

Semantic Translation in Translating Chinese to Thai

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Abstract: Semantic translation based on Peter Newmark's translation theory was widely discussed in the translation between English and Chinese or between English and Thai. However, there is still few research focused on translation between Chinese and Thai. Hence, the study aims to discuss the application and possible benefit of semantic translation in translating Chinese to Thai. In this research, the book series of "Common Knowledge about China" was selected as case, since, those books were proved to be high quality in translations. Semantic translation in the series were noted, summarized and interpreted. Someone of them was selected and presented as example in the part of results. As results shown, semantic translation was widely used in translating compound sentences including supporting sentences, interrupted sentence, causal sentence, conditional statement, parallel sentence and progressive sentence. Translating compound sentences by semantic translation would be able to hold the meaning to the Chinese as close as possible with a similar grammatical structure. In addition, semantic translation was also used to translate nine Chinese idioms to Thai which prefer to translate with short phrases, since, it is still difficult to find perfect idioms from Thai to translate Chinese idioms. Based on the results, we concluded that semantic translation based on Peter Newmark's translation theory could be used to translate compound sentences and idioms from Chinese to Thai. By using this strategy, many benefits would be presented.

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INTRODUCTION

Newmark^[1] mentioned semantic translation and communicative translation that semantic translation is a translation which attempts to convey the meaning of the

original author by using a similar grammatical structure to translate while communication translation is a translation tries to make the reader of the translated version receive the same thing as the original reader. After that, Newmark^[2] thought translate literally or freely is the

central problem of translating has been going on since at least the first century Before Christ (BC). However, this debate didn't deal with the purpose of the translation, the nature of the readership, the type of text. Hence, the writer, translator and reader would be implicitly identified with each other. Therefore, he summarized the translation method into 8 categories based on semantic translation and communicative translation and classified them as source language emphasis (SL emphasis) and target language emphasis (TL emphasis), in the form of a flattened V diagram:

SL emphasis	TL emphasis
Word-for-word translation	Adaptation
Literal translation	Free translation
Faithful translation	Idiomatic translation
Semantic translation	Communicative translation

Peter Newmark explained that semantic translation is a kind of translation methods which is very similar with faithful translation. The distinctions between them are that faithful translation is uncompromising and dogmatic, while semantic translation is more flexible and take more account of the aesthetic value of the SL text. What's more, "semantic translation admits the creative exception to 100% fidelity and allows for the translator's intuitive empathy with the original"^[2]. Furthermore, Kanokrat^[3] proved that semantic translation is the least emphasized translation method of the source language and translator would prefer to use other words in the target language which had a similar meaning with original text to translate. Hence, the translator must to consider the meaning of the words in the target language as well as the source language and then selected to use the most appropriate words.

Regarding as the usage of semantic translation, it had been used to study Western languages translation or East-Western languages translation. Such as studies between English and Thai, for example, Chotikaa^[4] studied "Translation strategies of focus clausal constructions in academic texts" and found there would be 3 main translation strategies were used, namely, free translation in which sentence structures in the target language are not limited to any particular ones, communicative translation in which sentence structures in the target language are limited to only focus constructions and faithful translation in which sentence structures in the target language are limited to only corresponding focus constructions. However, Tiwa^[5] didn't found semantic translation when he tried to discuss the translation strategies of passive constructions in the translations in novels from English to Thai based on Peter Newmark's translation theory. Moreover, the semantic translation seemed to be not, similar like passive construction, as the translation strategies of translating idioms from English to

Thai as the studies of Kanokrat^[3] and Ramanya^[6] shown. It may be essential to discuss the semantic translation in translating passive constructions and idioms from English to Thai based on Peter Newmark's translation theory.

Meanwhile, Gao^[7] studied "An introduction to Newmark's translation theories and their application in the translation of titles", emphasized that semantic translation based on Newmark's theories could be used to translate literary title, movie title, newspaper and magazine's column target and news report's headline between Chinese and English because this kinds of strategy might be able to preserve the meaning and culture of the manuscript.

