

The Translationese Renaissance: Challenging Standard Thai Writing in Literature

Krissakorn Winnarong

Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

Email: krissakorn.w@psu.ac.th

Received 15 June 2024; revised 4 September 2024; accepted 20 September 2024

Abstract

Translationese has traditionally been viewed as derogatory and characterized as producing unnatural translations. This perception has prompted Thai translators to enshrine idiomatic expression over the use of translationese. In Thailand, where official establishments and institutes have encouraged people to be guardians of the purity of the language under the concept of Thainess, incorporating English-influenced features into Thai writing is often labelled “defective” and “unidiomatic.” However, this article seeks to rethink translationese and introduce a fresh perspective by examining the adoption of translationese features in the works of Prapt, a contemporary Thai author known for his unconventional approach to writing. Through a qualitative analysis of examples from his four distinguished novels and an interview, the article explores the possible reasons why Prapt’s unconventional writing withstands editorial review(s) and examines the potential consequences of embracing translationese in Thai literature.

Keywords: translationese, Thainess, standard, literature

1. Introduction

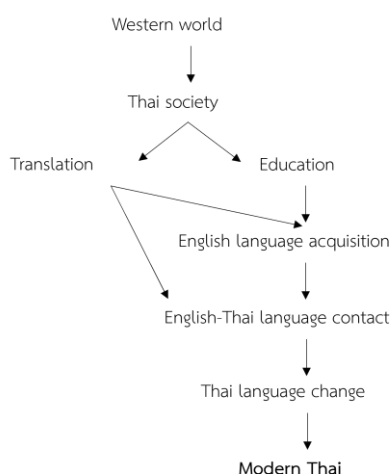
1.1 Down Memory Lane with Translationese in the Thai Context

During the reign of King Mongkut, otherwise known as King Rama IV, the first Asian monarch to understand, write, and speak English, between 1851 and 1868, translation was primarily carried out by native translators, with most texts focusing on scholarly subjects (Prasithrathsint, 2005, p. 143). Subsequently, in the transformative reign of King Chulalongkorn, commonly known as King Rama V, from 1868-1910, which marked a significant period of reform in Thai history, Thai translators began to take on translation tasks, although some critics argue that the products leaned more towards adaptations than true translations. During this era, Thai came into significant contact with English, as European colonialism expanded to Thailand. To modernize and steer the country clear of colonization, the King's offspring and many notabilities were sent abroad to learn the language, while those within the country also pursued English education to become civilized, leading to a notable English influence on the Thai language. As a result, Thai underwent modernization, evolving from a simple to a more complex language—numerous English structures were assimilated into Thai, such as prepositions, nominalization through prefixes, relative pronouns, and passive voice structures (pp. 131-135). Furthermore, throughout this era, a plethora of translations encompassing various subjects, such as religion, philosophy, documentaries, technology, health, medicine, economy, politics, pharmaceutical science, geography, and engineering were undertaken to disseminate knowledge among the people (p. 144). However, many of the translations were greatly impacted by the characteristics and conventions of the original language, and this influence—translationese—manifested itself in Thai writing thereafter. One of the basic examples is the translation of the phrase “to catch a train” into Thai as “จับรถไฟ,” “*chap rot fai*” (*lit.* catch train). In the era of King Vajiravudh (King Rama VI), spanning from 1910 to 1925, the translation of an English novel

marked a significant milestone, paving the way for the emergence of Thailand's own novel writing. During this era, there was a deliberate effort to avoid translationese because the monarch concerned himself with contemporary Thai writing and its use of the Thai language. He opposed the adoption of English-influenced modern Thai. With his wish to defend standard written Thai, he established the "Literature Society," aiming to counteract "deteriorating" standards in written Thai by creating good models of writing. One of the main issues was that Thai writers often translated texts by copying the sentence structures of the original language. Therefore, not resembling a foreign language became the standard for good Thai (Simmons, 2005, pp. 9-10). The figure below provides a summary of the ways in which English has influenced modern Thai.

Figure 1

Development of Modern Thai



Note. From *Language in Thai society: Diversity, change and Development* (p. 145), by A. Prasithrathsint, 2005, Chulalongkorn University Press.

As the Thai language evolves, it becomes necessary to establish standardized grammar rules. This standardization can, to an extent, reinforce national security as well as act as a symbol of the people's identity. Today, there are many establishments and institutes responsible for Thai language policies, usage, and restrictions. One of them is the Royal Society of Thailand, founded in 1933 and formerly known as the Royal Institute. According to the Royal Society Act (2015), powers and duties regarding the Thai language of the institute include:

Item 4: Organizing academic training and development programs related to the Thai language.

Item 7: Prescribing criteria for the use of Thai language, preserving it against deterioration, and promoting it as a national identity. This includes ensuring its prominence alongside local Thai languages and areas of knowledge.

From the two items above, it can be said that departing from Thai writing norms and incorporating a foreign language into Thai texts are deemed “deteriorating.” Examples of deviations include incorrect placement of classifiers, improper subject-verb arrangements, passive voice usage, the use of dummy/anticipatory/preparatory “it,” and excessive nominalization. The Office of Royal Society of Thailand labels such characteristics as “flawed,” as documented in the publication titled “ภาษาไทยที่บกพร่อง ต้องแก้ไข,” “*Flawed Thai Must be Corrected*” (Office of the Royal Society, 2013). This has thus set a benchmark for what is considered “proper” Thai. Given this standard, any deviation is thus prevented in writing, let alone in translation, and labelled as “*farang*¹-like expression,” “foreign-styled Thai,” “unauthentic Thai,” and “hybrid Thai” (Prasithrathsint, 2005, p. 131).

¹ The term “*farang*” is a general term used by many Thais when referring to Caucasians.

