

Exploring shifts in translating English nominal groups modified by embedded clauses: a corpus-based approach

Jing Fang

Canzhong Wu

Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University

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1 Introduction

It remains a challenge for many experienced English-Chinese translators to translate English nominal groups modified by embedded clauses, which are also known in traditional grammar as noun phrases modified by attributive clauses or restrictive/ defining relative clauses. This is largely due to the lexicogrammatical differences between English and Chinese, making it rather difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the translation equivalence at all ranks of lexicogrammar. Sometimes, translators need to make some translation shifts between ranks so that the Chinese translations have more natural lexicogrammatical structures while maintaining the meaning of the original. This problem can be illustrated with the following examples:

	English sentence	Chinese translation and back translation
1	Assad, Syria's autocratic president, died.	叙利亚的 独裁总统 阿萨德 去世了。 Syria's autocratic president Assad died. <i>Syria's autocratic president Assad died.</i>
2	Assad, Syria's autocratic president who dreamed of Arab unity, died.	梦想 阿拉伯团结的 叙利亚独裁 总统 阿萨德 去世了。 dreamed Arab unity Syria autocratic president Assad died <i>Syria's autocratic president who dreamed of Arab unity, Assad, died.</i>
3	Assad, Syria's autocratic president who dreamed of Arab unity but watched his neighbors sign peace	叙利亚的 独裁总统 阿萨德 去世 了， Syria's autocratic president Assad died.

<i>deals with Israel, died.</i>	<p><i>Syria's autocratic president Assad died.</i></p> <p>他 生前 梦想 阿拉伯世界的团结 ,</p> <p>He before death dreamed Arab unity</p> <p><i>He dreamed of Arab unity,</i></p> <p>却 眼看着 邻国 与以色列 签署和平协议。</p> <p>but watched neighboring countries with Israel Sign peace deals</p> <p><i>but watched his neighbors sign peace deals with Israel.</i></p>
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In the examples presented above, the translation equivalence is realized at different ranks or levels¹. In Example 1, the equivalence is achieved at the word rank, and in Examples 2 and 3, where nominal groups are modified by embedded clause(s), as indicated by italics, the translation equivalence is achieved at the rank of group and clause respectively. When the nominal group in Example 3 is translated into Chinese, a translation shift occurs in terms of rank: instead of a nominal group, it is translated into a paratactic clause complex. This rank-shifting phenomenon in translation, also known ‘conversion’ or ‘transformation’, is well documented, and a variety of translation techniques in handling such nominal groups are proposed by many translation theorists and professionals (e.g. Lin, 1991; Luo, 1980; Shan, 1990; Zhou, 2003), but little research has been done on the parameters that may determine the translator’s decision to make such a translation shift.

A tentative research by Jing Fang (2005) shows that, among the lexicogrammatical features of the English nominal group with embedded clauses, the logico-semantic relations between the Head noun and the embedding, together with the complexity of embedded clauses, can be the effective factors in determining such translation shifts. There are two lexicogrammatical features in nominal groups that are closely related to translation shifts, namely, embedded projecting clauses and embedded clause complexes with further embedding. However, this finding is based on a small corpus of legal texts, which requires further investigation based on a larger corpus, and with different types of texts. The current study is an attempt to achieve this goal, and address following question:

Is a translator’s decision to make translation shifts influenced in the same way by the logico-semantic relations and the clause complexity of embedded clauses in different text types?

¹ Terms such as *rank*, *translation equivalence* and *translation shift* will be introduced in more detail later.

2 Theoretical framework

As this investigation draws on systemic functional theory, it is necessary to have a brief introduction of some fundamental concepts that are used for explaining the phenomenon of translation shifts in the study.

2.1 Strata and rank scale

Language in context is viewed in systemic functional linguistics as a complex semiotic system, having various strata or levels (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004): context, semantics, lexicogrammar, phonology/graphology and phonetics. The relationship between the strata is that of realization. Context is realized by semantics, which is realized by lexicogrammar, which is realized by phonology or graphology, and so on. In terms of stratification, the current study deals with lexicogrammar, the stratum of wording.

Translation can be viewed as a mapping or transformation of meanings between languages. As Matthiessen (2001) notes, “In most cases, translation draws on the resources at all the strata”. Translation itself involves the process of transforming and realizing the meanings at the level of semantics through lexicogrammar. Every stratum is organized into a hierarchy of rank, that is, the **rank scale**. Within the lexicogrammar of English, the descending rank scale² is:

clause – phrase/group – word – morpheme

Each unit consists of one or more units of the rank next below. A clause consists of one or more groups (e.g., nominal and verbal groups), and a group consists of one or more words consisting of one or more morphemes. Units of every rank may form complexes: clause complexes, phrase/group complexes, word complexes and so on. There is a potential for **rank shift**, whereby a unit of one rank may be down-ranked (downgraded) to function in the structure of a unit of its own rank or of a rank below (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

2.2 Translation equivalence and translation shift on the systemic map of language

Many linguists and translation researchers view translation equivalence in respect of different levels of presentation. Baker (1992) recognizes equivalence at word level, at grammatical

