



The Consistency Degree in the Use of Translation Procedures: A Pilot Study

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Abstract. This article aims to introduce a pilot study that investigated the consistency degree in the use of translation procedures. Through a translation test of six participants, it was observed that a high degree of consistency exists in most cases. Further, the kappa coefficient was employed to verify this outcome. The final results revealed that translators tend to adopt the same procedure to tackle the same word. Additionally, translators' afterthoughts were examined. The results showed that patterns help simplify translation tasks but also cause "rote translation", which hampers the "colourfulness of words". Besides, the context length and the mindset at the moment of translating are the two factors that may affect translators' outputs for the same text at different times. Lastly, the level of difficulty and the consistency degree are negatively correlated. In this pilot study, the above-mentioned findings were obtained, and these findings shed light on translators' translation tendencies and thinking patterns. Nevertheless, the test of this research consisted of six participants, a number that may only be acceptable for a pilot study. It is hoped that a relevant study with more participants can be done in the future to further validate these findings.

Keywords: consistency degree, translation procedures, Chinese empty words, kappa coefficient

1. Introduction

In the domain of translation studies, we have seen many theorists investigating procedures to identify possible paths that translators can adopt for converting source texts (STs) into target texts (TTs).

In Europe, Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) propose seven translation procedures (Borrowing, Calque, Literal Translation, Transposition, Modulation, Equivalence and Adaptation); Newmark (1988) compiles a V-shape diagram to show eight translation methods (from the most literal to the most free: Word-for-word Translation, Literal Translation, Faithful Translation, Semantic Translation, Communicative Translation, Idiomatic Translation, Free Translation and Adaptation); Chesterman (1997) discusses thirty translation strategies, which are divided into syntactic, semantic and pragmatic strategies; and Munday (2009) gives another V-shape diagram (from the most literal to the most free: Phonological Translation, Word-for-word, Literal, Formal, Functional, Free-Adaptation, Translocation and Creative/Primary).

In the USA, Nida (1964) lists five techniques for solving translation problems (Additions, Subtractions, Alterations, the Use of Footnotes and Adjustments of Language to Experience) and Malone (1988) brings forward ten trajections (Equation, Substitution, Divergence, Convergence, Amplification, Reduction, Diffusion, Condensation, Reordering and Recoding).

The above-mentioned scholars conducted studies on the basis of STs

and TTs written in European languages. During the same period, there are also Chinese-speaking researchers who spent efforts identifying translation procedures for converting English into Chinese (or vice versa). Among them, Loh (1958) proposes six ways to tackle translation problems (Omission, Amplification, Repetition, Conversion, Inversion and Negation), Liu (2001) gives four expediencies for transferring STs into TTs (Description, Rephrasing, Addition and Transliteration), and Su (2005) brings forward six adaptive strategies (Paraphrasing, Conversion in the Part of Speech, Amplification, Omission, Shifting and Division).

These theorists' findings focus on the procedures adopted by the translators. To my knowledge, however, there has been no study examining the consistency degree in the use of translation procedures among translators. Do translators tend to employ the same procedure when tackling the same sentence? Or, is there a tendency to use different methods to deal with the same word? In order to obtain an answer, a translation test was designed, and percentage-based calculation and a statistical measure (kappa coefficient), were adopted to analyse the test results. This is an issue that has not been delved into yet and no one has ever introduced the kappa coefficient into translation studies, so it would be an important contribution if a positive answer could be gained. Meanwhile, because this is an investigation that has never previously been undertaken, the research in this article is also a pilot study to determine whether or not my methodology can work. If yes, examinations that include more participants and test questions can be conducted in the future.

Because a translation test needed to be designed, it was considered to be worthwhile to also elicit translators' thoughts for obtaining answers to questions such as:

- is the consistency degree influenced by any factor?
- why do translators tackle some words in some ways? and
- what are the factors that can influence translators' outputs?"

To achieve this, participants, right after translating the extracts in the test, were asked to write down answers to a number of questions relating to their translation work. By studying their written comments, it is expected that meaningful thinking patterns can be identified. If this expectation can be fulfilled, it will be the other contribution.

In this section, past theorists' contributions and the aim of this pilot study have been explained. Before discussing the research methodology and results, the basis of this study should be described to provide some background knowledge.

2. Introducing the Previous Research

Based on the translation procedures proposed by the previously-mentioned theorists, my previous research aimed to identify the procedures adopted for translating Chinese 'empty words' into English. The reason why Chinese empty words were chosen as the research objects was that they are said to be elusive (Bao, 1988; Pollard, 2001; Wong, 2001). Because of this, the previous research was conducted to identify translators' procedures in translating them.

In Chinese, there are two types of words: solid words (實詞: *shi ci*) and empty ones (虛詞: *xu ci*). Solid words include nouns, verbs, adjectives, numerals, measure words, and pronouns; they have a clear and substantive meaning, e.g. 虎 (*hu*)¹ 'tiger', 漂亮 (*piao liang*) 'beautiful', 太陽 (*tai yang*)

¹ Every Chinese character is accompanied with its corresponding phonetic transcription.

‘sun’ and 跑 (*pao*) ‘run’. As for empty words, they include adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, particles, interjections, compounds and structures²; their meaning is not always easy to grasp. As Bao (1988, pp. 356-357) points out, four features are seen in Chinese empty words:

- 1) most empty words convey ambiguous ideas;
- 2) most empty words can constitute sentences only when they are combined with solid words;
- 3) except for interjections, most empty words cannot be taken as an answer to a question;
- 4) two identical empty words should not be placed right beside each other in a sentence (it makes the sentence meaningless and confusing).

The first of these four features is the most notable. Some empty words are so ambiguous that it is difficult to determine their exact meaning without context. Take the particle 左右 (*zuo you*) ‘around; beside’ for instance:

A: 現在是下午五點左右。 ‘It is **around** 5pm.’

B: 我想與他常伴左右。 ‘I want to be **with** him forever.’

In sentence A, *zuo you* stands for the idea of “approximation”, whereas in sentence B it signifies the idea of “being together”. Moreover, *zuo you* means “control/influence” when it is taken as a verb. This example demonstrates the ambiguity of empty words and the importance of the context. Because of this feature, translators face a higher degree of difficulty in translating empty words than in tackling the other kind of Chinese words (i.e. solid words).

