

# การวิเคราะห์กลวิธีการแปลบทความทางวัฒนธรรม จากภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาอังกฤษของนิตยสารเมืองโบราณ

## Thai-English Translation Strategies used in Muang Boran Journal: Focusing on Cultural Content Analysis

มยุรี พวงอารัย<sup>1\*</sup>  
Mayuree Pongarpai<sup>1\*</sup>



### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์หลัก เพื่อระบุ และจัดกลุ่มกลวิธีที่ใช้ในการแปลภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาอังกฤษของนิตยสาร “เมืองโบราณ” และค้นหาลักษณะโครงสร้างทางภาษาและคำศัพท์ทางวัฒนธรรมที่จูงใจให้นักแปลภาษาใช้กลวิธีเหล่านี้ ข้อมูลได้มาจากบทความที่เป็นภาษาต้นและภาษาเป้าหมายในการแปลของนิตยสารเมืองโบราณ

ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่า มีกลวิธีการแปล 8 ชนิดที่ถูกใช้อยู่ในนิตยสารเมืองโบราณจากภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ กลวิธีเหล่านี้ประกอบด้วย การเพิ่ม การแทนที่ การใช้คำทั่วไป การเสริม การละ การทับศัพท์ การเปลี่ยนรูปคำ และการเปลี่ยนรูปวลีและประโยค กลวิธี 3 อันดับแรกที่นักแปลใช้บ่อยที่สุดคือการทับศัพท์ 38.37%, การเปลี่ยนรูปคำ 12.79% และการใช้คำทั่วไป 10.47% มีลักษณะโครงสร้างทางภาษา 16 ชนิด แต่นักแปลใช้กับกลวิธีเหล่านี้แค่ 13 ชนิด เช่น ลักษณะนาม กาล และกรรมวาจก จุดประสงค์หลักของการใช้กลวิธีการแปลที่มีผลต่อการใช้ลักษณะทางภาษาคือ การทำให้ถูกต้องตามหลักไวยากรณ์ และบทความที่ถูกแปลเป็นที่ยอมรับ มีคำศัพท์ทางวัฒนธรรม 8 ชนิด แต่นักแปลใช้แค่ 6 ชนิด กับกลวิธีเหล่านี้ เช่น การเรียกชื่อตามตำแหน่งหรืออาชีพ, นิเวศวิทยา และการเปรียบเทียบ จุดประสงค์หลักของการใช้กลวิธีการแปลที่มีการใช้คำศัพท์ทางวัฒนธรรมคือ ช่วยให้ผู้ที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา เข้าใจเนื้อเรื่องได้ง่ายและชัดเจนยิ่งขึ้น

**คำสำคัญ:** นิตยสารเมืองโบราณ, กลวิธีการแปล, ลักษณะทางภาษา, คำศัพท์ทางวัฒนธรรม

<sup>1</sup> ศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงใหม่

<sup>1</sup> Master of Arts in English, Chiangrai Rajabhat University

\* Corresponding author. Tel. 081-9924800 E-mail: krubeepangai@hotmail.com



## Abstract

The main purposes of this study are to identify and classify strategies used in translating the *Muang Boran* journal from Thai into English, and to investigate linguistic features and cultural terms that influenced the translator to use these strategies. Data were taken from the source language and target language contents of the *Muang Boran* journal.

The results of the study showed that there were eight translation strategies frequently used in translating the *Muang Boran* journal from Thai into English. These included the strategy of addition, substitution, generalisation, adjunction, deletion, transliteration, word reformation, and phrase and sentence reformation. Three most frequent strategies that the translators used were transliteration about 38.37%, word reformation about 12.79% and generalization about 10.47%. There were 16 linguistic features but the translators used only 13 features with these strategies. The main purpose of using the translation strategies stimulated by the linguistic features is to make grammatical and acceptable translated text. There were 8 cultural terms but the translators used only 6 terms with these strategies. The main purpose of the translation strategies, which were stimulated by the cultural terms, is to help a non-native audience understand the story more easily and clearly.

**Keywords:** *Muang Boran* journal, Translation strategies, Linguistic features, Cultural terms



## Introduction

In the present, people have more and more chance to communicate with one another throughout the world. The extents divide people geographically, but they can still communicate via several communicative methods such as the internet, telephone and letters. Besides, they can also learn things on the other side of the world easily through books, films, television, radio, etc. Translation, therefore, has become an essential device for cross-cultural communication. For those who do not understand other languages, they need translators to transfer the messages for them in their languages. A translators should understand and try to transfer the messages in the original text to the translated version naturally. Certainly, the translators must employ many translation techniques to have a good translation.

