

Translating ‘America First’ into Thai: Translators’ Evaluations of President Trump’s Inaugural Speech

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Abstract

The present article investigates Thai translations of Donald Trump’s 2017 inaugural address and its potential shift in attitude-rich words caused by translators’ choices. Applying the appraisal-based translation analysis to the Trump speech and Thai translations by *Khaosod*, *Thairath*, and *VOA Thai*, the article discusses Trump’s appraisal profile and the Thai translators’ evaluations compared to those found in previous studies. The Trump speech, which received many negative reviews, is presented somewhat differently in the three Thai versions, possibly resulting from an ideological manipulation of the target text. The translators’ interventionist moves resulted in a shift in a number of implicit values inscribed in the source text’s terms and phrases. The article also discusses the roles of translators and news agencies in relation to the findings. It is hoped to be a valuable resource for studies on the translation of political texts and its application of appraisal-based analysis, especially in the Thai context.

Keywords: appraisal theory, news agency, political text, translation, Trump’s speech

Introduction

Political speeches by the leader of a country are one of the most-studied types of texts, offering a rich source of information to examine the hidden meanings behind the leader’s statement. This kind of utterance is always replete with sociocultural values and ideological assumptions

unique to that individual leader. Investigation into this type of text can reveal the viewpoint of the speaker, confirming his or her ideological stance.

As far as translation is concerned, the purpose of a political text is generally to engage with the source culture community. When a given political text is translated, its function changes in accordance with the expectations of the target culture (Schaffner, 2004: 138). Careful analysis of a politician's speech and its translation can unveil the speaker's underlining attitude within clauses, which may be regarded as a translation problem. One earlier study on political texts demonstrated that, like news reports, it is a common practice for translators to hide themselves in the background and be 'invisible' (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2008). However, studies of translators' evaluations of speeches by Munday (2012, 2018) show otherwise. Examining Spanish interpretations of the Obama and Trump inaugural addresses, he found that in dealing with attitude-rich words, the interpreters asserted themselves by making lexical choices indicative of their personal judgement, which left their "fingerprints" on the target text, regardless of their own ideology or that of the person who had commissioned them. Even when applying different methodologies, many studies on the translation of world leaders' speeches have produced similar results, such as those by Joz, Ketabi and Dastjedi (2014), Caimotto (2020), and Li and Pan (2020).

In the Thai political context, aside from that of Phanthaphoomme (2019), there are no other comparative studies or textual analyses of a political speech and its translation, not even one written in Thai. Thus, there is a need to take a wider perspective to contribute to our understanding of the translation of ideology and the study of political texts in Thailand.

Applying Appraisal to Translation Studies

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL), devised by Michael Halliday (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1984/2014), offers an interpretation of how social contexts are related to one another by means of language and how

the context determines language choice. SFL's main construct is to understand the different elements of *language*, *register*, and *genre*. Genre, or the schematic structure of language use, is conditioned by the socio-cultural environment and determines the pattern of register. Register is the variation of language used in certain contexts, characterized by three dimensions: *field* (the situation or activity in which we are engaged), *tenor* (relationship between the people involved in the communicative situation), and *mode* (the form of interaction). The following three dimensions condition discourse semantics or metafunctions: *ideational* metafunction or 'construing' our experience of the world; *interpersonal* metafunction or 'enacting' relationships between interactants; and *textual* metafunction or 'organizing' the pattern of a text. To employ this framework, one can analyze, for example, the pattern of transitivity in clauses to interpret the text producer's view on certain situations for which the text is created (ideational meaning). One can examine whether the text producer's choices of lexis or pronoun use are positive or negative (interpersonal meanings). One can also study whether the text is cohesive by looking at repetition, collocation, substitution, or which topic is usually foregrounded in a clause by looking at its theme and information flow (textual meaning). By analyzing a text to find its metafunctions, one can expect to understand how the producers of the text exploit language according to their perception of the world, largely because the choices they make in the text production process are often influenced by their own way of thinking and the particular values with which they have socialized (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 32-33).

Mainly focusing on the interpersonal function, Martin and Rose (2007) propose an appraisal system by which to analyze how one negotiates one's social relationships by showing others how one feels about certain things and people. The most important concept in their appraisal framework is 'attitude' - the result after one evaluates the environment and one's own feelings. This can be construed as attitudinal lexis or 'lexis with attitude,' and it allows for three options (Martin and Rose, 2007: 26-38):

affect – demonstrating the speaker's feelings and emotional reactions;
 judgement – showing behavior, ethics capacity, and tenacity of people; and,
 appreciation – revealing the speaker's evaluation of abstractions or entities.

