NON-FINITE STRUCTURES IN MANUALS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS INTO CZECH

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Abstract

One of the main differences between English and Czech resides in the fact that an English sentence is much more frequently condensed by means of nominal forms. This difference then logically leads to certain problems in translation. Based on the analysis of four manuals, one of the most frequently translated types of texts, this paper analyses quantitative distribution of finite and non-finite clauses and the ways non-finite clauses are translated. The analysis shows that word for word translation is frequently used, which often does not represent the best solution. The biggest area of difficulty is the English infinitive of purpose. The frequently criticized translation of the infinitive of purpose by means of a preposition plus a noun, however, does not always need to be considered a mistake, but rather a feature of natural and inevitable development of language.

Key words: non-finite clause; subordination; coordination; condensation; translation; manuals.

Introduction

Translation is one of the most important areas where professional knowledge of languages is required, one of the practical and professional applications of foreign language knowledge. Apart from a number of other skills, good translators need to be aware of the differences in structures between the languages they translate because these areas always represent potential difficulties. One of the most significant structural differences between English and Czech is represented by the tendency to more condensed sentences in English. Dušková [7, p. 542] writes that "The main difference between English and Czech in this area is the more frequent use of finite subordinate clauses in Czech compared to the more frequent occurrence of nominal forms in English. The conditions for this difference are ensured by the systems of formal means in both languages. In English this system is richer (there is also the gerund which is not used in Czech) and more developed (English nominal forms distinguish not only voice, active and passive, but also time reference: simultaneity as opposed to time sequence). This significant tendency of English to express secondary predicates by means of nominal forms leads to the condensation of the structure of an English sentence"[1].

Non-finite clauses in written language typically occur in a formal style, most frequently in academic writing and official documents. Although manuals are representatives of neither type of the texts mentioned, it has been assumed that non-finite structures, as the means of

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[1]The citations which were originally written in Czech have been translated by the author. The original texts are listed in the foot notes. Dušková [7, p. 542] writes that „Hlavní rozdíl mezi češtinou a angličtinou v této oblasti je častější užívání vedlejších vět v češtině proti hojnějšímu výskytu jmenných tvarů v angličtině. Podmínky pro tento rozdíl jsou dány již systémem formálních prostředků v obou jazycích. V angličtině je tento systém bohatší (oproti češtině zahrnuje navíc gerundium) a rozvinutější (anglické jmenné tvary rozlišují nejen slovesný rod, aktivum a pasívum, nýbrž i časové vztahy: současnost (popř. následnost) proti předčasnosti)."

condensation, will be used there. Since precision, correct terminology and brevity, often required by the text layout, are the main concerns of translators, a tendency to word for word translation is expected in this kind of text, which may not always be correct.

In this paper the distribution, function and Czech translations of finite and non-finite clauses were studied on four user manuals originally written in English. The analysis uses *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* [9] as the theoretical framework and applies functional approach to sentence analysis. It means that the non-finite clauses are classified according to their syntactic functions they fulfill in sentences.

1   Quantitative analysis

1.1   Methodology

Four user manuals for four different appliances originally written in English and their official published Czech translations were used as the material for the analysis. In each manual all explicitly expressed predications were classified into finite or non-finite and the finite clauses were further classified into main clauses and subordinate clauses. Since the manuals were of different lengths, the results of the quantitative analysis are presented in percentages.

In the decision and determination of what predications should and should not be included, I followed the methodology established by my colleague Marcela Malá [8, pp. 115-117] which was based on three criteria. According to the first criterion, non-finite verb forms which were lexicalized prepositions and *-ing / -ed* forms used as adjectival pre-modifications whose meaning is institutionalized were left out. Secondly, only non-finite forms functioning as individual sentence elements, not parts of complex verb phrases were excerpted. Thirdly, a distinction was made between multiple predication and coordination of clauses.

