loswerden (pg.197)

( Ich musste **diesen Kommentar** loswerden)(Unmarked)

I had to get **this comment** off my chest (pg.194) (Unmarked)

The accusative object „diesen Kommentar” is in the initial (preverbal) position in the German example and forms the nucleus as the stressed element or focal point. This takes the position that is normally reserved for topics and so we can say that the object has assumed topical position i.e. marked as topic expression by being placed in the sentence-initial position normally occupied by the topical subject. This is then followed by the modal verb „musste” that is inflected and keeps the sub-inversion structure. The subject „ich” follows while the main verb in the infinitive „loswerden” is pushed to the end of the sentence. This forms DO (AUX) SV order in German which is marked. The direct object in English namely, “this comment” appears in the middle of



the sentence, after the topical subject ‘I’ and the auxiliary verb ‘had’, that appears together with the verb in the infinitive state ‘to get’. This results into S (AUX) VO an unmarked configuration and this therefore shows that the translator missed the markedness depicted in the message in German. To see more of this, let us look at the following example:

26) **Meine Promotion** wollte ich bei Professor Alois Wierlacher schreiben (pg.211)

(Ich wollte **meine Promotion** bei Professor Alois Wierlacher schreiben) ( Unmarked)

I wanted to write **my dissertation** under Professor Alois Wierlacher (pg.207) (Unmarked)

The same case applies here in that the direct accusative object ‘meine Promotion’ is fronted in German and enjoys prominence and focus while this appears in the middle of the English sentence as ‘my dissertation’, and therefore loses the sentence-initial prominence. A difference is also observed in the order in which the verb and the subject appear. In German the modal verb ‘wollte’ is before the subject ‘ich’ hence a AUXS structure, while in English the subject ‘I’ is before the modal verb ‘wanted’ hence SAUX order. The infinitive ‘to write’ follows the main verb but the infinitive ‘schreiben’ in the German sentence is delayed until the end. While the translation in English depicts a normal category of topic-focus, the original sentence in German displays a marked category, hence a translation that doesn’t depict the original markedness. Let us see this example:

27) **Diese Tiere** gab es bei uns schon immer (pg.208)

(Es gab **diese Tiere** bei uns schon immer)(Unmarked)

We’ve always had **these animals** here (pg.205) (Unmarked)

The same situation is replicated here for ‘diese Tiere’ which is the direct object is foregrounded in German and it is followed by the verb ‘gab’ and the dummy subject ‘es’ resulting also into

subject (dummy)-verb inversion. The dummy subject however has been rendered in English by the subject ‘we’ which begins the sentence. This subject is followed by the verb ‘have’... ‘had’ and this paves way to the direct object namely ‘these animals’. In English the normal SVO order is used, while German uses the marked OVS sequence that is therefore not transferred in the translation.

28) **Das Haus** in Lavington hatte sie längst verkauft (pg. 202)

(Sie hatte **das Haus** in Lavington längst verkauft)(Unmarked)

She had sold **the house** in Lavington a long time ago (pg.199) (Unmarked)

As seen from the highlight, the direct object ‘das Haus...’ is in the initial position in German and receives prominence compared to other elements in the construction. This is predicated ‘as the house,’ in the English translation and therefore loses the original prominence resulting into a mismatch in translation. While the subject is sentence initial in the English sentence and followed by the two verbs (auxiliary and main), it is in the middle of the German sentence having been positioned after the auxiliary verb, but before the main verb that appears at the end.

Another marked construction is rendered by an unmarked construction. See this too:

29) **Diesen Job** kann ich wohl vergessen(pg.220)

(Ich kann **diesen Job** wohl vergessen)(Unmarked)

I can forget this job (pg.219)(Unmarked)

While the direct object ‘diesen Job’ is in the topical position in the German example, English uses end-position and places it in the predicate as ‘this job’ in the normal focus position. German displays a marked structure that can be analyzed as O(AUX)SV structure, while English opts for S(AUX)VO unmarked structure. This shows different syntactic structures. The direct object is once again marked as a topic expression in German by placing it in a position that is

normally reserved for topical subject. The subject ‘‘Ich’’ is placed in the middle but doesn’t lose its topic status since the whole proposition is conveying information about it. In addition to conveying information about the subject one may also rightly say that information about the topicalized expression is conveyed in relation to the primary topic which is the subject. This may be taken as the secondary topic since it results into two topic expressions one that assumes this status and the other being primary topic by nature of being the subject in the sentence. The translation in English is an unmarked structure and the difference therefore occurs where a marked structure is rendered by an unmarked construction.

In the given German utterances the element presented in the sentence front position that is the object is highlighted and receives structural prominence. When this is translated in English the order of sequencing the information units changes completely in that the object paves way for the topical subject. The object appears after the verb in the predicate, as normal topic-focus structure. The translator uses the subject-predicate (SVO) structure that doesn’t portray the special emphasis contained in the German marked structure and leads to lack of equivalence in the passing of the writer’s intention. Markedness is lost in English. This mismatch is significant enough to deserve analysis in the following tables:

**Table 13: German marked Structure**

<b>Direct object</b>	<b>Modal verb (New)</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>The rest of the proposition + Verb(Infinitive)(new)</b>
Ex.(29) Diesen Job	kann	ich	wohl vergessen

**Table 14: English unmarked Structure**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Modal verb+other main verb(New)</b>	<b>Direct object</b>
I	can forget	this job

It is however worth noting that one may also find a structure consisting of double focus in the sentence initial position of a German utterance. Let us look at this example;

30) **Nicht einen Augenblick** zweifelt ich daran,....(pg.195)

I didn't doubt **for a moment**, that..... (pg.192)

„In this example „nicht” is a negative particle that is fronted together with the object „einen Augenblick” in the German utterance for focusing. In the English clause however, the negative particle appears after the subject “I” and the verbs “did” and “doubt” and the accusative object “a moment” is clause final. English uses the SVO unmarked constructions, which bears no special emphasis, while German goes for subject-verb inversion and double focus which is marked.

Fronting the object in the cases cited in the German constructions given above gives it certain prominence. This fronting is missing in the English translation as can be seen from the examples. From the example we can also conclude that it is possible, for an element with argument focus to be fore-grounded in German.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter we have closely analyzed marked constructions in German and the various occurrences of mismatches that have resulted from their translation into English. As observed,

some of them have been rendered by marked constructions, hence remaining faithful to the original text. But others have nevertheless been translated into unmarked constructions in English, therefore resulting into mismatches in translation. These mismatches have occurred in instances where markedness that is carried in the original message in German, has not been transferred during translation in English.