Attitude may be direct (inscribed attitude), such as when the speaker straightforwardly employs specific terms to disclose his or her evaluation of people and things; or it may be indirect (invoked attitude) when the speaker only hints at his or her feelings by using 'attitudinal lexis.' On the one hand, the speaker can indirectly 'provoke' the listener's attitudinal reaction with the use of metaphor, profanity, and non-core lexis. On the other hand, a piece of factual information or common-sensical representation of the world can be manipulated to 'evoke' positive or negative attitudes (Martin and White, 2005: 67).

The attitude can be amplified (*much, very, considerably*), softened (*sort of, quite, perhaps*) or sharpened (*true, absolutely, right to the point*). These discourse markers are referred to as resources of graduation and can be varied by degree – low, medium, or high. Another resource is engagement, which refers to the scale of the speaker's commitment in a clause. Such markers include modality (*should, must, never*), counter-expectancy (*only, but, at least*), and projection (reported verbs) (Martin and Rose, 2007: 42-59).

All of these evaluative items are 'meaning potentials' or a range of lexical and grammatical options made out of and for a certain context (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 16, 23). A term applied in a clause can bring about a positive or negative reaction, not because of its positive/negative qualities by nature, but for its ability "to trigger a latent contextual connection in the reader" (Munday, 2009: 18).

In the Thai context, there is an interesting comparison between Thai and English political languages with a focus on differences in socio-cultural values. A study by Nusartlert (2017) underlined the characteristics of politicians' use of language in written and spoken discourse and found that power, particularly solidarity and persuasion,

can be mirrored in their language use. However, her study did not use the appraisal framework, nor did it focus on translation. Only a few studies were found that directly applied the appraisal framework to Thai political texts: the analysis of newspaper commentaries by Arunsitrot (2012) and the English subtitling and structure of the Thai prime ministerial addresses by Phanthaphoommee (2019, 2021). Using the appraisal theory, the present study seeks to fill a research gap by investigating political writings translated from English to Thai, and it hopes to encourage future research on political texts and translations in Thailand.

Methodology

The present study draws upon the appraisal model of Munday (2012, 2018) used in his study of evaluations by Spanish interpreters of Obama's 2006 and Trump's 2017 inaugural addresses. It compares the so-called 'critical points' in the original text (inauguration speech) with those presented in their Thai translations. The notion of 'critical points' refers to the generation of evaluative potentials or 'lexical signals' that disclose the speaker's value judgement of a particular matter, and these are susceptible to manipulation in translation (Munday, 2012: 41). For the present study, the researcher transcribed Trump's inaugural address (16:18 minutes), which is a total of 1444 words in length as the source text (ST). The video clip of the address was retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mn-HvdmV6Vk>. The transcription was cross-checked against two other transcriptions available online to test its correctness (Blake, 2017; "Trump inauguration," 2017). There is no contradiction in either of the transcriptions, including mine.

The present study explores the three different Thai translated versions by well-known news agencies: *Khaosod* as target text 1 (TT1), *Thairath* as target text 2 (TT2) and *VOA Thai* as target text 3 (TT3). The reason for using these three versions is that there are only three complete Thai translations of Trump's speech available in the public domain. *Khaosod*, first published in 1991, heavily features crime and entertainment and is frequently critical of politics and society. *Thairath* is one of the most long-established newspapers in Thailand and has

remained active in business since its inception in 1962. Most news reports from publications focus on domestic events with little attention given to international affairs. *VOA Thai* is the Thai version of Voice of America. This online news media outlet originated in the United States during the Cold War era.¹

The present study also takes into consideration the structural differences between English and Thai. Based on the SFL interpretation of Thai grammar by Patpong (2006), the article analyses the lexicogrammatical shifts of the 'critical points' and some ideology-laden elements of the ST that the translators might have overlooked. The potential translation shift, or change of positive/negative values rooted in the terms/phrases used, can occur at the level of process type, serial verb construction, ambivalence in pronoun use, obscurity in number or complex type of modality.

Thai Versions of Trump's Speech

Donald Trump won the 2016 election by a small margin of the Electoral College vote versus the Democratic Party's Hillary Clinton, and was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States at the January 2017 inauguration ceremony. Broadcast live across the United States and around the globe, Trump's inaugural address evoked a negative vision of the country, especially with the phrase *American carnage* and the self-serving emphasis on *American First*, *America First!* Trump's speech was characterized by exaggeration, such as the threat of crime, historical suppression and the corrupt establishment and, ironically, was delivered in a setting where a statement of unity, positivity, and non-partisanship is expected (Graham, 2017).