To clearly transfer the expression from source language to target language, the translator employs several translation strategies to make the translation equivalent to the original. Mildred L. Larson advices that the translators cannot pay attention only to the meaning of a word but also the culture of the target language (Larson, 1985). To achieve effective translation, the translator have to overcome the boundaries of cultural meaning between the source and the target language. The translators need to learn more and more about the history, culture,

belief, attitudes and other aspects of the target language in order to create a good piece of translation and makes it comprehensible for the target readers (Nipaporn, 2010).

Presently, the objectives of translation have the relevant of mankind. Furthermore, finding the equivalent words that give exactly the same meanings in two languages is impossible. Conveying accurate meaning in the cultural forms involves the demonstration of implicit and explicit information. Implicit information is some information which is communicated but it omits implicit information in conversation or written text (Larson, 1985). Explicit information is a part of surface structure form. Larson affirms that one of difficult problems in translation is the differences between cultures. The translators should determine what information should be expressed implicitly and what can be expressed explicitly and shared knowledge of the languages and cultures involved.

As the previous states, culture is the most important in translating for the purpose of conveying the correct meaning of source language into the target language. The translators must know the belief that different forms and ways to convey the same meaning. Besides, they have to realize that there is not always one-to-one equivalence of meaning expressed readily in comparable syntactic knowledge. In consider to translating messages from one language to another language, the translator needs to have knowledge of both languages. In addition knowledge, the translator also needs to have skill in translating since no translator can produce good work without solving problems which appear in the process of conveying the meaning from one language to another language. That there are many problems in translation cannot be admitted; what is important is how the translator deals with them. Translators who have experience in translating texts in the same areas are familiar with the style of discourse. This experience is also beneficial in solving problems which occur in the process of translation. Indeed, their works are interesting to study especially in the area of translation strategies. In the translation of literature, especially in translation for young people, the interesting point which should be mentioned here is the situational meaning as proposed by Larson (1985). Situational meaning is concerned with factors involved in the content, the relationships of participants, and the channel of communication are. Everything about the people involved in communication such as their age, sex, education level, cultural background are also relevant to making the communication successful. Indeed, the translator must always born in mind that the audience is very importance. Larson (1985) stated:

...The translator must be aware of who the original text was written for. But he also has a further factor: who is his translation intended for? Both of these audiences will come into play as he works on the translation. In analysis of the source document, he will be considering the original audience; in the restructuring into the receptor language, they will be taking into account the audience who will read the translation...

Sanchawee Saibua (1995) wrote that in translation from Thai language into English language the readers will have to know about knowledge of English grammar to analyze the

message in order to gain the meaning, especially in some messages contained in several long and complicated sentences. In Thai to English translation, grammar analyzing would help to get more accurate meanings. In the above example sign board, if the bookstore started by analyzing the meaning and the use of language, there will be a far less chance of making errors and the message could have been easier to understand and less confusing.

Saibua (2007) also said that translation adjustments or translation techniques are required both in literal and free translation since the target group of the translated text is different from those of the source text. There are nine translation techniques in translating between Thai and English suggested by Saibua (2007) and Chantraket (1985).

Moreover, Supanee (2005) explained about how mistakes happen in translation from Thai to English language in English writing or speaking. Such mistakes can be caused by two different factors which are: translators do not have sufficient knowledge of English or grammar, or, the translator does not understand the meaning of the content of the message. These two causes created:

1. Incorrect translations which lead to misunderstandings in meaning.
2. Miscommunication to receiver due to the initial misunderstanding of the translator.

Although the meaning is not totally wrong from the original meaning, it still has enough errors to cause misunderstandings.

Newmark (1992) defined culture as “the way of life and its demonstrations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”, thus acknowledging that each language group has its own culturally specific features. He also introduced ‘*Cultural word*’ which the readership is unlikely to understand and the translation strategies for this kind of concept depend on the particular text-type, requirements of the readers and significant of the cultural word in the text. Peter Newmark also categorized the cultural words as follows:

1. Ecology: flora, fauna, hills, winds, plains
2. Material Culture: food, clothes, houses and towns, transport
3. Social Culture: work and leisure
4. Organizations Customs, Activities, Procedures, Concepts: Political and administrative, Religious and artistic

