End of Chapter Exercises – Chapter 5

1. John Le Carré’s novel *The Russia House* opens with the following three paragraphs (1989:17–18):

In a broad Moscow street not two hundred yards from the Leningrad station, on the upper floor of an ornate and hideous hotel built by Stalin in the style known to Muscovites as Empire During the Plague, the British Council’s first ever audio fair for the teaching of the English language and the spread of British culture was grinding to its excruciating end. The time was half past five, the summer weather erratic. After fierce rain showers all day long, a false sunlight was blazing in the puddles and raising vapours from the pavements. Of the passers-by, the younger ones wore jeans and sneakers, but their elders were still huddled in their warms.

The room the Council had rented was not expensive but neither was it appropriate to the occasion. I have seen it – Not long ago, in Moscow on quite another mission, I tiptoed up the great empty staircase and, with a diplomatic passport in my pocket, stood in the eternal dusk that shrouds old ballrooms when they are asleep – With its plump brown pillars and gilded mirrors, it was better suited to the last hours of a sinking liner than the launch of a great initiative. On the ceiling, snarling Russians in proletarian caps shook their fists at Lenin. Their vigour contrasted unhelpfully with the chipped green racks of sound cassettes along the walls, featuring *Winnie the Pooh* and *Advanced Computer English in Three Hours*. The sack-cloth sound-booths, locally procured and lacking many of their promised features had the sadness of deck chairs on a rainy beach. The exhibitors’ stands, crammed under the shadow of an overhanging gallery, seemed as blasphemous as betting shops in a tabernacle.

Nevertheless a fair of sorts had taken place. People had come, as Moscow people do, provided they have the documents and status to satisfy the hard-eyed boys in leather jackets at the door. Out of politeness. Out of curiosity. To talk to Westerners. Because it is there. And now on the fifth and final evening the great farewell cocktail party of exhibitors and invited guests was getting into its stride. A handful of the small *nomenclatura* of the Soviet cultural bureaucracy was gathering under the chandelier, the ladies in their beehive hairstyles and flowered frocks designed for slenderer frames, the gentlemen slimmed by the shiny French-tailored suits that signified access to the special clothing stores. Only their British hosts, in despondent shades of grey, observed the monotone of socialist austerity. The hubbub rose, a brigade of pinafored governesses distributed the curling salami sandwiches and warm white wine. A senior Brit-ish diplomat who was not quite the Ambassador shook the better hands and said he was delighted.

Imagine that you have been asked to translate Le Carré’s novel into your target language. You have not yet read the whole novel – and you would normally read a text all the way through before you seriously get down to translating it. However, you decide that it might be helpful to ‘warm up’ to Le Carré by translating a few extracts to get the hang of his unusual style.

Translate the above extract into your target language and comment on any difficulties involved in maintaining the flow of information in terms of thematic and information structures. You should pay particular attention to marked information structures in the
third paragraph. How does Le Carré’s manipulation of English syntax foreground certain items of information? Can this be successfully conveyed in your target language?

Given the fact that the above three paragraphs introduce the opening for Le Carre’s novel, a focus is observed on the description of time and place. The first sentence above opens with two successive adverbial phrases of place serving as a fronted theme:

In a broad Moscow street not two hundred yards from the Leningrad station, on the upper floor of an ornate and hideous hotel built by Stalin in the style known to Muscovites as Empire During the Plague.

Marked themes are, linguistically, a fertile ground for new elements of information. The author intended to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that in a typical Muscovite atmosphere, a typical British event took place. The new element presented through the prepositional structures involves given elements. The reduced relative clause "not two yards from..." is subordinate to the indefinite head word "a broad Moscow street". Similarly, the reduced relative clause "built by Stalin" is subordinate to the indefinite lexical item "an ornate hideous hotel". In both cases, subordination and indefiniteness confirm the quality of new information. This is further supported by the definiteness of "the first ever audio fair"; in spite of being the first of its kind, it is presented to the reader as if known before.

Arabic readily allows a placement of the adverbs of time and place at the beginning or end of sentences. The normal expected order is that time adverbs usually precede space.
adverbs. Generally, affronting of a time or a place adverb foregrounds the importance of the time or place setting. Accordingly, the English marked, fronted thematic structure can be preserved in the target Arabic as shown above in the suggested translation:

The end-focus or end-weight technique can be applied to the last sentence of the first paragraph above:

"Of the passers-by" functions as a given element, "the youth…but their elders..." are the new elements within this information structure. Arabic offers a similar structure that typically corresponds to the order of the English information structure:

But the problem is that this Arabic structure reverses the intended English given-new information structure as the following table shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Given</th>
<th>Given</th>
<th>New</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>من المارة</td>
<td>شباب</td>
<td>مبتدأ مإخر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مرجال</td>
<td>معطوف</td>
<td>خبر مقدم</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When an Arabic initial prepositional phrase involves a superordinate hyponym, and is followed by a co-hyponym, the prepositional phrase is parsed as a fronted predicate, *xabar muqaddam*, i.e. a new element, whereas the following head noun, which has to be in the indefinite form, is parsed as a deferred subject, *mubtada? Mu?axxar*. The following verse from the Holy Qur'an exemplifies this grammatical rule:

"ومن قوم موسى أمة يهدون بالحق وبه يعدلون" (آية 159- سورة الأعراف)

One of the possible options posed to keep the English information structure of the given sentence in Arabic can be applied by means of turning the prepositional phrase "of the passers-by", into an adverbial phrase of place in Arabic:

A number of marked information structures can be traced in the third English paragraph:

*Out of politeness, Out of curiosity, To talk to Westerners, Because it is there.*

Obviously, the underlined elements are marked new items, while the given notions, more precisely the themes, are ellipted. The intended ellipsis of themes or given elements functions to highlight the reasons why Muscovites might visit an alien and typical British fair. In the author's view, such reasons are most worthy of the reader's attention. Each marked new element stands as a separate tonic group receiving a primary stress; the beginning and end of each are distinguished through the full stops.
Arabic provides a brilliant device for expressing reasons, namely, the causative infinitive, al-maf'uul li?ajlih. Thus, the English marked new elements can be translated as follows:

 فقد توافدت الناس كعادة سكان موسكوع على زارة المعرض، شرطة أن يكون لديهم من البطاقات الشخصية والمكانة الاجتماعية ما يرضي الحراس ذوي المعاطف الجلدية والأعين الجامدة. جاء الناس أدباً، أو فضولاً، أو رغبة في التحدث مع الغربيين، أو لمجرد المشاهدة.

However, in order to keep the marked quality of the English new elements, the Arabic coordinator "aw" might be deleted, and the entire sequence of the Arabic causative infinitives can be fronted:

 أدباً ،فضولاً ،رغبةً في التحدث مع الغربيين، لمجرد المشاهدة توافدت الناس كعادة سكان موسكوع على زيارة المعرض.

2. The following extract is from Swee Chai Ang, From Beirut to Jerusalem: A Woman Surgeon with the Palestinians (1989:299–300). This book gives a first-hand account of death and suffering in Palestinian refugee camps in war-torn Beirut in the 1980s. Ms Ang, a surgeon, volunteered to provide medical assistance to Palestinians and was with them during the Israeli invasion of West Beirut in 1982. She also lived through the appalling 1982 massacres in the Sabra and Shatila camps. Since then, she has returned repeatedly to Lebanon and the Occupied Territories to help Palestinians.

 Israeli bomber planes were breaking the sound barrier in south Lebanon. Villages in the south, as well as the Palestinian refugee camps, were attacked. In May 1988, two thousand Israeli troops crossed into southern Lebanon. People in Lebanon told me: 'The Israelis failed to stifle the uprising in the occupied territories, so they take it out on us by threatening to invade Lebanon again.'

 It was a multi-pronged attack on the Palestinians in Lebanon. Saida and the south were bombed by Israeli aeroplanes, and shelled from the sea by Israeli gun-boats. The Beirut camps were attacked from the mountains, not by the Israelis, but by anti-PLO forces. Shatila and Bourj el-Brajneh were shelled incessantly from the month of May 1988. Both camps were flattened; homes and hospitals demolished.

 Shatila finally collapsed on 27 June 1988, followed by Bourj el-Brajneh a few days later. I got the news of the fall of Shatila in London, having just returned from a fund-raising trip in the Gulf countries. People all over the Gulf wanted to support the uprising and build hospitals and clinics to mend the wounds of the Palestinians. What can I say? Each time I think of Shatila, I still cry. It was nearly six years since I first met the people of Sa-bra and Shatila. My understanding of the Palestinians began with them. It was they who taught a naive woman surgeon the meaning of justice. It was they who inspired me to struggle incessantly for a better world. Each time I felt like giving up, they would strengthen me with their example.

 The uprising: commonly known in the West as the intifada – the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank of Jordan

 Saida: Lebanese town
 PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization
 Bourj el-Brajneh: Palestinian refugee camp
Imagine that you have been asked to translate the above extract for inclusion in a review of the book, to be published in one of the leading newspapers in your country.

Various reviews of the book in English papers have suggested that the poignancy of Dr Ang's narrative is enhanced by her unadorned style, by her awkward, artless prose which has the raw immediacy of everyday speech. Consider how this straight-to-the-point, free-from-rhetoric, ‘artless’ style is reflected in the simplicity of the thematic and information structures in the above extract. How does the contrast between this general feature and the build-up of emotion, culminating in marked thematic structures towards the end of the extract, enhance the emotional impact of the message? How successfully are these features reflected in your target version?