There have been several studies on the presentation of Trump's speech. Rice's (2017) computational analysis reveals that Trump used short sentences relatively rich in lexical selection. Bump (2017) also found a total of 44 new words that had never been employed in other

¹ The *Khaosod* translation can be retrieved from https://www.khaosod.co.th/around-the-world-news/news_189803; *Thairath*, <https://www.thairath.co.th/content/840700>; and *VOA Thai*, <https://www.voathai.com/a/inauguration-day-trump/3685508.html>

U.S. presidential addresses. Quite a number of studies have looked into Trump's speech formation by analyzing such linguistic features as presuppositions, politeness, and cohesion. They largely agree that Trump employed different language forms to ideologically influence the audience, trying to induce support from Americans by overstating the country's bleak social and economic situation, narrowing the psychological distance between the government and the public, and creating a xenophobic atmosphere among Americans (cf. Chen, 2018; Quinonez, 2018; Liao and Han, 2019). When compared to Obama's inaugural address in 2006, Trump's was found to include fewer metaphors, allusions, and non-core lexis. Once employed, these 'critical points' are prone to be changed in accordance with target culture expectations (Munday, 2018: 185). Regarding translations of the speech, Caimotto's (2020) study on the Trump translations by Italian newspapers found that the right-wing *Libero* explicitly welcomed Trump's election, while the left-wing *Il Manifesto* openly condemned it.

A detailed analysis of the appraisal profile for the source text (Munday, 2018: 194) shows that Trump's speech was filled with negative items that played up a sense of insecurity and incapacity. Trump underlined international threats to the United States as well as domestic violence as justification for his focus on ordinary Americans. These evaluative items were employed openly with explicit emphasis, as in the example below:

...for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities [...] an education system flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge.

This short passage demonstrates his negative evaluation of the status quo of the American people and the country: *trapped in poverty* (expressing unhappiness), *flush with cash* (dissatisfaction), *young and beautiful students* (admiration) and *deprived of* (insecurity). To engage with the analyses of the Spanish and Italian translations of Trump's speech, the following part discusses the three Thai translations compared to the results in Munday's (2018) and Caimotto's (2020) studies.

Trump’s Invocation of Emotional Response

According to Munday (2018: 185), despite the small number of metaphors used in Trump’s speech, there are several interesting examples of English that challenge the translator’s ability to render them into other languages:

Example 1:

rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation.

The phrase, *rusted-out factories*, which shows negative capacity (appreciation of the country’s composition), is used here to allude to the Rustbelt of the United States – a manufacturing region in the Northeast and Midwest consisting of parts of the following states: Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota.² It also conveys an image of unemployment, crisis, and industrial decline since the 1980s. Blake (2017) opines that the use of this particular allusion in his speech was unique. It served as an appeal to the white working class in those states who had been unreliable voters for the Republican Party and a reminder to the listener of his electoral win in those normally blue (Democratic)-leaning states. In Munday’s view the simile, *scattered like tombstones*, generates a sense of desolation. The Thai versions re-present this image as follows:

Table 1 A comparison of the three Thai translations of the phrase *rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones*

	Target text	Back translation
TT1	โรงงานที่ร้างอย่างกับสุสานตามท้องที่ต่าง ๆ ในประเทศของเรา	deserted factories like cemeteries in different places in our country
TT2	โรงงานผู้พักกระจัดกระจายเหมือนป้ายหลุมศพไปทั่วประเทศ	run-down factories scattered like tombstones across the country
TT3	สนิมยังคงเกาะอยู่ที่เครื่องจักรโรงงาน โรงงานซึ่งหยุดการผลิตเกิดขึ้นทั่วไปราวกับหลัหินที่หลุมฝังศพที่เห็นเกลื่อนกลาด	rust still covers the factory machine, the factories that stop manufacturing happen [sic] everywhere like scattered tombstones

² For more information, see <https://www.encyclopedia.com/places/united-states-and-canada/miscellaneous-us-geography/rust-belt>

The Thai translations are economical with attitude-laden terms: ‘deserted factories like cemeteries’ (TT1) and ‘run-down factories scattered like tombstones’ (TT2) with the exception of TT3. *VOA Thai* uses quite a number of words to describe such short phrases. This is perhaps due to the translator’s scant knowledge or unawareness of the relevant concept. It is only TT1 that manages to retain the possessive adjective *ของเรา* ‘our’ in its final version. However, none of the translators translates the ‘critical point’ of *rusted-out factories* in terms that can help the Thai reader to understand its connotation as a reference to the American rustbelt region.