## **CHAPTER THREE: DISLOCATION, CONTRASTIVENESS AND DUMMY SUBJECTS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter a further extensive discussion on the way German marked constructions have been rendered in English will be discussed. Specifically the chapter is divided into three parts: Firstly, mismatches exhibited in rendering bi-clausal and multi-clausal constructions will be featured in section one. This will provide an avenue for comparison of the two structures while highlighting the strategies employed by both languages for focusing. Secondly, mismatches between German and English in regard to the usage of the modifier “aber” (but) will be presented in section two with the purpose of showing the scope of focus and emphasized constituents. Thirdly, mismatches resulting from translation of clauses consisting of dummy subjects will be discussed in section three, with the intention of appreciating the different grammatical structures that are available in both German and English.

### **3.2 RENDERING BI-CLAUSAL AND MULTI-CLAUSAL CONSTRUCTIONS**

Information may be presented in simple or complex sentences. Simple sentences contain one clause, and sentences containing two or more clauses are referred to as complex sentences. Clause constructions may either be coordinated or subordinated to form complex structures. These constructions are often used variedly to convey the intent of the speaker. Depending on whether it is a default or non-default structure new and recoverable information may be coded differently in different languages. This may occur either to the right or to the left of the clause, which contains the propositional information about the topic referent. In this study such constructions have been identified in German and in their translation, a mismatch has occurred

where divergent structures have been used. The following are a few examples of such constructions:

31) Die Liebe war es, die mich dazu brachte, dass ich Kenia nach einem Jahr verliess und nach Deutschland zurückkehrte (pg.211)

Liebe brachte mich dazu,dass ich Kenia nach einem Jahr verliess und nach Deutschland zurückkehrte(Unmarked)

It was love that made me leave Kenya after a year and return to Germany (pg.209)

Love made me leave Kenya after a year and return to Germany (Unmarked)

„Die Liebe war es” is left- dislocated and it has been used to present new highly focused information. The highly focused information is „Die Liebe”. This may also be characterized as a brand new entity that is identified through this structure. This presentation makes it discourse-active and ready for recall in subsequent clause-/s or sentences. In this particular situation deictic pronoun „die” found in the next clause refers to the referent. This is a highly marked structure in that an inactive referent appears directly as the subject NP of the clause. In the translation in English a completely different configuration is used. This is an It-cleft construction ‘whose main purpose is to bring the focused entity near to the initial position of the sentence/clause. This also draws the attention of the addressee to the identified element bearing the new information. This element is the NP ”“love”. This may also be referred to as argument focus since it is a NP and gives the relevant information to the presupposition that something caused the speaker to return to Germany. The assertion is therefore that this thing is “love” and the focus is on it. The accent therefore marks the argument „Die Liebe/love” as the focus of the whole proposition. The two structures, the left-dislocated German construction and the It-cleft English structure are highly marked. While the use of It-Cleft constructions is relatively common in English for focusing, this

is not the case in German. One of the most important functions of cleft structures is to signal information status. In cleft structures the item in topical position is presented as new and the predicated information is presented as given, hence a deviation from the normal order. The same thing is displayed in German where the new information is left-dislocated while the old is dislocated to the right. We may therefore assert that a marked structure has been rendered by a marked structure, but of different word order. In the unmarked structure no special accent is placed on the noun phrase, ‘love’ (Liebe). Let us look at another example:

32) In meiner kleinen Wohnung im wunderschönen Stadtteil Kileleshwa, war es sehr einsam geworden (pg.192)

Meine kleine Wohnung im wunderschönen Kileleshwa war sehr einsam geworden

(Unmarked)

It had gotten very lonely in my small apartment in the beautiful neighborhood of Kileleshwa (pg.189)

My small apartment in the beautiful neighbourhood of Kileleshwa had become very lonely

(Unmarked)

Although this may not be categorized as bi-clausal, we can discuss it under this category since it involves a left-dislocated ‘heavy’ prepositional phrase. The German construction is marked in that it begins with a prepositional phrase that precedes the verb and the dummy subject. This places special emphasis to the prepositional phrase at the expense of the new information presented about this entity. English on the other hand uses an It-presentational construction. Through this construction previously unidentifiable information is introduced, then the presupposed information follows, again deviating from the norm of old before new information.



The highly marked construction was translated by a non-default construction in English by using the It-cleft construction in the subject position. Let us still consider another example:

33) Karl holte mich mit einem riesigen Blumenstrauss vom Frankfurt Flughafen ab, als ich aus Kenia zurück kehrte (pg.217)

Ich kehrte aus Kenia zurück, und Karl holte mich mit einem riesigen Blumenstrauss vom Frankfurt Flughafen ab. (Unmarked)

When I returned from Kenya, Karl met me at the Frankfurt airport with a huge bouquet (pg. 216)

I returned from Kenya and Karl picked me from the Frankfurt airport with a huge bouquet (Unmarked)

In this example the writer opts for new information in the left dislocated clause in German while the translator in English prefers the known information coming before the new information. Information packaging in the two constructions differs in that German starts with new information i.e. a clause that presents new information that is directed to the readership and the discourse active information is delayed up to the subsequent clause. This also deviates from the normal focus-final canonical order, where it is expected that the old or recoverable information that will aid in the interpretation of subsequent information be presented first. This becomes a non-default highly marked structure. The translation in English however goes for the linear arrangement of the information, the first clause consisting of information that has already been established in discourse that will help in interpreting the information in the second clause. This leads to a distortion in translation of the original message as left dislocation, it appears in the original text highlighted. See the following example:

34) Es hat so überzeugend geklungen, was er gesagt hatte (pg.218)

What he had said had, sounded so conclusive (pg. 217)

The new focused information is also dislocated here to the left in German. Through the presentational construction, the new information is introduced. The information that has already been established is placed in the next clause just like in the prior example. This depicts a mismatch with the canonical principle that places the known information before the new information. The German sentence is normal in structure but the presentation of the information differs with the way this is presented in the translation. In English the clause that presents known information appears on the left. This retains the normal order of topic-focus, where the final position is reserved for the new information. Two distinct structures are therefore employed to mark focus. In the German sentence focus is marked through left-dislocation while in English this is not achieved since the normal non-default structure is used.

