

# **A Study of Ellipted Subjects Translation Strategies: A Case Study of Thai EFL Learners in an Introductory Translation Course**

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## ***Abstract***

*The primary purpose of the study is to examine how Thai EFL learners translate ellipted subjects in a Thai news article to English and to explore whether there is any significant relationship between the skills of writing and reading in English and translation proficiency. The participants of the study include eighteen Thai freshmen from different intended majors in the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. The data used in this research are a test on Thai to English news article translation taken individually by the students during a translation course. Their writing and reading scores from their previous English course are also used to compare their writing and reading skills with their Thai to English translation proficiency. The results revealed that the most frequently adopted strategy for translating omitted Thai subjects among the students was the use of personal pronouns after separating long complex sentences into short simpler ones, followed by the use of conjunctions, preparatory it, and structural transformation. The use of participles and the relative pronoun “who” were the least frequently adopted strategies. Furthermore, there exists a significant relationship between reading in English and translating from Thai to English, but not between writing in English and Thai to English translation. Implications for classroom practices and further research are also discussed.*

**Keywords:** *personal pronoun, Thai to English translation, English reading and writing skills*

## **1. Introduction**

The fact that the majority of human languages follow similar grammatical rules and patterns is more than a coincidence. As Chomsky (2006) believed, humans are born with a kind of blueprint in the brain consisting of basic rules for rapid language acquisition at specific stages in the developmental process. An example of such language similarities can be found in ‘parts of speech,’ a category to which a word is assigned in accordance



with its syntactic functions. In Chomskyan linguistics, all human languages have parts of speech, such as nouns and verbs, and a set of semantic roles that a noun phrase may have in relation to verbs such as agent and patient. However, Dryer (2007) stated that not all languages share the exact same parts of speech because the syntactic roles, such as the relationship between subject, verb and object and the order of constituents, can vary depending on the nature of a language. In some languages such as a Nakh-Daghestanian language spoken in the Caucasus mountains, in an area straddling the border between Azerbaijan and Russia (Haspelmath, 1993), the verb follows the subject and object, while in Fijian, an Austronesian language spoken on the island of Fiji in the Pacific Ocean (Dixon, 1988), the verb normally precedes both the subject and the object. There are also languages which are neither verb-final nor verb-initial, since the subject precedes the verb while the object follows the verb. The latter, which are called SVO languages, represent the second most widespread type among the languages of the world (Dryer, 2007).

Despite the different types of syntactic relationships between subject, verb and object among languages, subject is one of the core grammatical functions, the concept of which is a significant component in several grammatical phenomena of language (Andrews, 2007). According to Andrews (2007), phenomena related to the existence of subjects can be divided into two main types: overt coding features in ordinary main clauses, and coding features in subordinate clauses which are a variety of more complex and abstract grammatical phenomena, such as ‘subject ellipsis’. In some languages, subjects can be optionally or are obligatorily ellipsed in various kinds of grammatical constructions. In conventional English, subjects can be excluded in imperative clauses whose most common functions are commands, instructions or orders such as *Come on.*, *Hurry up!* or *Let’s go*. Also, English subjects can be omitted in subordinate clauses with the help of various types of conjunctions, and the subject omission requires that the verb of the omitted subject be in either the gerund (-ing) or past participle (-ed) form, neither of which reveals agreement. For instance, in an adverbial clause introduced by the conjunction *while*, if the subject is omitted, the verb must be in the gerund (-ing) form, which does not show agreement, as in *The boy had his breakfast while watching his favorite TV show*. However, Peral and Ferrández (2003) found that in Spanish the pronominal subject of sentences can be omitted. These omitted pronouns are usually called zero pronouns. In other languages, such as Japanese, Chinese, and Italian, zero pronouns may appear in either the subject’s or the object’s grammatical position, while in Spanish zero pronouns only appear in the position of the subject. Thai is also a language in which subject omission is allowed. On the discourse level, if it is clearly understood which pronoun is being referred to in a sentence, that pronoun in the subject or object position can be omitted without the requirement that its verb be changed.

