Theme Choices in Translation and Target Readers' Reactions to Different Theme Choices

Mira Kim
The University of New South Wales, Australia

Zhi Huang
Macquarie University, Australia

This paper is primarily concerned with textual meaning in translation (i.e. the flow of text). Why do some translations not read as one piece of writing? Does it make any difference if translators start clauses in a translation with different experiential elements? If so, what impacts will such choices have on the flow of information in the translation? In this paper, we attempt to address such issues by analyzing Themes in different English translations of Chinese and Korean source texts. Firstly, we will present an analysis of Theme choices in three English translations of a Chinese short story. Secondly, we will discuss target readers' reactions to two English translations of a Korean short story that are nearly identical except for a few Theme choices. We hope that our discussion stimulates more interest in the textual meaning of translations, which is an area that needs significantly more attention in translation studies (Baker 1992; House 1997; Munday 2000).

1. Introduction

When translating from Chinese or Korean into English, translators often face the challenge of choosing an element at the beginning of a clause. That is because the subject in a clause is often elliptical in both Chinese and Korean while it is typically obligatory in English. Translators working with those

languages have to somehow recover a subject from the Chinese or Korean source text when they translate into English. This task of subject recovery is not always difficult, as an elliptical subject can often be easily derived from the context. However, the translators sometimes choose not to translate the recovered subject in the Chinese or Korean source text as the subject in their English translation, which sometimes changes the voice in the source text from active to passive or vice versa. That is perhaps because they believe passive voice is much less used in Chinese or Korean than in English. Sometimes, they automatically translate a prepositional phrase of time or location before the recovered subject in their English translation maybe because they do not fully consider the textual role of the elliptical subject in Chinese or Korean. All these choices have textual significance in translation because the information contained in the clause-initial element, which is called Theme, "creates the **method of development** of that paragraph" (Fries 1983:135). In other words, it is a key factor that needs to be taken into account at the clause level for the effective delivery of the thematic progression of the text at the paragraph and even text levels. A detailed explanation of Theme will be provided in Section 2.

Textual meaning (i.e. flow of information) in translated texts has been explored by scholars such as Baker (1992), Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997), House (1997), Kim (2007), Munday (2000), Taylor (1987) and Ventola (1995). For instance, Baker (1992:128) suggests that translators should "preserve the thematic patterning of the original if the elements can be naturally placed in theme position in the target text". However, she adds, if translators find that they cannot preserve the patterning of themes without distortion, they have to make sure "the target version has its own method of development and maintains a sense of continuity in its own right". This suggestion stimulates further questions, such as how this particular challenge of translation has been dealt with in existing translations and how target readers react to different developments of thematic patterning in translation. These questions are the focus of discussion in the current paper, which presents two independent studies. The first question was investigated by Huang on the basis of an analysis of Themes in three different English translations of a Chinese short story called *A Small Incident* by Lu Xun (Section 3). The second question was explored by Kim on the basis of a survey of target readers' reactions to two different English translations of a Korean short story called *On the Overhead Bridge* by Sehui Cho (Section 4). There are several reasons for presenting the studies together: **a.** the questions that both studies deal with belong to the same domain of meaning, namely textual, **b.** both studies use short stories as their data, a text type in which thematic development is typically dynamic (compared with, for example, expounding texts such as science textbooks) and **c.** both Chinese and Korean languages share some major features in relation to the realization of Themes.

2. Theoretical framework

In order to investigate the questions related to textual meaning, we draw on Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory, which has been adopted as a theoretical framework in previous studies on Theme in translated texts, as was the case in the studies mentioned above. The primary reason for using this theoretical framework is that it enables us to explain the questions belonging to the semantic domain with lexicogrammatical evidence. SFL theory hypothesizes that there are four distinct modes of meaning: experiential, logical, interpersonal and textual (Halliday 1979) and that each abstract mode of meaning is realized through a particular linguistic system, for example TRANSITIVITY (experiential and logical meaning), MOOD (interpersonal meaning) and THEME (textual meaning). Textual meaning, which is the focus of this paper, is concerned with information flow, which is "the way in which meanings are packaged to make it easier for us to take them in" (Martin and Rose 2003: 175). According to SFL theory, Theme and Rheme[1] are textual resources at the clause level that are used to realize textual meaning and therefore one can understand variations of textual meaning by analyzing Themes and Rhemes in texts. In fact, it is common practice in discourse analysis to study lexicogrammar, which is mainly concerned with meaning at the clause level, in relation to semantics, which is primarily concerned with meaning at the text or discourse level, and vice versa (Martin 2001: 154). Following common discourse analysis practice and the theoretical principles of SFL, we will use the clausal Theme analysis to explain textual meaning.

Halliday (1994: 37) explains that Theme is "the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is

_____

[1] Rheme is the part of the clause in which the Theme is developed. It typically contains new information (See Eggins 2004: 300).

concerned". It also plays a critical role in developing a coherent text (Matthiessen and Martin 1991). The basic principle of Theme identification suggested by Halliday is to include everything up to and including the first experiential element in the clause-initial position, typically a Participant or Circumstance. Such a Theme is called a topical Theme, which can be in a marked or unmarked form. An unmarked Theme, which is a typical topical Theme, indicates what the clause is concerned with and serves to maintain continuity within a text, while a marked Theme, which is an atypical topical Theme, signals a shift of orientation (Martin and Rose 2003: 177-9). In some clauses, a cohesive device such as *and, although*, and *however* is placed before the topical Theme, orienting the reader to how the messages are connected. This type of Theme is called a textual Theme. Sometimes clauses begin with interpersonal orientation signaling the kind of interaction between the speakers (e.g. giving information or asking for information) or the position that they are taking. For instance, a Finite in an interrogative signals that the speaker is demanding information, and modal adjuncts, like *probably* and *definitely*, indicate the position of the speaker. When such interpersonal elements precede the topical Theme, they are called an interpersonal Theme (see Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: Chapter 3 for details of Theme in English). In summary, according to SFL theory, the English clause can have multiple Themes at the clause-initial position orienting the reader textually, interpersonally and topically.

The fact that SFL offers an analysis of multiple Themes realized at the beginning of the clause is one of the major reasons why we favor SFL theory over the Prague School's theory on Theme. Even though there is an affinity between the two theories (see Davidse (1987) and Halliday (1974) for the affinity and differences), the Prague School is mainly concerned with topical Theme, while SFL theory takes the further step of explaining multiple Themes. Another important reason for our preference is that a number of Theme studies that draw on the Hallidayan model (i.e. SFL theory) have been undertaken and they have shown that different languages mark Theme using different strategies, including indicating with a morpheme like *wa* in Japanese (SOV) (Teruya 2004) and *ang* and *si* in Tagalog (VOS) (Martin 2004). It is crucial to understand how Theme works in other languages (in our case, Chinese and Korean) if one wants to apply descriptive or contrastive Theme studies to translation (e.g. Fang et al. 1995).