Dr. Ang’s simple and poignant narrative, which tastes like everyday language, is well-reflected through the sequence of unmarked and thematic structures. In almost all sentences in the above extract, unmarked themes correspond to expected given-new information flow. The present table attempts to show the correspondence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unmarked theme/ Unmarked given</th>
<th>Rheme / New elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Israeli bomber planes</td>
<td>were breaking...in south Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Villages in the south as well as Palestinian refugee camps</td>
<td>were attacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Saida and the south</td>
<td>were bombed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Beirut camps</td>
<td>were attacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shatila and Bourj el-Brajneh</td>
<td>were shelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Both camps</td>
<td>were flattened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- homes and hospitals</td>
<td>Demolished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shatila finally</td>
<td>Collapsed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I</td>
<td>got the news</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prevailing use of the passive emphasizes the author's focus on the victimized cities, camps, hospitals and people. Arabic provides an equivalence of the English passive structures through the use of active or passive verbal sentences that do not semantically violate the English unmarked theme-rheme and given-new information units:
The sudden shift from the unmarked and expected choices of theme-rheme and information structures is observed towards the end of the third paragraph. The author wants to depict the significant role played by the Palestinians in her life. She means to express their formidable and incessant struggle for true justice. They were the true instructors who taught her the real meaning of justice. That is obviously reflected through her two successive choices of the marked predicated themes functioning as marked new elements whereby the rest of the sentence provides the given notions:

- It was they who taught a naive woman surgeon the meaning of justice.
- It was they who inspired me to struggle incessantly for a better world.

The nominal Arabic clauses beginning with the explicit plural third person pronoun "hum" function to provide the required equivalent of the marked theme within the it-structure," they". Furthermore, actors, doers, real processors of the given action are emphasized in Arabic through nominal clauses with verbal or relative predicates, for instance:

- It was the Egyptian army who managed to confront the enemy.

Two other fronted adjuncts of time serve the same purpose:

- Each time I think of Shatila, I still cry.
- Each time I felt like giving up, they would strengthen me with their example.

The first emphasizes her unending grief, and the second foregrounds the permanent and unforgettable role of the Palestinians in her life. A similar fronting of the adjunct can be preserved in Arabic:

- ففي كل مرة أتذكر فيها شاتيلا أظل أبك وأبك.
- في كل مرة ينتش فيها من مواصلة الكفاح أراههم أمامي نموذجاً يستنى.

3. The Project for the New American Century is a neoconservative think tank that exercised considerable influence on US foreign policy between 1997 and 2006. Imagine that you have been asked to translate its Statement of Principles into your target language, for inclusion in a forthcoming volume of scholarly articles intended to critique American foreign policy under George W. Bush (2001–2009).
In Other Words, 2nd edition – by Mona Baker

The Statement, reproduced in full below, is available at: www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm.

Statement of Principles

June 3, 1997
American foreign and defense policy is adrift. Conservatives have criticized the incoherent policies of the Clinton Administration. They have also resisted isolationist impulses from within their own ranks. But conservatives have not confidently advanced a strategic vision of America’s role in the world. They have not set forth guiding principles for American foreign policy. They have allowed differences over tactics to obscure potential agreement on strategic objectives. And they have not fought for a defense budget that would maintain American security and advance American interests in the new century.

We aim to change this. We aim to make the case and rally support for American global leadership.

As the 20th century draws to a close, the United States stands as the world’s preeminent power. Having led the West to victory in the Cold War, America faces an opportunity and a challenge: Does the United States have the vision to build upon the achievements of past decades? Does the United States have the resolve to shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests?

We are in danger of squandering the opportunity and failing the challenge. We are living off the capital – both the military investments and the foreign policy achievements – built up by past administrations. Cuts in foreign affairs and defense spending, inattention to the tools of statecraft, and inconstant leadership are making it increasingly difficult to sustain American influence around the world. And the promise of short-term commercial benefits threatens to override strategic considerations. As a consequence, we are jeopardizing the nation’s ability to meet present threats and to deal with potentially greater challenges that lie ahead.

We seem to have forgotten the essential elements of the Reagan Administration’s success: a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States’ global responsibilities.

Of course, the United States must be prudent in how it exercises its power. But we cannot safely avoid the responsibilities of global leadership or the costs that are associated with its exercise. America has a vital role in maintaining peace and security in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. If we shirk our responsibilities, we invite challenges to our fundamental interests. The history of the 20th century should have taught us that it is important to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire. The history of this century should have taught us to embrace the cause of American leadership.

Our aim is to remind Americans of these lessons and to draw their consequences for today. Here are four consequences:
-we need to increase defense spending significantly if we are to carry out our global responsibilities today and modernize our armed forces for the future;
-we need to strengthen our ties to democratic allies and to challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values;
-we need to promote the cause of political and economic freedom abroad;
-we need to accept responsibility for America’s unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles.

Such a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity may not be fashionable today. But it is necessary if the United States is to build on the successes of this past century and to ensure our security and our greatness in the next.

When you have translated the text, comment on the ease or difficulty of maintaining the contrastive thematic choices of we and they and any resulting loss or shift in thematic patterning. You might also like to consider the various senses of we (inclusive of the American nation, exclusive to the group which drafted the Statement) and whether these senses can be maintained in your translation while retaining the repetition of the same pronoun as theme.