In translation from a language in which zero pronouns, the omission of pronouns without the verb changed into present or past participle form, are not allowed such as English to another where zero pronouns are allowed to appear such as Thai, it is generally not difficult for the translator to identify the pronouns and to consider whether such pronouns should appear in subject positions, taking into account the context. However, when it is the other way around, with different rules of subject ellipsis between the two languages, the translator is challenged to adopt various strategies, under the possible grammatical rules of that language, for deciding how and where subjects are to appear with the slightest impact on the context.

There have been a number of studies in translation that investigated the relationship between translation proficiency and reading and writing skills of EFL learners. Conducted in a Middle Eastern context, these studies successfully identified the existence of such correlations. Tavakoli, Shafiei and Hatam (2012), for instance, found a positive correlation between their Iranian participants' proficiency in reading comprehension and their proficiency in translation, while Abbasi and Shabani (2011) discovered in their study a relationship between writing and translation skills from English to Farsi among Iranian EFL students. Unfortunately, these studies did not proceed to discuss specific structures of the source and target languages that might have shed light on some aspects of the learners' translation strategies. In addition, related studies conducted in a Thai context dealt mostly with identifying and attempting to explain grammatical errors made by Thai EFL learners asked to do Thai to English translation or other written tasks. A study conducted by Pojprasat (2007) and Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013) are such examples. These studies, however, did not explore the possible existence of a correlation between translation skills and reading and writing abilities, nor did they discuss the 'correct production' or 'grammaticality' produced by their participants, as opposed to their errors. To examine the correct production of EFL learners, which previous studies have not touched upon, this research turns its attention to subject omission in Thai to English translation, one of several grammatical aspects worth examining because of the syntactic dissimilarities between the two languages.

Another point of note regarding the prior research discussed here is that these studies did not mention the particular type of translation used to explore the relationship between translation proficiency and reading and writing skills, or the source of errors made by ELF learners. In this study, a news article is used to investigate Thai to English translation proficiency in terms of subject ellipsis and its possible relation to English reading and writing skills for two reasons. First, it is the nature of news articles to be short and concise so that readers can understand the message being conveyed within a matter of minutes. Other than being easily comprehensible and brief, English news articles also often contain a considerable number of slang expressions and focus on a lively and interesting writing style in order to attract readers' attention. Thai



news articles are not different in this regard, except that Thai allows zero pronouns, mostly in the subject position of a sentence. Hence, Thai news articles are good material for attempting to identify EFL learners' strategies in translating omitted pronouns into English. Secondly, news articles tend to be among the teaching materials used in introductory translation courses in many leading universities in Thailand such as Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, and Mahidol University. This implies that news articles are considered appropriate materials for novice translators, possibly because they contain less complicated structures than other types of informative or narrative texts. The second reason is supported by Suksaersup's study (2009), which employed English newspapers as scaffolding in teaching Thai to English translation. The researcher found that there was syntactic development in the participants' translation in the post-translation test, which implied that English newspapers could be effective material for teaching translation from Thai into English. In brief, Thai news articles are concise and easily comprehensible owing partly to the fact that Thai allows subject ellipsis, and they are considered good material for teaching translation to beginners because of their less complex structures compared to other genres of writing.

Consequently, the present study specifically seeks to investigate how Chulalongkorn University first-year students enrolled in the course Introduction to Translation translate omitted subjects in Thai news articles, where subjects are frequently ellipped, into English, and whether there exist significant relationships between English reading and writing skills and Thai to English translation ability with respect to the provision of English personal pronouns based on such translation.

## 2. Literature review

Translation is a combination between science and art. According to Nida and Taber (1982, p. 12) in *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, "translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." A good translation must fulfill its intention; it must be able to convey the content, formal features, and functional roles from one language to an equivalent text in a different language. Under this definition, it can be said that to become a professional translator, one needs to possess a considerable amount of translation and language expertise — specifically in terms of writing and reading. A translator is required to possess advanced reading skills to comprehend the source text, and also high writing proficiency to create a translated version that retains the taste and content of the original text while sounding as natural as possible. Thus, such receptive and productive skills should affect translation ability immensely.