The mismatch can be well observed in the examples analyzed in the following tables:

**Table 15: German structure**

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Topic</b>
(Ex. 34)Es hat so überzeugend geklungen,	was er gesagt hatte

**Table 16: Translation in English**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Focus</b>
What he had said	had sounded so conclusive

It is therefore clear that German has used left-dislocation to mark focus, whereby the clauses containing the information that is deemed to be highly important are detached and placed before the ones containing active recoverable information hence exchange of positions of the default old and new information. English on the other hand, uses a normal non emphatic structure and so the translation did not render the intention of the author to convey the information as highly important.

### **3.3 TRANSLATION OF CLAUSES CONSISTING OF MODIFIER,,ABER’’**

Languages have words that are used to modify the meaning which also may help to signal where focus lies in a sentence. These are uninflected words whose main function is to reflect the attitude of the speaker and to highlight the sentence focus. Most of these words have no direct translation in other languages and may call for use of different configuration like pragmatic particles to portray similar meaning or same effect. One of the many such words that are used in German is “aber” (but) which can be used as a modal particle and as a conjunction. When it is used as a conjunction it modifies the constituent it signals into a contrastive one. I.e. it contrasts information that was previously given or imagined. As a modal particle too, it is used in expressions where the speaker wants to emphasize some information that is unexpected or unusual, hence a sense of emphasis implicating contrast.

The use of modifier/,,aber’’ translated as “but” in English in the data that we are using, can be used for contrastive focus as seen from the explanation above. This has attracted a different word order in German. Let us consider the following examples:

35) **Aber** eine Aufregung gab es doch(pg.213)

**But** there was one exciting development (pg.211)

The modifier is placed in the initial position. The focused information follows and spreads to the entire sentence. The usage of the modal particle „aber” places no special emphasis on a single item of the utterance, but rather on the whole. In English it is equally placed at the beginning of the sentence and also modifies the whole sentence therefore placing it in focus. The use of existential “there” also makes the sentence athetic construction that serves to introduce not-yet activated referents into the discourse. The German structure uses subject-verb inversion in that the subject assumes the position that is normally taken by the verb and vice versa. This makes it a marked construction. English on the other hand uses athetic marked construction, but also a modifier “but” at the beginning. In both, marked structures are used effectively. Let us look at another example;

36) Barack hatte **aber** nicht die Absicht nur für ein paar Tage zu bleiben(pg.192)

**But** Barack did not intend to stay for only a few days (pg.189)

„Aber” appears after the subject namely; „Barack” and the verb „hatte” in the German sentence.. The accented constituent is the part that follows the modal particle that is in the predicate, which is also in focus,i.e. „nicht die Absicht”. This part is the one that is contrasting an alternative proposition in which it was earlier asserted either explicitly i.e. in previous discourse or implicitly i.e. as an assumption in the addressee’s mental representation that Barack would stay for only a few days. By using the contrastive modal particle, the speaker wants to stress and direct the reader into the newsworthy constituent that is informative. The focus scope is therefore not the whole sentence but rather the predication that consists of the proposition presenting the contrastive information about the topic, which is Barack in this case. The topic is however outside the scope of focus. This is not however the case in the English translation. Firstly, the modal particle is fronted and although the proposition is contrastive it is not accented

as in the original German sentence where some prosodic peak is present after the particle and signals where the new information is. After the modal particle the normal unmarked structure of English is used that doesn't carry partial contrastive focus but rather the entire sentence is contrastive focus. So the partial scope in German is lost in English. A back translation of this would have the modal particle placed at the beginning of the German sentence in order to achieve the same effect of stress in the whole sentence. This was not however the intention of the German writer. Take a look at another example:

37) Letztere Bemerkung bedeutete aber für mich eine kleine Herausforderung(pg.192)

But the last of the items he mentioned meant a slight challenge for me (pg.189/190)

The same sequence is replicated here where „aber” in German is placed in the middle of the sentence, and has scope placed over what followsnamely, „fürmich”. The modifier aids in contrasting information that is predicated and directs focus to these constituents in the predication. In English though, “but” is placed at the beginning of the sentence hence have no special accentuation. Contrastive focus is spread out in the whole sentence which differs from the partial focus depicted in the German construction. Consider a different configuration:

38) Ruth **aber** hatte sich vehement dagegen gewehrt(pg.202)

**But** Ruth had resisted that vehemently (pg.200)

In this example the German construction depicts contrastive topic where through placing the modal particle immediately after the subject, prosodic prominence is placed on it. The topic, „Ruth” is contrasted. The topic, different from other prior examples is also in the preverbal position.

The position of the modal particle “but” in English is still placed in the initial position where it helps spread focus in the entire sentence. English uses sentence scope, while in German one argument ‘Ruth’ is contrasted, hence partial focus. This shows lack of equivalence in the two pieces of information. Consider this too:

39) Wir ließen uns unsere gute Laune **aber** dadurch nicht verderben (pg.209)

**But** we didn’t let that spoil our good mood (pg.207)

The positioning of the modal particle that varies in both German and English indicates a difference in the scope of focus. “Aber/but” guides the reader into what is considered to be the most important or salient change to be made in his/her mental representation. In other words „dadurch” becomes the focus of the entire utterance. The material in focus typically adds new information or changes what is already present in an activated propositional framework either by replacement or by selecting between alternatives. This means the focused material is generally new or contrastive. In the German sentence due to the positioning of the modifier after the subject, the auxiliary verb and the object, the intonation nucleus falls on the constituent that appears in the predicate namely; i.e. „dadurch”. This constituent receives special emphasis. The scope of focus here is on this constituent and not the entire sentence. On the other hand when considering the translation, the modal particle remains sentence-initial, therefore not placing any special emphasis on a single or few constituents, but rather to the entire sentence. Contrastiveness is however achieved through the use of the particle, but the scope is over the whole sentence. When the two are compared, the German sentence carries special emphasis on a structurally selected constituent-/s. This is nevertheless not transferred in the English sentence. Let us have a look at yet another example:

40) Sie wissen **aber**, dass ich Afrikanerin bin, oder?(pg.219)

**But** you know that I am African, right? (pg.219)

This is another good example of a contrastive statement that differs with an already activated propositional framework that is contrary to the presupposition of the interlocutors. Focus in the German example falls once again on the constituent in the predication „ich Afrikanerin bin” that appears after the comma. This is also the main message that the speaker wants to put across, so qualifying it further as the focus. The scope of focus is limited to a few constituents in the second clause. In the English sentence stress is spread out to the part of the utterance that follows after the modifier and not on the last constituent.