At present we all see the necessity for transmitting messages, beliefs and other elements of culture in all kinds of utterances and texts from one language to another language by translation. This requires appropriate style for different contexts. Experts agree that translation is an art requiring knowledge, experience and skill. Muang Boran is one of several dual-language journal in Thailand. It was first published in September 1974 and has the purpose to reveal Thai culture, life, architecture, ceremonies, rituals and so on. Thai culture could be translated with specific strategies in order to clearly convey all the meaning in Thai to be understandable to

the foreigner readers or even the youth age readers who do not know well about Thai culture or the story of Thailand in the past. Therefore, it is very interesting to study what strategies translators employed in translation. Moreover, some cultural aspects are also presented through the translation as well. In my opinion, Muang Boran has the contents about culture of Thailand in the past. I would like the foreigners knows and use this research as the medium make the readers know these journals well. These journals has own denotative meaning. It may make the misunderstanding problems to the readers. To solve the problems, I decided to do this research and specific to cultural meaning and bring the result of the research solve the reading problems and understanding of the readers.

It is, therefore, interesting to investigate translation strategies being employed in translating from Thai into English so as to make the meaning in the translated text equivalent to that of the original text. The study of cultural meaning about anthropology refers that language is considered in the definition. According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, culture means the belief, art way of life and social organization of a country or a group. These are my decision to select Muang Boran journal as the sample of this study. To study about Thai culture the translators must not only understand the meaning of individual words, they must also realize the Thai background: for example, beliefs, thoughts, way of living and so on. They also should be able to and analyze the strategies used in translating that related to Thai cultural meaning in Muang Boran journal from Thai to English. Hence, the study will provide more insight effective translation strategies, especially in cross-cultural aspects, for those who are interested in translation. It will be interesting to study the techniques that the translators use when they reveal the events, art, or even the places which are unknown to the target readers and make them understandable. A good translation hopefully can attract the readers especially the young generation understandable Thailand story.



## **Purpose of the Study**

There are two main objectives of this study:

1. To identify and classify strategies used in translating the journal, Muang Boran, from Thai into English.
2. To investigate linguistic and cultural meaning that influenced the translator to use these strategies when translating the journal, Muang Boran, based on the comparison of the source language and target language sentences.



## Methodology

This research is a qualitative study as it is a content analysis of the sentences of the cultural journal, Muang Boran (Viriyah Business Co., Ltd., 1974). In order to investigate strategies used in translating from Thai into English, and factors that influenced the translator to use these strategies, the scripts are separated into units of analysis. A unit of analysis is a phrase/sentence at a time. Then, the data are analyzed in the following steps:

First, to identify and classify translation strategies in translating from Thai into English, the sentences are analyzed based on the theoretical frameworks suggested by Chantraket (1985) and Saibua (2007) as follows:

- Addition
- Substitution
- Generalisation
- Adjunction
- Deletion
- Transliteration
- Word reformation
- Phrase and sentence reformation

Strategies found in the sentences are identified and classified. Any other strategies found besides the suggested categories are discussed separately.

Second, the linguistic and cultural factors that influenced the use of these strategies are investigated. Linguistic factors are analyzed based on the study of Chanchairerk (1999), Wimolchalao (1996) and Korporsiripath (2005); cultural factors are analyzed based on the study of Chantraket (1985) and Saibua (2007) about word form and function. These factors shown in table 3 are the suggested factors that the researcher employed as the framework for identifying and analyzing the data.

**Table 1** Factors that can cause difficulties in translating from Thai into English

Linguistic features	Cultural Terms
1. articles	1. greeting words
2. wrong word forms: -ing and -ed forms of adjective	2. time telling
3. special morphemes	3. onomatopoeia
4. classifiers	4. idioms, metaphor, and similes
5. personal pronouns	5. terms of address
6. presumptive pronoun in Thai	6. ecology

Linguistic features	Cultural Terms
7. wording	7. material words
8. omitting words	8. attitudes
9. tenses	
10. inversion of the subject and auxiliary	
11. passive voice	
12. conditional sentences	
13. separating sentences	
14. interference of Thai language	
15. choice of words and phrases	
16. long and complicated sentences	

Words, phrases or sentences that demonstrate the use of each translation technique are highlighted. After that, the highlighted words, phrases or sentences are analyzed to find linguistic and cultural factors and meaning. The factors found in each technique are identified and classified. Any other factors found besides the suggestions of those translators are discussed with the translation technique in which they appear.



