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THE GRAMMATICAL ARTISTRY OF CHINESE–ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Darryl Sterk

8.1 Introduction

> [T]he variability and range of the things that the grammars of actual languages regulate make it very hard to say that a grammar is what all languages have in common.
>
> *(Bellos 2011: 328)*

> No living language has yet been given a grammar that accounts for absolutely all of the expressions (including sentences) that are uttered by speakers of that language.
>
> *(Bellos 2011: 330)*

This recent assertion by translator and scholar David Bellos of the incommensurability of grammars and the very inadequacy of grammar may seem to give translators a reason not to spend too much time on grammar. It is my job in this chapter to try to convince you that even if neither Chinese grammar nor English grammar is entirely adequate, they apply to the vast majority of the sentences in source and target language texts, and that even if Chinese grammar and English grammar are not entirely commensurable, they have enough in common for contrastive analysis. Further, contrastive analysis allows us to describe the similarities and differences precisely and intimate their significance in translation. That significance is partly practical: a translator with grammatical sophistication can see problems other translators miss and be more artful in solving them. But practicality is not the only reason for a translator to study grammar. Grammar is fascinating in its own right and in a way beautiful: there is poetry in phrase structure. However, grammar means different things to different people. To explain what it means to me, I begin with a brief review of the roles grammar has played in the history of modern translation studies.

Handbook of Chinese Translation, edited by Chris Shei, and Zhao-Ming Gao, Taylor and Francis, 2017.

8.2 Historical perspectives

In the 1960s, two scholars of translation drew on different branches of linguistics – John Catford on the 'functional' linguistics of Michael Halliday, Eugene Nida on the 'formal' linguistics of Noam Chomsky – each aspiring to articulate a 'science' of translation. Despite the fact that Chomsky had doubted that his generative grammar could ever provide a procedure for translation (Fawcett 1997: 1), let alone serve as a science of translation, Nida hoped that a dip into the supposedly universal 'deep structure' of language would allow translators to deal more systematically with the different 'surface structures' of sentences in different languages (Gentzler 1993: 43–73). For instance, in Chinese you would say 他們看到了什麼? where 什麼 is at the right of the verb 看到, while in English you would only say *They saw what?* to express shock or surprise. According to generative grammarians like Chomsky, you 'generate' the question by moving the unknown object *what* from its original position in deep structure to the beginning of the sentence in surface structure. Hence, *They saw what?* in deep structure becomes *What did they see?* in surface structure. It turns out you can generalise: all question words move to the front of the sentence to generate questions in English, while they remain 'in situ' in Chinese (Huang et al. 2009: 260). Surely this is relevant to Chinese–English translation. But not everyone agreed with the analysis. Functionalist linguists, for instance, tend not to accept the analytical appeal to constructs such as deep structure and movement to explain structure or to compare languages. For functionalists, the context for explanation and comparison is communicative and cultural.

Yet in the 1970s and 1980s, translation studies scholars mostly tuned out the debate between formalist and functionalist linguists and abandoned a grammatical approach in research and teaching. Instead, they adopted sociological and political perspectives on translation. While these perspectives have certainly enriched translation studies, they do not demonstrate the sterility of a grammatical, which is to say a linguistic, approach. In recent years, there has been talk of 'linguistic re-turn' in translation studies (Saldanha 2009: 149). In fact, Mona Baker, who first published the coursebook *In Other Words* in 1992, was an early proponent of such a return. Baker followed in the footsteps of Halliday and Catford. She particularly emphasised discourse and pragmatics: the way structure depends on the information we want to convey and the points we want to make. But there has been no return in translation studies to formalist linguistics, which is to say generative grammar. And yet the generative project continues to evolve, and formalist linguists around the world, including linguists who study Chinese, continue to explore the possibility that human language (or all human languages) is (or are) generated out of a common plan. Whether or not it is, or they are, I adopt generative grammar as a way of producing a precise description of the similarities and differences with which the Chinese–English translator must grapple in every clause. I am only asking the reader to treat generative grammar as what the Buddhists call a 'convenient means', not as The Truth. Below, I offer a simple formal description of Chinese and English that, as I will go on to demonstrate, is functional, because it bears on discourse and pragmatics.

8.3 Critical issues and topics: generative grammar in C–E translation

The theory of generative grammar I have adopted dates to the 1980s, but remains mainstream in formal linguistics research. It is called the principles and parameters paradigm, where the principles are similarities and the parameters are differences. For instance, all languages have question words (principle), but some leave them in situ while others front them (parameter). All languages have subjects (principle), but some languages put subjects at the beginning of a clause, while others put them at the end (parameter). Subjects that appear at the beginning of a clause

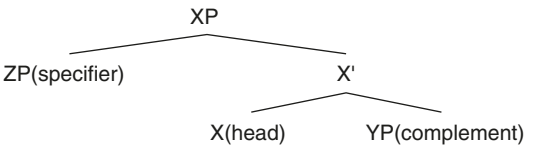

Figure 8.1 Basic tree

are said to branch left, where 'branching' is a metaphor from the upside-down tree representation of phrase structure.[1]

The subject in either tree is the 'specifier', a term I will explain below. According to generative grammarians, phrase structure determines word order: the subject comes at the beginning because it branches left and attaches last. Yet, a generative analysis of any phrase begins with the head, the main word in the phrase, represented by the X. X is like a wildcard: if X is a noun, then XP is an NP, a noun phrase; if X is a verb, then XP is a VP, a verb phrase, and so on. Y and Z (and A in Figure 8.2) are also wildcards: the phrase is labelled according to the head's part of speech. If the head is a verb, it might merge first with an object. We assume that objects are phrases, because although one can *study translation*, so that *translation* appears to be a word, an N (for noun), one can also *study the translation of a Louis Cha novel*, where *the translation of a Louis Cha novel* is clearly a phrase. In this merger of verb and object, the verb is active, the object passive. The verb is said to 'select' its object, while the object is 'selected' by the verb. The verb selects an object to fulfil the pattern of its meaning, because one cannot, for instance, just *take*. One has to *take* something. *Take* selects that something, for instance, *the cookie*. *Take* might also select *from the cookie jar*, the source of the cookie, because surely the act of taking something means removing it from somewhere. On the other hand, *take the cookie* does not seem inherently unfinished, so that the source of *the cookie* may instead be an optional addition. If so, then it is an adverbial, a phrase that is added at the discretion of the writer or the speaker instead of being selected by the verb. We could add other adverbials to our example sentence: *surreptitiously*, *while nobody was looking*, or *again*. I just listed three adverbials one could add to the clause about the cookie taken from the cookie jar, and in theory one could keep adding adverbials forever, producing another level of 'V' (read 'V-bar') structure each time. Once all the adverbials have been added, the verb selects a subject, which, like icing on a layer cake, finishes the phrase, turning it into a VP.

