Cohesion Strategies for English-Thai Translation:
'novice translators'

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Abstract

The purposes of this study are to investigate English-Thai translation strategies used by Thai graduate students in a Thai university to establish cohesion in their translations of English-Thai news reports, one type of informative texts, and to explore motivation for their choices of cohesive devices in order to create a balance between accuracy and naturalness in their translations. Findings show that literal translation and shifts were employed (48.15% and 51.85% respectively) on cohesive devices by these so-called 'novice translators' who enrolled in a translation course. And the factors for their cohesion shifts were grammatically driven (59.52%) and stylistically motivated (40.48%). These findings seem to challenge the stereotype about novice translators that their translations often lack cohesion, which is the most palpable feature of text, unlike translations by professionals. These findings also have implications for translation teaching.

1 Introduction

Many theorists, e.g. Newmark (1988), Delisle (1988) and Neubert and Shreve (1992), agree that translation is a complex problem-solving process; and that strategies to solve translation problems are not pre-determined – there are no written rules for solutions. A translator needs to decide and make judgements whether to be 'faithful' to the source text (accuracy) or to adjust the translated text for the sake of 'naturalness' (acceptability). Moreover, a translator always has to make choices in dealing with lexical and grammatical discrepancies between the source language and the target language. In most cases, translators will try to achieve equivalence at the textual level, rather than the lexical or sentential level, so that the target reader will not view the translated text as foreign or strange. They may adjust certain textual features of the source text to correspond to the acceptable ways a text is organized in the target language (Baker 1992:112). One cause of mismatch between the source language and the target language is cohesion – the most easily noticeable textual determinant of all the seven features, generally accepted by theorists in text linguistics. These features that combine to determine or create textuality are intentionality, acceptability, situationality, informativity, coherence, cohesion, and intertextuality (Larson 1998:457; Neubert and Shreve 1992:70). Since "cohesion is the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which provide links between various parts of a text"(Baker 1992:180), only the correct use of cohesion devices will make the translated text sound natural and easily understood (Larson 1998:457).

Interestingly, recent studies have pointed out that cohesion is a fundamental feature that can distinguish translations by novice translators from those done by experts.
This is because the former are likely to translate at the levels of word, phrase and sentence – not at the textual level (Baer and Bystrova-McIntyre 2009:162-3). Therefore, their translations tend to lack cohesion and thus sound foreign or unnatural. Unfortunately, however, little is known, particularly in the area of English-Thai translation, about cohesion strategies used by novice translators, or their motivation for the choice of cohesion devices in order to create a balance between accuracy and naturalness in their translations for the best interest of the target text reader.

2 Research Questions

2.1 What are the cohesion strategies used by the novice translators to translate English informative texts into Thai?
2.2 What are the motivations for their choices of cohesion in translating informative texts into Thai?

3 Methodology

3.1 Background of the Study

In this research, the case studies are translations of English news reports by students who enrolled in Translation for Graduate Studies of which the course objectives are that students should be able to translate short passages from English into Thai, edit translated texts, and use dictionaries for English language learning and translating purposes.

According to Newmark (1988), texts are categorized into three types on account of their language functions: informative, expressive and vocative texts. He proposes that translation should respond to the function of the text. Textbooks and news reports are two examples of informative texts. And communicative translation should be used when translating informative texts so that the meaning of the source text will be rendered in such a way that is easily understood by the target reader.

In Translation for Graduate Studies course, news reports, not textbooks, are selected as instructional materials for students to practice translating. They are easily accessible and suitablefor students from all academic disciplines. The content in the news reports is concerned with general topic of knowledge, which can be exciting and amusing, and the language is non-technical, non-regional, familiar and modern (Newmark 1988).

Furthermore, Newmark suggests that in all communicative translation, naturalness is important. Translators can translate properly only when the target language is their language of habitual use. That is why communicative translation is the aim of this translation course offered to students whose native language is Thai.

3.2 Conceptual Frameworks

3.1.1 Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of cohesion in English was adopted to analyse cohesion in the three English source texts.
3.1.2 Chanawangsa's (1986) model of cohesion in Thai was adopted to analyse cohesion in the 39 translated texts.
3.1.3 Newmark's (1988) and Baker's (1992) models of translation were adopted to analyse the 39 translated texts.
3.1.4 Swan's (2009) *Practical English Usage* was adopted to analyse punctuation devices in the English source texts.
3.1.5 The Royal Academy's (2005) guidelines were adopted to analyze the translations of English punctuation devices in the 39 translated texts.

3.3 Participants

The participants were 13 Thai graduate students who enrolled in Translation for Graduate Studies course in a university in Thailand. This 3-credit hour elective course ran for 14 weeks, during which they practiced translating by applying what they were trained in classes to understand language to translate. There was no explicit training in cohesion strategies.

3.4 Data Collection

An achievement test was given to the participants as their final examination (after 42 hours of classes). The test consisted of three informative texts, which were three news reports from international news agencies published in an English newspaper in Thailand. (See Appendix) The participants were given

two hours to translate the texts into Thai. The final examination was an open-book test and dictionaries were allowed in the examination room.