All non-finite clauses in each manual were further classified according to their syntactic functions. Based on the theoretical expectations and the actual data acquired, the following categories were established:

1. Non-finite adverbial clause of purpose
2. Non-finite adverbial clause of time
3. Non-finite adverbial clause of manner
4. Non-finite adverbial clause of condition
5. Non-finite relative clause
6. Non-finite nominal clause function as a subject
7. Non-finite nominal clause functioning as an object
8. Non-finite appositive clause

1.2   Discussion of the results

In all the four manuals, clauses were counted and classified. They were divided into finite clauses, which were further divided into main and subordinate clauses, and into non-finite clauses. Non-finite clauses did not require any further classification, because as Carter and McCarthy [6, p. 546] state: "Non-finite clauses can normally only be subordinate, and typically combine with finite ones in sentences". The manuals consisted of the following numbers and kinds of clauses: MAN1 – 720 clauses, 540 finite (140 subordinate), 180 non-finite; MAN2 – 540 clauses, 410 finite (60 subordinate) 110 non-finite; MAN3 – 410 clauses, 260 finite (10 subordinate), 130 non-finite; MAN4 – 2450 clauses, 1900 finite (280 subordinate), 550 non-finite. The following table expresses the proportion of non-finite clauses out of the total number of clauses and then the proportion of non-finite clauses of the

subordinate clauses included in each manual. Further follows the information about the distribution of the pre-set functions of non-finite clauses.

Tab. 1: Quantitative distribution of finite and non-finite subordinate clauses

	MAN1		MAN2		MAN3		MAN4	
	Non-finite Clauses out of							
	total	sub. cl.	total	sub. cl.	total	sub. cl.	total	sub. cl.
	25%	62%	24%	68%	20%	99%	22%	66%
Adv. cl. of purpose	25%		45%		14%		65%	
Adv. cl. of time	19%		18%		-		8%	
Adv. cl. of manner	-		-		14%		1.5%	
Adv. cl. of cond.	-		-		-		8%	
Relative clauses	6%		18%		44%		12%	
Nom. cl. – subject	37%		9.5%		14%		1.5%	
Nom. cl. – object	13%		9.5%		-		4%	
Appositive clauses	-		-		14%		-	

Source: prepared by the author based on the analysis of the texts

It can be clearly seen from Table 1 that in terms of the absolute proportion of non-finite clauses in the studied user manuals, the result are almost the same for all the four: non-finite clauses represent approximately one fourth of all the clauses used. In terms of the proportion of non-finite clauses out of all the subordinate clauses, the numbers are similar for three out of the four manuals – the value being somewhere around 65%. MAN3 provided an extreme value where out of all subordinate clauses included, 99% were non-finite.

The results also confirm that the investigation into non-finite clauses and their translation is justified, because in general non-finite clauses are used to express the majority (around 65%) of sub-ordinate relations in user manuals. The following part of the article therefore brings a brief insight into the ways non-finite structures, a feature Czech uses only in a limited extent, are translated into Czech.

2   Analysis of the translations

For the reason of the reliability of results and the limited amount of space we will only focus on the two most frequent categories, which both occurred in all the four manuals, and these are: infinitives of purpose and relative clauses.

The infinitive of purpose belongs among non-finite structures translations of which are often discussed and even criticized. Two references out of many are provided further. One is taken from Czech Style Guide [5] prepared by Microsoft with the aim to "provide everyone involved in the localization of Czech Microsoft products with Microsoft-specific linguistic guidelines and standard conventions that differ from or are more prescriptive than those found in language reference materials" [5, p. 5]. In the guide, the translation *Pro otevření souboru dvakrát klikněte na ikonu* of the English instruction *To open the file click the icon twice* is seen as an "anglicanism" and the correct recommended translation should be as follows: *Chcete-li otevřít soubor, dvakrát klikněte na jeho ikonu*. Although there are other drawbacks in the translation such as the missing translation of the definite article in the former suggestion, the main problem is the word for word translation of the infinitive of purpose, which is unnatural in Czech. The latter example comes from Dalibor and Pavel Behún [1, p 153]. In their handbook on correct Czech they write: "We will mention another bad habit which comes from English which is the use of Czech preposition *pro* to express purpose. Today this feature is not limited to translations and it appears also in texts originally written in

Czech. Perhaps the most typical example is the common conclusion of English materials – *To get more information, call …* And therefore we are also often asked *Pro více informací volejte …*".[2]