In the tree above, I use not the traditional grammatical vocabulary of object, adverbial and subject but the X-bar theoretical terms complement, adjunct, and specifier. The difference between the two vocabularies is that objects, adverbials, and subjects appear in 'clauses', while complements, adjuncts and specifiers appear in any kind of phrase, including clauses. In fact, in the new theory, a clause is a kind of phrase. Here, for simplicity's sake, we will call it a verb

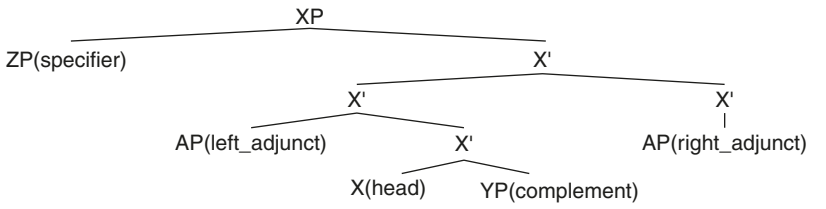

Figure 8.2 With left/right branching adjuncts

phrase. Verb phrases and noun phrases are assumed to have the same structure, consisting of heads, complements, adjuncts and specifiers.

Let us consider the specifier first. A specifier is so called because of its function. The specifier in a clause is a subject, because a subject specifies a predicate. The predicate *took the cookie from the cookie jar* defines a set of all possible takers of a particular cookie from a particular jar. But in daily communication, we often need to refer to specific people, not just to sets of people, so we ask questions like *Who took the cookie from the cookie jar?* to try to specify the taker. In a noun phrase, the specifier is a 'determiner', a word such as 'the', 'this' or 'his', which plays the same specifying role in a noun phrase as the subject plays in a clause. *Cookie jar* defines a set of cookie jars, while *the cookie jar* is a specific cookie jar. In English or Chinese, the specifier branches left. Indeed, part of the purpose of X-bar theory is to reveal similarities between different kinds of phrases in a language or in different languages. Surely it is no accident that subjects and determiners appear at the beginning of verb and noun phrases respectively in both Chinese and English. Another part of the purpose of the theory is to reveal differences. Surely it is no coincidence that English always requires an explicit subject and usually requires a determiner in verb and noun phrases respectively, whereas in Chinese one can often omit the subject in a verb phrase and the determiner in a noun phrase if it is clear in context. One might answer the question 你拿了餅乾罐裡的餅乾嗎? with a simple 拿了 in Chinese, but in English the subject and determiner both have to be spelled out.

Adjunct, as you have probably guessed, is a term for an optional addition to a phrase. In verb phrases adjuncts are adverbials, while in noun phrases they are adjectival phrases or adjectivals. Just as one can in theory add an infinite number of adverbials to a clause, one can add an infinite number of adjectivals to a noun phrase. We could be talking about *the big, hard cookie from the batch that Mom made yesterday*, where *big*, *hard* and *from the batch that Mom made yesterday* are three of a theoretical infinity of adjectival phrases one could add. X-bar theory also allows us to observe differences in the way the two languages handle adjuncts. One difference is that in English both adverbials and adjectivals tend to branch left if they are 'light' and right if they are 'heavy', as compared with Chinese, in which they always branch left:

I successfully delivered the big case I slaved over all weekend on time.
我順利地準時交出了那個我整個周末都在趕稿的大案子。

Readers can try treating Figure 8.2 as a template for the representation of the structures of these two sentences, which demonstrate that adjunct branching direction is the only fundamental difference between Chinese and English at the level of phrase structure (Huang et al. 2009: 38–76). In both languages, specifiers branch left and complements right.

The term 'complement' may be confusing to you because of its use in traditional grammar. In *They painted the wall white*, for instance, *white* is an object complement, the goal to which *the wall* went in the process of painting. 'Complement' in X-bar theory includes both objects and complements in traditional grammar, because both can be seen as cast by the verb to play parts in the drama of the clause. In both Chinese and English, complements branch right in verb phrases: 交稿 translates *deliver the case*. Complements should in theory branch right in noun phrases as well. Indeed, it is usually easy to produce an example of a right-branching complement in a noun phrase in English, in which an entire clause can be nominalised without changing the word order or, presumably, the phrase structure. For instance, the example sentence above could be adapted and nominalised into *My successful delivery of the big case in the nick of time*, where *delivery* is the head and *of the big case* is the complement. For some

reason, however, it is impossible to nominalise the sentence in Chinese without turning the complement into an adjunct and producing bureaucratese: 我對那大案子的準時交出. There is a constraint on nominalisation in Chinese, which is part of why nominalisation is used more seldom in Chinese than it is in English.

This comparison of English and Chinese phrase structure has revealed differences of branching direction and nominalisation, differences that limit the freedom of translators working between the two languages. But if Merge, an operation that combines, for instance, head and complement in a certain order, is the source of the limitations of grammar, then Move is the source of its freedom. The typical order of an English predicate may be VOA (Verb-Object-Adverbial), as in *deliver the translation on time*, but if the translator has a good reason, there is no reason why the A cannot be pre-posed, moved left in front of the O, to produce VAO, as in: *deliver on time the translation I was working on all weekend*. Chinese is inflexible about the placement of the A, but is open to moving the O to the 'topic' position, as in 那個翻譯案子我準時交出去了.

The concept of 'topic' is a contribution of functionalist linguists. Below, I complement this brief formalist comparison of Chinese and English grammar with a review of how translation scholars have applied findings from functionalist linguistics to Chinese–English translation.

8.4 Current contributions and research

The most useful studies of the role of grammar in Chinese-English translation draw on functionalist linguistics, and can be discussed in terms of discourse and pragmatics. Instead of pragmatics, I will use rhetoric, the traditional term for the art of persuasion. By viewing functionalist findings from a formal perspective, I hope to suggest ways in which C–E translators can work within the constraints of grammar, exercising their freedom by selecting and moving elements around to achieve certain discursive and rhetorical effects.