German has been able to single out constituents that are supposed to receive contrastive focus through strategic positioning of the modifier „aber”. This has not been so easy to achieve in English and it has led to awarding contrastive prominence to entire clauses or sentences when this is not the case in the original text in German. This has led to differences in focus scope and results into a mismatch.

The following tables summarize that better:

**Table 17: German Structure**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb(auxiliary)</b>	<b>Modal particle</b>	<b>Contrastive Focus information+Verb(infinitive)</b>
(Ex36)Barack	hatte	aber	nicht die Absicht nur für ein paar Tage zu bleiben

**Table 18: Translation in English**

<b>Modal particle</b>	<b>Subject (receives contrast)</b>	<b>Auxiliary Verb+ infinitive Verb (part of contrast)</b>	<b>The rest of the contrasted information</b>
But	Barack	did not intend to stay	for only a few days

### **3.4 TRANSLATION OF CLAUSES WITH DUMMY SUBJECTS**

German and English differ in the possibility of, or tolerance for the coding of referents especially where they are not definite. Indefinite subjects in this sense will be deemed not directly identifiable if the addressee is not assumed to be able to identify the subject which the speaker has in mind. Such indefinite concepts need to be judged on the basis of contextual clues for correct interpretation of presented information. This has consequences on sentence structure in both languages. Lack of definite pronominal coding may also be associated with presupposition, whereby if the speaker uses an indefinite pronoun most often they are marked as having active referents. Discourse context will help in their identification.



The study has showed that it is possible to find clauses with indefinite subjects, in both German and English. A few that have been encountered in this study have been rendered by a different configuration as the following examples show, two examples will be considered:.

41) So sollte **es** doch sein, wenn **man** verliebt ist (pg.193)

That is how **it** should be when **you** are in love (pg.191)

The pronoun „es” positioned after the modal verb „sollte” in the bi-clausal construction is indefinite. This is translated as „it” which is equally not a definite subject hence correctly presented. From the context this seems to be active from subsequent discourse, since it indicates a comment about a matter of current interest in both German and English. This may therefore be identified as the topic in the left-detached clause that is discourse active. The second highlighted entity „man” is also indefinite in that it is not referring to a specific identifiable topic. In English this is translated using *you* which is also used in English to show indefiniteness. *You* here shows no specific person hence successful translation. Let us have a closer look at another example:

42) Bei uns kann **man** so lange träumen, wie **man** will, am Ende bleibt es bei den Hoffnungen (pg. 195).

Here **you** can dream as much as **you** want, but in most cases it doesn't go beyond hope (pg. 192)

The indefinite pronoun, „man” has been used in both clauses in German. From the context they are unidentifiable and inactive. These have been rendered by the indefinite “you” that is not identifiable just as in the past example. The translator, by going for the English indefinite *you* renders the original message correctly. In German the indefinite pronoun in the first clause is preceded by the verb, due to the fronting of the prepositional phrase. This differs with the

English structure in that the indefinite “you” precedes the verb even though the deictic adverb, “here” is fronted. This is due to the difference in the grammar principles of the two languages.

But fronting the adverb in English also makes it a marked structure. See the following example:

43) Das darf **man** nicht(pg.195)

**You** can't do that (pg. 192)

An already established referential element „das” is fronted in the German utterance and takes the topical position. This pushes the indefinite pronoun „man”to near the final position, hence resulting into a marked structure. The indefinite pronoun is inactive in discourse. This is translated using the equally indefinite “you” in English that is not identifiable but foregrounded. This is a normal unmarked SVO order, therefore resulting into a mismatch where a marked German construction is translated into a default English construction. However the translator is right in using the indefinite “you” for the indefinite pronoun „man” in German.

Though the way the elements in the German utterances are sequenced may differ due to fronting of some constituents; successful translation has been achieved where an indefinite pronoun has been rendered by an equally indefinite pronoun in English. The translator had the option of using the indefinite pronoun “one”but she opts for the indefinite “you” which is commonly used in English when one is making hypothetical statements that are not directed or referring to a specific identifiable person. In this case there exists a match in the presentation of the original form and message. The following tables highlight this, but also a difference in the sequencing of the information units involved:

**Table 19: German construction**

<b>Established Topic</b>	<b>Modal verb</b>	<b>Indefinite Pronoun(dummy subject)</b>	<b>The rest of the Proposition(negation)</b>
(Ex 43)Das	darf	man	nicht

**Table 20: Translation in English**

<b>Indefinite pronoun</b>	<b>Modal Verb +negation+auxiliary verb</b>	<b>Established Topic</b>
You	can't do	that

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter we have analyzed divergent syntactic structures in German that have been used for focusing which have however called for different strategies in translating into English. This has resulted into distinct syntactic categories where some have not presented the effect felt in the original text adequately due to divergent syntactic structures in work in both languages. The analysis has enabled us to capture such significant differences that characterize German and English, in reference to word order in the process of translation of bi-clausal and multi-clausal constructions, sentences consisting of the contrastive „aber” (but) and those that consist of indefinite, non-referential subjects.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In translation the translator may not be able to faithfully follow the syntactic structure of the original language. Though the organization of the information units into comprehensive syntactic structures is normally carried out with adherence to the rules that govern a particular language, this may sometimes hinder a faithful transfer of the intended message into the target language if it is coded in a non-default form in the original language. These grammatical principles differ from language to language and the degree of divergence may be great or small, depending on the relationship that exists between languages. In section one of this chapter, different strategies used in German for focusing and directing the attention of the reader to particular elements deemed to be prominent will be highlighted. A review of these will help bring to light the different ways through which a certain message may be presented differently in German while awarding different elements prominence. In section two a closer consideration of translation strategies used in English in translating the marked and unmarked structures from German will be taken. This will enable a subsequent comparison of the strategies used in the two languages in section three. Here, we shall be able to observe how the translation has been able to cope with markedness. This will take us to section four where we shall make recommendations in regard to the findings and information gathered in the previous sections. This will be carried out with the intention of equipping the translator with the necessary skills that may help in closing the translation gaps and solving the mismatches that might occur.

## **4.2 GENERAL IDEAS ABOUT TRANSLATION STRATEGIES**

During the translation process, the translator tries as much as possible to remain faithful to the original message, both in content and form. On the other hand s/he also endeavors to adhere to the structure of the target language, with the aim of producing a target text that is acceptable and reads naturally. This adherence has sometimes driven translators into abandoning the form used in the source language in favor of the target- language's natural form. This may sometimes lead to mistranslation or lack of accuracy when a certain form is opted for at the expense of the intended message.