In addition to Bao (1988), Wong (2001) and Pollard (2001) also discuss the difficulty in translating empty words, and Pollard’s article provides a rather detailed discussion. His study focuses on Chinese modal adverbs, which are a part of empty words. As he defines them, modal adverbs are adopted “to convey the speaker’s or writer’s comment on what he is saying – for instance to express concession, reservation, confidence – or to anticipate a reaction from the listener or reader” (p. 216). For example:

我可不要他遲到。 ‘I **WOULDN’T** want him to be late.’

According to Pollard, the empty word 可 (*ke*) does not mean “but” or “to approve”, but rather functions as a tone reinforcer that “adds a colouring” to this statement. Therefore, it is wrong to translate this empty word as “but” or “to approve”. In English, there is no correspondent, so one of the solutions is to use “WOULDN’T”. (By fully capitalising it, a reinforced tone can be conveyed).

From these examples, it can be seen that Chinese empty words require extra care because their meanings are elusive and, sometimes, it is difficult to find correspondents in English. For the very reason that translating Chinese empty words is challenging, it was considered to be worthwhile to identify the translation procedures adopted for translating these words into English. Therefore, this was taken as the theme of my previous research.

To identify translation procedures, a full list of empty words (Wang, 2003) was obtained, and a ParaConc-run corpus was constructed in which translations from a renowned Chinese-English translation journal, *Renditions*, and the source texts of those translations were included and aligned. In total, there were 62 STs (Chinese) and the same number of TTs (English), consisting of 493,929 characters and 371,862 words respectively.

Through analysing examples extracted from such a large corpus, eight translation procedures and one non-procedure were identified:

- 1) Match
- 2) Paraphrase
- 3) Shared Match
- 4) Implication
- 5) Amplification
- 6) Grammatical Conveyance
- 7) Borrowing
- 8) Omission
- 9) Mismatch (non-procedure)

The following are brief definitions of these nine findings.

2.1 Match

An example is classified into the category of Match when it contains one or more independent target word(s) that closely correspond to the source empty word. For example:

ST: 井上先生終於清楚地領悟了...
 TT: Kiyoshi Inoue **finally** realized...

In Chinese, 終於 (*zhong yu*) gives us the idea that someone has spent so much effort and time and, in the end, found the answer to a question or gained whatever he/she wanted. “Finally”, in English, has the same implication, so this (and this kind of examples) is classified as an example of Match.

2.2 Paraphrase

If a translator chooses to translate a source empty word in a different way, without producing an extremely dissimilar (or even wrong) meaning and altering the function, this is counted as an example of Paraphrase. For example:

ST: 由於四頭牛同時吼叫，同時發表演說，因此即使調來外國語學院的全部教授也聽不清。
 TT: The four oxen were bellowing and speechifying at one and the same time, **therefore**, even though the entire faculty of the Foreign Languages Institute had been laid on, no one could make out what they were saying.

The most common English correspondent of the Chinese preposition, 由於 (*you yu*), is “because”, but the translator chose “therefore” instead. Although because and therefore are words with different meanings, they fulfil a similar function. Hence, this example (and examples like this) is classified in the category of Paraphrase.

2.3 Shared Match

An example is classified into the procedure of Shared Match when the translator translates two or more source words with only one English word. In other words, translations belonging to this category cover not only the meaning of the empty words, but also that of the other accompanying solid words. The term “Shared Match” is coined in an attempt to let readers know that this procedure is about a match that is shared by plural words. For example:

ST: 有許多人都把我當成物質主義者...
 TT: There are many who would make a **materialist** of me.

The Chinese empty word, 者 (*zhe*), is often added to an action or a state to refer to people who perform that action or are in that state. In this example, the translator retained the idea of 者 by the use of a suffix (-ist). Although suffixes, including “-er”, “-or” and “-ist”, are correspondents of 者, they can only be added to the end of other words and cannot stand as independent words; this does not meet the definition of Match (see above). Therefore, such examples are categorised into the category of Shared Match.

2.4 Implication

Procedures in which there are always corresponding translations were discussed in the preceding three sections. However, in some cases, the meaning of words is not conveyed by corresponding translations, but by implication from another word or words. Such cases are regarded as adopting the procedure of Implication. For example:

ST: 鄉間報死訊的人都以倒挾黑傘為標記...

TT: In this country a reversed black umbrella was the sign of tidings of death.

Although the English phrase “take...as...” matches the empty word, 以...為... (*yi...wei...*), the translator did not adopt it. Nonetheless, the idea of 以...為... can still be captured from the context. When we read this translation, we understand that a reversed black umbrella indicates that someone has died. Further thinking may produce the reasoning that people take a reversed black umbrella as tidings of death. The idea of 以...為... is, hence, rendered, and this example (and examples like this) is, thus, classified into the category of Implication. What also has to be explained here is that this example does not belong to the procedure of Shared Match because there is no word in the translation that contains the idea of 以...為....

2.5 Amplification

Totally contrary to the procedure of Implication, the procedure of Amplification is a method that increases the amount of information explicitly provided. For example:

ST: 我的思想對於這個世界和人生是徹底肯定的，**就是說**我不和一般宗教家一樣把宇宙人生看成虛無，看成罪惡的。

TT: My thought vis-a-vis the world and human life is thoroughly affirming, **which is simply to say** that I am not like the standard religious thinker, who views life and the universe as being meaningless or as being evil.

The corresponding translation of 就是說 (*jiu shi shuo*) is “which is to say”, but the translator added extra information (i.e. simply) to the target text. Such examples belong to the category of Amplification.