8.4.1 Discourse

Topic vs. subject

As I explained above, generative grammarians begin the analysis of a phrase with the head, with the verb in the case of a clause. Discourse linguists, by contrast, begin analysis with the topic, which appears at the beginning. In studies of C–E translation that draw on Chinese linguistics, it is often noted that Chinese is a topic-oriented language whereas English is a subject-oriented language (Zhou 2003: 197–293; He 2007: 283–5). In syntax, the difference between subject and topic is simply that a subject is selected by the verb while the topic is not. Discursively, the topic is what the clause is about, the 'frame' of common understanding in which a comment is made (Chafe 1976). The topic is usually old information, the comment new information. Although it is true that Chinese employs topics much more often than English and can therefore be described as topic-oriented, both languages have subjects and topics. We all know English has subjects, but it also, very occasionally and usually orally, has topics: *I think this decision you will have to make yourself*, as my own mother recently told me, where *this decision* is a topic. Everyone knows that Chinese has topics, but it also has subjects: in 雞我吃了, 雞 is the topic, while 我 is the subject, the eater selected by the verb.

Chinese is described as a topic-oriented language not only because it employs topics more often, but also because it can, unlike English, omit the subject if it is clear from the context. The option of subject omission in Chinese leads to potential ambiguity, as in a

sentence such as 雞吃了. If 雞 is the subject, it was the eater; if it is the topic, it was eaten. This is, by the way, the reason why the passive 被 construction (Huang et al. 2009: 112–52) is used nearly ten times less often in Chinese than the passive voice is used in English (Xiao and McEnery 2010: 105). In a sentence like 飯吃了 there could be no ambiguity: obviously the rice was eaten, because rice cannot eat! English requires an explicit subject in any clause, but with a transitive verb such as *eat* one can drop the eater, turning the food eaten into the subject by using the passive voice: *The rice was eaten*. An E–C translator should probably translate this particular passive into a topic-comment sentence like 飯吃了 or, more idiomatically, 飯已經吃完了. What actually happens is that about 20 per cent of the time E–C translators translate the passive voice with a 被 (Xiao and McEnery 2010: 105–6). As a result, 被 sentences are overrepresented in E–C translation, or at least in E–C translationese. Descriptively, I would also hypothesise that topics are underrepresented in E–C translation, and prescriptively would advise E–C translators to make use of the topic-orientation of the target language. One might, for instance, translate *I delivered the big case on time* as 那個大案子準時交出去了.

Branching direction and focus

From a discourse perspective, a sentence divides into topic on the left and a comment on the right. The comment can be an entire clause if the topic is different from the subject, as in 早餐我已經吃了. Or it can be a predicate if the subject and topic coincide, as in 我早就吃了. Discursive linguists have gone on to distinguish between comment and focus. Consider this example: *I ran a marathon*. The comment here is *ran a marathon*, but the verb *run* seems information-poor, predictable from context, for what other verb tends to collocate with *marathon*? *A marathon*, by contrast, is information-rich. *A marathon* here is a focus, a single element, typically positioned at the end of a sentence, that is highly informative. A focus is usually also contrastive: *I ran a marathon (and not some other distance or race)*. Often a focus is described as the answer to a wh-word question such as what, where or when, which is something, somewhere or sometime and not some other thing, place or time. A focus may be syntactically secondary. In fact, even though it is an optional addition, the adverbial at the end of an English clause may well be the focus, the most informative element in the sentence. Consider my latest translation of *I delivered the translation on time*: 那個大案子準時交出去了. While an improvement on the first translation, the latest translation is 'out of focus', assuming that the focus in the original was *on time (as opposed to too early or too late)*. Adjunct branching direction in Chinese has moved the adjunct left (Chen 2009). Part of the task of a translator is to manipulate grammatical structure to retain the order and thereby keep the translation in focus. If the translator really wanted to keep *on time* in focus and at the end in the Chinese translation, he or she could find a way, for instance by employing the 'double verb' construction and the fact that complements are often used in Chinese to render information that in English is conveyed by adverbials: 那個大案子我交稿交得準時 (Huang et al. 2009: 84–91).[2] If this sounds odd, more radical solutions are available, such as negation and omission: 那個案子我並沒有遲交. My point is that one motivation for such solutions is to keep the translation in focus.

A humorous example of the importance of maintaining the focus is the Chinese translation of Donald Trump's conditional avowal *I will totally accept the result of this great and historic presidential election, if I win*. A translation that retained the order with a conditional clause would go against Chinese branching direction: 我會完全接受這位大、歷史性的總統大選'如果我勝選的話. Yet pre-posing the heavy adjunct would leave the translation out of focus,

compromising the humour. A clever translator would keep the order by other means, with 前提是我勝選 or 除非我落選.

Focuses typically appear at the end of the clause, and can be explicitly identified there with the pseudo-cleft construction: *What I delivered on time was the big translation case*, or in Chinese: 我準時交的是那個大案子. But the focus can appear earlier, as in the cleft construction: *It was the big translation case (and not something else) that I delivered on time*. But no special construction is necessary to pre-pose the focus. In *A peanut butter cookie, I would never have taken from the cookie jar*, *a peanut butter cookie* (and not, say, *a chocolate chip cookie*) is the focus. One might translate this sentence with 才, which implies focal exclusivity: 花生餅乾我才不會偷吃. As for C–E translation, consider 大象鼻子長 and 大象的鼻子長. In the former, the 鼻子 is the focus, because the clause is asserting that the trunk and not some other part of the anatomy is long. Had we wanted to compare elephants to other animals, we would add a 的: in the latter, the 大象的 is the focus, referring to the elephant's, and not some other animal's, proboscis. In English translation, one can either put the focus at the end or uses a cleft construction: *The longest part of an elephant's anatomy is its trunk* and *It's the elephant that has the longest nose.*

Given that a focus can appear in different positions in a sentence, a translator might well decide that that *on time* in *I successfully delivered the big case I slaved over all weekend on time* is at the end of the clause in the English not because it is focal but simply because it is, as a prepositional phrase, a relatively 'heavy' adjunct. If the order of the original was determined by syntax and not by discursive importance, the translator does not have to worry about rearranging it.

In general, discourse is ordered according to what people know and what they want to stress. But people exist in time and causality, which constrains what they know and consider important. As a result, discourse tends to be ordered temporally and causally, a tendency we can discuss in terms of 'iconicity'.