1.2 Save the Language, Save Identity

Language is one of the basic factors for distinguishing a community. According to Kuś (2012, p. 1), language use necessitates a communal aspect. To function effectively, it requires sounds, symbols, syntax, and so forth, which are comprehensible to a particular community. Consequently, a language can serve as a medium of communication within one group, while simultaneously acting as a barrier to those outside that group, preventing them from understanding its specific content. Through this process, language becomes a crucial component of structural-conscious and psycho-social connections, shaping group awareness and collective identity. This is evident in various social and cultural elements and defining features that create a clear boundary between those identified as “us” and those considered “them.”

In Thailand, the concept of “Thainess” has deeply influenced the formation of Thai identity, particularly during the long reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, also referred to as King Rama IX, which lasted from 1946 to 2016. The concept is collective identity constituted by shared commonality of language, religion, and monarchy as shaped by the need “to be loyal to [those] three principles/pillars.” (Laungaramsri, 2003, p. 157, as cited in Farrelly, 2016, p. 332). This is also evident in the King’s often-quoted statement about problems of the Thai language: “*Language is a tool of the nation. All languages are beautiful, much like those used in literature. Hence, it is crucial to conserve it We are fortunate to have our language from ancient times, which merits preservation. This preservation involves maintaining our language’s purity through correct articulation and proper usage* (my translation),” delivered on July 29, 1962 (Chulalongkorn University, 2009, pp. 5-6). As a result, this has championed the over-preservation of standard Thai, while halting practices deemed detrimental to the uniqueness of both the spoken and written language. With respect to translation, there is a strong emphasis on avoiding translationese and

expressing the original message in idiomatic Thai. Translators are encouraged to adhere to the principles of the Thai language and, where possible, to avoid borrowing words from the source text. Instead, they should use Thai coinages established by the Office of the Royal Society, as evidenced in their publication “ศัพท์ต่างประเทศที่ใช้คำไทยแทนได้,” *“Foreign Words That Can Be Replaced with Thai Words”* (Office of the Royal Society, 2018). Paradoxically, while the institute champions the use of Thai coinages over foreign terms to preserve Thai identity, many of these coinages are derived from Pali and Sanskrit. This raises the question of whether a truly distinct Thainess can ever be achieved.

Techawongstien and Chittiphalangsri (2024, p. 82) observe that the overuse of standard Thai can be seen as an intense form of domestication, with a fetish exaltation of old-school patriotism; it reflects a broader nationalist framework in Thailand, where concepts like “officialness,” “standard,” “correctness,” and “appropriateness” are intrinsically linked to Thai identity. They call the belief in the benefits of Standard Thai for national unity “the sense of linguistic singularity”—a mindset that prioritizes the exclusive use of Standard Thai. They underscore the importance of reconsidering the prevailing mindset that shapes various aspects of Thai language usage, including translation. This should include whether there is room for alternative translation practices that diverge from the traditional emphasis on fluency, idiomaticity, and correctness. Currently, most research in Thai translation focuses on linguistic style and strategies aimed at achieving these ideals, which limits the exploration of different, potentially innovative approaches to translation (p. 84).

2. Research Objectives

Prapt is the pseudonym of Chairat Pipitpattanaprap, a Thai writer whose works primarily focus on romance and detective genres. Despite the stringent requirement to maintain authentic Thai language usage,

Prapt employs unusual features of translationese in his Thai novels, most of which are adapted from source interference. Flouting conventional notions of “good” Thai writing by adopting different features consisting of distinct linguistic structures that are not found in more “natural” Thai, Prapt makes his own novels unique and distinct and he has achieved multiple awards. For instance, *กาหลมหารัททีก*, *Kahonmahorathuek* (Prapt, 2014) received Naiin’s Best Novel Award 2014 in the detective fiction category, the second runner-up for the 7 Books Award 2015, and an honorable mention from the Office of the Basic Education Commission of Thailand (OBEC) in 2015. *นীরาศมพรรณพ*, *Nirat Mahannop* (Prapt, 2015) made it to the Long List round of the S.E.A. Writer’s Award in 2015. *ลิ่งพาดกลอน*, *Ling Phat Klon* (Prapt, 2018) was a finalist in the Short List round of the 7 Books Award in 2019. *อโศกสง*, *Asok Sang* (Prapt, 2021) received the second runner-up for Naiin Readers’ Awards 2021. With his works published consecutively for the readership, an acceptance of the use of translationese is signaled. In this article, I aim to explore the possible reasons why Prapt’s unconventional writing withstands editorial review and the potential consequences of embracing translationese in his literary works.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Translationese

Translated texts in a given language often display distinct features that differentiate them from texts originally written in that language. This phenomenon is referred to as “translationese.”

Unlike the concept of “translationese” in machine translation (MT), which refers to the artificial or stilted language output generated by automated translation systems, in translation studies, “translationese” denotes specific characteristics found in translated texts. Coined by Nida and Taber in 1969, the term initially described the unnatural elements arising from the constraints of the source text (henceforth ST), often

resulting in a formal fidelity to the original but a loss of faithfulness in terms of content or impact. Over time, this term has taken on a derogatory connotation, with scholars such as Chesterman (2004) referring to it as “unnaturalness,” highlighting the conspicuous artificiality of translated texts to native speakers of the target language (henceforth TL). Leman (2009) defined it as “the phenomenon of an odd, unnatural language that only appears in translations—or the fingerprints that one language leaves on another when a text is translated.” Graham et al. (2019) expand on this definition, viewing translationese as the presence of unusual features within target texts (henceforth TT). Newmark (1991, as cited in Yue & Son, 2021, p. 48), narrows the scope of translationese to encompass only the “inappropriate” or “unnatural” aspects of translation. From these perspectives, translationese is commonly understood as indicative of subpar translation quality or performance.

Similarly, in Thailand, translationese is often seen as a red flag for improper translations. Thai translators are warned against it, humorously called “milk and butter-smelling language,” since it is Western food that feels out of place. In the same way, when translating Thai to English, they are also given the sage advice: “Don’t make your translation smell like shrimp paste and fish sauce!” The idea is to avoid making the translation sound awkwardly foreign to English-speaking readers, like you have seasoned it with something that does not belong.