There are commonalities and differences in the way Theme works in English, Chinese and Korean. Firstly, in all three languages, the clause-initial position has thematic significance, as it is typical in all three for the Theme to come at the beginning of the clause. However, in Chinese and Korean, decisions as to where to make the division between Theme and Rheme are not as straightforward as in English, primarily due to the two languages having a strong tendency to elide what can be recoverable from the context. Secondly, all three languages can have multiple Themes, although textual Themes are used less frequently in Chinese and Korean. This difference in the frequency of textual Themes is due to the fact that, in Chinese, clause links are often implicit and, in Korean, clauses tend to be combined by a connective suffix in the verbal group that comes at the end of the clause. Thirdly, in all three languages, a Theme that is conflated with the Subject is typical and this unmarked Theme plays a role in sustaining a topic, while a marked Theme signals a new phase in the discourse. However, in Chinese and Korean, unmarked Themes are not often explicit due to the strong tendency for ellipsis, as mentioned above. For the analysis of the data used in this paper, we followed the Theme identification method suggested in Halliday and McDonald (2004) and Li (2007) for Chinese and the method outlined in Kim (2007) for Korean.

3. Analysis of different Theme choices in translations

3.1. Texts

Our analysis of different Theme choices is based on three different translations of a Chinese short story entitled *A Small Incident* (Yang and Yang 2004) written by Lu Xun, a famous Chinese writer in the 1930s (see Appendix 1). The English translations were created by three internationally recognized translators, Hsien-yi Yang, Gladys Yang (Yang and Yang 1972, 2004, see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively) and William Lyell (Lyell 1990, see Appendix 4). Findings from the analysis of the Theme choices in the source text and translated texts will be presented, followed by an interpretation of the influences of different translation choices on the textual meanings of the texts. A detailed analysis of the Themes in the four texts is presented in tables, with numbered clauses. The analysis displays clause complexes, clause boundaries, textual and interpersonal Themes, and unmarked and marked topical Themes, shown in Chinese characters, the *pinyin* (phonetic) system, and literal

translations. All texts, including the source text in Chinese and three translated texts in English, are attached at the end as appendices.

3.2. Analysis

From the examination of the data collected from the source text and the three translated texts, some similarities and differences in Theme choices have been found. The analysis will be based on the three types of Themes, namely textual, interpersonal and topical Themes.

Table 1 shows that only 12 textual Themes were found in the source text, while in the three translations the numbers of textual Themes were found to be over three times as many. This seems to indicate that all three translators reflected on the fact that textual Themes are used more often in English than in Chinese. As a result, the textual links in English translations are more explicit than they are in the Chinese source text.

Table 1. Textual Themes (the whole text)

Texts	Number of Textual Themes
Source Text	12
Yang & Yang (2004)	37
Yang & Yang (1972)	42
Lyell (1990)	45

Examples indicating different choices of textual Themes from the story's first clause complex are shown in Table 2, which indicates that the textual link between clauses 1.1 and 1.2 in the Chinese source text is implicit, while all three translations add *since* at the beginning of clause 1.2 to make the link explicit in the target texts. It can be seen that the choice by all three translators to make the textual link explicit in their English translations contrasts with the implicit clause links typical of Chinese clause complexes. This choice indicates an awareness by the three translators of the contrasting implicitness and explicitness of textual Themes in Chinese and English.

Table 2. Examples of textual Theme choices

Texts	Clause No.	Textual Theme	Topical Theme	Rheme
Source Text	1.1		我 *wo* I	从乡下跑到京城里， *cong xiang xia pao dao jing cheng li* from the countryside came to the capital
	1.2		一转眼 *yi zhuan yan* in a twinkling of an eye	已经六年了。 *yi jing liu nian le.* six years have been
Yang & Yang (2004)	1.1		Six years	have slipped by
	1.2	since	I	came from the country to the capital.
Yang & Yang (1972)	1.1		Six years	have slipped by
	1.2	since	I	came from the country to the capital.
Lyell (1990)	1.1		In the twinkling of an eye,	six years have passed
	1.2	since	I	left the countryside

In Table 3 which shows the results of the analysis of interpersonal Themes, there are only three interpersonal Themes in the source text while each of the three translations has thirteen. This difference can be attributed, in part, to the structural differences in interrogative clauses between Chinese and English. One example shown in Table 4 indicates that in English interrogative clauses, the first element is usually a finite or a wh-interrogative indicating interpersonal meaning, while in Chinese this is not the case. Interrogatives in Chinese are often realized by grammatical particles at the end of the clause rather than by interpersonal Themes at the beginning. In this table and the following ones, elliptical Themes that are not expressed explicitly but can be recovered are in parentheses, and embedded clauses are shown in square brackets.

Table 3. Interpersonal Themes (the whole text)

Texts	Interpersonal Themes
Source Text	3
Yang & Yang (2004)	13
Yang & Yang (1972)	13
Lyell (1990)	13

Table 4. Example of interpersonal Theme choices

Texts	Interpersonal Theme	Topical Theme	Rheme
Source Text		(Ø=这) (Ø=zhe) (Ø= this)	是奖他么？ *shi jiang ta me* is a reward to him?
Yang & Yang (2004)	Was	it	a reward?
Yang & Yang (1972)	Was	it	a reward?
Lyell (1990)	Had	I	been trying [[to reward him]]?

Table 5 shows the number of topical Themes in the texts. The source text has 10 marked topical Themes, while the three translations each have between two or three more. Focusing on unmarked Themes, the source text has 99, of which 51 are elliptical (51.5%), while the three translated texts have 95, 98 and 115 respectively, but fewer ellipses. The number of elliptical Themes in the Chinese source text (over half of the total number) far exceeds the number of elliptical Themes in the three translated texts (all around one third of the total number). This difference in frequency of elliptical Themes between the source text and the three target texts indicates, on the one hand, a tendency to elide unmarked Themes in Chinese and, on the other hand, a tendency to recover elided Themes in the process of translating these Themes into English. The common approach to the recovery of ellipsis in the translation process of these texts is to add the subject or the unmarked topical Theme to the beginning of the clause. An example is shown in Table 6, which indicates that in Clause 1.1 in the source text, we, as a topical Theme, is elliptical, but in all three translations the unmarked Theme has been recovered.