Some translators have therefore ended up stripping certain syntactic forms of the intended message. An awareness of the divergent strategies that may be used for different purposeful communicative contexts is necessary so that the translators are able to use equally effective strategies as may be used in the source language to present such information into target language with fidelity.

## **4.3 STRATEGIES USED IN GERMAN FOR FOCUSING**

From the data analyzed earlier, it is clear that German uses different strategies to place focus on selected elements used in an utterance. The intention is to draw the attention of the reader to the highlighted information unit. Prominence is achieved through especial organization of information units, sometimes even deviating from the language norm or the so called unmarked structure. Let us see a few of the strategies:

### 4.3.1 Fronting

Focusing can be achieved through foregrounding of elements. The fronted element attains a kind of prominence that is not shared by those elements in the interior sequence. The main goal of fronting an element that is otherwise placed in another position within the clause or the sentence, is emphasis. The flexible character of German allows the author to select from a large number of elements that s/he wishes to place in the initial topical position. See the following examples;

44 (a) Sie ist letzte Woche wegen einer Verletzung zu Hause geblieben.

(She remained at home last week due to an injury)

(b) Letzte Woche ist sie wegen einer Verletzung zu Hause geblieben

(Last week she remained at home due to an an injury)

(c) Wegen einer Verletzung ist sie letzte Woche zu Hause geblieben

(Due to an injury she remained at home last week)

(d) Zu Hause ist sie letzte Woche wegen einer Verletzung geblieben.

At home, she remained last week due to an injury (highly marked)

Depending on the information that the speaker would like to highlight the four options given above are acceptable. All the sentences consist of the same elements but the sequencing of these elements differ. Why should there be such a variety of ways to convey information composed of the same elements? In 44 (a) all the elements are in their basic order, a normal organizational structure namely unmarked structure where the subject precedes the verb. In this case there is no special emphasis on any of the elements, since each one of them takes its rightful place. This sentence reflects the default structure of the sentence in German. In (b) however the reader's attention is drawn to the temporal adverb namely; „letzte Woche“ (last week) that is fronted. In (c) the prepositional phrase which is „wegen Verletzung“ (due to an injury) that depicts a

causative statement is sentence initial, hence receives prominence. In sentence (d) the speaker selects the locative adverb „zu Hause” (at home) as the element that requires emphasis and therefore places it before all other elements. In the English construction such a sequence is rare and therefore highly marked. In order to appreciate the factors that motivate a writer or speaker to choose one form and not the other, the translator needs therefore to consider the clause/sentence as a message rather than a string of grammatical and lexical elements that can be maneuvered as one wills. The translator is therefore required to convey the message as it is presented in the original text. Let us consider further examples of fronted elements encountered in this study:

#### 4.3.1.1 Adverbs of manner as focal point

One of the focus strategies used in German is fronting of a modal adverb. When this is fronted in an utterance it achieves some prominent status that is not shared with any other information unit in the utterance. See the following possibilities:

45) **Schwierig** war auch der Besuch bei Ruth (pg.201)(marked)

Difficult, was also the visit to Ruth

Der Besuch bei Ruth war auch schwierig(Unmarked)

The visit to Ruth was also difficult

46) **Absichtlich** habe ich sie nicht vorgewarnt (pg.198)(non-default)

Intentionally, i hadn't warned her

Ich habe sie absichtlich nicht vorgewarnt(Unmarked)

I had intentionally not warned her

In these two examples modal adverbs are fronted in the marked structures. They signal stress, an aspect that is not achieved in the normal unmarked structures. The unmarked structure uses

topic-comment articulation. Translating the marked structures into normal unmarked structures would be denying the reader opportunity to get the intended message. Consider another possibility of focusing used in German.

#### 4.3.1.2 Focus on Adverb of time

A whole lot of utterances have been encountered in this study where temporal adverbs have been highlighted, as points of departure in German. See the following examples:

47) **Am nächsten Tag** mussten wir noch einmal zum Flughafen fahren (pg.193)

The following day we had to travel back to the airport

Wir mussten am nächsten Tag noch einmal zum Flughafen fahren (Unmarked)

We had to travel back to the airport the following day

48) **Seit meiner Reise nach Chicago** war der Austausch mit meinem Bruder rege geblieben (pg.192)

Since my trip to Chicago the exchange with my brother had remained active.

Der Austausch mit meinem Bruder war seit meiner Reise nach Chicago rege geblieben (Unmarked)

The exchange with my brother had remained active since my trip to Chicago.

Looking at the following examples another position-switch occurs in that the elements showing time of action are fronted while the rest of the information units follow. There must be a reason as to why the German author goes for the marked structure and abandons the normal canonical structure. The attention of the reader is drawn here and these therefore become focal domain. These elements are spoken with more stress. However, the sentences depicting the normal word order are spoken with less stress. Let us consider another possibility of focusing of particular elements in German:



#### 4.3.1.3 Highlighted locative adverbs

It is possible to find locative adverbs as the focal point in German as the following examples show.

49) **Überall** sah man grüne Felder(pg.197)

There were green pastures everywhere

Man sah grüne Felder überall.(Unmarked)

One saw green pastures everywhere.

50) **In Kendu Bay** hieß man uns ebenso herzlich willkommen wie in Alego(pg.201)

In Kendu Bay just like in Alego we were highly welcomed

Man hieß uns ebenso herzlich willkommen in Kendu Bay wie in Alego

We were highly welcomed in Kendu Bay just like in Alego

Fronting of the locative adverbs in the utterances gives them focal prominence. The difference can be seen when these are compared to the normal sequenced structures where there is no special prominence awarded to any of the elements used. Another possibility of special emphasis is presented in the following examples:

#### 4.3.1.4 Prepositional phrases as point of departure

Another possibility where elements are given special emphasis in German is in the context where the prepositional phrases are fronted. Consider these examples:

51) **Am Eingang unseres Hotels** wurden wir von einem misstrauischen Wächter begrüßt(pg.209)

At the hotel entrance we were greeted by a moody watchman

Wir wurden am Eingang unseres Hotels von einem misstrauischen Wächter begrüßt

(Unmarked)

We were greeted by a moody watchman at the hotel entrance

52) **In meiner eigenen Familie** passierte in dieser Zeit eine Menge(pg.212)

In my own family alot had happened at this moment.