2.1   The infinitive of purpose

What was therefore the situation regarding the translation of the infinitive of purpose in our text sample? First an overview for all the texts is presented in Table 2 below:

Tab. 2: *Summary of the translations of the infinitive of purpose*

	MAN. 1	MAN. 2	MAN. 3	MAN. 4
Pro + Noun	30	10	-	30
K + Noun	10	-	-	-
Při +Noun	-	10	-	-
Je nutno + infinitiv	-	10	-	-
Subordinate clause	-	20	1	40
Imperative mood	-	-	-	120
Indicative mood	-	-	-	130
Special construction	-	-	-	10

Source: prepared by the author based on the analysis of the texts

The results found in the four manuals confirm the assumptions and worries expressed in the two reference materials, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The translation of the infinitive of purpose by means of a preposition + noun is rather frequent and in two of the four manuals it represents the only way of translation. Let's, therefore, focus on a few concrete examples.

> **MAN1:** *On the front panel there are led diodes to indicate presence of supply voltage and communication with a central unit CU2-01M. – Na předním panelu jednotky jsou LED diody, pro indikaci napájení a komunikaci s centrální jednotkou CU2-01M. To increase its mechanical immunity we recommend installation of the cable into an electro-installation conduit of a sufficient profile. – Pro zvýšení mechanické odolnosti kabelů doporučujeme vždy kabel instalovat do elektroinstalační trubky vhodného průměru. To supply system units, it is possible to use power supplies of ELKO EP PS-50/27. – K napájení jednotek systému je možné použít napájecí zdroje ELKO EP PS-50/27.*

> **MAN2:** *To transport the collector, the use of carrying strap is recommended. – Pro přepravu kolektoru se doporučuje použít zvedací popruh. To tighten the union nuts, always balance (counter) the torque with a pipe wrench or another spanner. – Při dotahování šroubových spojů podržte protější díl šroubení plochým klíčem.*

> **MAN4:** *Press FUNCTION button (10) to select "TUNER" mode. – Stiskněte tlačítko pro výběr funkcí (10) pro výběr režimu "TUNER". Repeat step 2 to 5 to store other stations. – Opakujte krok 2 až 5 pro uložení jiných stanic.*

It is obvious that for the majority of selected examples, a more appropriate translation could be found, e.g. *LED diody umístěné na předním panelu signalizují stav napájení a komunikace s centrální jednotkou*, or *Režim "TUNER" zvolíte stiskem tlačítka pro výběr funkcí*. Mainly in the first example from MAN4, the double use of the preposition *pro* looks very

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[2] Zmíníme se ještě o jednom nešvaru pocházejícím z angličtiny. Původně se asi objevil coby doslovný překlad. Dnes už se tento jev neomezuje jen na překlady a objevuje se i v textech vytvářených původně v češtině. Snad nejtypičtějším příkladem je běžné zakončení anglických materiálů: Pro více informací volejte …

unprofessional. However, in certain situations we believe it is usable, e.g. in *Pro přepravu kolektoru se doporučuje použít zvedací popruh*, where any alternative translation will be more complicated and potentially less clear. In general, the translation by means of *pro* + noun is usually the briefest one out of the possible solutions, it often enables translators to follow the correct distribution of communicative dynamism – since logically it is useful to first state what (the aim of a concrete step) and only then to add how (the way leading to the aim). What is however most important, is that it no longer sounds so strange as it is often presented, and the preposition (mainly *pro* + noun) used to express purpose might be on the verge of entering standard Czech.

Another frequently used way of translation of the infinitive of purpose was just by means of an imperative or indicative mood of a verb.

> **MAN4:** *Press memory button (9) to enable program state. – Stiskem tlačítka "paměti" spustíte program. Press FUNCTION button (10) to select "TUNER" mode. – Stiskem tlačítka pro výběr funkcí (10) zvolte režim "TUNER".*

2.2 Non-finite relative clauses

The second common function of non-finite clauses we would like to discuss here briefly is the function of a relative clause. Table 3 below is summarizing the distribution of various translations of non-finite relative clauses found in the four manuals:

Tab. 3: *Summary of the translations of the non-finite relative clauses*

	MAN. 1	MAN. 2	MAN. 3	MAN. 4
Prep. + Noun	16	-	-	14
Adj.	-	17	-	16
Noun				14
Subordinate clause	-	19	15	31
Special construction	-	-	6	7

Source: prepared by the author based on the analysis of the texts

The most common translation was by means of a subordinate relative clause, which is the least surprising way and also the way which corresponds to Dušková's [7] findings mentioned earlier.