Table 5. Marked and unmarked topical Themes and ellipses (the whole text)

Texts	Marked Topical Themes	Unmarked Topical Themes	Ellipses (% of Unmarked)
Source Text	10	99	51 (51.5%)
Yang & Yang (2004)	12	95	25 (26.3%)
Yang & Yang (1972)	12	98	25 (25.5%)
Lyell (1990)	13	115	36 (31.3%)

Table 6. Example of unmarked Theme choices

Texts	Clause No.	Theme	Rheme
Source Text	1.1	(Ø=我们) (Ø=wo men) (Ø=we)	将近S门， *gang jin s men* just arrived at Gate S
	1.2	忽而 *hu er* suddenly	车把上带着一个人， *che ba shang dai zhe yi ge ren* the handle knocked into someone
	1.3	(Ø=一个人) (Ø=yi ge ren) (Ø=someone)	慢慢地倒了。 *man man de dao le* slowly toppled over
Yang & Yang (2004)	1.1	We	were just approaching S-Gate
	1.2	when we	knocked into someone [[who slowly toppled over]].
Yang & Yang (1972)	1.1	We	were just approaching S-Gate
	1.2	when someone [[crossing the road]]	was entangled in our rickshaw

Yang & Yang (1972)	1.3	and (Ø=someone)	slowly fell.
Lyell (1990)	1.1	Then, just as we	were entering S-Gate,
	1.2	one of the shafts of his rig	snagged a piece of clothing
	1.3	and (Ø=one of the shafts of his rig)	dragged someone to the ground.

As for marked topical Themes, each of the three translations has two or three more than the source text. An example of a translation shift in relation to marked topical Themes shown in Table 7 demonstrates that the three clauses in the source text all have the same topical Theme, *a small incident*, which is unmarked, but in the Yang and Yang (1972) translation, the topical Theme in the third clause is a marked Theme, now, which foregrounds time.

Table 7. Example of marked Theme choices

Texts	Clause No.	Theme	Rheme
Source Text	1.1	但有一件小事， *dan you yi jian xiao shi,* but a small incident	却于我有意义， *que yu wo you yi yi* to me has significance
	1.2	(Ø=它) (Ø=*ta*) (Ø=it)	将我从坏脾气里拖开， *jiang wo cong huai pi qi li tuo kai* for me from the bad temper dragged
	1.3	(Ø=它) (Ø=*ta*) (Ø=it)	使我至今忘记不得。 *shi wo zhi jin wang ji bu de* made me not forget even today
Yang & Yang (1972)	1.1	One accident,	however, struck me as significant,
	1.2	and (Ø=it)	aroused me from my ill temper,
	1.3	so that now	I cannot forget it.

As indicated above, amongst the three translations, there are some differences in translation choices of marked topical Themes. Lyell's translation has one more marked Theme than the two translations by Yang and Yang and it appears at the beginning of the story. This can be seen in Table 8, which shows that the first clause in both the 1972 and 2004 Yang and Yang translations starts with an unmarked Theme *six years*, but in Lyell's translation of the first clause, there is a very marked Theme, *in the twinkling of an eye*, indicating the manner (in this case the speed) in which the six years have passed. The source text placed *in the twinkling of an eye* as a marked Theme in the second clause, orienting the reader with the circumstantial information of manner as in Lyell's translation.

Table 8. Example of topical Theme differences in two translations

Texts	Clause No.	Theme	Rheme
Source Text	1.1	我 *wo* I	从乡下跑到京城里， *cong xiang xia pao dao jing cheng li* from the countryside came to the capital
	1.2	一转眼 *yi zhuan yan* in a twinkling of an eye	已经六年了。 *yi jing liu nian le.* six years have been
Yang & Yang (2004)	1.1	Six years	have slipped by
	1.2	since I	came from the country to the capital.
Yang & Yang (1972)	1.1	In the twinkling of an eye,	six years have passed
	1.2	since I	left the countryside
	1.3	(Ø=I)	to come to the capital.

In summary, it can be seen from the analysis that translators, when translating from Chinese into English, make different Theme choices, whether they be textual, interpersonal or topical. The percentage of textual and interpersonal Themes in the source text is very different from that in the three

translations. This is due to the differences between the Chinese language and the English language in terms of both explicitness and implicitness in textual Themes and also the structural differences in interrogatives, which impacts on interpersonal Themes. In terms of unmarked topical Themes, more ellipses can be found in the source text, indicating a tendency toward implicitness of unmarkedness in Chinese, while more unmarked Themes tend to be recovered during the translation process into English, indicating a tendency toward explicitness of unmarkedness in English. In relation to marked topical Themes, the numbers among the source text and the three translated texts are quite similar but some slight differences have been found. These differences indicate a variation in focus on either time or manner meaning between the source text and the translated texts, on the one hand, or a variation between the three translated texts, on the other hand.

4. Target readers' reactions to different Theme choices in English translations of a Korean short story[2]

Now we will turn to Kim's study, which investigated how target readers react to different Theme choices in two English translations from Korean. The discussion is based on surveys that involved 42 native speakers of English who were presented with two English translations of the same Korean source text and asked which version they preferred. The surveys were conducted on two separate occasions. The first survey was conducted with 14 native speakers of English who were invited to participate in the survey through the researcher's personal network. The survey form (see below) was sent by email and the responses were collected by email as well. The first survey showed that there were clear indications of preference, but the number of participants was far too small to use them as evidence. Therefore the survey was repeated a few months later with 28 more native speakers of English. This second survey was conducted in a university residential college in Sydney. This time, the participants were presented with the two translation versions, given a few minutes to read them and then asked to tell the research assistant their preferred version and the reasons for their preference. Their responses were recorded in writing. For both surveys, only one condition was applied in the selection of participants: that they were native speakers of English. The rationale for this selection was that the targeted readership of short stories is typically not limited

by gender or to certain age groups. Since both surveys showed similar results, the results have been combined and will be discussed together.

4.1. Texts and survey

The source text used for the survey is the beginning part of a Korean short story titled *On the Overhead Bridge* by Se-Hui Cho. Translation 1 (T1) is an English native speaker's translation published in *Korea Journal* in 1980 and Translation 2 (T2) is a revised version of Translation 1 by the researcher. The researcher made two deliberate decisions when producing T2, firstly to give greater consideration to the Theme choices of the source text and their relation to the overall purpose of the text and secondly to make any Theme changes with as little alteration to syntactic choice as possible. The changes will be discussed in the analysis section that follows the survey results. The survey questionnaire is presented below.