## Results

**Table 2** Frequency of translated strategies

Translated Strategies	Frequency	Percentages
1. transliteration	33	38.37
2. word reformation	11	12.79
3. generalization	9	10.47
4. deletion	8	9.30
5. adjunction	7	8.14
6. phrase and sentence reformation	7	8.14
7. addition	6	6.98
8. substitution	5	5.81
<b>total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 presents translation strategies that appears 8 strategies in this study which transliteration strategy shows the most frequent number follows by the theories of Saibua (2007) and Chantraket (1985). According to the analysis, transliteration strategy was used the most frequently, at about 38.37%. The second one is word reformation strategy about 12.79% while generalization strategy is about 10.47%. After that, deletion strategy is used about 9.30% while adjunction strategy and phrase and sentence reformation strategy employed the same frequency that is about 8.14%. The addition strategy is used about 6.98% and the last one that appeared in this study is substitution strategy is about 5.81%.

**Table 3** Frequency of linguistic features

linguistic features	Frequency	Percentage
1. tenses	77	33.62
2. passive voice	59	25.76
3. articles	34	14.85
4. interference of Thai language	21	9.17
5. classifiers	9	3.93
6. wrong word forms: -ing and -ed forms of adjective	6	2.62
7. wording	6	2.62
8. personal pronouns	5	2.18
9. choice of words and phrases	5	2.18
10. special morphemes	3	1.31
11. presumptive pronoun in Thai	2	0.88
12. inversion of the subject and auxiliary	1	0.44
13. long and complicated sentences	1	0.44
14. omitting words	0	0
15. conditional sentences	0	0
16. separating sentences	0	0
<b>total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 presents 13 linguistic features that were analyzed in this study which tense shows the most frequent number follows by the strategies of Chanchairerk (1999), Wimolchalao (1996) and Korporsiripath (2005). According to the analysis, tense is used the most frequent about 33.62% while passive voice is about 25.76%. Next linguistic feature is article about 14.85% while interference of Thai language is 9.17%. Classifiers is used about 3.93% that is more than wrong word forms: -ing and -ed forms of adjective and wording which is about



2.62%. The personal pronouns and choice of words and phrases are employed the same number about 2.18% while special morphemes is about 1.31%. The next one is presumptive pronoun in Thai that is a little number about 0.88% when inversion of the subject and auxiliary and long and complicated sentences have the most frequent about 0.44%. In the part of omitting words, conditional sentences and separating sentences doesn't have any using in this study.

**Table 4** Frequency of cultural terms

Cultural Terms	Frequency	Percentage
1. terms of address	17	30.36
2. material words	15	26.78
3. ecology	12	21.43
4. attitudes	8	14.28
5. idioms, metaphor, and similes	3	5.36
6. time telling	1	1.79
7. onomatopoeia	0	0
8. greeting words	0	0
<b>total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 presents 8 cultural terms that were analyzed in this study which terms of address shows the most frequent number follows by the theories of Chantraket (1985) and Saibua (2007). According to the analysis, terms of address is used the most frequent about 30.36% while material words is about 26.78%. Next cultural terms is ecology about 21.43% while attitudes is 14.28%. Idioms, metaphor, and similes is used about 5.36% that is more than time telling that is about 1.79%. In the fragment of onomatopoeia and greeting words doesn't have any using in this study.



## Conclusions and Discussion

The translator used eight translation strategies in this study. But there were only three strategies the used the most frequent. First, the strategy of transliteration was used about 38.37% to translate the country name, the person name, and the places. Then, the strategy of word reformation was used about 12.79% to adjust the order of the words, phrases and sentences. Finally, the strategy of generalization was used about 10.47% to present the generally words.

The translator used thirteen linguistic features of sixteen linguistic features in this study. But there were only three linguistic features the used the most frequent. First, the tense was used about 33.62% to present the time that occurred and finished in the past. Then, the passive voice was used 25.76% to adjust the important of subjects and the objects of the sentences. Finally, the article was used before a noun about 14.85% to indicate whether a translator is referring to something specific or something of a particular type. Obviously, all of these linguistic features are used in order to make the target language grammatical.

The translator used six cultural terms of eight cultural terms in this study. But there were only three cultural terms the used the most frequent. First, the terms of address was used about 30.36% to call other people by name or nickname, or by their titles followed by names to show occupations or positions. Then, the material word was used about 26.78% to present the words that does not have in English, the translator must use the Thai general words. Finally, the ecology was used about 21.43% to show the relating between the living thing and the environment or the surrounding.