2.6 Grammatical Conveyance

If the meaning of an empty word is conveyed by its grammatical nature, the translation is counted in this category. Nevertheless, some examples are ruled out of that category. For instance, prefixes and suffixes are bound morphemes and can be further divided into derivational ones and inflectional ones. In English, all prefixes and some suffixes belong to the former kind, while the rest of the suffixes belong to the second kind. Suffixes such as in-, un-, -er, -ness, etc. are derivational bound morphemes the addition of which leads to the birth of new words (Malmkjær, 2004, p. 359). That is to say, happy and happiness are seen as two different words, although clearly semantically related. As for inflectional bound morphemes (e.g. -ed, -ing, -er,

etc.), the addition of such morphemes does not lead to the birth of new words but only adds extra grammatical information (such as tense, grammatical voice and number) to the already existing meaning. It is due to such a difference that I decided to classify examples in which inflectional bound morphemes are used in translation into the category of Grammatical Conveyance. For example:

ST: 在金光遍灑的朝陽路上，神農揹著藥籃子，一邊走一邊揮動手中的柳條或是管...

TT: On the road bathed in golden light Shen Nong walks into the sun, his herb basket on his back, **swishing** a willow switch or reed cane...

This empty word, 一邊...一邊... (*yi bian...yi bian...*), refers to a situation in which someone does two things at the same time. In this example, the two actions being performed at the same time are “walks into the sun” and “swishes a willow switch or reed cane”. In order to reveal the synchrony of these two actions, the translator employed a gerund, by which readers know that “walks into the sun” and “swishes a willow switch or reed cane” were performed at the same time. Because a gerund does not stand as an independent word, such a translation method does not meet the definition of Match. Therefore, examples like this are named according to their characteristic of conveying messages via grammatical rules.

2.7 Borrowing

If translators phonetically transcribe empty words and take it directly as the translation, such outputs are classified into the procedure of Borrowing. For example:

ST: 哎！孔子到此卻突然長嘆了一聲...

TT: “**Ai!**” Confucius at this point suddenly exhaled a long sigh...

The empty word, 哎 (*ai*), is an interjection that can be heard in a Chinese-speaking society almost every day. When tackling this word, the translator chose to keep its foreign colour and borrow its pronunciation directly into the translation. Examples like this are classified into the category of Borrowing.

2.8 Omission

When there is no corresponding translation in the target text and the meaning is not implied, the example is classified into the category of Omission. For example:

ST: 我炎帝當了多久，連我自己也不知道...

TT: I can't rightly say how long I ruled as Emperor Yan...

Regarding the empty word, 連...也... (*lian...ye...*), 也 does not mean “also” but functions as a tone reinforcer, which emphasises the statement of “I can't rightly say”. In English, the word that best matches this empty word is “even”, which is also used as an intensive. Nevertheless, the translator did not tackle 連...也... in the translation, and the emphatic tone has disappeared, so this and other similar examples are classified into the category of Omission.

2.9 Mismatch

When there is a corresponding translation in the target text, but the meaning it conveys deviates from that of the source empty word, it is put in the

category of Mismatch. In this research, care has been taken to make sure that deviation was not made on purpose to create certain effects, as far as it is possible to determine from textual evidence alone. For example:

ST: 小弟在江湖上代人算命，已有二十多年，似這般八字，卻也不曾遇到過幾個。

TT: I have **seldom** come across anything to equal it in all my wanderings and in the more than twenty years that I have been telling fortunes!

不曾 (*bu ceng*) means “never”, while “seldom” means “almost never”. Because a meaning difference exists between the two words, this example (and examples like this) is classified into the category of Mismatch.

As the results show, almost all procedures proposed in my research have also been identified by former scholars who investigated translations of different language pairs; the only exception is Grammatical Conveyance. The reason why Grammatical Conveyance could be taken as a new procedure may be that there is a relatively great grammar difference between English and Chinese².

Having identified these eight procedures and one non-procedure (i.e. Mismatch), I would like to further investigate whether there is a high or low degree of consistency in the use of translation procedures among translators, hence this study. In order to obtain an answer, a translation test was designed. In the following section, the research methodology will be explained.

3. Research Methodology

As mentioned in the previous section, Chinese consists of solid words and empty words. In this study, the concepts proposed by Wang in his book, *A New Chinese-English Dictionary of Function Words* (2003), were adopted to categorise Chinese words. It is also because of this decision that the present study classified empty words into seven categories as Wang suggests:

1. adverbs
2. conjunctions
3. prepositions
4. particles
5. interjection
6. compounds
7. structures.

Among these categories, lesser-known compounds and structures need further explanations. Compounds refer to sets of words (i.e. collocations) that possess the characteristics of empty words, and generally consist of three Chinese characters (e.g. 不得不 (*bu de bu*), 恨不能 (*hen bun eng*) and 想不到 (*xiang bu dao*)). Regarding structures, they represent empty words that collocate but are not put beside each other in sentences. For example, 你**連書也**沒有帶 means “you do not even bring the book” in English. Here, the words in bold form a structure; they collocate but are not put together.

Having chosen Wang’s list as the basis, there is still one concern to be addressed: the list contains approximately 950 empty words, which is so overwhelming that it would become an onerous task if they were all included in the translation test. Because this is a pilot study, whose main purpose is to determine whether or not the methodology works, I decided to randomly

² Because the focus of this article is the consistency degree of these translation procedures, spending too many words on explaining why Grammatical Conveyance is a new translation procedure may dilute the importance of the theme. For those who are interested in this, please refer to “Translation procedures adopted for translating Chinese empty words: A corpus-based study” in *Babel* vol. 59: 3, 332-359.

select fifteen extracts, in which fifteen different empty words were contained to represent the seven empty word categories in Wang's list. Eventually, two extracts from each category were chosen—but three from the category of Adverb because this category contains many more empty words than other categories do. The empty words selected are:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1) 連...也... "lian...ye..." (lian...structure) | 9) 叫 "jiao" (preposition) |
| 2) 以...為... "yi...wei..." (structure) | 10) 把 "ba" (preposition) |
| 3) 怪不得 "guai bu de" (compound) | 11) 萬一 "wan yi" (conjunction) |
| 4) 大不了 "da bu liao" (compound) | 12) 要不是 "yao bu shi" (conjunction) |
| 5) 哎 "ai" (interjection) | 13) 竟 "jing" (adverb) |
| 6) 喂 "wei" (interjection) | 14) 親自 "qin zi" (adverb) |
| 7) 來著 "lai zhe" (particle) | 15) 漸漸 "jian jian" (adverb) |
| 8) 者 "zhe" (particle) | |

These fifteen extracts belonged to the first half of the translation test. Right after translating these extracts, test participants were asked to answer questions that aimed to elicit their thoughts on tackling those extracts. The purpose of including these questions as the second half of the translation test was to understand translators' thinking patterns. Besides, in order to draw desired information from test participants, some of the strategy labels were deliberately put into the questions (...by using a more general term, by paraphrasing it, by omitting it...) to let them know how to answer these questions. This was considered to be necessary in order to prevent the possibility that some test participants may answer in a wrong way. Meanwhile, if participants used these labels in their comments, this test would not be affected because the aim of the test was to analyse their actions, not the labels they used.