Translationese can be categorized into what are known as fundamental laws of translation (Toury, 1995) or translation universals (Baker, 1993).

Toury (1995, pp. 53-64) states that translation is a norm-governed activity; it is not just about converting words from one language to another but involves engaging with two different sets of cultural norms and expectations. This means that any translation activity must address and reconcile at least two distinct “norm-systems”—one from the source

language (henceforth SL)/source culture (henceforth SC) and one from the TL/ target culture (henceforth TC). There are two major elements of translation: position in the TC and representation of the ST. The former means the TT must fit into the cultural and linguistic context of the TL, while the latter means the TT must also represent the ST from the SL, which belongs to a different culture.

Toury (1980, 1995) distinguishes two laws concerning the features of translationese: “the law of interference” and “the law of growing standardization.” The law of interference refers to the phenomena in which the translation mirrors the typical patterns of the SL, allowing the SL to shine through the ST (Toury 1995, p. 275). For example:

(1) ST: **So talking, and laughing as he talked**, he escorted me up the short narrow flight of stairs to the light airy room where he usually worked. (Corelli, 1886, p. 109)

TT: **พูดไปพลางหัวเราะไปพลาง** เขานำข้าพเจ้ามาทางระเบียงอันมืดและเข้าในห้องโถงซึ่งเคยทำการเขียนของเขา (Corelli, 1886/1994, p. 122)

In (1), instead of standardizing the translation, the TT follows the present participial structure of the SL. Although subjects can be dropped in the Thai language, such translation can still sound awkward. According to Winnarong (2023), two possible ways to make the translation of the temporal adverbial clause read natural and idiomatic are initiating the sentence with a conjunctive marker or temporal relator and changing the present participial clause into the predicate of the sentence. Therefore, its translation can be either “**ในขณะที่พูดไปพลางหัวเราะไปพลางนั้น** เขานำข้าพเจ้ามาทางระเบียงอันมืด...,” “**While** talking and laughing as he talked, he escorted me up the short narrow flight of stairs...” or “**เขาพูดไปพลางหัวเราะไปพลางขณะ**นำข้าพเจ้ามาทางระเบียงอันมืด...,” “He talked and laughed

as he escorted me up the short narrow flight of stairs...” However, these two strategies tend to make explicit logico-semantic relation between two clauses of the sentence. In other words, while the ST leaves it implicit whether the two events occurred simultaneously or at different times, the TT explicitly indicates that they happened concurrently. This distinction can, therefore, lead to a nuanced shift in meaning. It can be said that replicating the typical pattern of the SL can maintain the implicit nature of the ST, even if it diverges from idiomatic Thai.

Conversely, the law of growing standardization refers to the tendency for translated texts to become more standardized or conventional in their TL. In simpler terms, this means that features or characteristics unique to the ST are often replaced with elements that are more typical or expected in the TL (p. 267), for example:

(2) ST: **The system was removed** two years ago for security precautions.
(Brown, 2003, p. 125)

TT: เราเลิกใช้ระบบที่ว่าไปแล้วตั้งแต่สองปีก่อนด้วยเหตุผลด้านการรักษาความปลอดภัยค่ะ (Brown, 2003/2004, p. 214)

In (2), instead of replicating the ST pattern, the translator standardizes the passive sentence “The system was removed...” to match the TL pattern by changing it into the active sentence “เราเลิกใช้ระบบที่ว่าไปแล้ว...,” “We already removed the system...” It should be noted that passive voice is generally avoided in Thai writing; it is typically indicated by the word “ถูก,” which is equivalent to “verb be + past participle” in English. Further, the 2013 publication by the Office of the Royal Society, as earlier mentioned, gives several examples, explaining how passive sentences can be converted into active ones to achieve a more idiomatic and natural expression in Thai.

Unlike Toury's laws, Baker (1993) proposed the concept of translation universals. Baker suggests that translation universals are linguistic features that typically appear in translated texts rather than in texts written originally in the TL. In the following year, Baker (1996) identified a brief checklist of universals, as illustrated by the examples found in English-Thai translations below.

1. Explicitation is “*an overall tendency to spell things out rather than leave them implicit*” (Baker, 1996, p. 180), for example:

(3) ST: **They** were leisurely enough for him to take in the full meaning of the portent, and to taste the flavour of death rising in his gorge....**They** were leisurely enough for Mr Verloc to elaborate a plan of defence... (Conrad, 1907, p. 264)

TT: **เงา**นั้นบ่งชี้ชัดเจนว่าสิ่งเลวร้ายบางอย่างกำลังจะเกิดขึ้นแน่ ดูเหมือนรสชาติของความตายกำลังคลืบคลานเข้ามาหาเขา...**ร่างเงา**นั้นเคลื่อนที่เข้ามาช้า ๆ จนนายเวอร์ล็อกมีเวลามากพอที่จะคิดว่า เขาควรระวังป้องกันตนเองอย่างไรดี... (Conrad, 1907/2018, p. 418)

In (3), rather than literally translating “they” as “มัน”, “man,” ‘it,’ which can also be used to denote plurality in Thai, the translator opts for its antecedents “เงา,” “ngao,” “shadow” and “ร่างเงา,” “rang ngao,” ‘the silhouette of the body,’ respectively, explicitly indicating what “they” refer to.

2. Simplification is tentatively defined as “*the tendency to simplify the language used in translation*” (Baker, 1996, p. 181). This can also be observed through the shift of sentence length, for example:

(4) ST: **At length the heralds and forerunners of the royal sun had done their work**, and searching out the shadows, had caused them to flee away. (Haggard, 1887, p. 58)

TT: **พอแสงแดดสว่างจ้า** สรรพสิ่งทั้งหลายก็แหวกมีดมนทั้งผองออกให้เห็นชัด (Haggard, 1887/1990, p. 77)

In (4), rather than translating the lengthy ST word for word and preserving the metaphor that likens heralds and forerunners to early signs of sunrise, the translator opted for a concise translation “พอแสงแดดสว่างจ้า,” “As the sunlight shines bright”, that captures the essence of the ST. Here, it is worth noting that simplification can also be seen as a form of explicitation, as it increases clarity by eliminating ambiguity.