The following texts are two versions of translation of the beginning of a Korean short story. Please read them and answer the questions below:

Translation 1
Sinae was walking in the centre of Seoul, distracted. All she could see in front of her were people, buildings and cars. On the pavement the smell of oil, the smell of people and the smell of scorched rubber hung in the air. Just to stand still and look about her would take an effort. People packed the pavement, cars packed the street. There was no place to stop, no place to stop even for a few seconds to try to control her depression.

Translation 2
Sinae was walking in the centre of Seoul, distracted. All she could see in front of her were people, buildings and cars. On the pavement the smell of oil, the smell of people and the smell of scorched rubber hung in the air. Just to stand still and look about her would take an effort.

The pavement was overflowing with people, the road was overflowing with cars. There was no place for her, no place for her to stop even for a few seconds to try to control her depression.

1. Which version do you prefer?
2. Please specify reasons for your preference.

4.2. Survey results

As Table 9 shows, only 19 per cent of those surveyed did not have any preference for either translation, even though the two texts were very short and almost identical, except for a few Theme choices. There was a strong preference from the readers for the second version, 55 per cent versus 26 per cent.

Table 9. Results of the survey

Preference	No. of people	Percentage
Translation 1	11	26%
Translation 2	23	55%
No preference	8	19%
Total	42	100%

What is even more interesting than the quantitative data are the findings from a qualitative analysis of the various reasons mentioned for the survey participants' preferences. These are shown in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10. Reasons for preferring translation 1

Reasons	No. of respondents
Concise and short expression	7
Better way to describe traffic and busy pavements	7
Text flows well	3
Sense of alienation	2
Impression of immediacy	2

Table 11. Reasons for preferring translation 2

Reasons	No. of respondents
Text flows well	10
Nice link with the main character and the circumstance	9
Very emotive	6
More graphic and evocative	4
Greater sense of exclusion	3
More engaging	2
Makes the scene seem busier	1

Table 10 shows that 26 per cent of those surveyed preferred Translation 1 because: **a.** they liked its concise and short expressions, such as *packed* (7); and **b.** they could perceive the "harsh" and "suffocating" circumstances of the busy traffic and streets (7). On the other hand, 55 per cent of those surveyed preferred Translation 2 because it "seems to flow and reads more cohesively" (10). Also a number of survey participants pointed out that the choice of *for her* in the last sentence of the second version helped them better understand both the situation and the character's feelings (9).

There was an interesting response from one participant who did not have a strong preference but liked different aspects of each translation. As he equally liked the choice of *packed* in T1 and the choice of *for her* in T2, he could not choose between them. He wrote:

I have a slight preference for the sentence that uses packed in T1 rather than

overflowing in T2 as the pavement was overflowing with people··· sounds a little over-descriptive somehow, making the repetition here cumbersome. People packed the pavement··· is more compact and 'tight', I think, and so the repetition works better. I have a slight preference, however, for the final sentence in T2, as I think the phrase there was no place for HER··· is more powerful than there was no place to stop··· – the sentence in T2 creates the impression of a street scene in which Sinae, with her private needs, did not have a place.

Two main points emerge from the responses from the survey. The first is the issue of word choice: *packed versus overflowing*. As mentioned above, most of the respondents liked packed but more than half of them regarded it as less important than the overall flow. The second is the issue of stylistics versus flow, which refers to whether a reader would prefer a text on the basis of stylistic effect alone or on the basis of coherent textual flow. One respondent who liked the second version stated her criteria very clearly:

As this is a piece of descriptive prose, I'm considering more the effectiveness of communication rather than the correctness of grammar. As Sinae is feeling depressed, the author's job is to convey the individual's mental experience. The author uses Sinae's perceptions of her surroundings to convey her feelings of depression.

This statement provides a succinct summary of translation issues involved in this particular study, namely the translator's need take into account the purpose and effect of the source text in creating his/her translation.

4.3. Analysis

We will now focus on the Theme choices in the source text and Translation 1 and will explain the changes made by the researcher to create Translation 2. In Table 12, the source text (with a literal translation) and the two translations are divided into clauses and each clause is numbered. In addition, the whole text is presented again (see the two English versions below), with the Theme in each clause underlined in each translation and the differences between Translation 1 and Translation 2 identified with boxes.

English Translation 1
1) **Sinae** was walking in the centre of Seoul,
2) (**she** being) distracted.
3) **All she could see in front of her** were people, buildings and cars.
4) **On the pavement** the smell of oil, the smell of people and the smell of scorched rubber hung in the air.
5) **Just to stand still and look about her** would take an effort.
6) People packed the pavement,
7) cars packed the street.
8) **There** was no place to stop,
9) (there was) no place to stop even for a few seconds to try to control her depression.

English Translation 2
1) **Sinae** was walking in the centre of Seoul,
2) (**she** being) distracted.
3) **All she could see in front of her** were people, buildings and cars.
4) **On the pavement** the smell of oil, the smell of people and the smell of scorched rubber hung in the air.
5) **Just to stand still and look about her** would take an effort.
6) The pavement was overflowing with people,
7) the road was overflowing with cars.
8) **There** was no place for her,
9) (there was) no place for her to stop even for a few seconds to try to control her depression.

Table 12. Korean Source Text with a Literal Translation

Cl. No.	Theme(s)	Rheme
1	신애는 *sinae-nun* While Sinae	시내 중심가를 걸으며 *sinay cwungsimkalul kelumye* was walking in the centre of Seoul
2	(Sinae)	정신을 차릴 수 없었다. *cengsinul chalil swu epsessta.* couldn't keep her mind focused

3	[[그녀가 볼 수 있는]] 것은 [[kunyeka pol swu issnun]] kes-un What she could see	사람, 건물, 자동차뿐이었다. salam, kenmwul, catongchappwuniessta. were only people, buildings and cars.
4	거리에서는 kelieyse-nun On the streets	기름 타는 냄새, 사람 냄새, 고무 타는 냄새가 났다. kirum thanun naymsay, salam naymsay, komwu thanun naymsayka nassta. smell of burning oil, smell of people, smell of burning rubber emitted.
5	 (The distraction)	잠시 서서 주위를 둘러 보기도 어려울 정도였다. camsi sese cwuwilul twulle pokito elyewul cengtoyessta. (was so bad that) even stopping for a while to look around was difficult.
6	인도에 intoey On the pavement	사람들이 넘치고, salamtul-i nemchi-ko, people were overflowing and,
7	차도에 Chatoey On the road	자동차들이 넘쳤다. catongchatul-i nemchyessta. cars were overflowing.
8	(신애는) (sinae-nun) (Sinae)	[[몸둘]] 곳이 없었다. [[momtwul]] kos-i epsessta. did not have a place [[to lay (her) body]].
9	(신애는) (sinae-nun) (Sinae)	[[단 몇 초 동안이라도 걸음을 멈추고 우울을 달랠]] 곳이 없었다. [[tan myech cho tonganilato kelumul memchwuko wuwulul tallayl]] kos-i epsessta. did not have a place [[to stop just for a few seconds to alleviate (her) low feelings]].