² English and Chinese are fairly similar in compositional hierarchy in grammar, therefore in this paper the same rank scale of English lexicogrammar is also used in describing Chinese.

level, at textual level and pragmatic level. Nida(1964) distinguishes two different types of equivalence as *formal equivalence* (closest possible match of form and content between source language text and target language text) and *dynamic equivalence* (principle of equivalence of effect on reader of the target language text) According to Catford, in the process of translation, a source language meaning is 'replaced' by a target language meaning which functions in the same way in the situation at hand, and it is achieved either through formal correspondence or through textual equivalence (Catford, 1965, in Hatim, 2001:14). Catford (1965) gives a definition of textual equivalence and formal correspondence as follows:

A textual equivalent is any target language text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion... to be the equivalent of a given source language text or portion of text. A formal correspondent, on the other hand, is any target language category (unit, class, structure, elements of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy as nearly as possible, the 'same' place in the 'economy' of the target language as the given source language category occupies in the source language. (p. 27)

It seems very clear that, due to the differences between the source language and target language systems, it is often difficult to pursue formal correspondence. Changes become inevitable in order to maintain textual equivalence at different ranks. In Catford's term, this change is called '**shift**', where a textual equivalence is achieved at a higher rank when it cannot be realized at the current rank(Catford, 1965).

In fact, Catford's theory about translation equivalence and translation shift is closely related to the systemic functional theory of **rank**. That could explain why his ideas about translation are not far away from that of the systemic functional linguists. Halliday (1966) defines translation equivalence in terms of grammatical relations—**scale of rank**, ranging from morpheme, word, phrase or group, clause up to clause complex (sentence). If equivalence is achieved at a lower rank, such as group or word rank, it is generally considered as formal equivalence. However, as Halliday argues, for all ranks, translation equivalence in the accepted sense does not occur below the rank of the clause, and "a good translation needs to be based on the sentence as its unit" (Halliday, 1966: 142). He also points out that equivalence may be achieved "at different ranks, different strata, and different metafunctions" (p.17), but more often value is given to equivalence at some higher ranks (such as clause complex or clause), which indicates that features at lower ranks are allowed to vary (Halliday,

2001). Matthiessen (2001) develops this further by systematically examining it in different environments defined by stratification, rank and axis (see Figure 1).

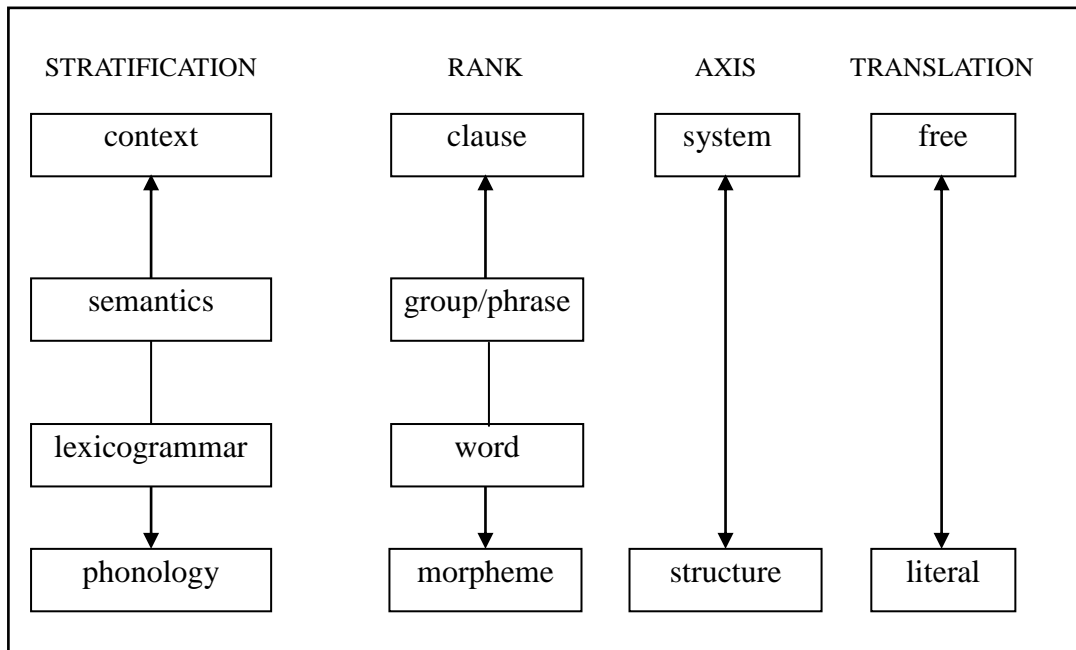


Figure 1 Mapping translation equivalence

Figure 1 shows the hierarchies of stratification, rank and axis in relation to the traditional division of “free” and “literal” translation. Similarly, these dimensions could also be used to define translation equivalence. As Matthiessen (2001:78) suggests, translation equivalence is a matter of degree. In terms of stratification, the highest degree of equivalence is to be found in the context, where the translation is most ‘free’. The lowest degree of equivalence is to be found at the stratum of phonology, where the translation is most ‘literal’. Similarly, if translation equivalence is viewed in the stratum of lexicogrammar, in terms of rank scale, the highest degree of equivalence is achieved at the rank of clause, and the lowest will be found at the rank of morpheme.

