

## Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the analysis of English translation equivalents of the French pronoun *on*. This ‘personal indefinite pronoun’ is the typical means of expressing the general human agent in the French language. Unlike French, English does not have any special device for this purpose. It must employ linguistic devices which have other primary functions than the expression of the general human agent. These devices are explicit or implicit; they were described, for example, by Dušková (Dušková 1999) and Kratochvílová (Kratochvílová 2007). A short study of English translation equivalents of generic *on* was part of Tláskal’s paper (Tláskal 2004). However, the pronoun *on* is not always generic; its reference can also be indefinite or definite. Since this thesis studies the English counterparts of all three types of *on*, translation devices were also collected of uses other than generic. This study analyses 200 sentences including the French *on* and their translation counterparts. The material was excerpted from 4 French novels and their translations into English. The 200 examples are divided into 4 groups according to the type of reference their *on* has: generic, indefinite, definite, or ambiguous. For each group, the English counterparts are studied. They are divided into 3 classes: NP-equivalents, implied equivalents, and other divergent equivalents. Analysis is carried out of individual instances in respect to their scope of reference, frequency of employment, semantics, stylistic features, etc. Modality, negation and the use of verbal tenses in *on*-sentences and in their English counterparts are also considered. The main aim of the thesis is to demonstrate the usefulness of contrastive studies. We believe that a comparison of two languages can reveal devices and strategies which a study of a single language might overlook.