4 Data Analysis and Results

The data was manually analysed as follows:

4.1 Analysis of the Source Texts

4.1.1 The three source texts (216 words) were analysed for cohesion devices as described by Halliday and Hasan (1976). All cohesive items in each source text were identified. The result revealed that61 cohesive items were found. The 61 items were categorized into cohesion types. Four types and 11 sub-types were found. There was no substitution. The details are as follows:
- Reference (34 items): pronominal (22), extended reference (1), co-reference (1), demonstratives (9) and comparatives (1)
- Lexical Cohesion (21 items): reiteration (16), and collocations (5)
- Ellipsis (3 items): nominal ellipsis (1), verbal ellipsis (2)
- Conjunction (3 items): temporal (2), and additive (1)

4.1.2 Baker (1992:193) suggests that "In addition to the type of conjunction discussed by Halliday and Hasan, English also relies on a highly-developed punctuation system to signal breaks and relations between chunks of information." The three source texts were analysed for punctuation devices used to connect sentences as described in Swan (2009). The results revealed that two types of punctuation used to connect sentences were found as follows:

- Comma (6 items)and full stop (14 items)

4.1.3 To sum up, the results showed that five types of cohesion were found in the three source texts: reference, lexical cohesion, punctuation, ellipsis, and conjunction. The total number of cohesion items found was 81.

4.2 Analysis of the Translated Texts

4.2.1 The 39 translated texts (3texts/1participant) were analysed for cohesion devices as described in Chanawangsa (1986) and for punctuation and spacing as described in the Royal Academy's (2005) guidelines. Unlike written words in English, there is no space between written words in Thai. Spacing is thus used to mark breaks between chunks of information, while conjunctions are used to express relations between information chunks.

The translated cohesive items in the 39 texts were identified, categorized and calculated for frequency percentage. Any cohesion type rendered by the majority of the participants (higher than 50%) was taken to be the cohesion type employed by the participants as a group in rendering that particular English cohesion type in their translations.

4.2.2 The translated cohesive items and their cohesion types were compared with those in the source texts to figure out the types of strategies used.

4.2.3 The results revealed that of the 81 English cohesive items, 39 items or 48.15% were translated literally and 42 items or 51.85 % were shifted or changed to different cohesion types.

4.2.4 The translation shifts were analysed and categorized. If an item is shifted to a different cohesion type or is omitted, it is categorized as a major shift. If it is shifted to a different sub-type of the same cohesion type, it is categorized as a minor shift. It was found that of the 42 English cohesive items that were shifted, 45.06% were major shifts and 6.79% were minor shifts.

4.2.5 The shifts were further analysed for the cohesion types to which they were shifted. As for the major shifts, it was found that two items of lexical cohesion and one ellipsis were shifted to three reference; one reference and one ellipsis were shifted to two lexical cohesion; 11 punctuation devices

were shifted to 11 spacing; three punctuation devices were shifted to three conjunctions and one item of lexical cohesion was shifted to one ellipsis. Regarding the minor shifts, two pronominals were shifted to two pronominally-used nouns; one synonym was shifted to one repetition; one general noun was shifted to one superordinate and one superordinate was shifted to one repetition. Finally, as for omission, it was found that the cohesive items that were omitted were nine reference, six punctuations, and 1.5 conjunctions. (See Table 1 in Appendix)

4.2.6 It should be noted that there was one residue regarding the translation of conjunction. There was a tie between the major shift (0.5 item) and the minor shift (0.5 item) in the translation of additive.

4.2.7 To sum up, of the 81 English cohesive items, 16.5 items were omitted and 64.5 items were rendered as cohesion in Thai. (See Table 1 in Appendix)

4.2.8 The shifts were analysed for their motivation. According to Newmark (1988), there are two types of shifts: obligatory and optional. The former is grammatically driven and the latter is stylistically motivated. The results were that of the 42 items that were shifted, 25 items or 59.52% were grammatically driven and 17 items or 40.48% were stylistically motivated.

4.2.9 The obligatory shifts were reference (3 items), punctuation (20 items), and ellipsis (2 items). The optional shifts were reference (9 items), lexical cohesion (6 items), and conjunction (2 items). (See Table 2 in Appendix)

4.2.10 To sum up the data analysis, it was found that of the 81 English cohesive items, 39 items (48.15%) were translated literally and 42 items (51.85%) were shifted. As for the motivation for the shifts, of the 42 items that were shifted, 25 items (59.52%) were grammatically driven and 17 items (40.48%) were stylistically motivated.

5 Discussion

The results revealed that, apart from translating literally, which Newmark (1988:67-70) views as the basic translation procedure where translation starts, the participants also made changes at the textual level, which is a common practice among professional translators (Baker 1992:188). This suggests thatthe participants were able to decide and make judgements whether to be 'faithful' to the source text or to adjust the translated text for the sake of 'naturalness'. Firstly, it was found that literal translation (48.15%) and shifts (51.85%) were employed by the participantsin their cohesion translation. The types of strategies are in line with those used by professional translators in their translation of English news reports into Thai (Koonme 1990). Secondly, it was found that the participants' choices of cohesion shifts were motivated as follows: 59.52% were obligatory or grammatically driven due to the linguistic discrepancies between English and Thai, and 40.48 % were stylistically motivated so that natural translations would be rendered.