The focus of this study, the nominal group with embedded clause, is located in the phrase/group rank. The embedded clause, which functions in the structure of a nominal group whose rank is lower than its own rank, should be considered as down ranked from a clause to a modifier in the nominal group.

2.3 Locating the nominal groups modified by embedded clauses

One of the major differences between an English and a Chinese nominal group with embedded clauses lies in the grammatical structure. In an English nominal group, the

embedded clause appears after the head noun as a post-modifier. In Chinese the embedded clause is a pre-modifier which precedes the head noun. In most cases, there is a subordinating particle *de* (的), used as a marker in front of the head noun to indicate the modifying function of the embedded clause. This particle turns the preceding group/clause into a modifier of the following nominal group (Fang, McDonald, & Cheng, 1995).

English: Assad, Syria's autocratic president [[who dreamed of Arab unity]], died.

Chinese Translation:

梦想 阿拉伯 团结 的 叙利亚 独裁 总统 阿萨德 去世了。
 Dream Arab unity *de* Syria autocratic president Assad died.
 (Back translation from Chinese)

Because of this structural difference in translating English nominal groups with embedded clauses into Chinese, the most common approach is to change the position of the embedded element and as a result, a post-modifier in English becomes a pre-modifier in Chinese. In this case, the translation equivalence is achieved at the group level, where a nominal group in English is transformed into a nominal group in Chinese. No translation shift occurs in terms of rank because the embedded element in the translation still functions as a modifier in the nominal group.

However, the particle *de* is not omnipotent in making all the embedded clauses as pre-modifiers in Chinese. Sometimes, when the embedded clause in an English nominal group is translated still as an embedded clause in Chinese, the translation loses its naturalness. For instance, in translating the example sentence below, the strategy of simply using *de* may make the Chinese version sound rather awkward though grammatically acceptable:

English: Assad, Syria's autocratic president [[who dreamed of Arab unity but watched his neighbors sign peace deals with Israel]], died.

Chinese translation:

[[生前 梦想 阿拉伯世界 的 团结, || 却眼看着|| 邻国 与
 before death dream Arab **de** unity, but watch neighbouring country and
 以色列 签署 和平协议]] 的 叙利亚 的 独裁 总统 阿萨德 去世了。
 Israel sign peach deals **de** Syria **de** autocratic president Assad died.

The translation above is rather awkward to native speakers of Chinese, which leads to another commonly used translation strategy, which is to divide the clause into two or even more parts and place the embedded clause after the major clause (cf. Ai, 2003; Sigurd &

Hong, 1999). This could be done in two ways: either by changing the embedded clause into an independent clause, or by converting the embedded clause into a dependent clause. For example,

Example 1:

English:

Assad, Syria's autocratic president [[**who dreamed of Arab unity but watched his neighbors sign peace deals with Israel**]], died.

Translation:

|||叙利亚的独裁总统阿萨德去世了。|||他生前梦想阿拉伯世界的统一，|| 却眼看着||邻国与以色列签署和平协议。||| (as an independent clause complex)

Example 2:

English: He did not remember his *father*[[**who died when he was three years old**]].

Translation: 他不记得他父亲了，|| **因为他父亲死时他才三岁**。(as a dependent clause)

In spite of their different structures in terms of TAXIS, the above translations have one common feature with reference to the rank scale. The equivalence in both translations is achieved at the rank of clause, and translation shift takes place in terms of rank in both cases. The embedded clause in the English nominal group is shifted to the clause in the Chinese translation.

In general, there are two different ways for translating nominal groups modified by embedded clause in relation to **rank**: 1) the translation equivalence is achieved at the group rank without translation shifts; 2) the translation equivalence is achieved at the clause rank with translation shifts. In both cases, it is the translator that makes a decision whether a translation shift is required.

Some researchers, such as Ai (2003), argue that if the embedded clause has a complicated structure, then the translator should divide the sentence into two parts and lift the embedded clause to a higher rank, otherwise they should remain part of the pre-modification of the nominal group. However, it is far from easy to judge whether the structure of an embedded clause could be regarded as 'complicated' since there is not a widely accepted standard for it. In addition, there is potentially more than one factor that influences the translation process. In her MA thesis, Fang (2005) notes that, in the case of legal translation,

the complexity of both embedded clauses and logico-semantic relations between the Head noun and the embedded clause play important roles in the determination of translation shifts.

2.4 Logico-semantic relation and clause complexity

Within the stratum of lexicogrammar, the entire grammar is represented as a network of systems, each of which is potentially a candidate for quantitative analysis (Halliday & James, 1993). This study will focus on two of the systems: logico-semantic relation and embedded clause complexity, which are found to be significantly related to translation shifts in legal translation.

