

การวิเคราะห์ข้อผิดพลาดการแปลโดยใช้ทฤษฎีไวยากรณ์ระบบ
และหน้าที่: กรณีศึกษานักเรียนไทยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษ
เป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

A Systemic Functional Grammar Approach to Translation Error
Analysis: A Case-Study of Thai EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate translation errors made by third-year English major students at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University in terms of word level, syntactic level and discourse level using Systemic Functional Grammar. The analysis focuses on the errors made when translating English-Thai translated texts. The sampling group was 97 third-year undergraduate students, majoring in English at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, Thailand. This study will provide not only the students with a better understanding of their translation difficulties and the process of evaluating with objective and constructive feedback in order to help them improve their translating performance, but will also provide Thai teachers with information that will help to develop translated materials and practical tools for their students.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Grammar, Translation Studies, Translation Error Analysis, Thai EFL Learners' translation difficulties

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษาในครั้งนี้คือเพื่อศึกษาความผิดพลาดทางการแปลของนักศึกษาปีที่ 3 สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงใหม่ในระดับคำไวยากรณ์และอนุพากย์โดยใช้ทฤษฎีไวยากรณ์ระบบและหน้าที่ โดยการวิเคราะห์จะมุ่งศึกษาความผิดพลาดในการแปลจากตัวบทภาษาอังกฤษเป็นตัวบทภาษาไทย โดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างคือนักศึกษาปีที่ 3 ในระดับปริญญาตรี สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงใหม่จำนวน 97 คน การศึกษาในครั้งนี้ไม่เพียงแต่เป็นประโยชน์ต่อนักศึกษาที่ส่งผลต่อความเข้าใจความยากของการแปลได้ดีขึ้นและยังสร้างกระบวนการในการประเมินผลการแปลโดยปราศจากอคติส่วนตัวของผู้ประเมินและปฏิกิริยาตอบกลับเชิงสร้างสรรค์ความรู้เพื่อก่อให้เกิดการพัฒนาประสิทธิภาพการแปลของตัวนักศึกษาเอง และยังส่งผลให้อาจารย์ชาวไทยได้รับข้อมูลอันจะช่วยพัฒนาสื่อการสอนแปลและเครื่องมือเชิงปฏิบัติสำหรับนักศึกษาอีกด้วย

คำสำคัญ: ไวยากรณ์ระบบและหน้าที่ การศึกษาการแปล การวิเคราะห์ข้อผิดพลาด การแปล ความยากในการแปลของผู้เรียนชาวไทยที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

INTRODUCTION

The world of globalization and modernization era plays an essential role in enhancing Thai people for using English in every domain of communication, both in local and global contexts. As a result, Thai government puts a lot of effort to develop English language skills of Thai people in order to give them to be able to speak, read and write in English well enough to communicate effectively with people who speak English.

When Thai society is developing and becoming more and more sophisticated, translation has become an important aspect for the exchange system of information and ideas. As performing a vital role in communication, translation is required to transfer the message from a source language to a target language. According to Robinson (1997), translators should fully understand the original text and be responsible for giving the equivalent message. They should have an expert knowledge of both the source and the target languages and avoid word-for-word translation when they translate a text from one language into another. In other words, the insufficiency of both source and target language competencies has negative impact on translate proficiency as well as the quality of translated texts.

As the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI), the world's largest ranking of countries by English skills, benchmarks English proficiency across 54 countries using a sample of just under 2 million people, an average Thai is considered to have very low English proficiency (53 of 54 rankings) which is a barrier in translation. Likewise, Bunnag (2005) indicated that, based on the scores of two international standardized tests: TOEFL and TOEIC, Thai test takers' scores were significantly low, compared to those of Southeast Asian countries. Hence, it is not an easy task for Thai people to achieve competence translation.