> **MAN2:** *The collector must be installed so that rear ventilation for preventing the diffusion of moisture in the collector is guaranteed. – Kolektor se musí instalovat tak, aby bylo zaručeno zadní odvětrání, které zabrání rozptylu vlhkosti v kolektoru.*

> **MAN4:** *The motor must be mounted on the rigid mounting with two M3 bolts screwed into the front plate. – Motor musí být spolehlivě upevněn dvěma šrouby M3, které zasahují do čela motoru.*

Another common translation is the translation by means of an adjective. It is again easily understandable and predictable since relative clauses, in the same way as adjectives, function as modifiers of noun phrases.

> **MAN2:** *e.g. sacking membranes, as security against water penetration caused by wind pressure and driving snow. – např. izolaci proti vodě hnané větrem nebo sněhu ve vánici.*

> **MAN4:** *which is displayed in order to inform listeners about the program service being broadcasted by the radio station. – který se zobrazuje, aby posluchače informoval o programové službě vysílané rozhlasovou stanicí.*

The last way of translation worth mentioning here is the translation by means of a preposition + noun.

> **MAN1:** *While servicing, it is essential to observe safety regulations for working with electrical equipment. – Při údržbě je nutné dodržet bezpečnostní předpisy pro práci s elektrickým zařízením.*

> **MAN4:** *Set the speed selector (32) to the proper position depending ON the type or record to be played. – Přepínač rychlosti otáček (32) a nastavte na správnou rychlost podle typu nahrávky k přehrání. It will indicate program no. and digits for track no. to be programmed. – Zobrazí se číslo programu a číslice k naprogramování čísla stopy.*

It was assumed at the beginning of this paper that one of the potential problems regarding translations of non-finite structures might be the use of word for word translation, regardless of the fact that in the area of non-finite structures we often deal with expressions which do not have any directly corresponding counterparts in Czech. The examples listed above, mainly the ones excerpted from MAN4, represent such problems. We are convinced that these translations represent even more serious deviation from standard or commonly used Czech than the above discussed *pro* + noun as a translation of the infinitive of purpose. The word to word translation in this area works only when there a genuine noun in Czech exists which directly corresponds to the -ing or infinitive form of a verb in English. This case is represented by the sample taken from MAN1. In the other cases there is no justification for the use of a solely for this purpose created de-verbal noun, because the non-finite predication can be easily translated by means of a relative clause, which is a natural means and which can be used at more or less the same position as the criticized de-verbal noun: Přepínač rychlosti otáček (32) nastavte na správnou rychlost podle typu nahrávky, kterou chcete přehrát. Zobrazí se číslo programu a číslice, pomocí kterých můžete naprogramovat stopy. No justification can therefore be sought in the functional sentence perspective (FSP) and generally, it would be difficult to provide any arguments why the word for word translation was used.

Conclusion

User manuals represent a type of text which frequently needs translation into a foreign language. For a number of translators this becomes a routine activity and they often fall back to a word for word translation. Based on the analysis of four user manuals originally written in English it has been found out that approximately 65 percent of the relation of subordination is expressed by means of non-finite clauses. This represents a significant part of each manual and therefore a feature which cannot be ignored. It is also significant that the proportion of non-finite structures was extremely similar for three out of the four manuals, with even much higher percentage in the remaining one. Since non-finite clauses are much less frequent in Czech than in English and since for certain non-finite expressions directly corresponding Czech expressions do not exist, it is clear that the area of non-finite clauses represents an area of potential difficulties for translators. The analysis of the translations used confirmed that certain non-finite structures really cause troubles. Based on the theory, it has been assumed that one of the most problematic areas will be the translation of the infinitive of purpose. Although in many cases a more appropriate translation could be suggested, in general there have not appeared any serious violations of standard Czech structure. The commonly criticized translation by means of a preposition (usually *pro*) + a noun appeared frequently. It

has, however, been argued that at least in certain cases it offers the briefest way of translation, which is important in manuals both because the content is easily accessible and also because there usually exist strict requirements regarding the graphical layout. The use of this way of translation moreover allows keeping the logical distribution of communicative dynamism. Surprisingly the most serious problems were found in the area of non-finite relative clauses where in addition to correctly formed translations by means of finite relative clauses and adjectives, also translations by means of a preposition + a noun were used. These were again caused by the word for word translation approach. However in these cases no justification could be found for the use of a structure which significantly deviates from the means of standard Czech.