After the creation of the translation test, it was posted on the online forum of Literocracy (<http://groups.google.com/group/literocracy>) through the emailing service of MCLC (Modern Chinese Literature and Culture: <http://mclc.osu.edu/>) and sent to English-speaking translators and scholars whose names are on the contributors list of *Renditions* (thanks to the kind help of the Managing Editor, Ms Sherlon Ip Chi Yin). Two months later, six responses were received, and the background information of these six participants is given:

Participant A: A male who is in his thirties and has practised Chinese-English translation for three to four years.

Participant B: A female who is over seventy years old and has practised Chinese-English translation for thirty years.

Participant C: A female who is in her sixties and has practised Chinese-English translation for thirty years.

Participant D: A male who is in his thirties and has practised Chinese-English translation for four years.

Participant E: A male who is in his forties and has practised Chinese-English translation for twenty-seven years.

Participant F: A female who is in her sixties and has practised Chinese-English translation for about twenty-five years.

To sum up, there were three males and three females sending me their replies, and their translation experience ranged from three years to up to thirty years. Frankly speaking, although this number is insufficient for conducting a statistical analysis, even if the results may be somewhat tentative, such an analysis is still worthwhile because, as far as is known, no such examination has been done before. The result of this research will determine whether or not the statistical measure (the kappa coefficient) can be applied to translation studies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Consistency Degree in the Use of Translation Procedures

After examining the six participants' translations, Table 1 was created to show results.

Table 1: Results Obtained from the Translation Test

Empty Words	Extracts Selected ³	Degree of Consistency ⁴
連...都... (Structure)	那個時候我連憤怒的力氣都沒有了。	100 % (Match)
以...為... (Structure)	而這力量的形式起初是以國家為單位，進而至於國際。	66.67 % (Omission)
怪不得 (Compound)	"怪不得你不在乎，原來你也是少爺出身。"	100 % (Match)
大不了 (Compound)	大不了回娘家來住個三年五載的，兩下裡也就回心轉意了。	83.33 % (Paraphrase)
哎 (Interjection)	哎！孔子到此卻突然長嘆了一聲...	50 % (Omission)
喂 (Interjection)	喂，我不管你幹什麼，但你要我幹什麼？」	100 % (Match)
來著 (Particle)	你幾時捉出我說謊來著？	100 % (Omission)
把 (Preposition)	她在這間屋子裡呆的很久，炭氣把她熏壞了。	100 % (Omission)
萬一 (Conjunction)	萬一有點事，跑都跑不及，還是回去好。	100 % (Implication)
要不是 (Conjunction)	要不是他倆要好，我怎會認得余彬	83.33 % (Grammatical)
竟 (Adverb)	有一次參觀教堂的時候我竟忘記了脫去我的帽子...	66.67 % (Omission)
親自 (Adverb)	然後，把一顆顆破碎和焦灼的心親自帶向遠方。	83.33 % (Match)
漸漸 (Adverb)	縱使我的身體不死，我也會漸漸自我的記憶中死去。	100 % (Match)

To begin with, the way in which the percentage-based consistency degree results were obtained should be expounded. The percentage for each extract represents the proportion of the most-adopted procedure among all. Take the second extract, 以...為... (yi...wei...), for instance: four out of these six participants tackled this extract by the procedure of Omission, while the other two by that of Match. Therefore, the consistency degree = $4 \div 6 \times 100 \% = 66.67 \%$.

³ When analysing test participants' responses, I found that extracts 8 and 9 are not suitable examples. Therefore, they are ignored in the discussion.

⁴ The most-adopted procedures are also listed.

Having known the way the results were obtained and going through this table, it can be noted that the percentage for all extracts is above 50 %. It seems that a majority of cases belong to high-degree consistency, and this may indicate that translators tend to use the same procedure to tackle the same empty word. However, this is just an initial observation on the basis of the figures shown in the table. In the next section, this finding is going to be verified by a statistical measure, the kappa coefficient.

4.1.1 Introducing the Kappa Coefficient (κ). Firstly, it need be remarked that the use of a statistical measure – i.e. the kappa coefficient – is in order to demonstrate from a statistical perspective that translators tend to adopt the same procedure to tackle the same empty word. The reason why the kappa coefficient was selected as the investigation approach lies in the fact that it is a statistical measure specially designed for calculating the agreement (i.e. consistency) for multiple items (in my case, the consistency in the use of translation procedures). Because no one has ever examined the use of translation procedures through this statistical measure, original contributions will be made and a new investigation approach will be confirmed if this measure brings meaningful results in this pilot study.

Before calculating, however, it is necessary to explain what the kappa coefficient (κ) is, because its values will be shown in the following tables to reveal the consistency degree in the use of translation procedures. Proposed by Jacob Cohen in 1960 in his article “A Coefficient of Agreement for Nominal Scale”, κ is a value that determines inter-rater reliability, namely the degree to which two raters’ assessments are concordant. For example, suppose that there are two teachers marking twenty-five students’ dissertations. We wish to know whether the two teachers give these students similar marks. In this case, the kappa coefficient can be applied to give us an answer from the perspective of statistics. It could be said that κ gives us ideas on whether a consensus exists between the two raters (or whether homogeneity is seen in the two raters’ evaluations). The equation is:

$$\kappa = \frac{P_o - P_c}{1 - P_c}$$

Where P_o = the proportion of units in which the judges agreed
 P_c = the proportion of units for which agreement is expected by chance.

The upper limit of the kappa coefficient value is +1, while the lower limit is -1. According to Cohen, the lower limit is a complicated issue because “it depends on the marginal distributions” (1960, p. 41). Nevertheless, Cohen argues that more attention should be paid to the upper limit than the lower one because a value that is lower than zero is actually “of no further practical interest” (p. 42). Based on this concept, Landis and Koch determine the strength of agreement for the kappa value in their article “The Measurement of Observer Agreement for Categorical Data” (1977, p. 165).