In conclusion, there were eight translation strategies used in translating the journal, Muang Boran. These strategies are the same as the translation strategies suggested in the theoretical frameworks of Saibua (2007) and Chantraket (1985). They were used because of the three main reasons: differences of Thai and English language systems, unfamiliar words and the complicated story. According to the results, there are three main reasons why these strategies of translation were often used when translating the journal, Muang Boran, from Thai into English. These reasons are (1) differences between the Thai and English systems, (2) unfamiliar words and (3) the complicated story. The first reason why the translator used these translation strategies is the differences between Thai and English systems. Thai and English belong to different language families. They have several differences in phonological rules, word forms and sentence structures. These differences require the strategies of translation to adjust them correctly into the target language. The second reason involves unfamiliar words, which include religious words, ancient words, royal words, etc. These words are in relation to culture. They require the translation strategies to adjust the target language to be easier for non-native audience to understand. For example, the word Khun Krue refers to a person who named Krue and had the political position Khun that means the nobleman. The last main reason that motivated the translator to use the translation strategies is the complicated story. The journal, Muang Boran, is full of complicated expressions. The deletion of some sentences may generate very short and complicated sentences. This may cause difficulty for readers in following the story. The phrase in the target language has more general meaning than in the source language since it refers to any being that is respected by Thai people. Obviously, the strategies used to make concise and simple target language.

In terms of linguistic features, the strategies found 13 features which included tenses, passive voice, articles, interference of Thai language, classifiers, wrong word forms: -ing and

-ed forms of adjective, wording, personal pronouns, choice of words and phrases, special morphemes, presumptive pronoun in Thai, inversion of the subject and auxiliary and long and complicated sentences. But there were only three linguistic features the used the most frequent, tense, passive voice and article which were used about 33.62%, 25.76% and 14.85% respectively. According to the result, it presented making grammatical and acceptable English. This is because Thai and English have several differences in the language systems since they belong to different language families. For instance, tenses, plural forms, irregular verb forms, passive voice, special morphemes, articles, wording, etc. Because of linguistic differences, the strategies of translation are required. For example, the strategy of word reformation is needed in order to adjust forms of words, such as past tense forms, plural forms, passive forms, etc., correctly into English. Likewise, the strategy of phrase and sentence reformation is required in order to adjust an order of words in phrases and sentences correctly into English. Similarly, the strategy of adjunction is needed in order to adjust conjunctions in phrases and sentences correctly into English. In conclusion, all of these strategies are required in order to make the translated text grammatical and acceptable.

In terms of cultural terms from the study, there were six cultural terms which included terms of address, material words, ecology, attitudes, idioms, metaphor, and similes and time telling. The most three top range consisted of terms of address, material words and ecology which were used about 30.36%, 26.78% and 21.43% that was respectively. The reason of using is to help a non-native audience understand the story more easily and clearly. As Thai and English are far away from each other, they have a wide cultural gap. Due to the differences in cultural aspects e.g., religions, attitudes, environment, materials etc., the translation strategies are required. For example, the strategy of addition is needed in order to add words or explanatory phrases to words that are not familiar to non-native audience. Likewise, the strategy of substitution is required in order to replace Thai words that cannot find an English equivalent word by English words or explanatory phrases. Similarly, the strategy of generalization is needed in order to replace Thai words that have specific meaning by English words that have more general meaning. In conclusion, all of these strategies are required in order to help non-native audience understand the story easily and clearly. About the ecology, geographical features can be normally distinguished from other cultural terms in that they are usually value-free, politically and commercially. Nevertheless, their diffusion depends on the importance of their country of origin as well as their degree of specificity. Nida has pointed out that certain ecological features –the seasons, rain, hills of various sizes cultural words: where they are irregular or unknown may not be understood denotatively or figuratively, in translation (Nida, 1975). Saibua (2007) said that translation adjustments or translation strategies are required cultural terms for free translation since the target group of the translated text is different from those of the source text. Newmark (1992) defined culture as “the way of life and its demonstrations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its

means of expression”, thus acknowledging that each language group has its own culturally specific features such as “Vipassana” which was the same meaning with “วิปัสสนา” in Thai. He also introduced ‘Cultural word’ which the readership is unlikely to understand and the translation strategies for this kind of concept depend on the particular text-type, requirements of the readers and significant of the cultural word in the text.

In conclusion, there are thirteen linguistic features that influenced the translator to use these strategies. The strategies motivated by these features aimed to make grammatical and acceptable English. There are six cultural factors that influenced the translator to use the strategies. The strategies motivated by these terms aimed to help a non-native audience understand the story more easily and clearly.



## Recommendations

1. The results of this study provide a guideline for translators, students, teachers, and people who are interested in translating cultural text type. As a consequence, it may help them translate this type of text more effectively.

2. As the present study attempts to investigate the strategies that influenced the translator to use these translation, readers will see when these strategies are required. The results should also help translators and others who are interested in translation learn to develop their translating skills in dealing with the linguistic features and cultural terms that can cause difficulties in translating from Thai into English.



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