Although user manuals represent a kind of text the value of which is mainly informative and not really artistic and they are considered consumables and are often approached like this by both readers and translator, with just a bit of effort they can (and should be) be written in correct standard Czech.

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POLOVĚTNÉ VAZBY V MANUÁLECH A JEJICH PŘEKLADY DO ČEŠTINY

Jedním z hlavních rozdílů mezi angličtinou a češtinou je fakt, že anglická věta je častěji kondenzována pomocí nominálních tvarů. Tento rozdíl logicky vede k potenciálním problémům v překladech. Na základě čtyř technických manuálů analyzuje tento příspěvek kvantitativní rozložení vedlejších vět a polovětných konstrukcí a způsoby, jakými se polovětné vazby překládají. Analýza ukazuje, že se často vyskytuje doslovný překlad, který ale nemusí být pro daný kontext tím nejlepším řešením. Největší problém představuje překlad anglického infinitivu účelu. Ovšem často obecně kritizovaný překlad pomocí předložky a podstatného jména nemusí být vždy považován za chybu, ale spíše za přirozený a nevyhnutelný vývoj jazyka.

HALBSYNTAKTISCHE EINHEITEN (REDUZIERTE NEBENSÄTZE) IN HANDBÜCHERN UND IHRE ÜBERSETZUNG INS TSCHECHISCHE

Einer der wichtigsten Unterschiede zwischen dem Englischen und dem Tschechischen ist die Tatsache, dass der englische Satz häufiger mit Hilfe von Nominalisierungsformen reduziert wird. Dieser Unterschied führt logischerweise zu potenziellen Problemen in Übersetzungen. Dieser Beitrag analysiert die quantitative Verteilung der Nebensätze und der sog. reduzierten Nebensätze sowie die Weise, wie diese halbsyntaktischen Einheiten übersetzt werden. Die Analyse wurde anhand von vier technischen Handbüchern durchgeführt. Aus der Analyse geht hervor, dass die wörtliche Übersetzung häufig dort auftritt, wo sie im gegebenen Zusammenhang nicht die beste Lösung sein muss. Das größte Problem stellt die Übersetzung des englischen „infinitive of purpose", d.h. Zweckinfinitivs, dar. Jedoch die oft allgemein kritiesierte Übersetzung mit Hilfe von Präposition und Substantiv muss nicht immer als Fehler betrachtet werden, sondern vielmehr als natürliche und unvermeidliche Entwicklung der Sprache.

ZWIĄZKI POLIPREDYKATYWNE W INSTRUKCJACH OBSŁUGI I ICH TŁUMACZENIE NA JĘZYK CZESKI

Jedną z głównych różnic między językiem angielskim i czeskim jest fakt, że zdanie angielskie częściej ulega kondensacji za pomocą form nominalizacyjnych. Różnica ta w sposób logiczny prowadzi do potencjalnych problemów w tłumaczeniach. W niniejszym artykule przeanalizowano ilościowy rozkład zdań pobocznych i konstrukcji polipredykatywnych oraz sposoby ich tłumaczenia. Analizę przeprowadzono na podstawie czterech technicznych instrukcji obsługi. Wyniki analizy pokazują, że wielokrotnie występuje tłumaczenie dosłowne, które w danym kontekście nie musi być najlepszym rozwiązaniem. Największym problemem jest tłumaczenie angielskiego bezokolicznika celu. Jednak często powszechnie krytykowanego tłumaczenia za pomocą przyimka i rzeczownika nie należy zawsze uważać za błąd, lecz raczej za naturalną i nieuniknioną ewolucję języka.