

Cohesive Conjunction in English-Thai Legislative Translation

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Scholarly interest in legislative translation has grown substantially over recent decades, with corpus-based approaches contributing much to our understanding of the relationship between translated legislation and source texts, on the one hand, and translated and non-translated legislative texts in the target language, on the other. To date, however, most studies have been conducted on European languages. This study represents a first attempt to use corpus techniques to explore legislative translation from English into Thai. Drawing on a purpose-built, 400,000-word, parallel corpus of international treaties translated from English into Thai, and a one million-word monolingual corpus of legislative texts originally written in Thai, both of which are managed using the Sketch Engine platform, we investigate how cohesive conjunction is translated into Thai. Cohesive conjunction (and especially conditional cohesive conjunction) is selected here because it is considered one of the prominent features of legislative texts. We analyze the inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic differences we find in the light of the legal authenticity of the Thai non-translated texts, previously posited 'features of translation' including Teich's (2003) notion of source texts 'shining through', Becher's (2010) approach to explicitation and the presence of 'unique items' (Tirkkonen-Condit 2002), and drawing on Biel's (2014) concept of 'textual fit'. We find evidence of the source language shining through the translated texts as translated cohesive conjunctions strictly follow their English counterparts. At the same time we find a low level of textual fit between Thai translations and monolingual, non-translated Thai. This low level of textual fit is possibly due to radically different ways of using paratactic conjunctions in English and Thai, a subject to which we are currently devoting attention. Keywords: English-Thai legislative translation, cohesive conjunction, features of translation, corpus-based studies

References

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