Base on the sympathetic literature review^[3, 5, 6], semantic translation is rarely used to study Southeast Asian languages translation, especially translation between Chinese and Thai. Hence, the present study would like to discuss the usage of this kind of strategy in Chines-Thai translation.

The book series of "Common Knowledge about China" (BCKAC), published by Higher Education Press in 2007 was used as the study example in present study. The State Council of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office and The International Council Office of Chinese Language worked together to create this widely used Chinese textbooks for beginner of Mandarin as the foreign language. BCKAC was bilingual books (Chinese-Thai), based on the original Chinese-English version which includes common knowledge of Chinese Culture, History and Geography. What's more, it was recognized with a high quality translation.

Therefore, the researcher was interested in studying semantic translation in translating Chinese to Thai in BCKAC which would be useful for teaching translation as well as understanding the differences of languages between china and Thai.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was a documentary research, aims to study the usage of semantic translation in translating Chinese to Thai by analysing BCKAC. The researchers immersed themselves in those series in order to compare the matched Chinese and Thai. Concurrently, the characteristics of semantic translation were noted and summarized. Subsequently, each characteristic would be explained as example by using SL emphasis and TL emphasis. Finally, all results were presented after decision and selection.

In this research, SL means Chinese and TL means Thai. The abbreviation of the chart in the series books following with the pages number were used to presented the source of example. Those abbreviations were:

- C: reflected Common Knowledge about Chinese Culture
- H: reflected common knowledge about Chinese History
- G: reflected common knowledge about Chinese Geography

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Newmark^[1, 2], semantic translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the target language grammatical structures, to preserve author's idiolect or the peculiar form of expression in preference to the meaning of the source or the target language. It can express the thinking process of the author when writing as well. More importantly, it takes more account of the aesthetic value, especially the beautiful and natural sound of the source language. Therefore, using semantic translation in translating, translator should consider the meaning of the words in the source language and the target language and then select to use the words that are most appropriate.

This research noted that semantic translation can be used to translate compound sentences in which the text is related. This sort of sentence can show the process of thinking or the essay process of the author. In addition, semantic translation was also used to translate idioms.

Compound sentences translation: A compound sentence is a sentence that is connected by two or more single sentences through a conjunction while separating single sentences out, each single sentence can have a complete meaning with full freedom and equal importance. Prayoon^[8] attributed the relationship of compound sentences to four categories, namely, the sentences with relationship of inheritance, contradiction, choice and causality. Meanwhile, this research found that semantic translation could be used to translate compound sentences with relationships of inheritance, contradiction and causality without choice relationship. Moreover, it also can be used to translate other compound sentences like conditional statement, parallel sentence and progressive sentence.

Supporting sentences translation: Supporting sentences is a kind of compound sentence with inheritance relationship which often uses a conjunction with a bearing relationship to connect two or more single sentences to indicate successive actions of one sentence after another, or several things that happen one after another^[8]. The conjunctions commonly used in supporting sentences are after that, then, finally, in the end and so on. This research noted that semantic translation was used to translate the

supporting sentences in the book series. The benefits were that the translated version would have the same structure as the original and fully conveyed the meaning of the original, although, there is a little adjustment according to the Thai language usage. Just like the example below:

SL: 坐完花轿、拜完天地，接下来新人就要入洞房了。(C, 228)
TL: เมื่อนั่งเกี้ยวเสร็จแล้วและไหว้天地เรียบร้อยแล้ว เจ้าสาวก็จะเข้าห้องหอ (C, 229)