Unlike Thai versions, most of the Spanish interpreters omit the simile, *tombstones*, possibly because of the need to simplify the clause in order to keep up with the pace of the speech and perhaps the concentration of indirect evaluation – too many words with too many hidden meanings (Munday, 2018: 186). One Italian version is interesting. The translator summarizes this phrase and the adjacent clauses that give the negative picture of the current American situation as ‘Trump paints a picture like Rossellini’s *Germany Year Zero*.’ This is the reference to the movie showing a war-torn Germany after World War II (Caimotto, 2020: 86). All things considered, this choice of summary seems to conjure up a different image from the way Trump depicts it in this address.

Example 2:

we’ve defended **other nation’s** borders while refusing to defend our own and spent trillions of dollars overseas while America’s infrastructure has **fallen into disrepair and decay**.

As Blake (2017) and Caimotto (2020) suggest in tandem, Example 2 shows the anti-interventionist attitude of the Republicans, setting a tone for withdrawing U.S. military involvement abroad and shifting the blame from America to other nations which also implies the nullification of any former policies supporting immigrants.

Among many Italian versions, one newspaper uses the metaphor, *a casa loro*, 'their own home,' to refer to *other nations*. This conveys obvious criticism and is an allusion to anti-immigration remarks by numerous Italian politicians wanting to cut funds that support refugees arriving in Italy. Caimotto (2020: 87) opines that this might be a slip of the pen rather than the translator's intention to change the terms based on the newspaper's ideological stance.

The Thai translators seem to have no trouble translating the term, *other nations*. But the problem arises when they have to deal with the phrase, *fallen into disrepair and decay* (judgement), which implies criticism.

Table 2 A comparison of the three Thai translations of the phrases, *other nations*' and *fallen into disrepair and decay*.

	Target text	Back translation
TT1	เราปกป้องพรมแดนของประเทศอื่น ... แต่โครงสร้างพื้นฐานของอเมริกากลับดิ่งลงไปสู่จุดที่ซ่อมแซมไม่ได้ มีแต่หน้าเปื่อย	we've defended other nations' borders ... but America's infrastructure in turn plummeted to the point where [we are] unable to repair it. Only decay.
TT2	-	-
TT3	เราไปช่วยประเทศอื่นปกป้องเขตแดน... ขณะที่ระบบสาธารณูปโภคพื้นฐานของเรา กำลังอยู่ในสภาพที่ย่ำแย่และถดถอย	we've helped other nations defend [their] border ... while our infrastructure system is in a worse and deteriorating condition.

The case of TT2 is interesting because the translator chose to abridge the Trump speech, causing the exclusion of a significant amount of the ST content. Aside from the translator for TT2 who did not translate this particular passage, TT1 seems to achieve the full implication of the ST where such evaluative items as *disrepair* and *decay* are unaltered. It also projects a small increase in the degree of negativity with the term ดิ่งลง, 'plummeted,' instead of the straightforward term, หล่นลง 'fallen.' TT3 is simply a generalization of the ST, using the terms ย่ำแย่และถดถอย

'worse and deteriorating,' without preserving the metaphorical sense of falling into a state of dismay and desolation that the ST implies.

Example 3:

this American **carnage** stops right here and stops right now

The term, *carnage*, is non-core lexis that carries a negative weighting, hinting at insecurity similar to the core terms *crime*, *gangs*, *drugs* in the preceding clauses. This particular sentence perfectly captures Trump's brand of populism, which views the United States as a dystopian society that Trump and his team plan to correct (Blake, 2017). *Longman Online Dictionary* gives the referential meaning of *carnage* as 'when a lot of people are killed and injured, especially in a war,' while *Merriam-Webster* defines it as 'great and usually bloody slaughter or injury as in battle.'³ Both definitions suggest a battle or war, evoking a very negative image.

Table 3 A comparison of the three Thai translations of the term, *carnage*

	Target text	Back translation
TT1	การสังหารหมู่ชาวอเมริกันแบบนี้ต้องหยุดที่นี่และหยุดเดี๋ยวนี้เลย	The American massacre like this must stop here and stop now.
TT2	ความโหดร้ายเช่นนี้จะหยุดลง ณ ที่นี้และตอนนี้	The brutality like this will stop here and now.
TT3	ความสูญเสียนี้จะต้องยุติลง ณ บัดนี้ ในตอนนี้	This loss must stop now, right now.