Eine Menge passierte in dieser Zeit in meiner eigenen Familie(Unmarked)

Alot had happened in my own family at this moment.

When we compare the non-default constructions with the default one the essence for fronting the prepositional phrases highlighted becomes clear. In this configuration they are given presentational priority as the first elements that receive stress in the articulation. See another possibility:

#### **4.3.1.5 Verb as initial information unit**

German may also front a verb for emphasis. This leads the reader into interpreting the message differently than s/he would have interpreted, had the author used the normal articulation. The following example supports this better.

53) **Wohnen** konnte ich bei Elke(pg.233)

Ich konnte bei Elke wohnen(Unmarked)

Had the author opted for the unmarked structure she would be conveying the message as the norm, but by having the infinitive verb in the initial position, special emphasis is placed on it. The verb is positionally marked and therefore associated with certain prominence or saliency that is not on any other element within the whole proposition.

#### 4.3.1.6 Double focus

In German it is possible to find a configuration that may be used to signal focus on two fronted elements hence achievement of double focus. See the following example:

54) **Nicht einen Augenblick** zweifelte ich daran,...(pg.109)

Ich zweifelte nicht einen Augenblick daran,..(Unmarked)

In the first marked construction the two highlighted elements namely; the negative particle „nicht” and the accusative object, „einenAugenblick” fill the first two slots of the utterance, therefore achieving double focus. From the unmarked construction it is clear that they take the position that they would not normally take other than in a situation like this where the author intends to make them focal.

As displayed above expressions are sometimes maneuvered to the initial position in order for the intonation nucleus to fall on them, thus being clearly indicated as the focal point of the utterance. Intonation is therefore used sometimes as a signal of focus. Generally, as seen in the examples given, fronting is commonly associated with prominence and emphasis where this is narrowed to an element that is placed in the initial position of a sentence. Such structures need to be considered in the process of translation in order to ensure accuracy in conveying the intended information.

Other than fronting German uses other strategies:

### **4.3.2 Contrastiveness**

German uses contrastiveness as a sign of focus. The modifier „aber” signals contrastive focus. The scope of focus will be determined by the position of the modifier in an utterance. This may therefore differ from sentence to sentence as the following examples show:

55) Aber eine Aufregung gab es doch(pg.213)

But there was one exciting development

56) Jetzt aber, hatte ich Barack durch all meine Erzählungen ..... neugierig gemacht(pg.201)

But now i had made Barack curious with all my stories.

57) Ian aber, schien es zu genügen( pg. 221)

.

In (55) the modifier is placed at the beginning of the sentence. This modifies the whole proposition and therefore focus is spread out in the whole utterance. Different from this however, in (56) and (57) the elements that receive focus are the temporal adverb „jetzt” and the noun phrase „Ian” respectively. Therefore, focus scope is not on the entire construction, but rather on just an element in the utterance, hence partial. In German therefore, contrastive focus can be effectively depicted through strategic positioning of the modifier, which will either bring about partial focus or entire sentence contrastive focus.

### **4.3.3 Dislocation of entire clauses**

Another strategy that German uses is dislocation of clauses in a sentence. This entails reordering a sentence by changing the position of an entire clause and hence causing deviation from the normal basic order. A right dislocated clause is for instance moved into the left and becomes left-

dislocated. The dislocated clause brought to the left may contain new information that would otherwise be dislocated to the right in a normal word order. Let us see the following constructions:

58) Die Liebe war es die mich dazu brachte dass ich Kenia nach einem Jahr verließ und nach Deutschland zurückkehrte(pg.211)

It was love that made me leave Kenya after a year and return to Germany

59) Es hat so überzeugend geklungen, was er gesagt hatte(pg.218)

What he had said sounded so conclusive

In both constructions the clause in focus is left-dislocated. What is striking is that these clauses consist of new information. This arrangement of new information coming before known information is unusual and deviates from the normal basic structure where a message is conveyed from the known to the unknown. This is meant to give the reader a referent point to which s/he can relate new information. But for purposes of stress and special focus, a non-default structure is employed.

Let us now see what options English has in rendering non-default constructions;

#### **4.4 Options for rendering non-default German constructions into English**

In order to show certain communicative priorities awarded to particular elements in a clause English also uses different patterns of word order. As observed earlier an element may be moved in the initial position to achieve focal effect. English can achieve the same effect but while German is able to move these elements to be sentence-initial with much ease, English sometimes has to use some special syntactic structures which may appear a little complex.

#### 4.4.1 It- Cleft constructions

In English, cleft constructions are used for focusing. Through this strategy an element in focus is placed near the beginning of the clause but not in the initial position. Let us see these examples:

60) It was **love that** made me leave Kenya after a year and return to Germany(pg. 207)

61) It was **made clear to him**, that he was an outsider (pg.197)

Looking at the two examples of it-cleft construction, one sees that it comprises of the subject pronoun ‘it’ as an empty topic. This is followed by the verb ‘be’ a sequence that makes it natural to achieve focus on the item-/s that follow. The construction guides the reader in assigning special prosody on to the highlighted elements of the English utterances given above. This puts main focus near the front of the sentence but not in the initial position.

#### 4.4.2 Presentational/thetic constructions

The main essence of presentational constructions is to introduce a referent that the speaker assumes it is not shared by him and the hearer. The focused element therefore is predicated as the following examples show:

62) There is no such thing as **poor Americans**(pg.207)

63) There were green fields **everywhere** (pg.194)

While German has used fronting to show special focus on the highlighted elements, English opts for a completely different structure that pushes the focused element to the very end of the statement, hence relying on end-weight however though, still maintaining the effect of focusing.

### **4.4.3 Fronting**

Although not so frequent as in German, a few instances of fronted elements have been encountered in this study. This strategy allows the translator to preserve some of the marked patterning used in the original German text. Consider the following examples:

64) **Back in Nairobi**, we were invited to dinner by more family members (pg.198)

65) **There** we boarded a minibus that would stop in Alego Nyangoma(pg. 197)

In both constructions the translator has been faithful to the original message in that he maintains the fronted elements as they are found fronted in the German text. In(65) double focus is achieved in that two distinct elements i.e.”back” which is an adverb and “in Nairobi” a prepositional phrase,that would otherwise be predicated in the normal word order, appear first. The deictic place adverb ‘there’ which is discourse active introduces the message in the second example. In the translation in English there are not many instances of fronting of elements like there are in the German text. This brings about a mismatch in the way the information is conveyed in German and the way it is transferred in English.