For ease of presentation, the Themes of the three texts are presented in Table 13 and the literal translation is used when reference is made to the Korean source text. Elliptical Themes that are not expressed explicitly but can be recovered are in parentheses. Table 13 shows that all three texts have the same

Theme in each clause except Clauses 6, 7, 8 and 9. Individual effects of these different Theme choices will be explained shortly after a brief analysis of the Themes of the Korean source text.

Table 13. Theme comparison of the texts

Clause No.	Translation 1	Source Text	Translation 2
1	Sinae	Sinae	Sinae
2	(Sinae)	(Sinae)	(Sinae)
3	*All she could see in front of her*	*All she could see in front of her*	*All she could see in front of her*
4	On the pavement	On the streets	On the pavement
5	Just to stand still and look about her	Just to stand still and look about her	Just to stand still and look about her
6	People	On the pavement	The pavement
7	cars	On the road	The road
8	There	(Sinae)	There
9		(Sinae)	

In the source text, an analysis of the clausal Themes clearly showed an interesting thematic progression in the beginning of the short story. That is, the author is maintaining Sinae's angle by choosing *Sinae* as an explicit unmarked Theme in Clause 1 and then leaving it implicit in Clauses 2, 8 and 9. However, he is moving the angle from one place to another by choosing places as marked Theme, as in Clause 4 *on the streets*, Clause 6 *on the pavement*, and Clause 7 *on the road*. In short, the author is describing the hectic physical environment of the city, creating a camera-like zooming-in effect from Sinae's angle, so that the reader can understand from the description Sinae's depressed feelings.

Translation 1 seems to be less effective in orienting the reader to how the description of the physical environment is related to Sinae's personal feelings because the Themes in Clauses 6 *people* and 7 *cars* shift the point of departure

from places to entities located in the places, which results in discontinuity of the focus. The motivation for these Themes seems to be the desire to produce a rhythmic effect. The use of the balanced clauses *People packed the pavement* and *cars packed the street*, in which the parts of the clauses which are similar in structure, creates a rhythm. However, maintaining consistent Theme choices to create and sustain the link between Sinae's emotions, perspective and her environment could be argued to be more important if the translator's primary concern is trying to reflect the fundamental purpose of the source text.

In Translation 2, places are deliberately given the status of Theme in Clauses 6 *the pavement* and 7 *the road*. They could have been translated as marked Themes as in the source text by translating the clauses as *on the pavement (people were packed)* and *on the road (cars were packed)*, for example. However, since one of the researcher's aims when creating T2 was to modify the syntactic structure of T1 as little as possible, they were translated as unmarked Themes. The only other change made in T2 was the addition of for her in the last two clauses to show the subtle but obvious connection between the physical environment and the protagonist, which can be sensed in the source text. The connection derives from the implicit Theme of *Sinae* in each clause in conjunction with *did not have a place to lay her body* and *did not have a place to stop just for a few seconds to alleviate her low feelings.* There is the repetition of *place* in the two clauses – but it is repetition with variation. That is, *place* is repeated but each time is qualified by a different embedded clause that refers to Sinae's inner state –[[to lay her body]] – alluding to her exhaustion perhaps and [[to alleviate her low feelings]] – alluding to her emotional state. As a result of these small modifications, the text reads more smoothly, with the camera-like zooming-in effect still preserved, and effectively orients the reader to the background, both physical and emotional, as in the source text.

In summary, the analysis of Theme choices in the source and target texts clearly revealed that Theme choices made at the clause level create substantially different textual meaning at the text level. The survey results showed that target readers are sensitive to clause orientation and its subsequent impact on information flow. It can also be drawn from the results that making lexical choices motivated by a sense of the thematic progression in the source text (e.g. *for her* in Clauses 8 and 9 in T2) can be a useful translation strategy for taking into account the purpose and effect of the source text.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have investigated Theme choices made by professional translators in three different English translations of a Chinese short story. We have also discussed how target readers react to a few textually motivated changes in two different English translations of the first paragraph of a Korean short story. The analysis of the Theme choices by professional Chinese translators showed that textual and interpersonal Themes were maintained as much as possible within the syntactic structure of the target language but a few variations were observed in translating marked topical Themes. The survey in relation to the Korean short story showed that target readers' reactions even to a few different Theme choices even in a short passage are not minimal, and are prompted by definite reasons.

However, there are obvious limitations in the present study. The Chinese text is too short to generalize the findings from the analysis. The scope of the survey on target readers' reactions is not extensive and a similar survey has not been conducted with the English translations of the Chinese text. There is no intention, however, to imply that similar results could be anticipated with the English translations of the Chinese story if a similar survey were conducted. Our aim in putting together these two independent studies which are both concerned with textual meaning in translation is to raise interest among scholars and practitioners in this subtle domain of meaning in translation. As Munday (2000: 38) notes, there are still a number of important questions about textual meaning in translation that need further investigation. We also hope that the analysis and the survey results serve as evidence to support Baker's suggestion that it is important to preserve the thematic patterning of the source text in the translation if it is possible and, if it is not, to maintain a sense of continuity in the translation as a text in its own right (Baker 1992: 128).

Concluding this paper, we put forward further suggestions. Firstly, it is crucial for translators to understand how Theme works in their source and target languages, instead of assuming that what is discussed about Theme in English applies to other languages. Existing studies on Theme from a systemic functional perspective (cf. Caffarel 2004) confirm that the way in which Theme is realized differs from one language to another (as in English, Chinese and Korean), although its function is similar. Secondly, translators must understand the role of Theme at the clause level as well as at the text level. In other words, a Theme analysis can be applied in a meaningful way in translation only

when it is used as a tool to elucidate the thematic development in the text. Translators also need to be flexible and creative in representing the source text's thematic development in the target text because it is not always possible to translate Themes in the source text as Themes in the target text due to syntactic differences. Thirdly, it is useful for translators to make lexical choices in each clause with a consideration of how information flows in the source text and of whether there is continuity or discontinuity in the orientation. This correlation of micro choices and macro understanding will only make translating more enjoyable and creative. Lastly, there is an urgent need for more descriptive resources in different languages to make all these suggestions feasible for translators. It is true that the number of languages that have been fully described from an SFL perspective is still limited even though a number of systemic linguists are rigorously investigating a wide variety of languages (e.g. Bajjika (Kumar 2009), Chinese (Li 2007), French (Caffarel 2006), Japanese (Teruya 2007), Òkó (Akerejola 2005), Spanish (Lavid *et al.* 2010)). This is a challenge, but at the same time presents an opportunity for linguists and translation scholars to work together.