Iconicity

Iconicity is the tendency of language to serve as an 'icon' of reality, in other words to follow the order of reality. Iconic discourse order corresponds to temporal and causal order, as He Yuanjian explains in his monograph on generative grammar and Chinese–English translation (He 2007: 293–305). Both languages have to be temporally iconic without subordination: *I had a shower and went to bed*, not *I went to bed and took a shower*. But English often overrides temporal order, as in *I went to bed after taking a shower*. This is not to say that Chinese cannot override temporal order, as in 睡覺之前我先洗澡. But Chinese simply cannot maintain the order of *I went to bed after having a shower* (He 2007: 288) without changing *after* to 以前 and turning *I went to bed*, which is the main clause in the original, into the subordinate clause in the translation.

As for causal order, the E–C translator would probably translate *I just called to say I love you* without changing the order. But change the lyric into *because I wanted to say I love you* and the translator might decide to pre-pose: 因為要說我愛妳所以打電話給妳. This is not to say that Chinese cannot override the causal order with 之所以打電話給你是因為我愛你, just to say that a 之所以 construction, which effects causal reversal, is more 'marked', meaning less frequent, in Chinese than a right-branching *because* clause in English.

It seems to me that the tendency of Chinese towards iconicity is adjunct branching direction writ large. Temporal and causal clauses are subordinate clauses, and if they branch left, as they tend to do in Chinese, especially in written Chinese, then iconicity is underwritten by branching direction.

Iconicity is also a way of contrasting the Chinese and English rhetorical traditions. In reality, reasons precede decisions, but whereas Chinese tends to present a series of reasons before getting to the point, English tends to front the decision (Kirkpatrick and Xu 2012):

> 國立臺灣大學、國立臺灣師範大學及國立臺灣科技大學分別為臺灣綜合型、教育體系及技職體系的指標大學,且皆位於臺北市大安區,三校在地利之便及互補性等優勢下'為求資源整合共享、提升學生學習成效、強化教師教學與研究、以及擴大社會服務與貢獻'決定成立「國立臺灣大學系統」以邁向世界頂尖之聯合大學系統為目標。
>
> NTU, NTNU, and NTUST decided to establish the National Taiwan University System, in order to take advantage of their geographical proximity and academic complementarity and thereby facilitate resource sharing, improve student learning outcomes, enhance pedagogy and research, augment social services, make a greater contribution to society, and, last but not least, build one of the world's top university systems.

In English translation, one has a rhetorical justification for reversing the order and moving the heavy adjuncts, in this case the reasons, to the right. The justification is simply that English readers expect the writer to get to the point, and will probably find a writer who does get to the point more persuasive.

In the next two sections, I turn to rhetoric, specifically the issue of style in Chinese–English translation, which I discuss first in terms of parataxis and hypotaxis and second in terms of noun-style and verb-style.

8.4.2 Rhetoric

Parataxis vs. hypotaxis (and 意合 *and* 形合*)*

Parataxis and hypotaxis (both of which share a morphological root with syntax, as readers can confirm on the Online Etymology Dictionary) may be familiar to you from traditional rhetoric: Ernest Hemingway is paratactic because he preferred coordination, Henry James hypotactic because he preferred subordination (Lanham 2003: 29–47). Studies of C–E or E–C translation (Ye and Shi 2009: 21–7; Zhou 2003: 32–135; Kirkpatrick and Xu 2012: 118–23) point out that Chinese tends towards parataxis, English hypotaxis. Parataxis and hypotaxis are often translated as 意合 and 形合 respectively (Liu 2006: 305). But treating these terms as translations does them a disservice. 意合 is literally 'meaningful merger', 形合 'formal merger'. Unlike English, Chinese allows 意合 for pairs of paratactic nouns or adjectives: 你該多吃蔬菜水果, while *You should eat more fruits vegetables* is forbidden.[3] The English has to add a formal device, the coordinating conjunction in *fruits and vegetables*, making this a case of 形合. Yet, apposition, where two nouns are placed side by side, is 意合 and paratactic in English, as in: *China, the most populous nation on earth*. As for hypotaxis, it can be either 意合 or 形合 in both languages. *Beautiful rainbow* is 意合, *rainbow of sublime beauty*形合. 美景 is 意合, 奇麗的彩虹 is 形合.

Parataxis and hypotaxis, 意合 and 形合, also apply to relations between clauses. Indeed, that is what parataxis and hypotaxis mean applied to Hemingway and James. Some good quantitative research has been done on this issue in E–C translation. Causal adverbs such as *consequently* and conjunctions such as *because* are not only overrepresented in E–C popular science translations as compared with popular science texts originally written in Chinese, but are sometimes added during the translation process to 'explicitate' relations between clauses (Chen 2006). As a result,

the translation tends to be more hypotactic and 形合 than a popular science text originally written in Chinese.

Noun-style and verb-style

Readers may also have encountered the issue of noun-style and verb-style in a rhetorical context (Lanham 2003: 11–28). Studies of grammar in C–E or E–C translation point out that English has a tendency towards noun-style, Chinese towards verb-style (Zhou 2003: 381–426). This tendency, I would add, is related to the English ability to nominalise clauses without changing syntactic or discursive structure. As a result, *The central bank's decision to raise rates rattled investors* would sound better in a news report than *The central bank decided to raise rates, rattling investors*, while the opposite would be true in Chinese. Nominalisation in English raises register, but in Chinese it usually sounds bureaucratic. Nominalisation also contributes to the English tendency towards hypotaxis, because by nominalising one often combines two clauses into one, subordinating the first to the second. In the above example, for instance, *decision* is, as the subject of the resulting clause, grammatically subordinate to the verb, at least in a generative analysis.

8.5 Recommendations for practice: a case study of martial arts fiction translation

I have thus far shed the light of formal grammar on findings in functional linguistics that have been applied to C–E or E–C translation. In so doing, I have suggested grammatical foundations, as well as discursive and rhetorical motivations, for strategies or techniques such as negation and nominalisation. However, for the most part I have discussed single-sentence examples, not the texts translators translate. Therefore, in what follows I will conduct a contrastive analysis of a slightly longer text, a paragraph from Chapter 29 of Louis Cha's *The Legend of the Condor Heroes*. Here is the Chinese original and a literal English translation.