2.4.1 Logico-semantic relation

Logico-semantic relation is one of the two basic systems in determining how one clause is related to another³. It is most commonly used to study the relationship between clauses. However, the current study will use it to analyze the relationship between the Head noun and the modifying embedded clauses, as the range of semantic relations is “roughly equivalent”(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

There is a wide range of different logico-semantic relations and they are grouped into a small number of general types based on the two fundamental relationships of (1) *expansion* and (2) *projection* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Like clauses in a paratactic or hypotactic relation, an embedded clause may also be either an *expansion* or a *projection*(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Within these two general categories, there are a small number of subcategories, as shown below:

Expansion

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Elaborating | e.g. the only person [[who was kind to him]];
the person [[to take/ taking pictures]] |
| Extending | e.g. the person [[whose name has been forgotten]] |
| Enhancing | e.g. the house [[where she lived]];
the time [[when everything is finished]] |

Projection

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Locutions | e.g. the argument [[that it is harmful]] |
| Ideas | e.g. the idea [[that everyone is equal]] |

³The other basic system is TAXIS, the degree of interdependency between clauses, and is not the focus of current study.

Facts e.g. the fact [[that the river flows south]]

In the case of projection, a locution or an idea is projected metaphorically in a nominal group through a projection noun (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 469), and a fact just comes as if it was ready packed in a projected form.

2.4.2 Clause complexity

In functional grammar, *clause complexity* is the choice whether to develop one clause only (a *clause simplex*), or to be expanded by introducing one or more additional clauses thus forming a *clause complex* (Matthiessen, 1995). Although an embedded clause is rank-shifted as a constituent of or a dependant on the nominal group, it could still be considered as a clause within the embedding structure. Therefore, the analysis of clause complexity also applies to the embedded clause. An embedded clause in a nominal group could be either a clause simplex or a clause complex. For example,

1. the man [[who was talking loudly]] (embedded clause simplex)
2. the man [[who was talking loudly || when I entered the room]](embedded clause complex)

In the second example above, there are two clauses in the embedded clause, i.e., a clause complex in the embedding. Within an embedding clause complex, the relationship between clauses can be either hypotactic or paratactic.

Sometimes, an embedded clause may contain one or more embedded clauses, which is referred to as *further embedding* (Matthiessen, 1995). This kind of feature may appear in both the clause simplex and the clause complex. For example,

further embedding in an embedded clause simplex:

those electric trains [[that are resting at the platform [[where many passengers are waiting]]]]

further embedding in an embedded clause complex:

a reply to an offer [[which purports to be an acceptance || but contains additional or different terms [[which do not materially alter the terms of the offer]]]]

3 Methods

This research is a quantitative study in nature, and is carried out in three steps. Firstly, a parallel corpus is first constructed, which consists of 3 three legal documents (54,903 English words) and 18 public speeches (24,447 English words). The legal texts are published documents by the United Nations, and the speeches are those by different politicians. All the

texts are official publications in English with Chinese translations, and the Chinese translations are of a fairly high quality, and presumably produced by professional translators.

The selection of legal texts and public speeches is intentional. From the perspective of translation, the two types of text are known to be located at the opposite poles of the translation equivalence (see Figure 1). On the one hand, legal texts require a translator to keep high fidelity to the source language texts, making translation shifts only when there is no other alternative. On the other hand, the translation of speech is widely recognized as much freer, and potentially involves more translation shifts

The second step is to extract all the English nominal groups with embedded clauses, together with their corresponding translations in Chinese. In the corpus, there are all together 868 English nominal groups that satisfy the criteria, among which, there are 442 nominal groups from the legal texts and 426 nominal groups from the public speeches.

Once the data are extracted, they are fed into a customized version of SysFan, a database tool developed by Canzhong Wu at Macquarie University, so that they can be analyzed in terms of text type, logico-semantic relation, clause complexity, and translation shift. As SysFan is just a tool for facilitating the analysis, most of the analytical work has to be done manually. This puts constraints on the amount of data that could be analyzed, but fortunately, the tedious statistical work can be dealt with automatically in SysFan.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 General pictures of legal text and speech

Table 1 shows the overall picture of translation shifts in texts of legal document and speech, irrespective of lexicogrammatical features. For each text type, the raw score for translation shift and its percentage out of the total number of nominal groups are provided. For example, in legal translation, totally 86 translation shifts occur, which means 86 English nominal groups are translated at the clause rank, accounting for 19.46% of the total number of nominal groups in legal texts.

	Legal text	Speech
Total number of translation shift	86	176
Percentage	19.46%	41.31%

Table 1 Translation shifts in both text types

The percentage of translation shifts in speech texts are significantly higher than that in legal texts, which indicates that, as expected, translators are much more likely to make translation shifts when dealing with speech. It also shows that the equivalence in legal translation is largely achieved at the group rank, indicating a high degree of fidelity to the source language texts.