This sentence means “After taking the bridal sedan, bowing to the heaven, it’s time for the newlyweds to go to the bridal chamber”. This text is an introduction to the Chinese wedding tradition which respectively discusses three events as taking the bridal sedan, bowing to the heaven, going to the bridal chamber. Regarding as the conjunctions of SL (Chinese) used “...完、...完、接下来...” and the TL (Thai) uses “เมื่อ...และ...แล้ว ก็...”, both of two languages in here had the same meaning and structure, which is “after, ..., after, ..., it’s time to, ...”. Those conjunctions showed the sequences of the three events occurred, allowing the reader to understand the steps and processes of traditional Chinese weddings. In addition, translating by semantic translation made the translation version fully expressed the meaning of the original text with a similar structure. It might be helpful for the reader truly understand the meaning of the original text. However, complying with the Thai traditional culture and Thai language grammar, the translator yielded to use “นั่งเกี้ยวดอกไม้” rather than “นั่งเกี้ยวดอกไม้” to translate “坐花轿”. The general meaning of “坐花轿” is “sitting in a flowers sedan”. “นั่งเกี้ยวดอกไม้” in Thai should mean “taking the bridal sedan” while the “นั่งเกี้ยวดอกไม้” “would be fantastic word, since, it means “sitting in a flowers sedan”. Obviously, the translator didn’t interpret each word in this general sense by using word-for-word translation but choosing the right meaning based on the content.

Interrupted sentence translation: Interrupted sentence is a kind of compound sentence with relationship of contradiction, that is to say, the content of single sentences have a turning point which is different from the expected content^[8]. The conjunctions commonly used in interrupted sentences are “but”, “however”, “besides”, “while”, “although”, “instead”, “otherwise”, “nevertheless”, “on the other hand”, “different from”, “in spite of”, “on the contrary”, and so on. The present study also found that the translation version by using semantic translation on interrupted sentences would express the same meaning as the original ones with the similar structure as supporting sentences translation done. Both of SL and TL can express the meaning of a turning point. The selected example was shown as followed:

SL: 中国河川径流虽然很丰富，但地区分布却很不均匀。(G, 32)
TL: ถึงแม้ว่าจีนมีน้ำจำนวนมาก แต่การกระจายของน้ำตามท้องที่นั้นไม่สม่ำเสมอ (G, 33)

“Although, the river runoff of China is very rich, the regional distribution is very unequal” is the meaning of this sentence. This compound sentence consists of two single sentences, namely, “The river runoff in of China is very rich.” and “The regional distribution (of the river runoff in China) is very unequal.” It was obvious that both of those two single sentences were used to describe the river runoff in China. In this circumstances, Chinese used the structure as “Subject + conjunction + single sentence 1, conjunction + single sentence 2” while Thai used the structure as “conjunction 1+single sentence 1, conjunction 2+single sentence 2”. If the two singles sentences were talking about the same thing, the Chinese would like to take it as one subject for both of single sentences and place it in front of the conjunction. However, the Thai must use the different subject according to the case and put the conjunctions in front of the every single sentence. In this case, the subject of SL is “The river runoff in China” (中国河川径流) and the conjunction of it is “although, ...but...” (虽然...但...) (In English will only use “although” or “but” but in Chinese usually uses 虽然...但... together as special grammar). However, the subject of TL was transferred to two different subjects which are “Chinese” (จีน) and “The regional distribution of the river runoff” (การกระจายของน้ำตามท้องถิ่นแต่ละท้องถิ่น). Fortunately, the conjunction of TL was still kept as “although...but...” (ถึงแม้ว่า... แต่...) as similarly with Chinese. Although TL used different grammatical structure, the meaning it expressed is consistent with SL.

Causal sentence translation: Causal sentence is a kind of compound sentence with relationship of causality, that is to say some single sentences of the compound sentence are the reasons and the other part is the result^[8]. A causal sentence can be a description of the cause and then telling the result, also can be to tell the result first and then explain the reason [参考文献]. The most important conjunctions of causal sentences are “because”, “so”, “so that”, “therefor” and “since”. This research found that both SL and TL in the series have used two types of causal sentence, since both Chinese and Thai also have causal sentence as English and both of them have grammar structures to show the cause followed by the result or the result followed by the cause. Hence, Thai would translate as same structure no matter Chinese used which types of causal sentence. The first type of causal sentence as the example was shown as follows:

SL: 因为老子和庄子的思想有很多相似性, 所以, 后人习惯以“老庄”并称。(C, 10)

TL: เนื่องมาจากความคิดปรัชญาของทั้งสองเจ๊าะจะเจ๊าะมีส่วนคล้ายกันมาก จึงทำให้คนรุ่นหลังนิยมที่จะเอารวมกันไว้

“มาคำรวม” (C, 11)