> 郭 靖 扶著 黃 蓉 上 岸'將 鐵 舟 拉起 放 在 石 上'雙 槳 放入 舟 中'回 過 頭 來, 見 水 柱 在 太陽 照耀 下 映出 一 條 眩目 奇麗 的 彩虹。當 此 美 景'二 人 縱 有 百般 讚美 之 意'也 不 知 說 甚麼 話 好。手 攜著 手'並 肩 坐 在 石 上'胸 中 一 片 明淨。看了 半晌'忽 聽得 彩虹 後 傳 出 一 陣 歌聲。
>
> *(68 words)*

> Guo Jing, supporting Huang Rong, ascended the shore, and got the iron boat pulled up and put on top of a rock, the pair of oars put into the boat. He turned back his head and saw the water spouts reflecting in the sunshine the arc of an eye-dazzling, amazingly beautiful rainbow. He and Huang Rong faced this beautiful scene, and though the two of them had hundreds of inclinations to praise its beauty, they did not know what words it would be right to say. Holding hands, they sat shoulder to shoulder on top of the rock, and in their breasts there was a sea of tranquillity. They looked awhile, and suddenly heard a burst of song carry from behind the rainbow.
>
> *(123 words)*

I have chosen this particular Chinese paragraph not only because it is sublime but also because it is stylistically unremarkable and therefore linguistically representative. The spaces indicate the

'word' boundaries. I have parsed the Chinese into words by relying on my own linguistic intuition, the Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese, and the principle of lexical integrity: 上岸, for instance, lacks lexical integrity, because one could add 了 to form 上了岸, while 讚美, by contrast, possesses lexical integrity, because one cannot split the two characters. There are a lot of borderline cases in Chinese. 拉起 is easily split, as in 拉得起拉不起. The two verbs in 拉起 do not even share the same transitivity: 拉 is transitive and 起 is intransitive. But they seem to merge into a word (Huang et al. 2009: 40–3) that can take a perfective aspect inflection, as in 郭靖拉起了鐵舟. Another borderline case is 眩目. One could, for instance, ask 那條彩虹眩不眩目? In other words, Chinese native speakers can still think of 眩目 as a verb-object phrase, as it would have been in classical Chinese, not a word. Classical Chinese is almost purely 'analytic' (or 'isolating'), meaning that almost every character (morpheme) is a word. By contrast, modern Chinese and English are both relatively synthetic, even with the borderline cases in Chinese.

Sixty-eight words in the original have ballooned into 123 words in translation, because of my pursuit of literalism at three levels: the morpheme (unit of word structure) level, the word level, and the phrase level. Grammatical literalism is also why the translation probably seems stylistically odd. In what follows, I follow Mona Baker's example in *In Other Words*, proceeding morpheme for morpheme (character for character in Chinese), word for word, phrase for phrase, discursive unit for discursive unit, in a representative (which is to say, not exhaustive) grammatical analysis of literal translation that will add additional tools to the translator's kit: concepts such as aspect, rank shift, part of speech, reference and argument structure. I explain the terms as much as possible, but leave some of the explanation to the citations or the further reading. I hope through this analysis to apply to Chinese–English translation Roman Jakobson's maxim 'Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey' (2000: 116, emphasis in original). Once my analysis of my literal translation, a translation that was guided entirely by grammar, is complete, I will go on to demonstrate the grammatical moves I would perform to produce a literary revision that is both discursively and rhetorically effective.

8.5.1 Literal translation

We begin with the morphemes, or units of word structure – specifically, with the verbal inflections. In syntactic theory, inflections are added during sentence formation rather than stored in the lexicon, the mental dictionary. Hence, the verbs *support* and *look* are stored in the lexicon, while the aspect inflection *-ing* and the aspect/tense inflection *-ed* are added depending whether the clause is progressive (unfinished) or perfective (finished), present or past. *Supporting* is progressive, meaning that the event is ongoing from the perspective the writer is asking us to adopt, even if the event is in the past: *Guo Jing was supporting Huang Rong*. The progressive aspect inflection *-ing* in *holding* translates the 著 in 扶著, while the *-ed*, which combines perfective aspect and past tense, in *looked* translates the perfective aspect inflection 了. None of the other verb inflections in English translated analogues in Chinese, because aspect marking is obligatory in Chinese less often than it is in English, and Chinese simply does not have tense (Xiao and McEnery 2010: 11–23). As an example such as 你過了海關之後就可以去領行李 demonstrates, 了 is a perfective aspect inflection, not a tense inflection. The location in time of Chinese events is left to context or adverbials like 昨天 or 去年. Clearly, Chinese has grammaticalised aspect. However, much of the time, the temporal shape of an event in Chinese is left to context or adverbs like 曾經 or 逐漸.

There are inflections in English noun phrases, where the *s* in *oars* indicates plurality. The Chinese–English translator has no choice but to add the *s* in this case, because *oar* is a countable

noun. Plurality in the original was indicated by the classifier 雙, which translated into the noun *pair*, a part of speech change about which I have more to say below.

Morphemes are typically divided into inflectional, also called functional, morphemes, and content morphemes, which include roots and derivational affixes. Whereas inflectional morphemes are added on the fly, content morphemes are part of word history. They are for the most part untranslatable. Input 彩虹, output *rainbow*, even though there was neither *rain* nor *bow* in the original. Input 明淨, output *tranquillity*, even though 明淨 is a portmanteau compound, 明朗乾淨 according to the *Guoyu Cidian*, and *tranquillity* is the adjectival root *tranquil* with the nominalising derivational suffix *-ity*. Translators should know the morphological structure of the words they are translating, because sometimes the structure is so important that it has to be translated. 明淨, for instance, might be translated as *clear-clean*. But usually one can safely sacrifice structure to readability.

At other times, one manages to translate the morphemes via what John Catford called a rank shift. For instance, in the translation of 讚美 as *praise its beauty*, I have translated a word into a phrase. This is specifically a shift up, because the two morphemes in the original Chinese word have both translated into words in English. By contrast, the translation of 太陽照耀 into *sunshine* down-shifted a two-word phrase into a compound word with two morphemes, *sun* and *shine*.