Figures 2 and 3 below present the profiles of logico-semantic relations between Head noun and embedded clauses in legal and speech texts respectively. As seen from these two figures, the two types of texts have a similar picture of logico-semantic type in English nominal groups. A closer look shows that nominal groups contain more projected ideas and locutions in their embedded elements in speeches than in legal texts. This is probably because legal texts emphasize objectivity of wordings and rarely contain mental or verbal processes, which are normally construed by human beings.

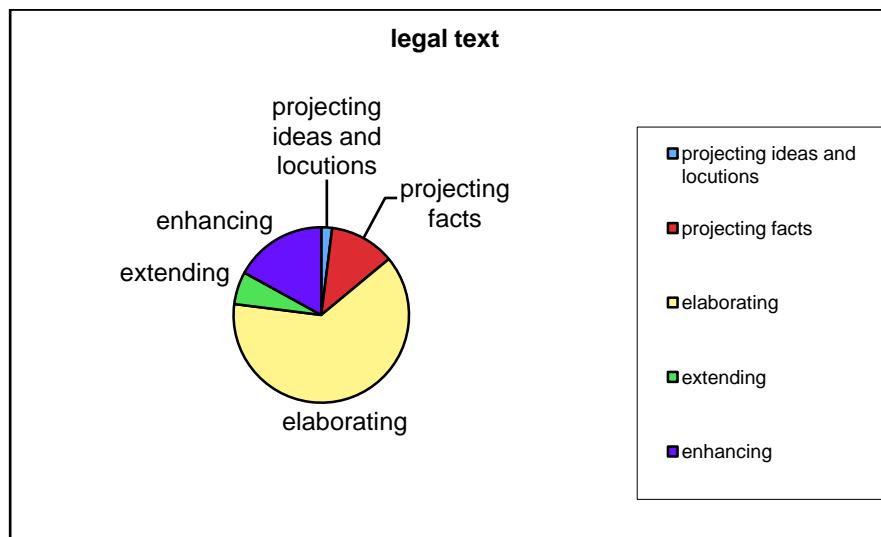


Figure 2 logico-semantic type of legal text

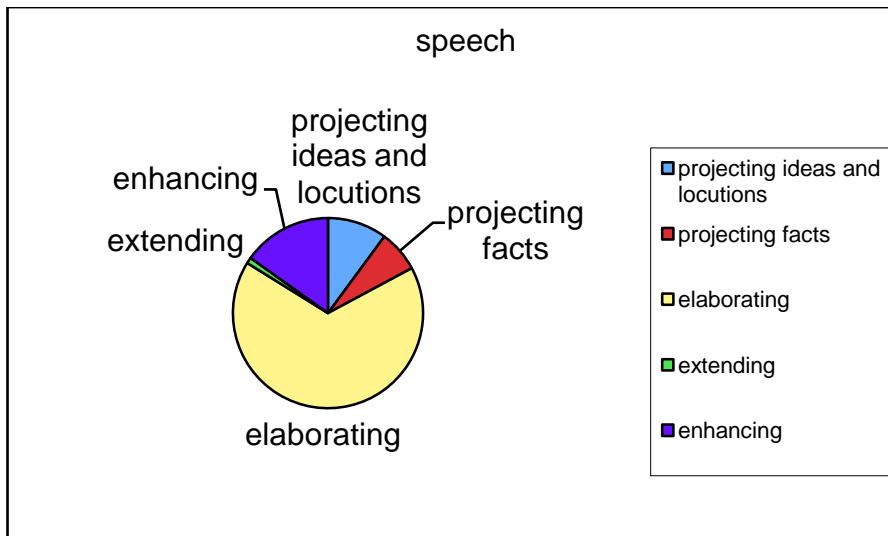


Figure 3 Logico-semantic type of speech

Figure 4 show the clause complexity of embedded clauses in legal and speech texts. In speeches, there is a higher percentage of simpler structures (like simplex/complex without further embedding), whereas there is a higher portion of more complicated embedded structures (like simplex/complex with further embedding). So generally, the embedded clause in nominal groups in legal texts is more complex than texts of speech. This difference is closely related to the difference of registers, or text types. It is widely recognized that legal documents are formal written texts in which legislative statements are expressed in a not only simple, clear and unambiguous but all-inclusive manner (Bhatia 1997), which inevitably involve the use of complex grammatical structures. In contrast, public speeches are spoken texts whose grammatical structures tend to be less complicated in order to make hearers easily understand the speaker's intention.