TT1 seems to provide the closest imagery of a tumultuous, ghastly, and bloody state of affairs with the term การสังหารหมู่ 'massacre.' TT2 provides a lesser degree of negativity with the choice of ความโหดร้าย 'brutality/cruelty.' But TT3 re-presents such a dreadful state by simply describing it as ความสูญเสีย 'loss,' a characterization that pales in comparison to 'massacre' and 'brutality.' The reason such a neutral term is used might be the shifting focus of the translator, who probably paid

³ See online Longman, <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/carnage>; and online Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/carnage>

attention to the entirety of the preceding clauses in which Trump offered a detailed depiction of America (the closure of factories, failure of education and loss of lives from crime).

In Spanish, three interpretations employ the procedure of generalization to deal with this 'critical point': an empty demonstrative *eso* 'this.' Another version uses *esta masacre* 'this massacre,' similar to the Thai TT1. There is only one written version using the most appropriate solution, *esta carnicería*, 'this carnage,' which might be explained by the fact that, being written, it would have allowed more time for closer translation. When comparing the three Thai versions, however, we can see that although the Thai translators had more time to cross-check with additional translation sources, they still chose less strong terms for *carnage*. This might be because there is no Thai word that conveys the same socio-cultural connotation of maiming and butchering attached to this critical term – given that its etymological background is of 'meat, especially as given to a ruler.'⁴

One more example that demonstrates the infused meaning in non-core lexis is that in which Trump tried to exhort the support of his audiences by using contrasting images:

Example 4:

And whether a child is born in **the urban sprawl of Detroit** or **the windswept plains of Nebraska**, they look up at the same night sky [...]

Detroit and Nebraska symbolize the binary of inner-city and rural living. Although Detroit is a heavy-Democratic city in Michigan, the Electoral vote of both Michigan and Nebraska went for Trump in the 2016 national poll, with a small margin in the popular vote in Michigan.⁵ In Munday's (2018: 187) opinion, the urban and vast terrain landscapes certainly invoke different images, depending on the audience's skill in interpreting the negative/positive meaning. These

⁴ Similar to the above source, see <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/carnage>

⁵ However, Detroit, which is in Wayne County, voted overwhelmingly Democratic. See also the map of the 2016 presidential election results (<https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2016/results/president>).

two are non-core words that require more time to understand their connotation, rather than translating them without having to consult additional sources of information.

Similar to the Spanish interpreters, all three Thai translators opted to transliterate the core terms into ดีทรอยต์ 'Detroit' and เนบราสกา 'Nebraska.' But these choices might have made it difficult for a Thai audience probably unfamiliar with either place and unable to grasp the real meaning behind the president's negative evaluation. The nominal phrase, ที่ราบแห่งเนบราสกา 'plains of Nebraska,' used in TT3 seems to convey a meaning somewhat closer to the original than พุ่มหญ้าถูกลม 'grassland bending in the breeze' (TT1) or the straightforward พุ่มหญ้า 'grassland' (TT2) because these terms in the Thai context are rarely associated with hardship and have a more bucolic implication.⁶

Graduation and Engagement

A range of explicit attitudes underpinned by force of utterance can be observed throughout the Trump speech (e.g., *great national effort, for all of our people, very sad depletion*). These lexical choices can be discussed in relation to the resource of graduation. Munday's (2012: 65, 2018: 187) analyses of Obama's and Trump's level of intensification in their speeches reveal that the Obama speech contains a total of 23 instances of force of attitude, while that of Trump has 37 instances with much shorter sentences. A sense of hyperbole pervades Trump's speech, displaying his idiosyncratic style in general.

In the Thai translations, these intensification tokens are treated differently among the three versions. Both *Khaosod* and *VOA Thai* manage to retain all 37 items, with only mitigation of force of negativity in two places: *so much unrealized potential* translated as ด้วยศักยภาพที่คาดไม่ถึง 'with unrealized potential' (TT1); and, *very sad depletion* translated as ขาดแคลนอย่างน่าเศร้า 'sadly depleted.' *VOA Thai* not only maintained the level of hyperbole in its final product, but also added force to some items. The phrase *what truly matters* is translated as

⁶ The search results found in the Thai National Corpus (<http://www.arts.chula.ac.th/~ling/tnc3/>) reveal that there are more than 300 tokens of พุ่มหญ้า used in such texts as newspapers, as well as academic and non-academic works in relation to nature and tourism.