As we can see, there are six levels, representing different degrees of strength, and agreement does not exist only when the value is lower than zero. In this study, this table will be adopted to examine the strength of agreement of the extracts.

Table 2 Kappa Values and their Strength of Agreement

Kappa Value	Strength of Agreement
<.00	Poor
.00-.20	Slight
.21-.40	Fair
.41-.60	Moderate
.61-.80	Substantial
.81-1.00	Almost Perfect

Furthermore, Cohen also points out that the kappa coefficient is applicable only when the following three requirements are met:

1. The units are independent.
2. The categories of the nominal scale are independent, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive.
3. The judges operate independently. (Cohen 1960, p. 38)

In this research, every extract is independent, and all test participants translated independently. Additionally, the categories in this research refer to the eight translation procedures and one non-procedure that the extracts were classified into. These categories are not ordinal but nominal and are mutually exclusive. Since this research meets the preceding three requirements, κ can be employed to calculate the degree of consistency.

Now, we have decided on the statistical method to measure the consistency degree and the group of results to which this statistical method can be applied, but there is still one problem waiting to be fixed: we must find a kappa equation that is suitable for investigating multi-rater evaluations.

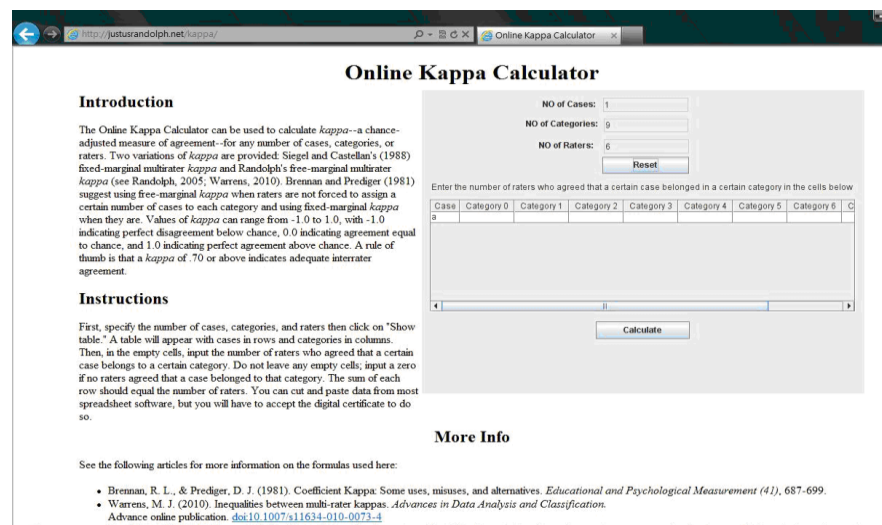
In fact, Cohen's Kappa is for determining the reliability of agreement in two-rater evaluations. In order to make multi-rater calculation possible, several scholars have proposed their suggestions on different statistical bases. In his article "Inequalities between Multi-rater Kappas", Warrens (2010) lists four multi-rater evaluation equations (Fleiss, 1971; Hubert, 1977; Light, 1971; Randolph, 2005), which are constructed on the basis of different concepts. Light's κ and Hubert's κ are multi-rater versions of Cohen's κ , while Fleiss' κ is from Scott's π and Randolph's κ from the S of Bennett et al.⁵. Among the four measures, Randolph's idea is taken in this research because his online kappa calculator (<http://justusrandolph.net/kappa/>) is used to calculate the kappa value of every example. This online calculator is designed to produce two kinds of results: a free-marginal kappa and a fixed-marginal kappa.

According to Randolph (2005), a free-marginal kappa is adopted when the number of cases that each category should have is not known in advance, while a fixed-marginal kappa is adopted when the number is known. In other words, in cases where raters have to assign a certain number of items to a category, the fixed-marginal kappa is taken into account. Contrarily, if raters can assign items to categories without any limitations (i.e. some categories may be left with no item), then the degree of agreement is determined by the free-marginal kappa. In this research, the free-marginal kappa is the applicable value because the test participants who tackled the extracts in the test were not required to use certain translation procedures in their outputs.

⁵ The π of Scott and the S of Bennett et al. are also agreement measures for two raters. In this study, the two measures are not elaborated together with Cohen's Kappa because they are not employed as the evaluation methods in this research.

4.1.2 Applying the Kappa Coefficient to this Research. Figure 1 shows Randolph's Online Kappa Calculator with a created calculation table. There introduction and instructions appear on the left side of the page and the calculator is inset on the right. To compute, we have to enter numbers in the three spaces: "No. of Cases, No. of Categories and No. of Raters". Let us take the calculation of the compound 怪不得 (*guai bu de*) for example. In the translation test, there is only one example that includes this empty word, so 1 is the number to be filled in "No. of Cases". Since examples are categorised into eight translation procedures and one non-procedure, we should put 9 in the blank of "No. of Categories". As for "No. of Raters", since responses from six translators were received and analysed, 6 is the number to be entered. After specifying the numbers and clicking the "Show Table" button, a 1 x 9 grid is created, in which we have to enter the number of occurrences for each category.