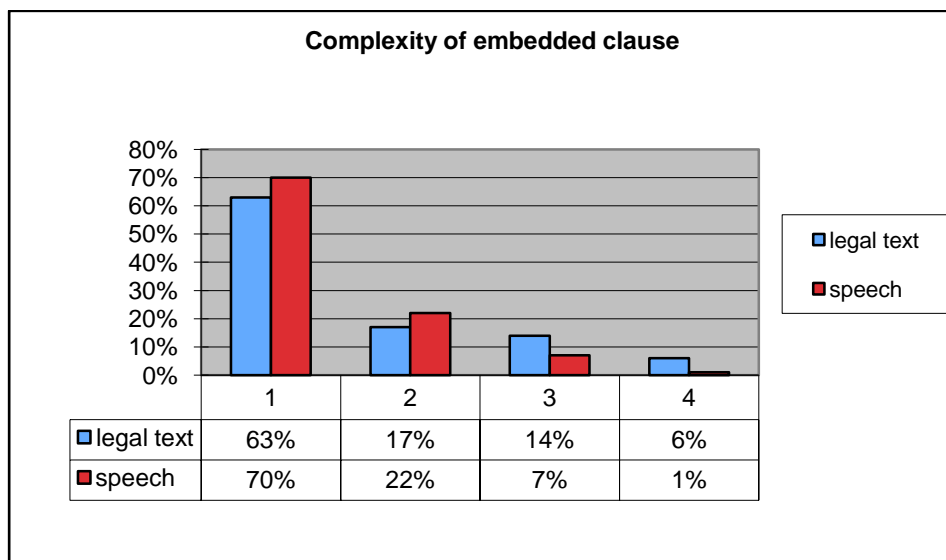


Figure 4 Complexity of embedded clause

Legend: 1=*simplex*, 2=*complex*, 3=*simplex with further embedding*, 4=*complex with further embedding*

4.2 Logico-semantic relation and translation shift

Figure 5 shows the percentage of translation shifts out of all the English nominal groups in each type of logico-semantic relations. In legal texts, translation shift occurs in 56% of the nominal groups which project ideas and locutions, while in the same category of speech, 95% of the nominal groups are translated at the clause rank.

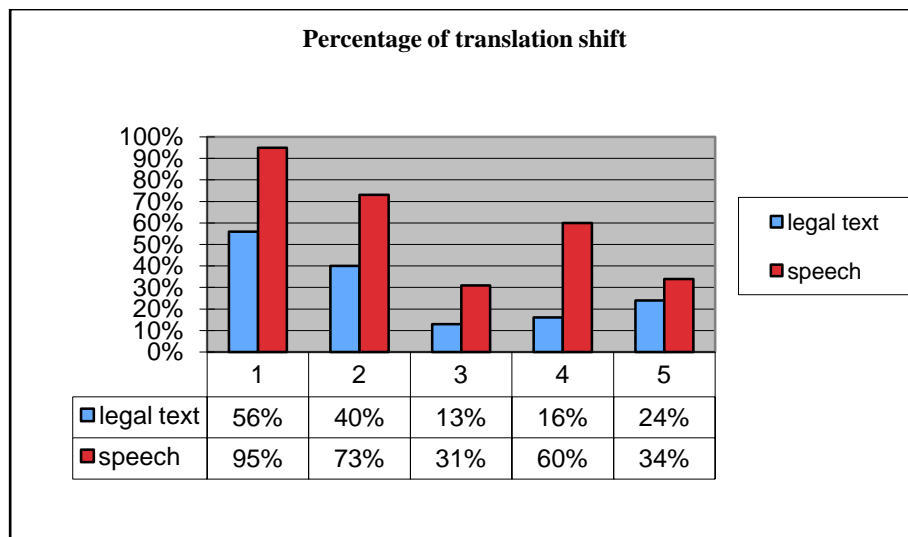


Figure 5 Translation shift in different logico-semantic relation types

Legend: 1=*projecting ideas and locutions*, 2=*projecting facts*, 3=*elaborating*, 4=*extending*, 5=*enhancing*

Although the exact distribution of occurrences of translation shifts varies significantly in the two different text types, there is a correspondence between the two text types in the overall tendency of translation shifts with respect to logico-semantic relations. In both types of texts, the translations of nominal groups projecting ideas and locutions are more likely to involve translation shifts. In general, embedded clauses in projected forms, as locutions and ideas, or as facts, are more likely to be translated as clauses in Chinese than those in expanding forms. This is mainly because, the head nouns in Chinese nominal groups usually have much less metaphoric propensity than their English equivalents in making projections. In other words, there is less potential for construing mental or verbal processes as things in Chinese than their English equivalents. For example,

Speech:

1 ... made the **decision**[[that we were going to establish a working group that would be textile

specific]]

...做出决定，||我们将组建一个专门处理纺织品问题的工作组

<speech><projecting ideas>

2 a strong **commitment** from the Premier [[that we are going to work very hard on closing the trade deficit gap between the United States and China]]

温总理向我做出了坚定的承诺，||保证||将非常努力地缩减美国和中国之间的贸易逆差

<speech><projecting locutions>

3 the **fact**[[that for the first time in 35 years our inflation rate is below 3 per cent and our unemployment rate below 6 per cent]], ...