### **4.5 Existing differences between German and English**

From the brief analysis above, a significant divergence between German and English in the use of non-default structures for focusing is observed. Most of the time, the way each language codes the relevant information so as to achieve focus in an utterance differs. The choice of these elements also depends on context that motivates the writer to go for a marked structure and

abandon the basic normal unmarked structure. German compared to English enjoys a relatively free word order. It therefore incorporates special prominence of information units in its structure, by permitting a wider range of elements to stand in utterance initial position. In a suitable textual environment the following would be acceptable as sentence-initial:

- Adverbs of manner
- Adverbs of time
- Adverbs of place
- Prepositional phrases
- Verbs
- Objects(direct and indirect)

In English, prepositional phrases, adverbs of manner, time and place can appear in sentence initial. However if we may compare this to the situation in German, English is restrictive in character and has a relatively fixed word order. The translator seemed so reluctant in preserving some of the marked syntactic structures used in the original German text for example, objects and verbs as sentence initial. In such instances she rendered marked constructions by unmarked ones resulting into lack of equivalence. This can be observed in the fronted elements in German where a majority of these have not been translated faithfully. Instead of fronting, English has used complex syntactic structures, for example cleft constructions to signal the focal point. In German these elements are fronted with much ease without a requirement of such complex structures. The author in German has also been able to detach entire clauses from their normal positions into syntactically prominent positions for focusing. Situations have been encountered where clauses containing new information have been moved from their rightful position to the right and moved to the left, for purposes of emphasis. In English all the clauses identified have been rendered by the normal structure that adheres to the principle of known information being



presented before the new information for purposes of ease in comprehension and interpretation. This has nevertheless led to a mismatch.

Other than fronting and detachment, German has made use of focus markers in a more effective manner than English. The use of modifier „aber” for contrastive focus has been used in both German and English. While in German this has signaled the focal item with clarity due to its positioning, in the English constructions this has been placed at the beginning spreading the focus to the entire sentences. This has also led to lack of uniformity in the presentation of the message. One may therefore conclude that every language seems to have divergent strategies through which focus is signaled, which may differ significantly from language to language. Some languages like German are endowed with freedom that may allow automatic usage of the varied strategies which may however not be readily acceptable in other languages. Such languages that have a fixed and restrictive word order like English may have to go to greater lengths in using more complex structures to signal markedness.

#### **4.6 Mistranslation and Recommendations**

The work of a translator entails faithful transfer of the message coded in the original text into the target text. S/he ought to first seek a good understanding of the sense and material of the original author before embarking on the translation work. Of great concern would be a situation whereby the translator fails to convey the information correctly as it appears in the original, and therefore results into mistranslation. Mistranslation may occur at the level of form and/or at the one for content. In both cases, there would be a distortion of the intended information since form determines the content and this will affect the ultimate interpretation of the message. If a translator fails to translate markedness in the original text with equivalent markedness in the

target text, then there would be cause for alarm. Let us consider the way the following German marked constructions have been handled in English:

66) Von einem Bekannten lieh ich mir ein Klappbett (pg.192)(marked)

I borrowed a cot from a friend(pg.189)(unmarked)

From a friend, I borrowed a cot(marked)

Mistranslation occurs here when a marked structure bearing a fronted highlighted prepositional phrase is rendered by an unmarked basic structure, showing the target reader no special emphasis. The given marked structure would have conveyed the intended message better.

67) Daran glaube ich fest(pg.195)

I believe firmly in that (pg. 192) (unmarked)

In that, I believe firmly (marked)

German uses a marked structure for focusing of the deictic prepositional domain...„daran’’ In the English translation this is predicated, as it would appear in a normal structure without any emphasis. There is loss of emphasis on this particular element. The suggested marked structure would have help lay focus on this element.

68) Schwierig war auch der Besuch bei Ruth(pg.201)(marked)

The visit with Ruth was also difficult (pg.199)(unmarked)

It was also difficult to visit Ruth(marked)

The same case is observed here in that the marked structure is translated into an unmarked structure. The stress achieved on the adjective „schwierig’’ is lost in the process of translation. Bringing the adjective near to the sentence initial through the It- cleft construction as suggested in the marked structure, would have rendered the message more accurately.

69) Pünktlich erschienen wir bei der dritten Frau unseres Vaters(pg.201)

We arrived on time at the home of our father's third wife(pg. 199)

Punctually, we arrived at the home of my father's third wife(marked)

„Pünktlich“ receives focus due to fronting. In the unmarked structure in the translation in English this effect is lost. Translating this using the marked structure given would have been more effective.

70) An der Tür stand noch eine zweite Person(pg.202)(marked)

Another person was standing at the door(pg.199) (Unmarked)

At the door, another person was standing (Marked)

The prepositional phrase fronted in the German construction is the main focal point in the entire sentence. In English however, this is translated as information in the predicate and doesn't therefore receive any special prominence. Special prominence would have been achieved by the use of an equally marked structure.

71) Nicht einen Augenblick zweifelte ich daran..(pg.195)

I didn't doubt for a moment (pg.192)

Not for any moment, did I doubt that.... (Marked)

The double focus realized through the fronting of the negative particle and the object it negates is not achieved in the English non-default construction. The marked English structure would have probably rendered the message with more fidelity.

72) Immer noch loben wir hier die Engländer( pg.196)

We still praise the British here (pg.194)

But often, we still praise the British here (Marked)

The highly marked structure in German is still translated using a normal default structure which leads to conveying of two non-equivalent messages. In German the fronted elements are awarded prominence, but this is lacking in the translation. Using an equally highly marked structure as suggested above would have been more effective.