Regarding the low-level proficiency of the Thais in the English language, many translation errors were made while translating. Such works include Suksaeresup and Thep-Ackrapong 2009, Bootchuy 2008, Ubol 1981, SriChai 2002, and Pongpairaj 2002. In a nutshell, overall translation errors can be divided into three levels: word level, sentence level and paragraph level. In Thailand, translation is extremely difficult for Thai learners. This is because English and Thai are different at all levels: pronunciation, word, grammar and text (Thep-Ackrapong, 2005). Also, the cultural equivalence between these two languages is considered as unavoidable obstacle that all EFL student translators have to encounter, resulting in ineffective translated text. Consequently, for decades, it has become an attractive issue that many linguists have studied in order to expose what types of errors frequently occur and why they make those errors.

Interestingly, even though many studies (Steiner, 2002; Malmkjaer, 2005; Juliane, 2009; Ana and Iraide, 2013) have been done to investigate the relationship between translation and linguistic approach there were a few studies (Kim, 2007) investigating the translation issues based on Systemic Functional Linguistics. Most of previous studies conducted in Thailand have approached the issue of translating from the viewpoints of linguistic differences between source and target texts. Consequently, I was motivated to undertake a study of English-Thai translation based on the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics including word level, sentence level and paragraph level for the sake of contributing the practical methods for examining and assessing students' errors when translating between English-Thai in order to provide them with sufficient knowledge to handle their translation difficulties.

The present study should be a contribution to the development of linguistic studies and translator education and training. Knowing what types of errors frequently occur and how such an approach can be used to evaluate student translations will provide not only the students with a better understanding of their translation difficulties and the process of evaluating with objective and constructive feedback in order to help them improve their translating performance, but will also provide Thai teachers with information that will help to develop translated materials and practical tools for their students.

LINGUISTIC THEORY AND TRANSLATION PRACTICE

This study uses Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) as a tool to analyze translated texts carried out by English major students who had enrolled the translation course at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University. As SFL considers language as a resource for meaning, it is especially suitable for analyzing translation. This is because translation deals with the transfer of meaning. They share the same focuses. As Halliday (1992, p.15) points out that '[t]ranslation is meaning making activity, and we would not consider any activity to be translation if it did not result in the creation of meaning'. Hence, he adds a language theory which is relevant to translation has to be 'a theory of meaning as choice' (Halliday, 1992, p.15). In SFL paradigm, a speaker makes choices from within the total meaning potential of the language. Each utterance encodes different kind of meanings, which are related to the functions of language. However, the grammatical resources responsible for realizing such meanings most often work differently across languages. Thus a translator, in order to accomplish his/her delicate task of interpreting and rendering a source text into a meaningful and effective target text, needs to understand all the meanings conveyed in the source language, and reproduce them in the target language.

Thus, this study undertakes the notion of Halliday (1994) in analyzing students' translation text seeking to explain the source of errors. To achieve this purpose, the study examines the students' errors in terms of the three Hallidayan metafunctions. As Halliday (1985, 1994) mentions that language has three main metafunctions according to its function with regard to different contexts:

(1) The Ideational metafunction is concerned with ideation. According to Thompson (2004), ideational metafunction is the way which we use language to talk about our experience of the world, including to the worlds in our own minds, to describe events and states and the entities involved in them. Halliday (2003) divided the ideational meta-function into two functions: the logical and the experiential functions. The logical function refers to the grammatical resources for building up grammatical units into complexes, for instance, for combining two or more clauses into a clause complex. In other words, the logical one relates to the connections between the messages and to the ways in which we signal these connections. (Thompson, 2004).

Whereas the experiential function deals with the transmission of ideas, representing processes or experiences of consciousness and relations (Halliday, 1985). A clause can often be broken down into three functional constituents: Participant, process and circumstance. A participant represents the concept that is being talked about, and in the grammar is most likely realized by a nominal group. Process is about happening, doing, and being, saying and thinking. It is realized by verbal group. Circumstance realized by adverbial group, prepositional phrase or nominal group, is the circumstantial information about the process. Halliday (1985) proposes the six primary options in process: material process, relational process, verbal process, mental process, existential process, and behavioral process. Thus, in this study aimed at investigating the errors in terms of the logical and the experiential functions occurred in the text.