References

Akerejola, E. S. (2005). *A Text-based Lexciogrammatical Description of Òkó*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Macquarie University.

Baker, M. (1992). *In Other Words*. London & New York: Routledge.

Butt, D., Fahey, R., Feez, S., Spinks, S. and Yallop, C. (2000). *Using Functional Grammar: An Explorer's Guide*. Sydney: NCELTR, Macquarie University.

Caffarel, A. (2006). *A Systemic Functional Interpretation of French Grammar: From Grammar to Discourse*. London: Continuum.

Caffarel, A., Martin, J. R. and Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *Language Typology: A Functional Perspective*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Davidse, K. (1987). M. A. K. Halliday's functional grammar and the Prague School. In Dirven, R. and V. Fried (eds.), *Functionalism in Linguistics*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Eggins, S. (2004). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (2nd edition). London & New York: Continuum.

Fang, Y., McDonald, E. and Cheng, M. (1995). Subject and Theme in Chinese: a systemic functional account. In Hasan, R. & P. Fries (eds.), *Subject and Theme: A Discourse Functional Perspective*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 235-273.

Fries, P. (1983). On the status of Theme in English: arguments from discourse. In Petöfi, J. and E. Sözer (eds.), *Micro and Macro Connexity of Texts*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 116-152.

Gerot, L. and Wignell, P. (1994). *Making Sense of Functional Grammar*. Gold Coast: Gerd Stabler.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1974). The place of "functional sentence perspective" in the system of linguistic description. In Daneš, F. (ed.), *Papers on Functional Sentence Perspective*. The Hague & Paris: Academia, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, 43-53.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1979). Modes of meaning and modes of expression: types of grammatical structure and their determination by different semantic functions. In Allerton, D. J., E. Carney and D. Holdcroft (eds.), *Function and Context in Linguistic Analysis: A Festschrift for William Haas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 57-79.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar (2nd edition)*. London, New York, Sydney & Auckland: Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K. and Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London & New York: Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K. and McDonald, E. (2004). Metafunctional profile of the grammar of Chinese. In Caffarel, A., J. R. Martin and C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (eds.), *Language*

Typology: A Functional Perspective. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 305-393.

Hatim, B. and Mason, I. (1990). *Discourse and the Translator*. London / New York: Longman.

Hatim, B. and Mason, I. (1997). *The Translator as Communicator*. London & New York: Routledge.

House, J. (1997). *Translation Quality Assessment: A Model Revisited*. Tübingen: Narr.

Kim, M. (2007). Using systemic functional text analysis for translator education: an illustration with a focus on the textual meaning. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 1: 223-246.

김미라 (2011). 한영 단편 소설 번역에 있어 '이끔부(Theme)'의 선택이 독자에게 미치는 영향. 조의연 엮음. 『번역학, 무엇을 연구하는가 언어적, 문화적, 사회적 접근』. Seoul: Dongkuk University Press, 53-84.

Kumar, A. (2009). *Mood, Transitivity and Theme in Bajjika in a Typological Perspective: A Text-based Description*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Macquarie University.

Lavid, J., Arús, J. and Juan, R. Z. (2010). *Systemic-Functional Grammar of Spanish: a Contrastive Account with English*. London & New York: Continuum.

Li, E. S. (2007). *A Systemic Functional Grammar of Chinese: a Text-based Analysis*. London & New York: Continuum.

Lu, X. (1972). *Selected Stories of Lu Xun*. (H. Yang and G. Yang, Trans.). Beijing: Foreign Language Press.

Lu, X. (1979). *Selected Short Stories of Lu Xun*. (D. C. Lau, Trans.). Hongkong: The Chinese University Press.

Lu, X. (1990). *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*. (W. A. Lyell, Trans.). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Lu, X. (2004). *Call to Arms (Na Han)*. (H. Yang and G. Yang, Trans.). Beijing: Foreign Language Press.

Martin, J. R., Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. and Painter, C. (1997). *Working with Functional Grammar*. London, New York, Sydney & Auckland: Arnold.

Martin, J. R. (2001). Language, register and genre. In Burns, A. and C. Coffin (eds.), *Analysing English in a Global Context*. London: Routledge, 149-166.

Martin, J. R. (2004). Metafunctional profile of the grammar of Tagalog. In Caffarel, A., J. R. Martin and C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (eds.), *Language Typology: A Functional Perspective*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 255-304.

Martin, J. R. and Rose, D. (2003). *Working with Discourse*. London & New York: Continuum.

Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. and Martin, J. R. (1991). A response to Huddleston's review of Halliday's introduction to functional grammar. *Occasional Papers in Systemic Linguistics* 5: 5-74.

Munday, J. R. (2000). Using systemic functional linguistics as an aid to translation between Spanish and English: maintaining the thematic development of the ST. *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 40: 37-58.

Taylor, C. (1987). Systemic linguistics and translation. *Occasional Papers in Systemic Linguistics* 7: 87-103.

Teruya, K. (2004). Metafunctional profile of the grammar of Japanese. In Caffarel, A., J. R. Martin and C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (eds.), *Language Typology: A Functional Perspective*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 185-254.

Teruya, K. (2007). *A Systemic Functional Grammar of Japanese (2 volumes)*. London & New York: Continuum.

Ventola, E. (1995). Thematic development and translation. In Ghadessy, M. (ed.), *Thematic Developments in English*. London & New York: Pinter, 85-104.

Yang, X. (1995). Theme and Chinese-English translation. In Ren, S. (ed.), *Language, System, Structure*. Hangzhou: Hangzhou University Press, 262-270.