Even when one finds a word in the translation corresponding to a word in the original, the part of speech may change. For instance, 好 is a stative verb, because it can serve as a predicate on its own, while *right* is an adjective, because it can only serve as a predicate with the addition of a copula. Also for instance, the localiser 上 translated into the noun *top*. This is a change on the level of sub-class, because a localiser is a special kind of noun, perhaps a clitic, a word that gloms onto the preceding word (Huang et al. 2009: 13–21). The noun *top* is the head of the phrase *top of a rock*, just as 上 was the head of the phrase 石上 in the original. But there is no obvious way to translate 中 besides *inside* or *interior*, neither of which could be used idiomatically in this context.[4]

In discussing the inflection morphemes, I noted that many of the inflections in English had to be added in the process of translation. Chinese-English translators often have to add entire words, especially to handle definiteness. The definite article, for instance, appears 11 times in the translation, corresponding to nothing in the original. How can almost 9 per cent of the words in an English translation appear seemingly out of nowhere? They appeared because in English definiteness usually has to be explicit, while in Chinese definiteness is often determined by a noun's location in the clause. In the topic or subject position, a bare noun in Chinese is either generic or definite: 水柱映出彩虹 is either *water columns reflect rainbows* (generic; generic) or *the water columns reflected a rainbow* (definite; specific). In context, the water columns are definite: the reader knows from the previous paragraph which water columns the narrator is referring to. The rainbow is new to the reader, hence the indefinite article, but *a rainbow* is technically specific, not indefinite, because Louis Cha knows and cares which rainbow it is, and as soon as he mentions it so does the reader. Louis Cha does sometimes have to mark (in)definiteness, with the number-classifier pair 一條 or with the demonstrative 此. But the English translator has to mark (in)definiteness much more often.

The word *the* in a noun phrase is actually the specifier of the phrase, which is to say that it is a phrase. In noun phrases, the specifier tends to be explicit in English. In verb phrases, it is always explicit in English. There are just two explicit human subjects in the original, 郭靖 and 二人 (added to indicate a change from a singular to a plural subject), and nine explicit human subjects in English, including the pronouns *he* and *they* thrice each. In other words, Chinese often omits the subject when it is clear in context. I leave it to the reader to confirm that the same is true of objects.

In the remainder of this section on literal translation I will consider the structure of phrases in translation. First, noun phrases. The head of the noun phrase 一條眩目奇麗的彩虹 is the noun 彩虹, while the head of the English translation *the arc of an eye-dazzling, amazingly beautiful rainbow* is the noun *arc*, which translated the classifier 條.[5] *Arc* is followed by a right-branching prepositional phrase. From a discursive perspective, this change in structure, specifically a Heavy A Movement, does not matter because *rainbow* remained at the end in the focus position.

Second, the structure of verb phrases in translation. Consider, for instance:

郭靖扶著黃蓉上岸…
Guo Jing, supporting Huang Rong, ascended the shore.

Whether the original is SAVO (it might be SVOC), the translation is SAVO. I could have moved the Heavy A, but was able to leave it in place. In my analysis of the original, 扶著黃榮 is an adjunct and therefore syntactically subordinate. It is subordinate, or hypotactic, because it is aspectually imperfective: its purpose is to provide a temporal setting for the ascension of the shore. As the 著 makes clear, Guo Jing does not complete the act of supporting Huang Rong before ascending the shore. In other words, the paratactic translation *Guo Jing supported Huang Rong and ascended the shore* would have been misleading, unless *supported* indicates the moment when he took her by the arm.

In some cases, one cannot maintain the same order without misprision. 水柱在太陽照耀下映出一條彩虹 translated into *the water columns reflecting in the sunshine a rainbow*, a change from SAVO to SVAO. Retaining the same order, as in *the water columns in the sunshine*, would have led the reader to parse *in the sunshine* as an adjectival, the purpose of which is to identify the water columns, rather than as an adverbial, the purpose of which is simply to indicate the location of the event. Often the translator's hands are tied, or not entirely free, when it comes to the location of adjuncts in English.

But adjuncts aside, the translator can usually take advantage of the SVO/SHC orientation of both English and Chinese and find a syntactic match. The trick is in choosing verbs that match at the level of sub-class. For instance, in the first sentence, I translated transitive for transitive, *support* for 扶, *ascend* for 上. 'Transitive' means that a verb selects a single object and a subject, or in X-bar terms a single complement and a specifier. In selecting its complement(s) and specifier, every verb contains within itself an 'argument structure', where 'argument' is a word that includes complement and subject (Huang et al. 2009: 38–76). The term 'argument' originally came from mathematics, from the insight that clauses can be analysed as functions. However, you will probably prefer to think of argument structure in relation to structure and semantics. Structurally, the verb 放 and its translation *put* both take a complex complement, complex because there is both an object and a complement, or two complements in X-bar terms.[6] Semantically, the object of 放 and *put* is the 'theme', where a theme is something that moves, while the complement is the 'goal', the place the object moves to. 放鐵舟(theme)在石上(goal) translates into *put the boat* (theme) *into the boat* (goal). However, the structure of the original was determined by the causal verb 將, a formal version of 把 (Huang et al. 2009: 153–96) that I translated with the causal verb *get*. Both 將 and *get* compel the pre-position of the object, which represents a change from VO to either OV or SV, depending on whether the complement is complex or clausal.

Put can only take a complex complement, but many verbs are ambitransitive, meaning that they can head phrases of different transitivity. The perceptual verb 見, for instance, can take (1) a noun complement, because one can 見彩虹 or (2) a complex complement/clause complement because one can 見彩虹出現. In English, *see* is similarly ambitransitive: one can (1) *see a*

rainbow, (2) *see the water spouts reflecting a rainbow*, or even (3) *see that the water spouts are reflecting a rainbow*, where *that* is a complementiser, a word that turns a clause into a complement. As the *see* sentences show, English makes a clear distinction between complex complement and clause complement. The sensitive translator should notice such structural differences and keen to the slight differences in meaning.

The mental verb 知 seems to take a clause complement, because 說什麼話好 can stand alone (as a complex complement cannot). Out of context, 說什麼話好 could be translated *What can I say to make it better?* 說什麼話好 analyses into a 'heavy' subject 說什麼話 and a 'light' predicate 好. The English translation of 知說什麼話好 in this paragraph by Louis Cha began as *know saying what words would be right*, with several obligatory grammatical additions, of the modal auxiliary verb *would* (because the words are hypothetical) and the copula *be* (because *right* is an adjective). But English has an antipathy to heavy subjects, so that I was forced to try again with the syntactically and semantically light subject *it*, which in turn necessitated two movements: the question word *what* and the adjective *right* both had to move left. In the process, I have translated a clause in the original into a noun clause, a term from traditional grammar that is misleading because a noun clause is a noun phrase not a clause.