สิ่งสำคัญที่สุดที่จริงแล้ว ‘the most important matter, actually’ (TT3), with the addition of ‘actually’ to counter the reader’s expectation (See engagement below). Similar to TT1, the phrase *so much unrealized potential* is rendered into ศักยภาพของประเทศที่มี ‘potential that the country has’ (TT3), diminishing its force of attitude with the words *so much*. The loss of force is also shown in the translation of *today’s ceremony, however, has very special meaning* into งานวันนี้มีความหมายพิเศษ ‘Today’s event **has special meaning**’ (TT3).

One possible reason for such omission of intensifiers would be the translators’ attempt to unjumble the translated versions. With the same number of word units, Thai prose normally looks longer than the English one. It is possible that if the translator were to opt for word-for-word translation, the Thai version would have a convoluted sentence structure and place too much emphasis on Trump’s preoccupation with ‘America First.’ If so, the TT would deviate from the Thai translation practice, in which conformity with the traditional, beautiful pattern of prose is a norm (cf. Rattanakantadilok, 2016). Inevitably, TT2 shows more reduction of force of attitude than the other two; there are only 16 instances compared to the ST. This is precisely due to the nature of the abridged translation (See Example 2).

Another resource that indicates the speaker’s commitment is engagement, which projects the speaker’s value judgement and allows for highlighting other potential meanings. The form of engagement depends on the use of modal verbs, reported verbs, modal particles and attitudinal adverbials. The last two are called ‘counter-expectancy’ (Martin and Rose, 2007: 56). The present article focuses only on counter-expectancy indicators, which can uncover the speaker’s intention and mark the course of attitude expression in a clause or between clauses.

Munday (2018: 188) finds some interesting sets of counter-expectancy in the Trump speech. The phrase, *not merely*, was found two times, *not even* one time, *only* three times, *however* and *but* twelve times, and *while* five times. All of these indicators show how often Trump countered potential meanings of the preceding clauses,

particularly with contrastive conjunction. The following excerpt illustrates Trump’s typical use of counter-expectancy:

[...] a small group in our nation’s capital has reaped the rewards of government **while** the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished, **but** the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, **but** the jobs left and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, **but** not the citizens of our country. [...] And **while** they celebrated in our nation’s capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

This is an obvious example of how Trump makes use of counter-expectancy to draw the audience’s attention. These indicators trigger a pivotal shift in content by contrasting the tone used in the preceding clause with that used in the clause that follows. This correlates with Munday’s (2018: 188) suggestion that the whole of Trump’s speech represents a message in which Trump tries to put forward the opposing view of the Establishment and a brighter future for the United States shaped by his incoming administration.

The Thai versions, however, portray the contrast of tone to a different degree. Again, it is only TT2 that fails to yield any significant result of engagement because this particular passage was shortened into วอชิงตันเจริญรุ่งเรืองแต่ประชาชนกลับไม่ได้รับส่วนแบ่งความมั่งคั่งนั้น, ‘Washington prospers **but** the people do not receive the share of that wealth.’ TT1 retains all indicators of the original, but this differs slightly in the degree of counter-expectancy from the term, กลับ ‘in turn,’ which carries a slightly weaker undertone than the straightforward, แต่ ‘but.’ TT3 also maintains the contrasting quality, perhaps even stronger in the last clause: แต่ไม่มีอะไรที่ครอบครัวที่กำลังลำบากทั่วประเทศได้เฉลิมฉลองด้วย ‘**but nothing** left for struggling families across the country to celebrate.’

The translators of TT1 and TT3 tend to retain such indicators as แต่ ‘but’ and ในขณะที่/ขณะที่ ‘while,’ which continues the same textual prosody of the ST. But a plausible explanation as to why TT1 also uses the term กลับ ‘in turn’ in various clauses is relevant to the idea of lexicalization – the way in which translators often use a synonym or

near-synonym instead of the core term. This practice might be related to another norm in the Thai written discourse where repetition is not considered apt for many text types, including political texts such as the one we are examining in this paper.

Naming

In Rice's (2017) study, the term *America/American(s)* was employed 35 times, which lays the foundation for Trump's statement. Repetition is evident as the speech strategy to create a trick in advertising, or a portrayal of Trump's business personality (Rossman, 2017). This repetition in naming *America/Americans* became a problem in Spanish interpretations (Munday, 2018: 189). In some TTs, transliterating *American* as *América* gives a confusing sense of geography because the term *América* usually refers to the whole continent. The correct reference is *Estados Unidos* 'United States.' In the Italian version, the newspaper removed the term, *fellow*, from the nominal phrase, *fellow Americans*, leaving only *Americani*. This change demonstrates the translator's interventionist bias that causes a shift in the ST ideological standpoint, allowing it to match that of the newspaper (Caimotto, 2020: 82).