Appendix

1. A Small Incident (Chinese Text, Written by Xun Lu)

一件小事（鲁迅）

　　我从乡下跑到京城里，一转眼已经六年了。其间耳闻目睹的所谓国家大事，算起来也很不少；但在我心里，都不留什么痕迹，倘要我寻出这些事的影响来说，便只是增长了我的坏脾气，——老实说，便是教我一天比一天的看不起人。

　　但有一件小事，却于我有意义，将我从坏脾气里拖开，使我至今忘记不得。

　　这是民国六年的冬天，大北风刮得正猛，我因为生计关系，不得不一早在路上走。一路几乎遇不见人，好容易才雇定了一辆人力车，教他拉到S门去。不一会，北风小了，路上浮尘早已刮净，剩下一条洁白的大道来，车夫也跑得更快。刚近S门，忽而车把上带着一个人，慢慢地倒了。

　　跌倒的是一个女人，花白头发，衣服都很破烂。伊从马路上突然向车前横截过来；车夫已经让开道，但伊的破棉背心没有上扣，微风吹着，向外展开，所以终于兜着车把。幸而车夫早有点停步，否则伊定要栽一个大斤斗，跌到头破血出了。

　　伊伏在地上；车夫便也立住脚。我料定这老女人并没有伤，又没有别人看见，便很怪他多事，要自己惹出是非，也误了我的路。

　　我便对他说，"没有什么的。走你的罢！"

　　车夫毫不理会，–或者并没有听到，–却放下车子，扶那老女人慢慢起来，搀着臂膊立定，问伊说：

　　"你怎么啦？"

　　"我摔坏了。"

　　我想，我眼见你慢慢倒地，怎么会摔坏呢，装腔作势罢了，这真可憎恶。车夫多事，也正是自讨苦吃，现在你自己想法去。

　　车夫听了这老女人的话，却毫不踌躇，仍然搀着伊的臂膊，便一步一步的向前走。我有些诧异，忙看前面，是一所巡警分驻所，大风之后，外面也不见人。这车夫扶着那老女人，便正是向那大门走去。

　　我这时突然感到一种异样的感觉，觉得他满身灰尘的后影，刹时高大了，而且愈走愈大，须仰视才见。而且他对于我，渐渐的又几乎变成一种威压，甚而至于要榨出皮袍下面藏着的"小"来。

　　我的活力这时大约有些凝滞了，坐着没有动，也没有想，直到看见分驻所里走出一个巡警，才下了车。

　　巡警走近我说，"你自己雇车罢，他不能拉你了。"

　　我没有思索的从外套袋里抓出一大把铜元，交给巡警，说，"请你给他…"

　　风全住了，路上还很静。我走着，一面想，几乎怕敢想到自己。以前的事姑且搁起，

这一大把铜元又是什么意思？奖他么？我还能裁判车夫么？我不能回答自己。

　　这事到了现在，还是时时记起。我因此也时时煞了苦痛，努力的要想到我自己。几年来的文治武力，在我早如幼小时候所读过的"子曰诗云"一般，背不上半句了。独有这一件小事，却总是浮在我眼前，有时反更分明，教我惭愧，催我自新，并且增长我的勇气和希望。

2. A Small Incident (Translated by Yang and Yang 2004)

Six years have slipped by since I came from the country to the capital. During that time the number of so-called affairs of state I have witnessed or heard about is far from small, but none of them made much impression. If asked to define their influence on me, I can only say they made my bad temper worse. Frankly speaking, they taught me to take a poorer view of people every day.

One small incident, however, which struck me as significant and jolted me out of my irritability, remains fixed even now in my memory.

It was the winter of 1917, a strong north wind was blustering, but the exigencies of earning my living forced me to be up and out early. I met scarcely a soul on the road, but eventually managed to hire a rickshaw to take me to S – Gate. Presently the wind dropped a little, having blown away the drifts of dust on the road to leave a clean broad highway, and the rickshaw man quickened his pace. We were just approaching S – Gate when we knocked into someone who slowly toppled over.

It was a grey-haired woman in ragged clothes. She had stepped out abruptly from the roadside in front of us, and although the rickshaw man had swerved, her tattered padded waistcoat, unbuttoned and billowing in the wind, had caught on the shaft. Luckily the rickshaw man had slowed down, otherwise she would certainly have had a bad fall and it might have been a serious accident.

She huddled there on the ground, and the rickshaw man stopped. As I did not believe the old woman was hurt and as no one else had seen us, I thought this halt of his uncalled for, liable to land him trouble and hold me up.

"It's all right", I said. "Go on."

He paid no attention – he may not have heard – but set down the shafts, took the old woman's arm and gently helped her up.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

"I hurt myself falling."

I thought: I saw how slowly you fell, how could you be hurt? Putting on an act like this is simply disgusting. The rickshaw man asked for trouble, and now he's got it. He'll have to find his own way out.

But the rickshaw man did not hesitate for a minute after hearing the old woman's answer. Still holding her arm, he helped her slowly forward. Rather puzzled by his I looked ahead and saw a police-station. Because of the high wind, there was no one outside. It was there that the rickshaw man was taking the old woman.

Suddenly I had the strange sensation that his dusty retreating figure had in that instant grown larger. Indeed, the further he walked the larger he loomed, until I had to look up to him. At the same time he seemed gradually to be exerting a pressure on me which threatened to overpower the small self hidden under my fur-lined gown.

Almost paralysed at that juncture I sat there motionless, my mind a blank, until a policeman came out. Then I got down from the rickshaw.

The policeman came up to me and said, "Get another rickshaw. He can't take you any further."

On the spur of the moment I pulled a handful of coppers from my coat pocket and handed them to the policeman. "Please give him this," I said.

The wind had dropped completely, but the road was still quiet. As I walked along thinking, I hardly dared to think about myself. Quite apart from what had happened earlier, what had I meant by that handful of coppers? Was it a reward? Who was I to judge the rickshaw man? I could give myself no answer.

Even now, this incident keeps coming back to me. It keeps distressing me and makes me try to think about myself. The politics and the fighting of those years have slipped my mind as completely as the classics I read as a child. Yet this small incident keeps coming back to me, often more vivid than in actual life, teaching me shame, spurring me on to reform, and imbuing me with fresh courage and fresh hope.

3. A Small Incident (Translated by Yang and Yang 1972)

Six years have slipped by since I came from the country to the capital. During that time I have seen and heard quite enough of so-called affairs of state but none of them made much impression on me. If asked to define their influence, I can only say they aggravated my ill temper and made me, frankly speaking, more and more misanthropic.

One accident, however, struck me as significant, and aroused me from my ill temper, so that even now I cannot forget it.

It happened during the winter of 1917.A bitter north wind was blowing, but, to making a living, I had to be up and out early. I met scarcely a soul on the road, and had great difficulty in hiring a rickshaw to take me to S-Gate. Presently the wind dropped a little. By now the loose dust had all been blown away, leaving the roadway clean, and the rickshaw man quickened his pace. We were just approaching S-Gate when someone crossing the road was entangled in our rickshaw and slowly fell.

It was a woman, with streaks of white in her hair, wearing ragged clothes. She had left the pavement without warning to cut across in front of us, and although the rickshaw man had made way, her tattered jacket, unbuttoned and fluttering in the wind, had caught on the shaft. Luckily the rickshaw man pulled up quickly, otherwise she would certainly have had a bad fall and been seriously injured.

She lay there on the ground, and the rickshaw man stopped. I did not think the old woman was hurt, and there had been no witnesses to what had happened, so I resented this officiousness which might land him in trouble and hold me up.