The SL sentence means “since, there are so many similarities between Laozi and Zhuangzi in terms of thinking, descendants usually mention them comparably as ‘Lao-Zhuang’”. Obviously, this sentence is the so

called first type of causal sentence which firstly mentioned the reason “There are so many similarities between Laozi and Zhuangzi in terms of thinking”, and then discussed the result “descendants usually mention them comparably as ‘Lao-Zhuang’”. More importantly, the conjunction of SL is “因为...所以...” and its competitor is “เนื่องจาก... จึง...” which both of them mean “Because/Since, that...” if translated by word-for-word. By using semantic translation, TL can translate the meaning of the SL very well with the same structure. Then, the reader would be able to truly understand the idea of the original text as the original author’s want to be presented.

Conditional statement translation: Conditional statement is a kind of compound sentence which content of single sentences have conditional relationship^[9, 10]. The important conjunctions of conditional sentence are “if”, “unless”, “as long as”, “in case”, “if only”, “on condition” and so on. Chinese and Thai also have conjunctions of conditional sentence, for example, Chinese owns 若, 如果, 假如, 只要, 即使, and Thai has ถ้า, หาก, หาก...ก็, ตามที่, etc. Actually, conditional sentence is very similar to causal sentence, both of them consist of cause and consequence. The difference between them is that the cause of the conditional sentence is hypothetical rather than real but the cause of the causal sentence is real. Moreover, conditional sentence is generally used in hypothetical situations while causal sentence is used in situations that have already occurred. One example was shown in the following example:

SL: 孙子孙做了官, 如果犯了贪污罪, 不许回老家; 死了以后, 也不许葬在包家坟地上。(H, 127)

TL: ลูกหลานรุ่นต่อไปที่เป็นขุนนาง หากทำผิดรับสินบน จะต้องกลับบ้านเกิด และเมื่อตายไปแล้วก็ห้ามฝังศพในสุสานตระกูลเรา (H, 128)

This sentence means “The descendants who have been officials, if they commit the crime of corruption, they are not allowed to return to hometowns. After they die, they are not allowed to be buried in the graveyard of Bao’s family too.” This is a sentence of Bao Zheng’s will what he left for his descendants, indicating that he is a virtuous and upright person. This sentence was talking about the Bao Zheng’s will left for his descendants whom was thought to be a virtuous and upright person in China’s history. This sentences is a wonderful conditional statement by using famous conjunction “if” and it was shown as “如果” in Chinese and “หาก” in Thai. In addition, the condition of this sentence is “The descendants who have been officials were committed the crime of corruption” which is hypothetical and hasn’t happened yet. And the consequence is “They are not allowed to return to hometowns. After they died, they are not allowed to be buried in the graveyard of Bao’s family too”. This result would occur after the previous assumptions have occurred. The translator skillfully used the semantic translation to make the translated sentence as closely as original text complying with target language

grammar after truly understanding of the original text. Thus, TL conforms to the usage of the Thai in the same times maintained the meaning of the original text.

Parallel sentence translation: Parallel sentence is a kind of compound sentence to be a description of related several things or different aspects of something^[9,10]. However, there is no primary or secondary distinction between these contents. In other words, they all have the same effect and the same value. The conjunctions of parallel sentence in English are “and”, “both”, “as well”, “also”, “too”, “either”, “both...and”, “not only...but also...”, “either...or...”, “neither...nor...”, “on the one hand ... on the other hand....”, etc. As the basic knowledge of Chinese and Thai, both of them also have those kinds of conjunctions which are “...也...”, “既...又...”, “是...是...”, “有时...有时...”, “一方面...一方面...”, “一边...一边...” and “และ”, “ก็ทั้ง”, “ขณะเดียวกัน”, “บางที...บางที...”, “ไม่ใช่...ไม่ใช่...”, “คือ...คือ...”, etc. Since, the usage of parallel sentence can make the contents compact and make the language beautiful, BSCKAC preferred to use parallel sentences, especially in the content of the introduction of cities, objects or tourist attractions. But the most interesting things is when SL used parallel sentences, the TL would also use parallel sentences with the same grammatical structure. The perfect example is below:

SL:
上海是中国最大的经济中心，是全国最重要的工业基地，也是重要的贸易、金融和文化中心
(G, 142)
TL:
เมืองชิงไห่เป็นศูนย์กลางทางเศรษฐกิจที่ใหญ่ที่สุดของจีน เป็นฐานอุตสาหกรรมที่สำคัญที่สุดของทั่วประเทศ และยังเป็นศูนย์กลางทางการค้า การเงินและวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญอีกด้วย (G, 143)

The sentence mentioned here means “Shanghai is the biggest economic center of China is the most important industrial base in China and also is the important trading, financial and cultural center.” Obviously, this is a parallel sentence consisting of three single sentences which are “Shanghai is the biggest economic center of China.”, “Shanghai is the most important industrial base in China.” and “Shanghai is the important trading, financial and cultural center.” These three clauses all have the same subject and verb that is “Shanghai” and “is”. Those sentences shown above the same meaning was kept in both SL (Chinese) and TL (Thai) with a similar structure, which is “Subject (上海/เมืองชิงไห่) +predicate (是/เป็น) +object 1, (中国最大的经济中心/ศูนย์กลางทางเศรษฐกิจที่ใหญ่ที่สุดของจีน) predicate (是/เป็น) +object 2 (全国最重要的工业基地/ฐานอุตสาหกรรมที่สำคัญที่สุดของทั่วประเทศ) +predicate (也是/ยังเป็น...อีกด้วย) +object 3 (贸易和金融中心/ศูนย์กลางทางการค้า การเงินและวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญอีกด้วย)”. However, we still found the difference between SL and TL which was that the translator preferred “เป็น” to “เป็น” when translated the last verb. Even though both of them have the same meaning, the latter might be more suitable for the context and more appropriate in Thai language usage^[11]. Because all three objects play the same role to introduce the status of

Shanghai, this example should be a translation of parallel sentence by using semantical translation.

Progressive sentence translation: Progressive sentence is a kind of compound sentence which content of single sentences have progressive relationship, it means that the content behind is deeper than the previous content^[9, 10]. The conjunctions of English in those sentences might be “in addition”, “moreover”, “furthermore”, “further”, “what’ more”, and so on. Chinese and Thai also have the similar conjunctions which includes “而且”, “并且”, “甚至”, “更”, “还”, “不但...而且...”, “不仅...还...” and “ไม่เพียงแต่...ยัง...”, “ไม่ใช่แค่...ยัง...อีกด้วย”, “ไม่เพียงแต่เท่านั้น แต่...อีกด้วย”, etc. Since, Chinese and Thai have the same expression of progressive sentence and the conjunctions can be translated by literal translation, the semantic translation showed the same benefit in this kind of sentences translation:

SL:
在中国，违背了这种道德的人，不光会受到舆论的批评，严重的还要受到法律的惩处。(C, 20)
TL:
ในประเทศจีนผู้ที่ละเมิดคุณธรรมจะไม่เพียงแต่ถูกตำหนิ แต่ยังต้องได้รับโทษตามกฎหมายอีกด้วย (C, 21)

The sentence above means “In China, those who violate the morality will be not only criticized by the public, but also severely punished by law.” This sentence was located in the part of introduction about the Chinese traditional culture to respect the elderly or take care the younger which Chinese people have always considered it as a social responsibility and behavioral norm. This sentence consists of two single sentences with different degrees connect two clauses by using “not only... but also...”. In the case above, “不光...还...” was used in Chinese as the same meaning of “not only... but also...”, while as it competitor, the Thai performed the same meaning word “ไม่เพียงแต่...ยัง...อีกด้วย”. Furthermore, the text after “not only” is a punishment in lower degree, but the text after “but also” is a punishment in the higher degree. Exactly, “severely punished by law” would be more serious than “be criticized by the public”. As for translation, the author used semantic translation to maintain the general structure and the meaning of Chinese. In the same time, conform to the grammatical features of Thai.