3. Normalization/conservatism is defined as “*a tendency to exaggerate features of the target language and to conform to its typical patterns*” (Baker, 1996, p. 183). This definition is similar to Toury’s law of growing standardization (see e.g., (2)).

4. Leveling out is glossed as “*the tendency of translated text to gravitate towards the centre of a continuum*” (Baker, 1996, p. 184). For instance, “*the individual texts in an English translation corpus are more like each other in terms such as lexical density, type–token ratio and mean sentence length than the individual texts in a comparable corpus of original English*” (Baker, 1996, p. 184). For Thai translated texts, Phonchai (1989, p. 73) points out that prepositions are used at a higher rate in translated texts than in original Thai. Furthermore, Prasithrathsint (2005, pp. 133-134) observes that passive voice structures are used more frequently in translated texts than in non-translated ones.

In addition to the checklist above, Becher (2011, p. 19) has introduced another feature termed “implicitation,” which occurs when the TT is less direct (more implicit) compared to the ST. The example below is drawn from an English-Thai translation.

(5) ST: “**Good evening**,” he said, his eyes finding his clients. (Brown, 2003, p. 198)

TT: “**สวัสดีครับ**” เขากล่าว สายตามองหาลูกค้า (Brown, 2003/2004, p. 214)

In (5), the phrase “good evening,” typically employed for evening greetings in English, is rendered into Thai as “สวัสดี” or “*sawatdi*,” a widely used Thai expression meaning “hello,” suitable for any time of day. Here, the precise time conveyed in the original greeting becomes implicit in Thai. Note, however, that Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, a former prime minister of Thailand, encouraged the use of “*sayan sawat*,” an equivalent of “good evening” during his tenure, but the phrase was not favored by the public.

Given Toury’s laws and Baker’s universals, Pym (2008, p. 1) highlights that Baker’s work elaborates on and provides detailed insights into the first law of growing standardization, which is prominent in Thai translation practice, but does not regularly address the aspect of source text interference as proposed by Toury. Therefore, since the focus of this study revolves around deviations from standards, Toury’s law of interference is employed as a framework.

3.2 Linguistic Deviation in Literary Style

Literary style is a form of language expression distinguished by unique elements aimed at conveying the message clearly, persuasively, and engagingly to the reader. It captures and maintains the reader’s

attention by showcasing the writer's expertise, knowledge, and proficiency (Hacker, 1991, Sebranek et al., 2006, as cited in Mansoor & Salman, 2021, p. 8).

As mentioned earlier, Prapt is a contemporary Thai author known for his unconventional style to writing, with most of his works deviating from standard Thai language norms. To examine four of his distinctive novels, Leech's (1969, 1976) comprehensive concept of linguistic deviation in poetry is employed.

Leech (1976, pp. 42-52) identified nine categories of linguistic deviation in poetry: lexical (vocabulary invention or innovation), semantic (extraordinary meaning and interpretation), syntactic (grammatical deviation), phonological (departure from standard phonetic or phonological norms), morphological (departure from conventional morphological rules and structures in language, e.g., word forms, affixation patterns, or word combinations), graphological (deviations from conventional spelling, punctuation, or visual presentation of text), historical (departures from historical linguistic norms or conventions in language usage, e.g., the use of archaic or outdated vocabulary), dialectal (deviation from standard dialects), and register (deviation from the standard linguistic register, level of formality or context-specific norms).

4. Methodology and Results

4.1 Methodology

The research focused on the author's four detective thrillers, namely *Kahonmahorathuek* (Prapt, 2014), *Nirat Mahannop* (Prapt, 2015), *Ling Phat Klon* (Prapt, 2018), and *Asok Sang* (Prapt, 2021), to identify translationese features employed in his written works. These four works were selected because they belong to the same genre and were published consecutively. Additionally, *Asok Sang* is a sequel to *Ling Phat Klon*. The consecutive publication of these works can also reveal whether

the deviations persist or are removed over time, which may reflect the acceptance and stance of the editor(s) and the publishing house.

To qualitatively analyze the data, various linguistic elements in the four selected works that deviate from standard Thai language norms and exhibit translationese features were examined, using Toury's (1980, 1995) law of interference. The identified features found were then grouped, using Leech's (1969, 1976) typology of linguistic deviation, and possible reasons behind the deviations were hypothesized.

After the analysis, I conducted an interview with the author to understand reasons behind the use of the identified features in the texts. The author was given some excerpts that contained the frequently found features and asked about the editor(s)'s viewpoints to his approach, relevant criteria, if any, and his motivation(s) for certain excerpts. The interview data were then compared with the hypotheses to draw further conclusions.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Translationese features in Prapt's works

The examination of the author's adoption of translationese features in four Thai novels unveiled intriguing lexical and syntactic features that were employed to imbue his narratives with distinctiveness. Based on the analysis, the author employed translationese features that introduce two types of deviations based on Leech's (1969, 1976) typology of linguistic deviation as follows:

1) Historical deviation

The use of historical deviation through translationese in the author's novels aligns with his stance. He openly expresses a preference for archaic language on his Facebook Page under his pseudonym, underscoring the relevance of this feature to his literary perspective.

- (6) Sentence: ...เจ้าตัวตั้งใจเรียนจนจบเพื่อหาเงินมาจุนเจือครอบครัว
ระหว่างนั้นเสาร์อาทิตย์จะ**จับรถไฟ**กลับบ้านเสียเวลาชุลละ
เกือบสามชั่วโมง... (Prapt, 2021, p. 245)

Translation: ...He strived to earn a degree to support his family.
During the time on Saturdays and Sundays, he
caught the train homewards, with each ride taking
almost three hours (my translation).