35年来，澳大利亚首次实现了通货膨胀率低于3%，失业率低于6%

<speech><projecting facts>

Legal text:

4 ... get the **notice** from the buyer [[that he will not perform within the period so fixed]]

收到买方的通知，||声称||他将不在所规定的时间内履行义务

<legal text><projecting locutions>

5 The **fact**[[that the seller is authorized to retain documents controlling the disposition of the goods]]...

卖方受权||保留控制货物处置权的单据

<legal text><projecting facts>

In all the above examples, the logico-semantic relation between the Head noun and the embedded clause is projecting, either as locutions and ideas or as facts. Translation shift occurs in all the above examples because the Chinese equivalents to the English Head nouns do not have the same ability to project. For example, a nominalized *decision* in example 1 is used to construe the mental process of *decide*. Although both *decision* and *decide* have their Chinese equivalent as *juédìng* (决定), the *juédìng* as a verb has much stronger potential to project than its nominal form. The translator chooses to translate *decision* into *juédìng* as a verb in order to project the embedded part and in this way the equivalence is achieved at the clause rank. In example 3 and 5, the *fact* has its Chinese equivalent *shìshí* (事实), which is rarely used for long projection. In this case, the translator only conveys the projected information of the *fact* in the embedded clause and leaves the Head noun *fact* untranslated so as to avoid projecting. In example 4, the English word *notice* is translated into Chinese as *tō*

ngzhī(通知). When tōngzhī is used as a noun in Chinese, it is normally very weak in projecting. This prompts the translator to add a verb shēngchēng(声称) ('claim'), which construes a verbal projection, and in this way the embedded part in English becomes a dependent clause in Chinese which functions as the projected locution of shēngchēng. The translation shift occurs in example 2 out of the same reason.

As seen from the analysis above, the verbs in Chinese which construe mental or verbal processes have a strong potential for making long projections. The noun forms of these verbs (i.e. the nominalizations), together with some fact nouns, are much weaker in projecting, which is quite different from English nominalizations and fact nouns.

Irrespective of logico-semantic relation types, translation shifts take place more often in speeches than in legal documents. This shows that text type may be another parameter that has impact on making shifts in translation.

Although the findings indicate that a very large proportion of projected embedded clauses are translated at the clause rank, there are some instances in speeches where such an embedded clause is rendered as a projected element in a nominal group in Chinese. For example, under the category of projecting locutions and ideas, there are 2 nominal groups in speech texts which do not have a translation shift:

- 1 ... expressed the **hope**[[that life would return to normal]]
... 表达了[[美国人民的生活能够回归到以前正常]]的希望
- 2 ...the **desire**[[to live in freedom]]
...[[自由生活]]的愿望

Translation shift does not occur in these examples partly because the embedded clauses are very short and simple, and partly because there is another parameter to take into account, which is clause complexity.

4.3 Clause complexity and translation shift

As introduced previously (see 2.4.2), English nominal groups with embedded clauses can be divided into four types in terms of the complexity of embedded clauses. Figure 6 shows the percentage of translation shift in the two types of texts out of the total nominal groups for

each category. For example, in legal translation, 10% of all the nominal groups with embedded clause simplex have translation shift, and 30% of the same category in speech. As the embedded structure becomes more and more complex, the percentage of translation shift also increases. Although the exact percentage varies in the two types of texts, there is a similar tendency. As shown previously, the embedded structure in speech is generally simpler than legal texts. In spite of this, translation shift occurs more frequently in speech translation, which implies that text type plays an important role in translator's choice-making during translation process.

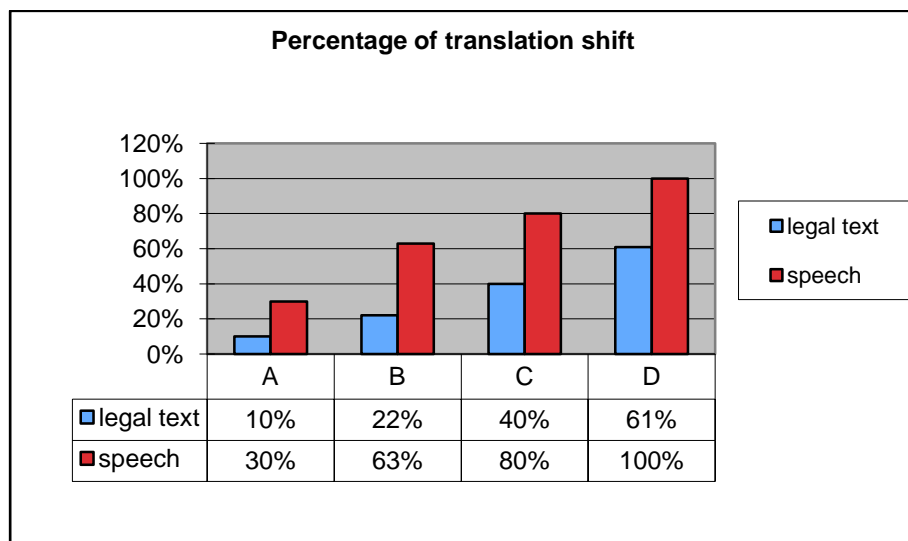


Figure 6 Translation shift and clause complexity

Legend: *A=simplex, B=complex, C=simplex with further embedding, D=complex with further embedding*

In terms of clause complexity, the levels of embedding in the clause have more influence on translation shift than the number of clause nexuses in the clause complex. In other words, a clause simplex with further embedding is more likely to lead to translation shifts than a clause complex without further embedding. Figure 7 shows the ascending order in terms of possibility of translation shift, which applies to the translation of legal texts and speeches, and probably to that of the other text types as well.