Idiom translation: According to Wehmeier^[12], idiom is a group meaning of words that is different from the individual words, and it is also a kind of language or grammar used by particular people at a particular time or place. Furthermore, Chris^[13] made a point that idiom cannot be translated literally into another language since it usually has different meaning of its component words, and it prefer to use in a style or manner of writing that is characteristic of a particular group or movement. What’s more as Chinese Proficiency Test Centre of Beijing Language and culture University explained in 2011, idiom might be a phrase or short sentence used by people for a long term with fixed match. Moreover, Chinese idioms

are mostly composed of four words and generally have their origin story in the history. Before we discuss the translation, we must mention that all idioms of Chinese in this research are included in the Chinese idiom dictionary. Because the specialty of items, the translation of idioms should selected the word from Thai not only focused on the meaning but also take care about the beauty of the word in order to keep Thai reader's attention. The researcher found 9 idioms translation in BSCKAC. However, short and clear phrases instead of idioms were preferred in TL such as this example.

SL: 在姜太公的辅佐下, 周文王和周武王整顿政治和军事
对内发展生产, 使人民安居乐业; 对外征服各部族, 不断扩大疆土。(H, 15)
TL: พระเจ้าโจวทงวินทวิและพระเจ้าโจวอู่กวังได้ทรงปรับปรุงประเทศทั้งด้านการเมือง
การปกครองและด้านการทหารให้ดีขึ้น โดยทรงได้รบ
ความช่วยเหลือจากเจ้านายเก่า ทำให้อาณาจักรงอกงามอีกหลายปี
ระเทศทำให้ประชาชนอยู่เย็นเป็นสุข และทรงขยายอำนาจการปกครองไปยังอาณาเขตนั่น

Chinese idiom dictionary indicates that “安居乐业” is an idiom. The explanation in that dictionary is “安定地生活, 愉快地从事自己的职业” which means people lives in peace and enjoy their career happily. Hence, Pei^[14] translated it to “อยู่เย็นเป็นสุข”. Since, the “安居乐业” and the “อยู่เย็นเป็นสุข” looked to share the same meaning, the same translation was performed in above example. However, the “อยู่เย็นเป็นสุข” is not an idiom because it hasn't been identified in the royal institute dictionary^[11]. However, it is a brief phrases used by Thai people to describe social stability and happy lives. The translator preferred to use this brief phrase to show the meaning of “安居乐业” because it can be able to express the implication of the idiom and presented the beauty of language. The difference of culture between China and Thailand lead to the difference of idiom usage between Chinese and Thai, since, idioms derived from the culture in which society uses the language. Therefore, it was difficult to find an idiom that is completely consistent Thai language with Chinese. However, it would be a very practical translation method by using reasonable and beautiful words or phrases to translate idioms through semantic translation from Chinese to Thai. China and Thailand have contractions with a long time the cultures of those two neighbouring countries should have been exchanged and integrated very well^[15, 16]. It might be easy to use simple words or phrases to express the deep meaning or true meaning of idioms.

CONCLUSION

As our results shown, there might be 6 kinds of compound sentences translated by sematic translation in the series books which are supporting sentences, interrupted sentence, causal sentence, conditional statement, parallel sentence, and progressive sentence. Since those compound sentences would share relationships between each sub-sentence (i.e., causal relationship), they can be used to express the relationships context and reflect the author's writing ideas. Hence,

using sematic translation to translate compound sentences would have many benefits. For example, the TL would be able to hold the meaning as close as possible to the SL with a similar grammatical structure.

In addition, there are 9 idioms translated by sematic translation in the series. The brief phrases was preferential to use since it is so difficult to find perfect idioms in Thai to reflect the real meaning in Chinese even though those two country should have similar culture. Compering with the studies of Kanokrat^[3] and Ramanya^[6], we found that semantic translation could not use to translate idioms between English and Thai but it could use in translating idioms from Chinese to Thai. This is very likely because both China and Thailand are Southeast Asian countries, the languages and cultures of them are similar while the English-speaking Western countries do not have such an advantage. In other words, culture has a certain impact on language use.

Based on all results above, we can conclude that semantic translation can be used to translate compound sentences and idioms from Chinese to Thai in the book serious of “Common Knowledge about China”.

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