In (6), as previously discussed, “จับรถไฟ” originates from the literal translation of “to catch a train.” This foreign-sounding phrase was cited as an example of English-influenced expressions slated for prohibition, as stated in Section 8 of the Literary Act of 1914. The correct recommendation was also provided—“ขึ้นรถไฟ,” “to board a train,” which should be used instead (Regulations of the Literary Society, 1917). It should be noted that this phrase, though archaic, is still avoided in contemporary writing; textbooks and learning materials often use it as an example of foreign-sounding expressions in Thai courses (e.g., Pancharoen, 2021). Some even say it is primarily used among the older generations.

2) Syntactic deviation

Syntactical deviation is broken into two main types: bad or incorrect grammar and syntactic re-arrangement or hyperbaton (Leech 1969, p. 45). The analysis indicates that only the latter category is present. The author’s syntactic re-arrangement can be further classified into two subtypes, as detailed below:

2.1 Anastrophe

Anastrophe, or inversion, is a literary technique where the position of “a single word” is changed (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002, p. 33, as cited in Gafur et al., 2021, p. 714). In Prapt’s writings, adverbs are frequently moved to the beginning of a sentence, similar to their usage in English.

The example below shows how the placement of an adverb is replicated in the TT.

(7) ST: **Ceremonially**, Ralph laid the conch on the trunk beside him as a sign that the speech was over. (Golding, 2006, p. 82)

TT: **อย่างเป็นทางการ** ราล์ฟวางหอยสังข์ลงบนขอนไม้ข้างกายเขา เป็นสัญญาณบอกให้รู้ว่าสิ่งที่ต้องการพูดจบลงแล้ว (Golding, 2006/2022, p. 139)

In (7), the TT follows the pattern of the ST by placing the adverb “อย่างเป็นทางการ,” “ceremonially” at the beginning of the sentence. This practice disrupts the natural branching structure of Thai syntax and renders the TT unnatural. The examples below, taken from Prapt’s novels published in 2014, 2015, 2018, and 2021, respectively, indicate that this practice has been consistently maintained.

(8a) Sentence: **อย่างรำคาญสุดทน** คนตัวใหญ่ทั้งสองหันมองหน้ากันแล้วถอนใจลึก (Prapt, 2014, p. 56)

Translation: **Exasperatedly**, the two bulky men looked at each other and sighed deeply (my translation).

(8b) Sentence: **อย่างว่องไว** กำมะหยี่รุดถึงประตูไม้หนาหนัก (Prapt, 2015, p. 152)

Translation: **Swiftly**, Kammayi rushed toward the thick, heavy wooden door (my translation).

(8c) Sentence: **อย่างครุ่นคิด** ผู้หมวดหนุ่มจากกรุงเทพฯ ล้วงโทรศัพท์ขึ้นเปิดดูเบอร์ที่โทร. ออกครั้งล่าสุด (Prapt, 2018, p. 57)

Translation: **Thoughtfully**, the young lieutenant from Bangkok reached for his cell phone and looked at the recent outgoing call on the screen (my translation).

- (8d) Sentence: **อย่างระแວดระวัง** เขาขับรถพลาถมองกระจกหลังไปตลอดทาง
(Prapt, 2021, p. 347)
Translation: **Cautiously**, he drove the car while glancing at the
rearview mirror all along the way (my translation).

In (8a-d), the author positions the Thai adverbs at the beginning of the sentence, following the same pattern of source-interfered translationese by mirroring the front placement of the English adverb. Here, placing Thai adverbs prefixed with “อย่าง-,” “*yang-*,” which is equivalent to the English suffix “-ly,” at the front of the sentence sounds unnatural. This is because the Thai language follows a right-branching sentence structure, wherein the primary subject is initially introduced, followed by a series of modifiers that furnish further details about the subject. Jenks (2011, p. 23) points out that all adverbs occur to the right of the verb phrase in Thai. To illustrate, (8a) can be rewritten as “คนตัวใหญ่ทั้งสองหันมอหน้ากันแล้วถอนใจลึกอย่างรำคาญสุดทน,” which translates to “The two bulky men looked at each other and sighed deeply, **exasperatedly**.” However, some adverbs such as temporal ones can be topicalized (p. 23).

2.2 Hyperbaton

Unlike anastrophe, hyperbaton is a form of syntactic displacement where words or phrases that typically belong together in a sentence are deliberately separated to achieve a rhetorical effect (Baldick, 2001, as cited in Gafur et al., 2021, p. 714). This is illustrated in (1). Such structuring is not typical in Thai but occasionally appears in translated texts. The examples from Prapt’s novels published in 2014, 2015, 2018, and 2021 show that this practice has been consistently followed.

- (9a) Sentence: **ลงเรือนด้านหลังแล้วรีบหลบหลังตุ่มใหญ่ อาศัยโสต
ประสาทไวกว่าคนสามัญ ยายอรอรอนผู้เข้ามาใหม่ดักน้ำล้าง
เท้าแล้วก้าวหย่ง ๆ ขึ้นเรือน** (Prapt, 2014, p. 122)
Translation: **Stepping down from the back door of the house
to hide behind a big jar, banking on her ears
more attuned than those of ordinary people,
Grandma On waited for the newcomer to finish
washing his feet and make his way up to the house
(my translation).**
- (9b) Sentence: **ผลักประตูปิดด้วยศอกขวา มงกุฎหอบของพะรุงพะรังเข้าบ้าน
อย่างคล่องแคล่ว** (Prapt, 2015, p. 23)
Translation: **Pushing the door shut with her right elbow,
Mongkut agilely carried her cluttered stuff into her
house (my translation).**
- (9c) Sentence: **มองมือกร้านสกปรกของมัน ไตรตรึงขย่นจมูกแล้วเบนสายตา
ไปที่กระถางไม้ดอกขนาดใหญ่ข้าง ๆ แทน** (Prapt, 2018, p. 13)
Translation: **Looking at his dirty, rough hands, Traitrueng
wrinkled his nose and averted his eyes to a big
flowerpot nearby (my translation).**
- (9d) Sentence: **เม้มปากเพราะกลัวตัวเองจะหลุดเสียง หญิงสาวก้มหน้า เลี่ยง
สายตาไปทางอื่น** (Prapt, 2021, p. 18)
Translation: **Pressing her lips together to restrain her remarks
from slipping out, the young woman bowed her
head and averted her gaze (my translation).**