(2) **The Interpersonal metafunction** is concerned with the interaction between speaker and addressee which is realized by the systems of mood and modality. According to Butt (1995), 'the interpersonal metafunction uses language to encode interaction and to show how defensible or binding we find our proposition or proposal.' Mood refers to the component of lexicogrammar. Each clause can be divided into mood and residue. Mood element is analyzed into subject and finite while the residue refers to the rest of verbal group. The subject is realized by a nominal group whereas the finite is realized by the first of the verbal group. In the nutshell, the mood structure indicates how clause is structured to realize the speech functions of offer, command, statement and question in interaction. However, modality refers to the degree of certainty and truth of statements about the world. It is the general term for all signs of speakers' opinion. As Matthiessen (1995) states, the interpersonal metafunction is a resource for enacting social roles and relationships between speaker and writer and listener and reader. This study is therefore to analyze the system of mood and modality in the students' translated text.

(3) **The Textual metafunction** is concerned with the creation of text. It is the presentation of ideational and interpersonal meaning. Information can be shared by speaker and listener in text that unfolds in context. One of the major textual systems is THEME. According to Halliday (1985), theme-Rheme is a structure that carries a line of meaning, Theme is defined as the point of departure of the message, and frequently serves to present given information which has already been mentioned somewhere in the text. That is to say, theme contains familiar or old information. Rheme is the second part of the clause in which theme is developed. It usually contains unfamiliar information, or new knowledge that a writer assumes his/her readers do not know. Halliday (1985) also stated that theme, the initial place, has played a crucial role in a clause, It will influence how readers interpret every piece of information that follow.

Given information presented in theme position acts as a signpost so that the readers know where the message are from and where they are heading to. So, this study is to compare theme-rheme structure between the source and target texts.

These metafunctions provide a systematic way to identify each type of meaning and register, which helps people gain a better understanding of language. In this study, analysis was done primarily on semantics in terms of ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meanings and lexicogrammar which is a way of how the translators choose the words and phrases that they actually employ to transfer meaning from source languages to target languages.

MATERIAL AND METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

This study focuses on the meaning in texts translated from English into Thai aiming to scrutinize translation errors and to provide systematic explanation relating to such issues. In order to ascertain those errors, Systemic Functional grammar (SFG) which concerns language as a system of meaning was used as a tool in this study. As Taylor (1993, p. 88) states, '[...] grammar should be a part of the education of a translator, and in particular functional grammar since it is concerned with language in texts and with the role grammar plays, in combination with lexicon, in carrying out specific functions and realizing specific types of meaning'. Moreover, SFL concerns language in actual use and centers around text and their contexts. Consequently, it is fit to deal with the actual goal of a translator to translate texts. Therefore, 68 student texts translated by third-year undergraduate students majoring in English were obtained as the raw data. These students were enrolled in the translation course ENG 3219: Translation 1 in Academic Year 2014 at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University. Within this course, they were assigned to translate text entitled 'Dear

The source text was a personal letter as an example of anecdote text type (Paltridge, 1996). Based on a framework for classifying texts of Ure (1989), the personal letter is located in the non-specialized realm. It is classified as a written dialogic text type. Its social purpose is concerned with sharing. It involves action rather than reflection (See Table 1).

		written	spoken				
		dialogue	monologue				dialogue
Specialized	1	Letter	Reference book	Lecture	Debate	expounding	Reflection
		Menu	Text book				
non-specialized	2	Questionnaire	History	Statement in evidence	Cross examination	Reporting	
			Biography				
			News report				
	3	Comic strip	Memoirs	Radio commentary	Drama	recreating	
			Novels				
					Folk play		
			Stories		Collaborative narrative		
	4	Letter, personal	Diary	Reminiscence	Conversation	Sharing	action
	5	Letter, business	--	--	Co-operation	Doing	
	6	Letter, agony aunt	Advertisements	Prayers	Consultation	recommending	
			Blurb				
			Advice		Business messages		
			Warnings				
	7	Open letter: exhortation	Act of parliament	Sermon	Demonstration	Enabling	
			Regulations				
			Knowledge				
Specialized	8	Letter to the editor	Critical studies	Speech (TV talks)	Discussion	exploring	reflection
			Investigations				