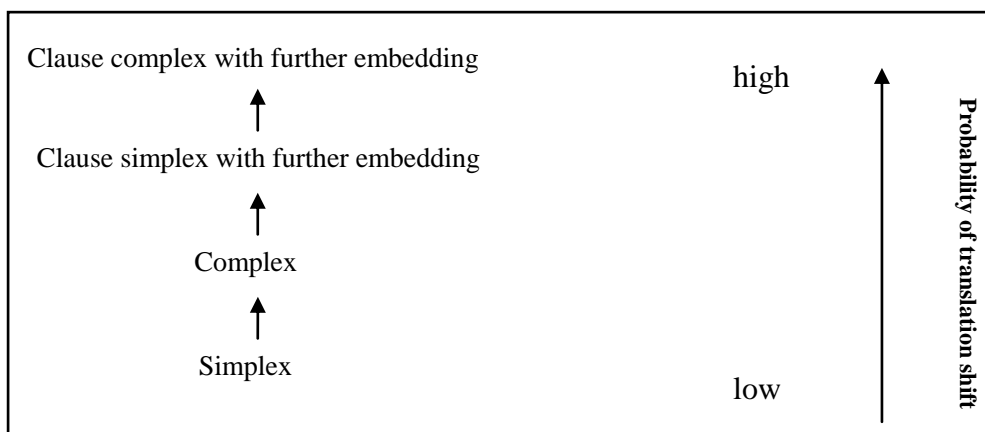


Figure 7: Clause complexity and probability of translation shift

The relationship between clause complexity and the probability of translation shift indicates that the structure of a Chinese embedded clause in a nominal group can hardly be as complex as its English equivalent, especially in terms of further embedding. This is the main reason why embedded clauses of higher clause complexity have greater probability of translation shift. Some examples are provided for illustration:

1 ...those determined **enemies**[[who follow a ruthless ideology [[that despises everything America stands for]]]]

...那些怙恶不悛的**敌人**，||他们奉行凶残的意识形态，||藐视美国代表的一切

<speech><simplex with further embedding>

...怙恶不悛的、[[[[奉行凶残的、藐视美国代表的一切]]的意识形态]]的敌人**

2 a **usage** of [[which the parties knew ||or ought to have known || and which in international trade is widely known to, || and regularly observed by, parties [to contracts of the **type**[[involved in the particular trade concerned]]]]]

双方当事人已知道或理应知道的**惯例**，||而这种惯例，在国际贸易上，已为有关特定贸易所涉**同类合同**的当事人所广泛知道||并为他们所经常遵守

<legal text><complex with further embedding>

[[双方当事人已知道或理应知道的]]、[[[[在国际贸易上，已为有关特定贸易所涉]]同类合同]]的当事人所广泛知道||并为他们所经常遵守]]的惯例**

In the above examples, two different translations are provided, with the second having no translation shifts, which are marked with **. The translations with asterisks in the two examples are both grammatically correct in Chinese, but sound very awkward to the Chinese readers. Since further embedding in an embedded clause in Chinese has a great impact on the

naturalness of the language, translators tend to make translation shifts across ranks.

We also notice that, when clause complexity is combined with another parameter, the logico-semantic type, the probability of making a translation shift in terms of rank will become even more predictable. For example, there is an extremely high possibility of translation shift in translating an embedded clause complex which is the projected element in a nominal group, regardless of its text type. In contrast, in translating an embedded clause simplex which elaborates the Head noun in a nominal group, translators are least likely to make a translation shift.

5 Conclusion

In this study, three parameters are identified to have a bearing on the probability of translation shift: text type, logico-semantic relation between the Head noun and the embedded clause, and the complexity of embedded clauses. The three parameters are closely interrelated. One parameter alone cannot have a decisive effect on the probability profile of translation shift.

As Hatim (2001) points out, there will always be cases, particularly regarding “level shift”, which go beyond straightforward incompatibility between the source language and target language linguistic systems and which will involve translators’ preference. Moreover, at a translator’s decision-making stage, the appropriateness of particular items can only be judged in the light of the item’s place within the overall plan of the text (Hatim & Mason, 1990). It is not feasible to conclude that the above three parameters will be the only three factors that have a bearing on translation shift.

In view of the fact that translation process is a rather complicated human activity which involves not only linguistic but also social and psychological aspects of language use, other factors such as translators’ preference and the functional role played by the nominal group in the overall clause, could also influence the probability of translation shift. However, all the potential factors, either linguistic or nonlinguistic, are all embodied by linguistic features at different ranks, and they function through these features during translation process. Therefore, the current study is expected to at least provide some insights into how a translator’s decision of making a translation shift could be influenced by the lexicogrammatical features at the group level in both the source language and the target language. By using systemic functional linguistic theory, it is possible to give forensic evidence to show how language features affects the decision-making process of a translator.

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