The examples in (9a-d) show how the author uses source-inferred translationese with dislocated clause placement, making the text sound unnatural. Based on my previous study (Winnarong, 2023), to make the example sentences less awkward, all the subordinate clauses in Thai, represented by present participle clauses in the translations, should be changed to

predicates of the sentences. For instance, (9c) can be rewritten as “ไตรตรึงษ์มองมือกร้านสกปรกของมันแล้วย่นจมูก เขาเบนสายตาไปที่กระถางไม้ดอกขนาดใหญ่ข้าง ๆ แทน,” “Traitrung **looked at his dirty**, rough hands and wrinkled. He averted his eyes to a big flowerpot nearby.” Interestingly, this feature is consistently used throughout the four novels, indicating ongoing approval by the editor(s).

4.2.2 The Potentials of the Translationese Features

My hypothesis posits that the author uses translationese features to create stylistic outcomes similar to those used in English writing. Whether it works in the Thai language or not, he employs translationese features to introduce historical and syntactic deviations from the standard norms.

For the initial feature, the author uses historical deviation that derives from the literal translation of the English expression. It is noteworthy that while this practice is discouraged in contemporary Thai writing, historically, certain foreign-sounding expressions were prevalent, particularly when English first intersected with Thai. Hence, employing this feature may imbue the story with an old-fashioned feel.

Regarding the second feature, the author intentionally alters the placement of adverbs within the texts. In English, when adverbs are positioned at the beginning of a clause, they modify the entire sentence and serve to emphasize or introduce important information. Stylistically, these kinds of fronted adverbs—openers—are used to create suspense. Wu (2019) calls adverbs proposed to the initial position “scene-setting” topics and reveals that they can provide the temporal, spatial, and manner background framework for the main predicate.

Conversely, in Thai, adverbs are typically placed at the end of the sentence, with only a few exceptions allowing for fronting, excluding those starting with “*yang-*” as in (8a-d). Therefore, incorporating this feature into Thai literature could initially result in providing manner context and building suspense, given that all four selected novels belong to the

thriller genre. According to Leech (1969), this kind of re-arrangement, aka anastrophe, is used to achieve a stylistic effect. Mukarovsky (1932/1964, p. 19, as cited in Miall & Kuiken, 1994, p. 346) terms this deviation “foregrounding,” which refers to “a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism. As an attention-grabbing literary device, foregrounding that occurs in a structured form allows a literary text to maintain its distinctive identity and uniqueness for readers, an identity that readers often discern but cannot clearly explain (p. 346). Hence, employing dislocated adverbs can also generate unique emphasis that captures attention.

Unlike anastrophe, which involves reversing the typical or expected word order of a single word, the final feature involves hyperbaton, where the author intentionally alters the placement of clauses within the text to achieve a rhetorical effect. In English, all tenses formed in combination with the present participle have the function of expressing the narrative or commentative background (Weinrich, 1978, pp. 94-105, 168-169, as cited in Bellardi, 2017, p. 78). Fuhre (2010) calls the structure an *-ing* participial free adjunct and states that its major function in literature is that of backgrounding. That is, it typically presents subsidiary, off-the-timeline information against which the information in its main clause is highlighted or foregrounded. Green (1915) regards this structure as verb inversion which involves an initial non-subject, and, according to Lingard (2019, p. 58), inversion is identified as one of the three aspects of syntax employed for pacing and subtle emphasis, sharing similarities with the previously discussed techniques of grammatical deviation. In contrast to English, Thai lacks a comparable structure. Therefore, it could be hypothesized that the author deliberately included this feature in Thai writing to establish background information and craft distinctive emphasis,

thereby capturing the reader's attention, similar to the way this feature is used in English.

4.2.3 The Editor(s)' Reasoning and the Author's Viewpoints

To begin with, the identities of the editor(s) were not mentioned; all of the information about them was provided by Prapt, the author. He was asked three questions as follows:

(1) Regarding the possible reasons why his unconventional writing withstands the editor(s)' review, the author disclosed, "*The editor(s) initially found these features (dislocated adverb placement and dislocated clause placement) irritating simply because they do not conform to the normal structure of the Thai language, such as principles and familiarity.*" As for the use of the foreign-sounding phrase—historical deviation—he said, "*The editor(s) regarded it as a stylistic choice. It sounds archaic and it often used in classics. I'd like to include it in my writing.*"

(2) When asked about any relevant criteria for the extent to which he could deviate from standards, he mentioned, "*There are no exact criteria. Normally, publishing houses that produce literary works are quite flexible. As long as the author's style does not impair the intelligibility of the text, deviations from standard norms are generally acceptable. Authors are allowed to maintain their uniqueness without feeling obligated to cater to readers or strictly adhere to grammar rules. The goal is for readers to appreciate the works, not merely digest them easily like mass-produced content.*"

(3) The last question was about his motivation(s) for unconventional writing. He openly expressed, "*I intentionally use "translationese" in my writing. I think the visual quality of the text stands out as cinematic, just like panning a camera, when it comes to be conveyed through the interplay of translationese features like dislocated adverb placement and dislocated clause placement. I observed the use of these features in*

older translated texts, so I use them to give my own works a reminiscent quality of earlier translation practices. I also use certain archaic expressions to evoke an antiquated ambiance (personal communication, March 26, 2024).”

5. Discussion

Through my interview with the author, my hypothesis about his adoption of translationese has been substantiated. The author opined that the visual quality of the text stands out as cinematic when it comes to be conveyed through the interplay of translationese features. Inspired by old Thai translation works, he embraces translationese as a distinctive stylistic choice, evoking an antiquated ambiance by incorporating certain English expressions and using anastrophe through dislocated adverb placement, reminiscent of older translation practices. Additionally, he infuses a cinematic quality into his writing by using hyperbaton through the strategic placement of dislocated clauses, mirroring the visual technique of panning a camera to provide background context and depth to the narrative.