"It is all right," I said. "Go on."

He paid no attention, however-perhaps he had not heard-for he set down the shafts, and gently helped the old woman to get up. Supporting her by one arm, he asked:

"Are you all right?"

"I am hurt."

I had seen how slowly she fell, and was sure she could not be hurt. She must be pretending, which was disgusting. The rickshaw man had asked for trouble, and now he had it. He would have to find his own way out.

But the rickshaw man did not hesitate for a minute after the old woman said she was injured. Still holding her arm, he helped her slowly forward. I was surprised. When I looked ahead, I saw a police station. Because of the high wind, there was no one outside, so the rickshaw man helped the old woman towards the gate.

Suddenly I had a strange feeling. His dusty, retreating figure seemed larger at that instant. Indeed, the further he walked the larger he loomed until I had to look up to him. At the same time he seemed gradually to be exerting a pressure on me, which threatened to overpower the small self under my fur-lined gown.

My vitality seemed sapped as I sat there motionless, my mind a blank, until a policeman came out. Then I got down from the rickshaw.

The policeman came up to me, "Get another rickshaw. He can't pull you any more."

Without thinking, I pulled a handful of coppers from my coat pocket and handed them to the policeman. "Please give him these," I said.

The wind had dropped completely, but the road was still quiet. I walked along thinking , but I was almost afraid to turn my thoughts on myself. Setting aside what had happened earlier, what had I meant by that handful of coppers? Was it a reward? Who was I to judge the rickshaw man?

Even now, this remains fresh in my memory. It often causes me distress, and makes me try to think about myself. The military and political affairs of those years I have forgotten have gone as completely as the classics I read in my childhood. Yet this incident keeps coming back to me, often more vivid than in actual life, teaching me shame, urging me to reform, and giving me fresh courage and hope.

4. A Small Incident (Translated by Lyell 1990)

In the twinkling of an eye, six years have passed since I left the countryside to come to the capital. If I stop to add up all the so-called important affairs of state that I have either witnessed or heard about during that time, there have been quite a few at that. And yet, not one has left so much as a trace in my memory, and as for their influence on me, it has only been to increase my stock of bad temper. To tell the truth, have these "important affairs of state" merely taught me to despise people more and more with every passing day.

But there was one unimportant affair that did have meaning for me, that dragged me out of the morass of my own bad temper, and that I cannot forget even today.

It happened during the winter of the sixth year of the Republic. A fierce north wind was just at its peak. Nonetheless, in order to make a living, I had no choice but to be out on the streets bright and early. There was hardly anyone around and it was only with the greatest of difficulty that I finally managed to hire a rickshaw. I ordered the puller to take me to S-Gate. Before long the north wind subsided. It had blown away every last speck of dust, leaving a spotlessly clean thoroughfare stretched out before us. The rickshaw man started making better time too. Then, just as we were entering S-Gate, one of the shafts of his rig snagged a piece of clothing and ragged someone to the ground.

It was a woman. Her hair was grey, her clothes ragged. Darting out from the side of the street, she had cut straight across the rickshaw's path. The puller had slowed so that she might cross safely, but her tattered jacket was unbuttoned and a breeze had caught it at the last moment, making it billow out so that it snagged on one of the shafts. Fortunately the puller had been slowing down at the time, or she would surely have been thrown head over heels and seriously injured.

There she lay stretched out on the ground. The puller stopped. I was certain that the old woman had not been hurt and – since no one had seen the whole thing in the first place – was rather put out by his making so much of it. He was only going to stir up trouble for himself. Besides, he would make me late.

"It is nothing," I said, "just keep going."

Paying no attention at all – perhaps he had not heard me – my puller put down the shafts of his rig. He gently raised the old woman to her feet and supported her under the arms.

"Are you all right?"

"I am hurt real bad."

I saw you go down with my own two eyes, I thought to myself, and it was slowly at that. How could you possibly have been hurt? Just a big act, that is all. What a contemptible old woman!

And the puller had no call to get mixed up in this either – just making trouble for himself. Well, he has gotten himself into it, now let's see him get himself out of it! When she answered, without the least hesitation still supporting her under the arms, he began walking the old woman down the street, one step at a time. Curious to see where he thought he was going, I glanced up ahead – a police substation! Although the wind had died down, there was still no one standing guard outside. Helping the old woman along, the rickshaw man was quite obviously headed for the main gate of that police station!

At this point a strange feeling came over me. It was as if the rickshaw man's receding and dust-covered form had, in a flash, somehow been magnified. It grew larger and larger with every step that he took, until finally I had to look up just to take it all in. What was more, that form gradually solidified into an oppressive weight that bore down upon me until it had squeezed out the pettiness that was hidden beneath my big fur coat.

At this point, my spirits must have been somewhat numbed, for I just sat there not moving, not even really thinking. It was only when I saw a policeman emerge from the substation that I stepped down from the rickshaw.

He walked up to me and said, "Better get another rig. He won't be able to pull you now."

Without thinking, I took a handful of coins out of my coat pocket and handed them to the policeman. "Please give him these."

By now the wind had died down completely. The streets were silent. I walked along, thinking as I went, and yet I was somehow reluctant to think about myself. Even setting aside for the moment the way I had behaved up to that point, what could I have had in mind when I gave the policeman that handful of coins for my puller? Had I been trying to reward him? Was I even fit to pass judgment on this rickshaw man? I could not answer my own questions.

I often think of that unimportant affair even today, and consequently am often forced through the painful business of thinking about myself. For me, the momentous civil and military affairs of the past several years have long since become one with all that Confucius says and the Poetry Classic states kind of thing that I had to memorize as a youth – can't recall so much as half a line. And yet that one unimportant affair remains ever before my eyes, sometimes with even greater clarity than when it actually occurred constantly making me ashamed, urging me to turn over a new leaf – and increasing my stock of courage and hope.

Author's email address
mira.kim@unsw.edu.au
zhi.huang@mq.edu.au

About the author
Dr Mira Kim is Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of the MA in Interpreting and Translation Studies at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. She received an MA in Translation and Interpreting from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul and a PhD from Macquarie University in Sydney. She has been teaching both practical and theoretical courses of translation and interpreting studies since 2000. Her main research areas are translation and interpreting pedagogy, translation quality assessment and text analysis analysis for translation.

Zhi Huang is an Australian NAATI accredited professional translator between Chinese and English languages. Having completed Master of Advanced Translation at Macquarie University, Australia and Master of Education in TESOL at the University of Sydney, Australia, he now teaches translation at Macquarie University. His research interests involve English language teaching, teacher quality, translation theory and pedagogy.