The results seem to challenge a common stereotype about 'novice translators' that they are unlikely to translate cohesion, resulting in translation that sounds 'foreign' or unnatural. One noteworthy example is the participants' translation of English extended reference *'it'* in one source text: *'We are treating **it** as an accident.'* (See Source Text 1 in Appendix) This type of reference is considered a special kind of reference. What makes it special is that it can also refer to the larger portion of the text, not only to one particular person or object (Halliday and Hasan 1976). It was found that this particular reference was shifted to lexical cohesion: เหตุการณ์นี้ (this incident), เรื่องนี้ (this matter), and กรณีนี้ (this case). This is in line with what Koonme (1990:4) found in the translation of professional translators. The extended reference *'it'* was shifted to lexical cohesion: โศกนาฏกรรมที่เกิดขึ้นกับเครื่องบินโดยสารของอิหร่าน (tragedy that happened to passenger plane of Iran).The shift   is stylistically motivated to make the translation natural.

6 Conclusion and Implications for Translation Teaching

As already mentioned that translation is a complex problem-solving process and strategies to solve translation problems are not pre-determined. The question thus lies in what can be done to make

translation students well-equipped to adequately handle translation problems. Baker (2011:3) suggests that "some areas in modern linguistics theory can provide a basis for training translators and can inform as well as guide the decisions they have to make in the course of performing their work." Interestingly, the findings of this study showed that the participants were able to translate at the textual level, which is normally handled by professional translators. These 'novice translators' employed both literal translation and shifts to deal with cohesion, a textual feature. Moreover, they seemed to
be able to create a balance between accuracy and naturalness in their translation by adjusting cohesion to respond to both linguistic discrepancies and linguistic preferences for the sake of naturalness in their translations. Probably they used their understanding of language as guidelines in their decisions, which did not seem to be made at random.

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Appendix

Table 1: Cohesion Strategies

COHESION TYPES	English	LITERAL	SHIFTS						Thai
			Reference	Lexical cohesion	Spacing	Ellipsis	Conjunction	Omission	
REFERENCE:	**34**	**22**							**27**
pronominals	22	17	2					3	
extended reference	1	0		1					
co-reference	1	1							
demonstratives	9	3						6	
comparatives	1	1							
LEXICAL COHESION:	**21**	**15**							**20**
reiteration	16	11	1	3		1			
collocations	5	4	1						
PUNCTUATION:	**20**	**0**							**11**
comma	6	0			3		3		
full stop	14	0			8			6	
ELLIPSIS:	**3**	**1**							**2**
nominal ellipsis	1	0		1					
verbal ellipsis	2	1	1						
CONJUNCTION:	**3**	**1**							**4.5**
temporal	2	1						1	
additive	1	0					0.5	0.5	
SUBSTITUTION	0	0							0
TOTAL	**81**	**39**	**5**	**5**	**11**	**1**	**3.5**	**16.5**	**64.5**

Table 2: Motivations for Shifts

COHESION TYPES	N	SHIFTS	
		obligatory	optional
REFERENCE:	**12**	**3**	**9**
pronominals	5		5
extended reference	1		1
co-reference	0		
demonstratives	6	3	3
comparatives	0		
LEXICAL COHESION:	**6**		**6**
reiteration	5		5
collocations	1		1
PUNCTUATION:	**20**	**20**	
comma	6	6	
full stop	14	14	
ELLIPSIS:	**2**	**2**	
nominal ellipsis	1	1	
verbal ellipsis	1	1	
CONJUNCTION:	**2**		**2**
temporal	1		1
additive	1		1
SUBSTITUTION	**0**		
TOTAL	42	25	17
%	100	59.52	40.48

Source Text 1

A train derailment at a railway construction site has killed 11 people and injured at least one.

The train that derailed on Friday morning was carrying stones used in the construction of a rail line linking Baotou to Mandalt. The cause of the accident was still under investigation.

Source Text 2

A New Zealand man is recovering from injuries after being run over by his wife.

Sandy Telford ran over her husband, Terry, as she backed down the driveway of their rural property in Wellington. Not realizing what she had done, Mrs. Telford then drove her car forward, running over him again. Police said the woman was distraught. "We are treating it as an accident," a police spokesman said.

Source Text 3

An Illinois man said it didn't take him long to decide not to mess with the uninvited, antlered guest he found in his kitchen.

Mark Page and his wife were sleeping when the sound of breaking glass and hooves woke them up. Mr. Page went downstairs to find a large buck in the kitchen with its head in the sink. He said he looked at the animal, turned tail and ran upstairs. The animal also was spooked and barreled through a closed window to escape. Mr. Page said the deer jumped through a different window to get into his home.