Table 1: Ure Text typology (1989)

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p.10): “The clause is the central processing unit in the lexicogrammar – in the specific sense that it is in the clause that meanings of different kinds are mapped into an integrated grammatical structure.” Therefore, clauses are the basic unit of the language analysis. Firstly, the selected texts were segmented into clause simplexes and clause complexes by identifying the clause boundaries and number of clause simplexes and clause complexes by using symbols in order to analyze the three metafunctions.

Secondly, each clause was analyzed according to the three different metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational metafunction was further analyzed into two modes of meaning: experiential and logical. In order to understand experiential meaning, each clause was broken down into three functional constituents: Participant, Process and Circumstance. For the analysis of interpersonal meaning, Subject and Finite relations were identified and for the analysis of thematic meaning, Theme and Rheme relations were identified. After all kinds of errors within different metafunctions were scrutinized, percentages were calculated by dividing each type of translation error by the total number of errors.

DATA ANALYSIS

According to Metafunction dimension based on meaning using SFL, errors can be classified into 3 different metafunctions: ideational, which is divided into experiential and logical, interpersonal, and textual. The errors in experiential meaning were found at the highest rate (52%) followed by logical meaning (21%), interpersonal meaning (16%) and textual meaning (11%). Figure 1 illustrates the percentage error clauses by metafunctions.

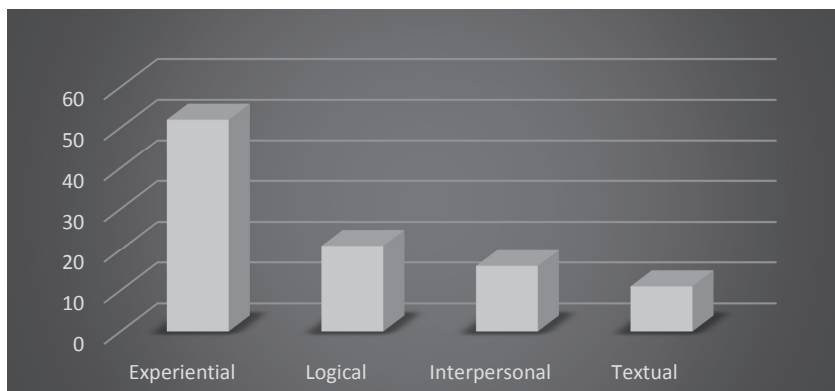


Figure 1 Percentage error clauses by metafunction

Discussions of errors within different metafunctions

In this section, some examples of translation errors in each different metafunction are discussed. For each example, a clause is indicated with double bars (||) and a clause complex, with triple bars (|||). The source text (ST) analysis of the clause or clause complex is accompanied by the target text (TT) as well as the researcher's literal translation of the target text (LT). The problematic parts are highlighted in bold>.

1. The Ideational metafunction errors

In realizing the experiential function, it is represented by transitivity which relates to process, participant, and circumstance. According to Halliday (1994, p. 106), processes are central to transitivity. He states that processes are 'sets under transitivity which is the most powerful impression of experience..., that consists of 'going-on' – happening, doing, sensing, meaning, and being and becoming and they are realized by verbal group in a clause'. Since the verbal group plays a vital role as a way of representing patterns of experience,

the essential task of a translator is that of preserving and conveying a particular kind of process. In this section, an example of experiential meaning error is discussed.