At first, the editor(s) found these features irritating due to their deviation from established standards and their unfamiliarity. However, they were eventually accepted because they did not affect the text's clarity and provided a unique touch to both the text and the author. While grammar holds significance, fiction can benefit from intentionally deviating from grammatical norms. Disregarding conventional grammatical rules in fiction is acceptable, provided that clarity of meaning is maintained, and there exists a compelling rationale for such departures (Gotham Writers, n.d.). Best-selling novelist and writing coach C.S. Lakin similarly suggests that when writing fiction, certain aspects of sentence structure might not follow definitive rules. Moreover, a writer's voice, style, tone, and chosen genre can and should influence decisions on crafting narrative,

internal monologue, dialogue, and descriptions (Merrell, 2015). This suggests that the author's style can deviate from the norm. A writing style is the unique way a writer expresses their thoughts and shapes their prose; it serves as their personal signature or fingerprint on the page. Creativity necessitates a degree of independence from the creator. Without this autonomy, creators might lose the internal drive to produce works, impacting their sense of ownership over their ideas (Amabile, 1998, p. 82, as cited in van Eechoud, 2014, p. 104). Moreover, originality entails diverging from the paths of others, a task made easier when individuals maintain independence and autonomy (Runco, 2007, p. 288, as cited in van Eechoud, 2014, p. 104).

Based on the author's intended approach, using features of translationese in Thai literary writing can create literary effects similar to those in English. Reflecting SL patterns in the TT can be an innovative approach and should be considered in translation. For instance, although mimicking the English participial clause pattern in the initial position might result in unnaturalness and awkwardness in Thai translations, it can replicate the original text's effects, such as conveying narrative or commentative background and capturing readers' attention, as shown in example (1). When translating such clauses according to Thai norms, the intended effects may be lost. For example, while the ST written with a present participial clause leaves the timing of events ambiguous, the Thai translation following normative practices explicitly indicates that the events occurred simultaneously. Another scenario involves using fronted adverbs to serve as openers and set the scene. While adhering to the English placement can create similar effects in the TT, altering it to fit Thai's right-branching structure might diminish or erase those effects.

This has prompted a reconsideration of translationese as merely a sign of inferior quality. Unlike Nida and Taber (1969), who saw translationese as a compromise in content and impact, it can actually

be creative and effectively replicate the ST's impact on the TT. In Japan, translationese has garnered attention for its significant role in language development. Unlike in the West, where translationese is often viewed as a marker of poor translation, Meldrum (2009, p. 98) notes that it has influenced the evolution of written Japanese positively. There are also studies that support this view. For example, Furuno (2002, 2005, as cited in Meldrum, 2009, p. 111) has explored how Japanese attitudes towards translationese in nonfiction writing have evolved, while Yanabu (1982, 2003, as cited in Meldrum, 2009, p. 111) has proposed a translation theory centered on the linguistic features of translationese, providing insights into its impact on language and translation practices.

With that said, Prapt's valid writing style raises questions about the extent of freedom and acceptability of using translationese in the field of translation in Thailand. Despite the intelligibility of texts and literary response, is it merely accepted as a stylistic choice in writing, yet still unsuitable for translating foreign language literary texts into Thai? According to Toury (1995), tolerance for foreign language interference is shaped by socio-cultural factors and follows different norms that guide translators' behavior. This leaves questions for those in positions of power, such as editors and publishing houses, about whether translation practices should adhere strictly to established norms or be open to innovative approaches.

6. Conclusion

Translationese, often criticized as "defective" and "unidiomatic", is typically avoided in Thai writing due to the concept of Thainess, which emphasizes the purity of the Thai language. This stance discourages its use not only in original compositions but also in translations. However, from the viewpoint of the editor(s) and the literary sensibility of publishing houses, the author's writing style allows for the incorporation of

translationese features in Thai literature; embracing translationese in Thai literary works serves to create the uniqueness of both the text and the author. Moreover, the visual quality of the text can achieve a cinematic effect through the integration of various translationese features, all of which derive from the interference category and produce historical and syntactic deviations. This approach can, potentially, produce stylistic effects similar to those found in English literature, such as enhancing emphasis and captivating the reader's attention. This new perspective on embracing translationese in the creation of unconventional Thai literature, therefore, paves the way for future considerations regarding its acceptance in translating foreign language literary texts into Thai, beyond its current application solely in original compositions.

References

- Baker, M. (1993). Corpus linguistics and translation studies: Implications and applications. In M. Baker, M. Baker, G. Francis, & E. Tognini-Bonelli (Eds.), *Text and technology* (pp. 233-250). Benjamins.
- Baker, M. (1996). Corpus-based translation studies: The challenges that lie ahead. In H. Somers (Ed.), *Terminology, LSP and translation* (pp. 175-186). Benjamins.
- Becher, V. (2011). *Explicitation and implicitation in translation a corpus-based study of English-German and German-English translations of business texts* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Hamburg]. ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de. <https://ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de/handle/ediss/4186>
- Bellardi, M. (2017). *The cinematic mode in twentieth-century fiction a comparative approach*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham]. e-theses repository. <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/8567/>
- Brown, D. (2003). *The Da Vinci code*. Doubleday.