Figure 1 Calculator with a Calculation Table Created



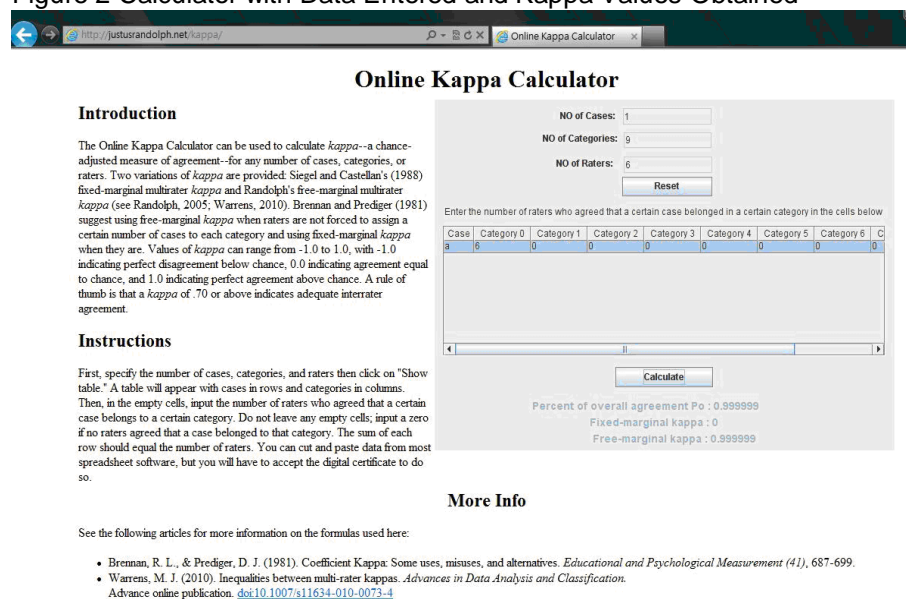
In Figure 1, we see that a table with nine blanks is created. In these nine blanks, we have to enter the number of occurrences of each procedure. In this research, category 0 refers to the procedure of Match, category 1 to the procedure of Paraphrase, category 2 to that of Shared Match, category 3 to that of Implication, category 4 to that of Amplification, category 5 to Grammatical Conveyance, category 6 to that of Borrowing, category 7 to that of Omission and category 8 to the non-procedure Mismatch. Every blank in the grid has to be filled with a figure, and the amount of all figures must equal six because there are six participants. If there is one occurrence, then 1 is entered; if two occurrences, then 2. If no occurrence can be seen, 0 is the input.

Here, one issue needs to be addressed; that is, whether or not one blank should be removed for some empty words whose English correspondent seems to be impossible to find (e.g. Pollard's example of 可 'ke'). Thus, since the procedure of Match is very unlikely to be adopted when translating these empty words, shall we calculate the kappa coefficient of these words with eight blanks instead (i.e. eliminating the possibility of using the procedure of Match)? Before calculating, this issue was pondered and a decision was made to maintain nine blanks. The reason is that the action of removing one blank equals to an assertion that it is impossible to find a correspondent. Although the untranslatability of some Chinese empty words was discussed in previous sections, is it really appropriate to state that there is absolutely no way to find a correspondent? There must be linguists who possess a better command of English than I do, and they may

offer a different opinion. It was due to this concern that a decision was made to maintain nine blanks, and this is an issue that can be discussed again when a further study is to be conducted in the future.

Once the grid is filled with figures, a click on the Calculate button will produce three results: 1) Percent of overall agreement P0; 2) Fixed-marginal kappa; 3) Free-marginal kappa (see Figure 2). Among these three results, it is the third result that is discussed in this research. The calculation shows that the free-marginal kappa is .999999, a value that is very close to 1. According to Landis and Koch's categorisation, this stands for an almost perfect agreement. In other words, there is an extremely high degree of consistency in the use of translation procedures in the translation of the compound 怪不得 (*guai bu de*); translators tend to translate it with the same procedure.

Figure 2 Calculator with Data Entered and Kappa Values Obtained



The above is an example of applying the kappa coefficient to this research. After counting the values of all other cases, Table 3 is produced.

Table 3 Kappa Values and Strength of Agreement in the Translation Cases

Empty Words	κ	Strength of Agreement
連...都...	.999999	Almost perfect
以...為...	.399999	Fair
怪不得	.999999	Almost perfect
大不了	.624999	Substantial
哎	.174999	Slight
喂	.999999	Almost perfect
來著	.999999	Almost perfect
把	.999999	Almost perfect
萬一	.999999	Almost perfect
要不是	.624999	Substantial
竟	.399999	Fair
親自	.624999	Substantial
漸漸	.999999	Almost perfect

Having converted the results into kappa values and assigned them to different levels of agreement, we gain a relatively clear idea of the degree of consistency in each translation case. In the previous section, the degree of consistency on the basis of percentage was discussed. It may cause different perceptions because people have different ideas of percentage; some may consider 60 % to be high enough, while the others may take it as just a moderate value. To examine with a relatively fixed standard, Landis and Koch's categorisation was adopted for evaluating the degree of consistency.

When the value is more than 0, there is agreement, which means that consistency exists if the value is more than 0. Therefore, it could be concluded that consistency exists in all translation cases, but with different strengths. In Table 3, there are seven cases in which "Almost perfect agreement" is seen, there are three cases in which "Substantial agreement" is seen, there are two cases in which "Fair agreement" is seen, and there is one case in which "Slight agreement" is seen (the reason why the consistency degree is low in this case will be given in the following section based on translators' thoughts). All in all, ten cases see either Substantial or Almost-perfect agreement, which indicates that high-degree consistency is common. From this finding, it could be further inferred that it is quite likely that translators use the same translation procedure when tackling the same text.

Based on this finding, it could also be concluded that the age and the length of translation experience do not affect translators' choices of translation procedures. The proof is such high-degree consistency in the use of translation procedures among six participants whose age ranged from thirties to seventies and length of translation experience from three to thirty years.

4.2 Investigating Test Participants' Translations and their Thoughts

After examining the consistency degree in the use of translation procedures, test participants' translations and their comments in the second half of the translation test will be discussed in this section. By examining translations and translators' thoughts at the same time, it is expected that their thinking patterns can be understood. What needs to be stressed is that only important examples will be mentioned lest the article becomes repetitive.

The first interesting example is the translation of the empty word 大不了 (*da bu liao*), which was challenging to all participants. The English translation of this Chinese compound can be "worst case" or "If the worst comes to the worst". When tackling this word, two of the six participants said that they turned to native speakers of Chinese for explanation, another three looked up this word in a Chinese-English dictionary, and the other one chose a more general term as the translation.

From their comments, we can note three solutions that translators would adopt when meeting words that they do not fully understand: 1) seeking help from native speakers; 2) consulting a dictionary; 3) generalising.