Example 1

12.1	We	will make	a living	out of	growing drugs
	participant	process [material]	participant	circumstance	participant
	nominal group	verbal group	nominal group	prepositional1 group	
	and	selling	them	to Dragons friends	
	conjunction	nominal group	nominal group	circumstance	
	prepositional1 group			prepositional2 group	
TT:	พวกเราจะผลิตยาและขายให้เพื่อนของดรากอน				
LT:	We will grow drugs and sell them to Dragon's friends				

In the above example, there are two metafunctional issues. One is that the main component of experience, which is represented by the process ‘*will make*’, is omitted and therefore the experiential metafunction is misrepresented. The other issue is related to the logical metafunction. ‘*out of growing drugs and selling them*’ is an adverbial phrase. ‘*Out of growing drugs and selling them*’ in the source text is a prepositional phrase which functions to modify the verb ‘*make*’. However the target text fails to convey the logical relations. An alternative translation would be พวกเราจะทำมาหากินโดยการปลูกกัญชาและการค้ายาเสพติด..., which means “*We will earn our living by growing drugs and selling them...*”.

Example 2

1.1	I	am writing	this note	to say that	I
	participant	process [material]	participant	process [verbal]	participant
	nominal group	verbal group	nominal group	non finite clause	nominal group
	haven't been honest		to you	lately	
	process [mental]		circumstance	circumstance	
	verbal group		prepositional group	adverbial group	
TT:	หนูได้เขียนจดหมายฉบับนี้ เพื่อที่จะบอกแม่ว่า เมื่อไม่นานมานี้หนูได้ทำผิดต่อแม่				
LT:	I wrote this letter to tell you that I have done something wrong to you lately.				

In example 2, there is a Process error which results in a shift in experiential metafunction. To find the proper equivalent, the verbal phrase ‘ได้ทำผิด’ was used by the most of the students (89%). This phrase means ‘did something wrong’, and has a generic relationship of phrase which leads to the distortion of its meaning. According to Halliday(1985), six primary options in process were proposed: relational, existential, material, behavioural, mental, and verbal. To find the precise equivalent, the translator should clearly identifies the target concept which represents the same type of process in the source language. Regarding the types of processes mentioned above, this verbal process ‘*haven't been honest*’ can be classified into the mental process in terms of cognition subtype which is related to thinking. Alternative translation would be ‘ไม่ซื่อสัตย์’ which means ‘dishonest’ or ‘ไม่จริงใจ’ *insincere*’ which is classified as the same type of the concept in the source text.

2. The Interpersonal metafunction errors

As interpersonal focuses on setting up and maintaining social relations, and indicates the roles of the participants in communication, we use language either to influence the others' attitudes, or to provide information. To keep the original meaning from the source text, the translator must translate the meaning of what is being said, rather than pass his/her own judgment or share emotions. Based on the data, the interpersonal meaning errors were found in the translated texts. Example 3 shows a shift in interpersonal metafunction caused by the student adding unnecessarily judgmental comments.

Example 3

ST	as they are both already drug addicts
TT	ซึ่งพวกเขาต้องเสพยาอย่างหนัก
BT	as they must take drug heavily

In Example 3, the source text refers to Dragon and the Katie who have become addicted to drug after getting involved in illegal drug activities. The source text doesn't mention about how drug is necessary for their lives. The translation adds a judgemental meaning used by the modal verb ต้อง 'must' to emphasize the stages of drug addiction.

Furthermore, the interpersonal meaning error in terms of the FINITE were found in the data. As Halliday (1994) mentioned, the FINITE is the part of the verbal group which can be a sign of TIME in relation to the speaker, or a MODAL sign of the speaker's opinion. Example 4 shows this kind of error occurred in the text.