I noted above at the end of my formalist analysis of Chinese and English that adjuncts in English might translate into complements in Chinese: *deliver on time* translates into 交得準時. By the same token, complements in Chinese often translate into adjuncts in English, affecting argument structure. The Chinese 看了半晌 treats an amount of time as the object of the verb 看, like *run a marathon* treats a certain distance as the object of the verb *run*. In English, however, there is no way to translate the complement 半晌 into a complement, so I translated it as the adjunct *awhile*. In other words, a transitive verb in the original has become an intransitive verb in the translation.

I also tried to translate intransitive verbs into intransitive verbs, and found a part-of-speech match in one of two cases. First, 起 turned into the preposition *up*. Second, the obvious translation for 傳 in the final clause seemed to be *convey*, but *convey* is transitive and would therefore have required the passive. The part of speech match I found was *carry*, which is intransitive in the idiom *voices carry*. Both 傳 and *carry* in this sense are technically unaccusative, because they each select a theme, and the speaker or writer usually adds a source: 彩虹後(source)傳來一陣歌聲(theme) translates into *From behind the rainbow* (source) *carried a burst of song* (theme), but because I had to produce a complex complement in English to serve as the object of the verb *heard*, I had to violate temporal iconicity: *heard a burst of song* (theme) *carry from behind the rainbow* (source), not *heard carry from the behind the rainbow* (source) *a burst of song* (theme).

Before I close this analysis of literal translation, I should mention relationships between clauses. There is but one example of either hypotaxis or 形合 at this level in the original Chinese: in 二人縱有百般讚美之意,也不知說甚麼話好, the conjunction 縱 explicitly marks the subordination of the first clause to the second. Otherwise, the Chinese is strikingly paratactic and 意合, as in, for instance, the relationship between 當此美景 and the following clause, reproduced above. In the English, the subordinating conjunction *though* makes the translation hypotactic and 形合, like 縱 in the original. By contrast, the coordinating conjunction *and* has to be added after *He and Huang Rong faced this beautiful scene*: the original is paratactic and 意合, the translation paratactic and 形合.

My purpose in attempting literalism was not to advocate literalism but rather to impress you with the degree to which it is possible and to pinpoint thereby the linguistic differences that complicate and even undermine it. In the following section I demonstrate a more flexible approach to translation, specifically literary translation.

8.5.2 Free translation

The best reason for a translator to depart from literalism is often: this is just how one would say it. While *they did not know what words it would be right to say* is syntactically alright and not overly weird stylistically, Google does not record it, as compared with almost 20 million hits for *they did not know what to say*. A Google search is often unnecessary: the translator may trust his or her linguistic intuition, just as long as he or she checks in times of doubt. For the same reason, I would revise the first clause into *Guo Jing helped Huang Rong onshore*. Surely the reader would assume Guo Jing helped Huang Rong by supporting her by the arm, not by pulling her up with a rope or pushing her up by the bum. Adapting Roman Jakobson's insight that some languages must make explicit what other languages can leave to context, we should feel empowered as translators to leave it out it if implied by and thus recoverable from context.

In this case, I prefer the unobtrusive blandness of *help*, but I also think that a translator should do the syntactic analysis and notice it *may* represent a structural change, from SAVO to SVOC, where C is for complement in the traditional sense. (I write *may* because the Chinese may well be SVOC.) There is as a result a potential ambiguity, because English adjuncts can also branch right. If *Guo Jing helped Huang Rong onshore* were SVOA it would have meant that they were both onshore by the time Guo Jing helped Huang Rong, not that the goal of helping Huang Rong was to get her onshore. *Help your father upstairs* is a case of the same SVOC/SVOA structural ambiguity, which is usually cleared up by context.

As noted at the end of the introduction to generative grammar, the C–E translator is to some extent free to move adjuncts around, if he or she has a good reason, and in the section on literal translation on the phrase level, I noted further that one good reason is to avoid misprision. Another good reason is to preserve discursive structure. Sometimes one lucks out, when the literal translation somehow manages to maintain the word order. Although I was forced to move *in the sunshine* after the verb *reflecting* to avoid misprision as an adjectival, it is better there than it would have been at the end of the sentence, where heavy adverbials tend to go: *Guo Jing…saw the water columns reflecting a brilliant, beautiful rainbow in the sunshine*. The problem with this translation is that the object *a brilliant, beautiful rainbow* is structurally heavier than the adverbial *in the sunshine*. It is also heavier semantically: unpredictable from context, *the rainbow* is the discursive focus of the sentence. By contrast *in the sunshine* is semantically light because it is predictable, implied by the context: had the sun not been shining, there could have been no rainbow. This observation might motivate me to either make the description of the sunlight weightier or omit it entirely, both of which options are demonstrated below. The same considerations of discourse and weight apply in the translation of noun phrases as well. *Resplendent, gorgeous rainbow* would have the advantage of keeping *rainbow* in focus, while *spectacular rainbow of marvellous beauty* creates a pleasing parallelism with a sense of an ending, because *of marvellous beauty* is heavy enough to go at the end of the phrase. These two versions illustrate another consideration: rhetoric, specifically prosody. *Resplendent, gorgeous rainbow* has duple rhythm and alliteration, while *spectacular rainbow of marvellous beauty* has a quicker, triple rhythm and parallelism. The choice between the options depends on what sounds more compelling in context.

As for relations between clauses, the literal translation was probably too paratactic to seem normal in English. It drew too much stylistic attention to itself, simply because the stylistic norm in English is relatively hypotactic. To make a translation more hypotactic, C–E translators can (1) nominalise. They can also convert independent clauses into subordinate clauses with

(2) subordinating conjunctions, (3) relative clauses or (4) participle clauses. These techniques are exemplified below:

> Having[4] helped Huang Rong onshore, pulled the iron-hulled boat onto a rock and put the oars inside, Guo Jing looked back at the sight[1] of the water columns reflecting a resplendent rainbow of preternatural beauty in the glorious sunshine, a scene that filled him and Guo Jing with the urge to give praise to its beauty despite[2] being unable to find the words to express their appreciation as[2] they sat on the rock hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder, looking[4] on at the beautiful scene, with a tranquillity in their hearts that[3] was dispelled the moment in which[3] a burst of song was conveyed from behind the rainbow.
>
> *(109 words)*

But to translate in this way would be to overdo hypotaxis. Except for the apposition of sight and scene, this revision reads like a parody of hypotactic style. It draws as much attention to itself as the literal translation did. Given the stylistic normalcy of the original, it would behove the translator to be less ostentatious.