- Brown, D. (2004). *The Da Vinci code* (Suwankomol, Trans.). Praew. (Original work published 2003).
- Chesterman, A. (2004). Beyond the particular. In K. Pekka & A. Mauranen, (Eds.), *Translation universals: do they exist?* (pp. 33-49). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Chulalongkorn University. (2009). *Problems of Thai language usage: The record of the royal guidance presented at the Academic Conference of the Thai Language Club, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, on July 29, 1962*. Chulalongkorn University Press.
- Conrad, J. (1907). *The secret agent*. Bernhard Tauchnitz.
- Conrad, J. (2018). *The secret agent* (Wichakkhana, Trans.). (Original work published 1907).
- Corelli, M. (1886). *Vendetta*. New York Publishing.
- Corelli, M. (1994). *Vendetta* (Maewan, Trans.). Kaona Kan Phim. (Original work published 1886).
- Farrelly, N. (2016). Being Thai a narrow identity in a wide world. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2016), 331-344. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26466934>
- Fuhre, P. (2010). *The English -ing participial free adjunct in original and translated fiction: An English-Norwegian parallel corpus study* [Master's thesis, University of Oslo]. UiO. https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/25272/Fuhre_Master.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Gafur, A., Arifin, M. B., & Rahayu, F. E. S. (2021). An analysis of syntactical deviation in Ed Sheeran's selected song lyrics. *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Budaya*, 5(4), 709-729. <https://doi.org/10.1234/exampledoi>
- Green, G. M. (1915). The description of inversions in generalized phrase structure grammar. *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society 1985*, 117-145. <https://doi.org/10.3765/bls.v11i0.1915>

- Golding, W. (2006). *Lord of the flies*. Penguin Books.
- Golding, W. (2022). *Lord of the flies* (T. Suthummarangsi, Trans). Lighthouse Publishing. (Original work published 2006).
- Gotham Writers. (n.d.). *Does fiction have to be grammatically correct?*. Retrieved May 11, 2024, from <https://www.writingclasses.com/toolbox/ask-writer/does-fiction-have-to-be-grammatically-correct>
- Graham, Y., Haddow, B., & Koehn, P. (2019). *Translationese in machine translation evaluation*. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1906.09833>
- Haggard, H. R. (1887). *She*. Longmans, Green & Co.
- Haggard, H. R. (1990). *She* (Noknori, Trans.). Samakkhisan. (Original work published 1887).
- Jenks, P. S. (2011). *The hidden structure of Thai noun phrases* [Doctoral thesis]. Harvard University.
- Leech, G. N. (1969). *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. Longman.
- Leech, G. N. (1976). *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman.
- Leman, W. (2009). *Translation glossary*. 110mb. <http://bible-translation.110mb.com/glosst.htm>
- Kuś, M. (2011). *Language as an element of national identity-of collective memory*. Jan Długosz Academy.
- Lingard, L. (2019). Pace, pause & silence: Creating emphasis & suspense in your writing. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 9(1), 57-59.
- Miall, D. & Kuiken, D. (1994). Beyond text theory: Understanding literary response. *Discourse processes*, 17(3), 337-352.
- Mansoor, M. S. & Salman, Y. M. (2021). Linguistic deviation in literary style: A stylistic analysis. *Cihan University-Erbil Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 7-16.
- Meldrum, Y. F. (2009). Translationese in Japanese literary translation. *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 22(1), 93-118. <https://doi.org/10.7202/044783ar>

- Merrell, A. (2015, January 12). *Are there grammar “rules” for writing fiction?*. The Write Editing. <https://thewriteediting.blogspot.com/2015/01/are-there-grammar-rules-for-writing.html>
- Nida, E. A. & Taber, C. R. (1969). *The theory and practice of translation*. E. J. Brill.
- Office of the Royal Society. (2013). *Phasa Thai thi bokphrong tong kaekhai* [Flawed Thai must be corrected]. Aroon Karnpim.
- Office of the Royal Society. (2018). *Sap tang prethet thi chai kham Thai thaen dai* [Foreign Terms That Can Be Replaced with Thai Words]. Dhammaintrend.
- Pancharoen, A. (2021). *Influences of some foreign languages on the Thai language*. Ramkhamhaeng University Press.
- Phonchai, N. (1989). *Characteristics of Thai in translated academic texts* [Master’s thesis, Thammasat University]. Thammasat University Digital Collection. https://digital.library.tu.ac.th/tu_dc/frontend/Info/item/dc:138376
- Prapt. (2014). *Kahonmahorathuek*. Amarin Printing and Publishing.
- Prapt. (2015). *Nirat Mahannop*. Amarin Printing and Publishing.
- Prapt. (2018). *Ling Phat Klon*. Amarin Printing and Publishing.
- Prapt. (2021). *Asok Sang*. Amarin Printing and Publishing.
- Prasithrathsint, A. (2005). *Language in Thai society: Diversity, change and Development*. Chulalongkorn University Press.
- Pym, A. (2008). On Toury’s laws of how translators translate. In A. Pym, M. Shlesinger, & D. Simeoni (Eds.), *Beyond descriptive translation studies: Investigations in homage to Gideon Toury* (pp. 311–328). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Regulations of the Literary Society. (1917, April 29). Government Gazette. Vol. 34. Part A. pp. 68-71.
- Royal Society Act. (2015, February 13). Government Gazette. Vol. 132. Part 10. pp. 1-13.

- Simmons, M. (2005). *Literary historiography and the history of the Thai novel*. University of London.
- Techawongstien, K. & Chittiphalangsri, P. (2024). The politics of singularity in the Thai landscape of translation. In P. Chittiphalangsri & V. L. Rafael (Eds.), *Of peninsulas and archipelagos* (pp. 81-102). Routledge.
- Toury, G. (1980). *In search of a theory of translation*. The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv.
- Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive translation studies and beyond*. John Benjamins.
- van Eechoud, M. (2014). *The work of authorship*. Amsterdam University Press. <http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=503030>
- Winnarong, K. (2023). *Strategies used in translating present participle clauses in Thida Plitpholkarnpim's Zoo* [Master's independent study, Chulalongkorn University]. Chulalongkorn University Intellectual Repository. <https://cuir.car.chula.ac.th/handle/123456789/83305>
- Wu, H. (2019). *Topic-comment sentence structure in written English* [Doctortal dissertation, Chulalongkorn University]. Chulalongkorn University Intellectual Repository. <https://cuir.car.chula.ac.th/handle/123456789/70078>
- Yue, M. & Sun, B. (2021). Translationese and interlanguage in inverse translation: A case study. *Languages and cultures*, 22(1), 45-63. <https://doi.org/10.1556/084.2021.00003>