Here, it is worthwhile to discuss the third solution. Using a more general term – a hypernym – as the translation is actually one of the most common strategies when dealing with difficult words and terms that do not exist in the target language system. The translation of *da bu liao* is a good example. Because it is difficult to produce a precise translation, generalisation becomes one of the choices. Besides, in some cases a hypernym is added to provide extra information. For example, a translator may translate a celebrity's name 周杰倫 into "the singer *Zhou Jie Lun*" to let readers know that the person being mentioned is a singer. In this way, annotation would become unnecessary. Sometimes, a hypernym could even be the most suitable translation. The kinship terminology is a good example. In Chinese, there are specific terms for an elder male cousin on the father's side, a younger male

cousin on the father's side, an elder female cousin on the father's side, a younger female cousin on the father's side, and so on. In English, however, there is only one term "cousin" for all, by using which a lot of information is removed. Even though we know that cousin is a term that is too general, we still use it as the translation because it is the most natural translation. What we can do is to make compensation, which refers to "a technique that involves making up for the loss of a source text effect by recreating a similar effect in the target text through means that are specific to the target language and/or text" (Baker, 2001, p. 37). Although this technique was proposed to deal with "puns, alliteration, rhyme, slang, metaphors and pregnant words" (Newmark, 1991, p. 144), I consider it to be applicable to the case in discussion.

The second example is the translation of 哎 (*ai*), which is an interjection to express surprise, sorrow or pity. When commenting on their translation of this empty word, participants B, E and F mentioned that they adopted omission as a procedure to tackle this empty word. What is more, participants E and F have defended their decision of omitting this Chinese interjection. According to participant E, he did not transliterate *ai* because it would foreignise the translation. Meanwhile, he did not replace *ai* with existing English exclamations, such as "ah" or "alas", for the reason that the verb "sigh" in this same sentence is enough to let readers know that there is such an exclamation. Participant F omitted this interjection also because she reasoned that the existence of the verb "sigh" is sufficient for readers to know what is happening. Their comments support the argument that translators omit certain words not always due to negligence; sometimes, they consciously do this because they consider it to be appropriate.

Among all that see a 100 % consistency degree, most of them have either Match or Omission as the most-adopted method, whereas the case of 萬一 (*wan yi*) is the only exception (Implication is the most-adopted), hence the third example worth discussing.

Wan yi is a Chinese semantic prosody⁶ that always comes with adverse circumstances. When we see this conjunction, we know that the speaker is going to mention a thing that is not favoured. In English, "what if" can bring a similar idea. Nevertheless, almost all of the translators chose to translate *wan yi* by "if" (see Table 4). To know their reasons, we can turn to their comments again. As one of the research participants points out, it could be because the negative feeling brought by *wan yi* can be retained by the following description. Take participant B's translation for example:

If anything happens, it's too late to run away. It's best to go back.

Even though "if" is a relatively neutral word, readers sense the negative feeling by "it's too late to run away". In normal circumstances, people only run away when something bad takes place. The same situation is seen in the other translations, and this is the reason why I classified all of them into the category of Implication – the idea of *wan yi* is conveyed implicitly by the other part of this sentence.

The fourth interesting example is the translation of 親自 (*qin zi*: personally). Although this empty word is easy to deal with, the test participants translate it with "personally", "himself/herself" or "with him" (see Table 5). It is noted from the comments that one of the reasons why they use different translations is that they possess different perceptions of words.

⁶ Semantic prosody "refers to the kinds of meaning that a grouping of words acquires by virtue of being used together. These are often positive or negative associations that become attached to words based on their usage" (Olohan 2004: 82).

Table 4 Six Translations of *wan yi* (marked in bold)

Empty Word	Text Title & Issue Number	Source Text
萬一 (Conjunction: what if)	Soaring/55	鐵山爺爺說：「老嫂子，別癡了，你待這兒管什麼用？ 萬一 有點事，跑都跑不及，還是回去好。」
Translator	Translation	Procedure
A	If something goes wrong, you won't be able to run fast enough. You'd better go back.	Implication
B	... If anything happens, it's too late to run away. It's best to go back.	Implication
C	If by any chance something bad happened, you wouldn't have time to run away, so it would be better to go back.	Implication
D	In case anything happens, you wouldn't be able to run fast enough, it would be better to go back.	Implication
E	If something bad happens there won't be time to escape. You'd better go home.	Implication
F	" If by any chance something did happen, you'd never be able to get away in time. You'd better go back."	Implication

To begin with, participant D spent some time pondering over the suitability of “personally” and “himself/herself”. Although both words are common correspondents, he was not satisfied with taking one of them as the translation. In his opinion, “personally” does not create an emphasis that is as strong as suggested by *qin zi*. In addition, participant E, when revisiting this example, mentioned that he would replace “she herself would” with “she would personally” if he could. The two participants’ comments indicate that translators possess different perceptions of words. A choice may be appropriate to one person but inappropriate to another. Besides, a translator may consider a translation to be adequate at one time and change his/her mind later.

The same situation is also seen in the case of *漸漸 (jian jian)*. Almost all translators chose “gradually” as the translation, but participants D and F commented that “gradually” might not be the most suitable translation. In the eyes of participant D, “gradually” was “too smooth for what’s going on here”, so he proposed another possible translation: “piece by piece”, which he admitted to be a little too far away from the original meaning. As for participant F, she stated that “little by little” posed a better choice when she was answering the questions. This is considered to be another case that shows that different translators have different perceptions of words, and translators will take contexts into consideration before making decisions. This is why some translators were happy with “gradually” as the translation while others were not.

In addition to the above-mentioned comments, these test participants also made several other arguments that are general and not on a specific case. Firstly, participant A pointed out that he would avoid a mechanical translation process and repetitions. The two things, to me, are similar because repetitions are the results of a mechanical translation process, in which translators have a list of correspondents in mind and they simply convert certain Chinese words into certain English counterparts without considering whether the target texts are awkward or whether repetitions negatively affect the “colourfulness of words” that is seen in the source texts. I term this kind of translation “rote translation” and reason that it is the cause of a lower degree of variance in the translated texts.