Example 4:

ST	I just	wanted		to let you know
		Finite (past) +	Predicator	
TT	แค่อยากให้แม่รู้ว่า			
BT	(I) just want you to know that			

With the differences between the English and Thai grammar structures, they can impose production errors. Tense is one of English is a time-oriented language which requires the overt marking of time in its sentence. Unlike English, Thai has neither verb inflections nor auxiliaries to convey the time concepts. Consequently, time in Thai is morphologically marked by time phrase that server as a clue to signal either present, past or future time. In the example 4, the time (tense) of this clause is in the past. In Thai, past can be indicated by the word ‘ได้’ before the verb or by a time expression indicating the past. However, the word ‘แล้ว’ is often used to indicate the past tense by being place behind the verb. Or, both ‘ได้’ and ‘แล้ว’ are put together to for the past tense expression. However, most of the students (97%) used the incorrect tense while translating the targeted text. The time markers either ‘ได้’ or ‘แล้ว’ is omitted to indicate the same time referred in the source text, the past tense. Alternative translation would be ‘หนูแค่อยากให้แม่ได้รู้ว่า’ which means ‘I just wanted to let you know that’.

3. The textual metafunction errors

As Halliday(1994) characterizes Theme refers to the first element which functions as a starting point or signpost, that is, the frame the speaker has chosen for the message. While Rheme is the rest of the clause. There are also some examples of errors of textual meaning found in the text.

Example 5

ST	there	are worse things in life than my report card
	Theme	Rheme
	which	is in the top drawer
	Theme	Rheme
TT	ชีวิตของคนเรา	มีสิ่งเลวร้ายมากมาย
	Theme	Rheme
	ซึ่งมากกว่าใบรายงานผลการเรียนของหนู ที่อยู่ในลิ้นชักชั้นบนสุดเสียอีก	
BT	In our life, there are many bad things which are worse than my report card in the top drawer.	

In the source text of Example 5, 'there' is the Theme and therefore the focus of the first clause and the clause complex. However, in the target text, some students (43%) recreated the new Theme by bringing different information into the foreground. 'ชีวิตของคนเรา' is used as the Theme in the translated text. This different Theme created by the student with very low level of English proficiency can create a shift in focus which may alter the writer's intention expressed in the source text. Thus, the student with a poor understanding of English should place the same Theme to preserve the same structure and implicitly obtain the same effects in the target language as in the source text. However, Baker (1994) mentioned that the re-creation of the target text using different thematic structures can be achieved by changing the word order at local or global levels of discourse. Personally, such strategies should be done by the translator who has an expert knowledge of both the source and the target languages. Since Thai students' English language skills still remain at a very low level, the translated text in Example 5 needs to be revised to improve its textual meaning.

Moreover, the errors depending on each individual student were found in the data. Since most of the students are hill-tribe ethnic minority students, English is considered as their third language besides their mother tongue and Thai. As a result, all of them have a very low level in English skills. Inadequate vocabulary causes reduced reading comprehension and lead to many misinterpretations when translating. Interestingly, one of the outstanding problems is the interference caused by the students' mother tongue. Due to the differences between English and Thai grammatical structure, the students have difficulty in differentiating the constituents placed in the English sentence. In order to overcome this problem, not only the knowledge about basic grammatical categories needs to be provided to the students but also the deep knowledge of the English language including cross-cultural communication, semantics and pragmatics.

Also, cross-cultural errors were found in the translated text. Both Western and Eastern contexts have similarities and differences in their cultural contexts. The western culture might have specific concepts that cannot be found in the eastern culture. The term 'a trailer' found in the source text, for instance, is used in English to indicate a vehicle without a wheeled vehicle for living or travelling in, which contains beds and cooking equipment and can be pulled by a car. In contrast, the concept of 'a trailer' in Thai indicates a large road vehicle which is used for transporting large amounts of goods. These two concepts are distinct from each other making the students' translation more difficult since the Thai culture does not have an idea of such a word. Therefore, this word is likely to cause a translation error. 96% of student misinterprets culture and meaning so it is readily distorted. In conclusion, culture plays a

crucial role in translating a foreign text. The students who are hardly exposed to the culture of the source language are much more likely to make errors. Therefore, the students need to have enough knowledge in the cultural perspective of the source text.

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