Sometimes it helps to forget temporarily about the morphemes, words and phrases and to try to see the scene and describe it in the target language. To this end, I started considering some other translation for 映 besides *reflect*. For how can two water spouts *reflect* a rainbow? Perhaps it is possible to imagine, but surely what Guo Jing and Huang Rong saw is a rainbow, not a reflection of a rainbow in the pair of water columns. Could Louis Cha have meant *refract*? Then again, 彩虹 is clearly the object of the verb, not the 陽光 that would be *refracted*. To use the words *refract*, one would have to convert *in the sunshine*, an adjunct in the literal translation, into *sunshine*, a complement: *Guo Jing saw the water columns refracting the sunshine into a rainbow*. The problem is not conversion, because the translator should feel free to convert. The problem is that *refract* seems overly technical, not to mention impossible to visualise: how can one *see* refraction, even if one knows refraction explains the sight? How might one visualise the scene otherwise? The way I imagine it, the rainbow is in the air above the water columns, forming an archway, so that it seems to Guo Jing that the columns are projecting the rainbow. Hence:

> Guo Jing helped Huang Rong onshore, pulled the craft onto a rock, stowed the oars, and looked back to see, as if shimmering forth from the geysers, a resplendent rainbow, a sight that filled him and Huang Rong with dumb admiration. Sitting together hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder on that rock, they enjoyed a few moments of peace before hearing, from somewhere over the rainbow, a song.
>
> *(69 words)*

The word count is right where it should be, about one English word per Chinese word (based on my analysis of the original). While I produced it as an artist would, letting the translation cascade down upon my mind like the water from a geyser, thence to flow through my fingers, I should pause and parse once I have gotten it onto the page to check what I have done. *See* has become a single object transitive verb, while *the geysers* have been demoted into an adverbial phrase. Such radical departures from the structure of the original can be justified: *as if* makes a concession to the reader's sense of realism while *shimmering forth from the geysers* creates a delightful sense of suspense that intensifies the climactic revelation of *the rainbow*. But I am particularly proud of *dumb*, a translation of a clause into a single word that is more literary than,

say, *speechless* would have been. It is at moments like these when I feel I might be worthy in my grammatical artistry to go head to head with the gravity-defying martial artists in this fictional world of Louis Cha.

8.6 Future directions

In her survey of linguistic approaches to translation, Gabriela Saldanha comments that early linguistic taxonomies of translator techniques 'were based on knowledge of contrastive linguistics rather than on how translators work in practice and therefore failed to describe the operational strategies that guide the actual translation process' (2009: 149). With all due respect, the operational strategies that guide the actual translation process have to be based in some way on the translator's knowledge of contrastive linguistics, even if they are motivated by discursive or rhetorical concerns. In this chapter, I have argued that we would do well as translators to engage with linguists of all persuasions, both formalists and functionalists, because based on my own experience I hypothesise that the more grammar you know the more grammatically flexible you can be. As a hypothesis, this cries out for empirical studies guided by questions such as: How do translators analyse the source text if at all? Do translators notice departures from literalism in translation and if so how would they justify them? How do translators deal with specific bits of grammar? Do translators of more experimental or stylistically distinctive writers try to translate literally? What method if any do translators adopt to balance the conflicting considerations of grammar, discourse and rhetoric? Answers to these questions, in the form of studies, is a future direction suggested by this chapter, which in fact exemplifies the kind of study I have in mind.

Notes

1 To draw the trees I used Miles Shang's Syntax Tree Generator:
Figure 8.1: [XP [ZP(specifier)] [X' [X(head)] [YP(complement)]]]
Figure 8.2: [XP [ZP(specifi er)] [X' [X' [AP(left_adjunct)] [X' [X(head)] [YP(complement)]]] [X' [AP(right_adjunct)]]]]
I should hasten to note that 'left' and 'right' are conventionally earlier and later in time, not necessarily left and right on the page. As we all know, traditionally Chinese writing followed a different convention, where earlier was up and right and later was down and left.

2 If 準時 in 交得準時 is to be considered a complement, then the definition of complement will need modification, because surely 交 does not select 準時. A comparison might be the object complement in an English phrase such as *paint the wall white*, where *white*, similarly, is not selected by *paint*, but is nevertheless part of the event defined by the verb, not just the setting for the event.

3 Parataxis is a major problem for X-bar theory, which assumes hypotactic relations between elements: in any merger, the element containing the head governs the element that does not. But what is the head in *tall and handsome* or 蔬果? For answers, see Zhang (2010).

4 在 is a one-dimensional preposition, requiring a localiser to make the location more specific than a point: 在石頭上 is *on the rock*, 在石頭中 is *in the rock*. English prepositions by contrast are often multi-dimensional: for instance, *on* or *in*. As a result, 在…中 or 在…上 typically translate into the prepositions *in* or *on*.

5 For another view of noun phrase structure, in which the head of what I have been calling a noun phrase is actually a determiner, see Huang et al. (2009: 295–306).

6 X-bar theory assumes binary branching, not ternary branching, so that the representation of a complex complement like *put the oars in the boat* is quite complex: [VP [NP Guo Jing] [V' [VP [NP Guo Jing] [V' [V_a put] [VP [NP the oars] [V' [V tr <a>] [PP into the boat]]]]].

Further reading

Chu, Chauncey C. (1978) A semantico – syntactical approach to contrastive analysis – some 'be' and 'have' sentences in English and Chinese. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching* 16(4): 273–96.
A philosophically profound investigation of the issues involved in teaching basic Chinese sentence patterns to English speakers that is relevant to translation.

Dong, Da Hui 董大暉, Lan, Yu-Su 藍月素 and Chiu, Andrew 邱東龍 (2010) 中譯英冠詞選擇 對翻譯「訊息準確」之影響 (The effect of articles on Chinese into English translation accuracy). 翻譯學研究集刊 (Studies of Interpretation and Translation) 13: 91–130.
An example of the kind of study I call for in *Future Directions* of the role of some specific bit of grammar in the translation process.

Li, Charles N. and Thompson, Sandra (1989 [1981]) *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
A functionalist classic reference that still inspires new research.

Paul, Waltraud (2015) *New Perspectives on Chinese Syntax*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
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