Table 5 Six Translations of *qin zi* (marked in bold)

Empty Word	Text Title & Issue Number	Source Text
親自 (Adverb: personally)	The Message Man/52	他總是把無窮的幽怨和緊迫的告急調理成文 縹緲的語句，鄭重地裝進信封，然後，把一 顆顆破碎和焦灼的心 親自 帶向遠方。
Translator	Translation	Procedure
A	Then he would personally lead the broken hearts and wounded souls into the distance.	Match
B	... he takes these broken and anxious hearts himself to a far away place.	Match
C	After that he would personally take many broken and and [sic.] troubled feelings and send them off to distant places	Match
D	then he personally took each scorched and shattered heart to a distant place.	Match
E	and then she herself would take each shattered and scorched heart away to a distant place.	Match
F	...then he went far away, taking with him his broken heart and all his worries.	Paraphrase

Another point that participant A raised is that the contexts given in the translation test were not sufficient for him to determine the most suitable meaning for the empty words. For instance, while talking about his afterthought on translating the adverb *qin zi*, he commented that “The whole sentence is 5 [hardest in the level of difficulty]. I don’t know what it’s saying. Would need more context”. Meanwhile, another translator also spoke of the influence caused by context. Participant E, who is the original translator of one of the extracts in this test, stated that the different lengths of the contexts made him produce different translations. Responding to this finding, what needs to be added is that, participant E was in a relatively advantaged position in translating this extract because he possessed more knowledge in the context of this extract than other participants did. Such an inequality in the access to the source text information could be a variable that influenced participants’ outputs. When designing the translation test, the author did not impose a control over this issue because the aim was to invite as many participants as possible. Nevertheless, the participants have mentioned the importance of context, so it is essential to address this variable in future studies.

The last point is relevant to patterns. Some participants gave a lower level of difficulty to the translation of some empty words because they had corresponding patterns in mind. Take the translation of 連...都... (*lian...dou...: even*) for example:

Participant C’s comment:

“I didn’t have any difficulty. It was one of the first sentence patterns I ever used”.

Participant D’s comment:

“I didn’t think about it. It’s a relatively common phrasing that flows into English fairly well”.

Participant F’s comment:

“I didn’t find this a problem, as I have taught the pattern for many years”.

The three participants’ comments reveal that the easiness of this translation case comes from the fact that there is a pattern. With a pattern in mind, they can easily tackle this empty word without much effort. But although patterns help simplify the translation tasks, we should still be

careful not to over-use patterns. Otherwise, we may fall into the situation mentioned by participant A – a mechanical translation process.

4.2.1 Applying a Correlation Coefficient to Examine the Relationship between Level of Difficulty and Consistency Degree.

In addition to comments on their translations, the test participants were also asked to rate every translation case with a 1-5 difficulty level. When analysing the six test participants' remarks, every participant's comments on the difficulty level for each extract were compiled, based on which the average level of difficulty was calculated and shown in Table 6. Meanwhile, the consistency degrees are listed again for ease of comparison.

Table 6 Average Level of Difficulty and Consistency Degree for Each Extract

Empty words	Average Level of Difficulty	Consistency Degree
連...都...	1.33	100 %
以...為...	2.83	66.67 %
怪不得	1.50	100 %
大不了	3.33	83.33 %
哎	2.83	50 %
喂	1.83	100 %
來著	1.67	100 %
把	1.83	100 %
萬一	1.33	100 %
要不是	2.00	83.33 %
竟	2.00	66.67 %
親自	2.00	83.33 %
漸漸	1.67	100 %

In this section, whether or not a lower difficulty level leads to a higher consistency degree will be examined. To conduct this investigation, another statistical measure, the correlation coefficient, will be adopted.

The correlation coefficient here refers to Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which is “an index that quantifies the linear relationship between a pair of variables” (Everitt, 2006, p. 101). The correlation coefficient, or we could call it Pearson's r in this article, is “a measure of the strength of the linear relationship between x and y variables” (Graham, 2003, p. 195; Johnson & Tsui, 1998, p. 111). In this article, the paired variables x and y are the Level of Difficulty and the Consistency Degree.

The value of the correlation coefficient is always between +1 and -1, and different values represent different phenomena. When the value is +1, it means that there is an extremely positive correlation between variable x and variable y : when the value in x grows larger, the value of y also grows larger. Conversely, when the value is -1, it means that an extremely negative correlation exists between variable x and variable y : when the value of x grows larger, the value of y grows smaller. As a whole, it could be said that both +1 and -1 indicate the existence of a correlation, and the closer the value is to 0, the weaker the correlation is. As Johnson and Tsui point out, “the zero correlation ... is due to the absence of any relation between x and y ” (p. 112). With such a definition, a value that is either close to +1 or to -1 has to be obtained to prove that there is a relationship between the Level of Difficulty and the Consistency Degree.

This table reveals that the correlation value is -.715, which is close to -1. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is a negative correlation between

the average level of difficulty and the consistency degree, and, according to Cohen & Holliday's definition (2001), the degree of this correlation is high (p. 83). In other words, when the difficulty level becomes lower (higher), the consistency degree goes higher (lower).

Table 7 Correlation Coefficient Outcome

		Correlations	
		Average Level of Difficulty	Consistency Degree
<i>Average Level of Difficulty</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	**-.715
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	13	13
<i>Consistency Degree</i>	Pearson Correlation	**-.715	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	13	13

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This outcome agrees with our common sense. Additionally, the significance value is seen in the second and fifth rows. This value is used to determine whether or not the correlation is an established phenomenon. In principle, statisticians stipulate that a correlation is confirmed when its significance value is lower than .05. But, the lower the significance value is, the more solid the phenomenon can be. In my case, the value is .006, which is much lower than .05, so we can say that there is a confirmed negative correlation between the average level of difficulty and the degree of consistency.

5. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this article was to examine the consistency degree in the use of translation procedures. A pilot study was conducted in advance in order to explore the potential results before investing a much greater amount of effort. Because this research is a pilot study, the test results were analysed even though the number of test participants was not sufficient for statistical calculation. Ultimately, three major findings could be noted:

- 1) consistency exists in the use of translation procedures
- 2) the kappa coefficient is applicable to research pertaining to the degree of consistency
- 3) the consistency degree is influenced by the average level of difficulty.

These results are the contributions of this research; they reveal translators' translation tendencies and an innovative approach to examining translators' behaviour. The meaningful results yielded by this pilot study suggest conducting a study that involves more participants, so as to further validate the aforementioned findings.

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