Translation cannot be carried out by just any person since it requires special skills. Firstly, this requires a lot of competence in both languages i.e. the source and the target language. Only then will the translator be able to comprehend the intended meaning in the original text, and equally realize it in translation. Secondly, other than mastery of the two languages one needs to understand the intricacies of the language and the strategies that may be used in case of specialties like those of markedness. A translator may be viewed by many as just reproducing work that has already been accomplished by another author. This is not the case since s/he also becomes the second author, in that in the process of translation, new and divergent ideas may be called for, especially where there is lack of equivalence in terms of the strategies that may be used to deal with intricate marked syntactic structures. This may even lead to a change in the syntactic structure of a text, for instance where German would use fronting with a lot of ease but this fails in English and clefting or presentational constructions are used.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, we have generally dealt with the syntactic strategies used in German and English to code information units that bear special emphasis in an utterance. As discovered, German employs a wider range of syntactic structures to signal this compared to English. A wider variety of items that are fronted in German have been encountered and these include adverbs of manner, time and place. We have also seen situations where prepositional phrases, objects and verbs are fronted. Dislocation of entire clauses to the left, conveying new information has also been

discussed as one of the strategies in German. Contrastive focus has also been found to be used with a lot of success in German. In English, a few elements have been found to be fronted as a signal of emphasis. These include temporal and locative adjuncts. What is interesting in English, is the use of complex syntactic structures where fronting was not automatic due to the fixed word order nature of the language, like cleft andthetic constructions. The overview of the strategies used in both languages that is supported by examples has also enabled a comparison of the two. Mismatches in terms of word order that affects the positioning of topical and focal elements have also been displayed, and suggestions on how best such structures would be translated have also been a highlight of this chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. CONCLUSION**

The main concern of this study has been to carry out a cross linguistic analysis with the primary focus on the way German and English package information in syntactic structures that mostly bear the known- recoverable information (topic) and the new non- recoverable information in focus. This has been done through a comparative analysis of data extracted from two literary texts, the original one appearing in German with the title „Das Leben kommt immer dazwischen” and the target text rendered in English translated as, “And then Life Happens”

The study has been carried out with reference to the conceptual framework developed by the renowned linguist Knud Lambrecht(1994) in his insightful topic on information structure. He acknowledges that among other things, the grammar structure of a language plays an integral part in guiding the writer or speaker on how to put together the information units, in order to produce comprehensible syntactic structures in different communicative contexts. Different contexts may call for divergent structural organizations.

From the analysis carried out, a few observations have been made on the way German and English deal with topic and focus: Firstly, the study shows that German and English differ in that German has portrayed a lot of freedom in the way information units can be combined, to build up complete and comprehensible syntactic structures. Due to this free word order, different patterns of syntactic structures consisting of same information units may occur in German. English has on the other hand depicted a restrictive rigid structural organization, where some structures that were found in German, were not automatically transferable.

Secondly, German enjoys a wider variety of strategies through which prominence carried by some elements in utterances, may be highlighted. Such a special situation leads to reordering of the items of an utterance from the normal word order to a non-default structure. These strategies range from fronting of such elements and dislocation of entire clauses to contrastiveness. Thirdly, fronting for purposes of emphasis has been found to be carried out in German with much ease than in English. So many utterances have been cited where adverbs, objects and prepositional phrases have been fronted in the German text. English has not displayed such a large number of fronted elements and have had to sometimes use more complex constructions such as clefting and presentational constructions, in order to bring highlight to the focal items in an utterance.

The concern of this study has been to highlight the differences between German and English on the level of syntax. From the study it is clear that structural mismatches exist between the two languages. This has been mainly caused by the difference in the grammatical principles that govern these languages. One (German) gives freedom while the other (English) is restrictive in word order. In order to achieve the intended communicative objective in translation, the right structure for that particular context has to be used. Sometimes context may call for use of non-default structures and use of a default structure in such a situation may lead to inaccuracies in the delivery of the message, especially in translation. In this study we have reiterated the need for impeccable mastery of both languages, thus the source language and the target language.

Acquisition of the right translation strategies that can be used in German and English is also inevitable, in order to present the original message without distortion. These strategies also differ in German and English. For successful transfer of meaning the knowledge and ability to use these strategies is a prerequisite in translation. Such instances where some pieces of information

may be presented differently from what the norm is will always be encountered, especially in literary texts. In such cases only a well-equipped translator will be able to carry out successful translation.

If the translator abandons the form that the original author has used and uses a different one, this may end up giving contradictory messages. Form helps shape the content and different forms will lead to divergent interpretations of the message, for instance where fronting is encountered.

If the translator seeks to communicate the same impression which s/he has received from the source text, the impression he paints in the target text will be dependent on his/her knowledge of the two languages, and the understanding of different contexts.

Therefore, after the translator has read and acquired the right understanding of what the writer is saying, s/he should put this meaning into the target language and produce the same impression on the target-language reader as the one impressed on the reader of the original text. There should be correct transfer of the message, and evidence of complete comprehension of the original message. The translator may however have to use his/her discretion and choose the appropriate strategy that will help in conveying the intended message in the best way possible.

The research findings therefore confirmed the stated hypothesis and the objectives of the study were well achieved.



## 5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

In seeking to highlight the distinctive properties of the syntactic structures used in German and English in reference to the placement of topic and focus, this study raises the fundamental issue of divergence between languages. As seen, the structure of a sentence is motivated by the principles of grammar that govern a language. Some, like in German may allow structural freedom while others as exemplified by English are restrictive as far as word order is concerned. This has been found to bring about divergence in the way the two languages handle accented information in an utterance, where the coding of such information has to be done through non-canonical patterns. In such cases, some constituents of the utterance are not placed in their habitual position, this may further influence the sentence structure for instance when subject-verb inversion appears in German because of fronted focal items. This is not possible in English.

Due to the differences in languages, translation is therefore expected to be challenging especially when it involves two very divergent languages. It is however meant to provide a medium through which a message is transmitted from one language to another. This message should be transmitted with accuracy and should be free from distortion and misinterpretation. A few factors that may hinder accuracy in translation have been highlighted in this study. There is however need for further studies in the causes of mismatches between German and English, in regard to the sentence structure. Such factors as extra-linguistic elements, whose knowledge may not be shared by the interlocutors in a communicative context, may hinder accuracy.

This may require working hand in hand with the original author in order to acquire a better understanding of such factors, which will be the first step into achieving the right translation in the target language. The original author should be seen as an important source of ideas,

especially when it comes to the mastery of the original language, and insights. This may help explain any extra-linguistic factors that may be encountered in discourse which may also touch on the culture that the language is embedded on. This is also another aspect that affects translation. It is therefore worth consulting the original author.

There is also need to venture into translating from German into English and also vice versa, for in so doing, otherwise unnoticed and hidden divergences and similarities between the two languages are disclosed. Practicing translators and students of translation should be encouraged to venture into this field of syntax that is not exhaustive, not only to research on syntactic forms but also on the pragmatic connotations especially where mismatches in translation are encountered. This will help in bringing out and discovering the wealth of ideas and strategies found in different languages that may be used to disseminate information in the most effective way. Translation work certainly influences one's way of thinking and helps in generation of new ideas and opening of new horizons, especially after an encounter with languages that differ structurally, and that may use different strategies to convey the same message.

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