These terms pose different patterns of problems for Thai translators. Apart from TT2, as the abridged version, TT1 follows the same line of naming *America/American(s)* in the ST with the terms อเมริกา and อเมริกัน. In TT3, the most striking example of translation shift would be the 'critical point' of *this American carnage*, which was translated into ความสูญเสียนี้ 'this loss,' as shown in Example 3. Furthermore, *American* and เรา 'we/us' seem to be used interchangeably. For example, *America's infrastructure* is rendered into ระบบสาธารณูปโภคพื้นฐานของเรา, 'our infrastructure,' which makes explicit the deictic position of Trump.⁷ But this shift in deixis is compensated in the following clause with the rendition of the phrase, *The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their home*, into ความมั่งคั่งของชนชั้นกลางถูกขโมยไปจากครอบครัวอเมริกัน, 'the wealth of the middle class has

⁷ Deictic positioning is expressed through pronouns and naming used to demarcate the relationship between the speaker and the listener, e.g. we, they, those people (Chilton, 2004: 56, as cited in Munday, 2018: 189).

been stolen from **the American families.**' By the same token, the phrase, *stealing our companies and destroying our jobs*, is translated into ขโมยผลประโยชน์ไปจากบริษัทอเมริกันและทำลายการจ้างงานในสหรัฐฯ 'stealing the profits from the **American** companies and destroying the employment **in the United States.** In doing so, TT3 repeats the term, *America*, and uses its synonym more often than the original, which seemingly adds to its persuasive power over the audience. The juggling between the direct *America* and the deictic center of 'we' can possibly be explained again with the tendency to eliminate repetition in Thai written discourse – the same reason as with the translations of counter-expectancy.

Another use of particular naming is aimed at the prime target of Trump's speech and opposition to the general American: the Establishment. Caimotto (2020: 81) explains that the pronoun 'they' in Italian is often used to reinforce the notion of the Establishment, which implicitly separates 'they' (them) from 'us' (the general American plus Trump). Similarly, Munday (2018: 189) shows that the term, *the Establishment*, is used to refer to a small group of people in Washington, DC in order to trick the listener into accepting his populist discourse. The problem occurs in Spanish interpreting because all six versions used completely different choices of terms, such as *los ricos* 'the rich,' *el sistema* 'the system,' *el establecimiento* 'the Establishment.' These choices seem to make Trump's attitude towards this group of people in the TTs different from the ST because the degree of negativity in each term varies.

Along the same line, the Thai versions appear with the following terms: กลไก 'mechanism' (TT1) and กลุ่มอำนาจเก่า 'group of old power.' Again, where the term *the establishment* appears in the ST passage, it is omitted in TT2.

- ST: **The Establishment** protected itself, but not the citizens of our country
- TT1: กลไกนี้ได้แต่ปกป้องตัวเอง แต่ไม่ปกป้องพลเรือนของประเทศเราเอง 'This mechanism only protected itself, but never protected our own civilians'
- TT3: กลุ่มอำนาจเก่าปกป้องผลประโยชน์ตนเอง แต่ไม่ใช่ผลประโยชน์ของประชาชน 'The old power group protected their interest, but not the people's interest'

Apart from พลเรือน 'civilian,' which sounds out of place because it carries a different connotation from the supposedly correct term พลเมือง 'citizen,' the TT1 uses the term, 'mechanism,' which suggests an operation or some kind of system for maintaining the chaotic situation in the United States. The TT3 rendition, 'the old power group,' comes closer in meaning to the original. The reason they translated *the Establishment* with different words might be the fact that this particular term has no direct equivalent in Thai. The translators might have had to unbundle it to find its referential meaning – some successfully, others not.

Discussion

The findings outlined in this article clearly reflect the translators' interventionist approaches toward handling such ideology-laden texts. A translator can 'intervene' in a certain text, for example, by naming a particular participant or social actor, thereby making explicit the translator's own values and judgements (Munday, 2007: 214). This is illustrated by the translation of the term, *the Establishment*, in our case. In the present article, I regard the Thai translator of the Trump speech as a person who constructs asymmetrical power relations between the speaker and the Thai readers. I am also aware of the fact that although shifts found in all three Thai versions may be ideologically motivated, some shifts are likely to occur because of the translator's limited knowledge of a certain allusion.

The empirical linguistic evidence emerging from the analysis of all Thai translations shows a similar tendency. First, the translators, especially for TT3, struggle and eventually fail to convey the Trump messages with limited use of words for many critical points, ending up with relatively more words in a sentence than the ST and the Spanish and Italian versions. Spanish and Italian are both Indo-European languages, while Thai is part of the Tai-Kadai language family. The latter has such unique linguistic features as compound nouns, serial verb construction, and sentences without boundary (cf. Patpong, 2006).

All of these features contribute to longer clauses in Thai. Second, the omission of intensifiers (TT1, TT2 and TT3) makes the translations look less jumbled and more concise, which mirrors, to a certain extent, general characteristics of the ST. Third, the retention of engagement indicators allows TT1 and TT3 to have the same textual prosody as the ST, but with different degrees of attitudinal force because of their use of near-synonyms. This translation procedure can lead to the idea of lexicalization as one of the Thai translation norms.

My contention is that the Thai translators seem to unintentionally put greater emphasis on allusion-laden terms by excessively using Thai words to explain just one 'critical point.' Paradoxically, although they try to make their translation short and concise by omitting intensifiers and using near-synonyms of contrastive conjunctions in order to comply with the Thai norm of lexicalization with short and striking prose, this renders many 'critical points' (e.g., *rusted-out factories, fallen into disrepair and decay*) ineffective and counterproductive. The reason is precise that the translator is unable to economize the Thai words used to describe the situation. Considering this effect with respect to the speculation made by Munday (2009: 25), that increased implicit evaluation in the ST is likely to cause translators more problems than directly inscribed attitudes, we can see that it rings true in our case. It is obvious that the translators have struggled to find appropriate meaning potentials to deal with or even manipulate those 'critical points' and make them understandable in the Thai version.

At the contextual level, the ideology of the news agency can answer the question as to why the TTs appear with those features. Kang (2007) concludes in her study of Korean-English news translation that this kind of political rendering can be institution-oriented, which is the outcome of the recontextualizing process and the news agency's ideological intervention with their preferred viewpoint. Caimotto (2020: 88) concludes, as well, that the process behind actual translations by Italian newspapers has political implications. This view concurs to some extent with our study. Known for its liberal stance, *Khaosod* (TT1) is a newspaper in the *Matichon* Group, whose position is more critical of

the Thai state than *Thairath* (TT2), the mass-oriented newspaper that focuses mostly on domestic affairs. *VOA Thai* (TT3) is part of Voice of America, a state-funded agency for promoting U.S. interests. VOA claims to be non-partisan and tries to resist Trump's efforts to control it. However, many critics have said otherwise, especially after the 2016 election.⁸

Although it is fairly hard to gauge the true political orientation of certain news agencies, careful analysis of the Thai translations reveals that TT1 kept closest to the negative evaluation and textual flow of information of the ST, followed by TT3 with its numerous shifts in attitude-rich words. One plausible explanation for this might be the fact that the translator of TT1 sought to portray as closely as possible an image of Trump as an assertive leader. The whole translation therefore serves as a criticism of his conservative and self-serving attitude towards foreign countries. However, the question remains: Does TT3 then represent the ideological leaning of polishing the image of the then-elected US president, regardless of his political standpoint?

Conclusion

The present essay has offered a comparison of profiles of Trump's 2017 inaugural speech and its translations by three well-known Thai news agencies. It shows how the translators manage, and many times fail, to cope with the problems of negative allusion and repetition of naming. The interpretation of the findings by means of lexical analysis can be of benefit to researchers of translation studies and discourse analysis in multiple ways. It also contributes to knowledge pertaining to political texts and the ideological positioning of the Thai news agencies in relation to Trump's speeches.

Regarding the nature of the speech, unscripted speeches by Trump in other settings appear to have a greater degree of force in evaluation than his scripted ones (Munday, 2018: 191). This issue could

⁸ See also <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/voice-america-will-sound-like-trump/613321>; and, <https://newrepublic.com/article/141707/will-voice-america-become-voice-trump>

serve as another topic of study. However, the fact remains that Trump's off-the-cuff comments can pose a major problem for translators, who have to decide as to whether to retain all the intensifiers provided in the ST or to comply with the norms in Thai culture where repetition is regarded as inappropriate use of language.

In conclusion, I should like to raise a few issues for future investigation. First, how can this appraisal model be applied to the translation of other kinds of political texts, such as editorials, press releases, or interviews? Second, apart from their linguistic competence and the translation brief given by the commissioner of a certain translation project, what other factors affect the translator's own judgement? Third, technology has played a central role in translation for decades. It would be interesting to compare the translation produced by humans (with perhaps influence from their commissioner's political stance) to those generated automatically, such as simultaneous screen translation available on various social media platforms.

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