The process of reading for comprehension may end after the reader understands what the text conveys; yet, if the reader wants to translate the message he or she receives from the text, further processes need to occur. Attempting to explore whether the same processes occur when participants who are bilingual and translators read for repetition and for translation, Macizo and Bajo (2006) found that reading for translation takes more resources from memory than reading within language. To understand a message so as to translate it, the participating translators demanded parallel activation of their target language, a process where the reader attempts to find similar linguistic components between the two languages.

In spite of the differences between the process of reading for comprehension and that of reading for translation, it has been shown that the two processes are complementary. Tavakoli, Shafiei and Hatam (2012) investigated the relationship between translation tests and reading comprehension with Iranian university students. Not only did they discover that an open-ended translation test, which is more reliable and valid than a multiple-choice test, is a valid tool to evaluate reading comprehension, but they also concluded that their participants' proficiency in reading comprehension positively correlated with their proficiency in translation. What is more, in Kavaliauskienė's (2009) study to address students' attitudes to reading, writing and translation and to conduct self-evaluation of proficiency in these skills in her ESP classroom, the researcher concluded that proficiency in reading and writing correlates with translation ability and that improving the student's performance in what is called read-to-write tasks could contribute to better proficiency in translation. However, in contrast, Farahani and Siyyari (2015) stated that after reading comprehension skills were taught to Iranian EFL students, their translation quality increased only slightly; that is, the correlation between reading comprehension skills and translation quality was not significant in their research.

Khanmohammad and Kehtari (2015a and 2015b) discovered that reading comprehension was a significant predictor of the quality of English-to-Persian translation, while writing was not. However, writing skills could significantly predict the quality of the translation from Persian to English done by the Persian students, and it made a stronger contribution than reading comprehension. This suggests that the Persian students relied on reading skills when they had to deal with English in translation, but did not have to resort to them when the reception and production processes occurred through Persian, their own mother tongue.

Meanwhile, in the study conducted by Abbasi and Shabani (2011), because a first group of students who performed better on a composition test than a second group also performed better on a translation test, they concluded that there was a relationship between proficiency in writing and Iranian EFL students' translation ability from



English to Farsi. This may emphasize that the greater the students' English writing proficiency, the more likely they are to understand several types of English structures in the source text and thus they are better able to translate the text into their mother tongue.

Other than reading and writing abilities, translators are also required to make decisions as to how to translate grammatical elements that do not exist in one language to another where such elements must appear. Peral and Ferrández (2003) mentioned in their study that in translations from English to Spanish, pronouns are frequently not translated because of the typical Spanish elliptical zero-subject construction. In some languages, however, the pronoun is directly translated by its antecedent. In English–Malay translation, for instance, the translator must first identify the antecedent of the pronoun *it* as the replacement of this pronoun with its antecedent is likely to occur. Furthermore, syntactic and semantic information about the antecedent also has an influence on the translation of pronouns. While pronouns can be translated into different expressions in some languages, in English–Korean translation they can be translated into definite noun phrases, into their antecedent, into different Korean pronouns, or they can be omitted elliptically.

Thai is one of the languages in which zero pronouns are allowed; consequently, pronoun omission is often seen in English to Thai translation. In contrast, when translation takes place from Thai to English, the translator must be able to detect the ellipted pronouns and decide how the pronouns, either in the subject or object position, should be provided. However, there are cases where pronoun provision in Thai to English translation is problematic among Thai EFL learners. In Pojprasat's analysis of translation errors made by Thai 12<sup>th</sup> grade students (2007), it was found that the students who were unaware of the distinction between Thai and English often omitted grammatical functioning both as the subject and object of the sentence when translating from Thai to English. The result was underscored by a table showing that the lower a student's English proficiency, the more syntactic errors in Thai to English translation, including ellipsis, he or she made. The researcher also concluded that the cause of such errors was influenced by their first language, which was Thai. Similarly, Sattayatham and Honsa (2007), who examined writing and translation errors made by first-year medical students at a Thai university, discovered that their participants relied upon the syntactic and semantic properties of the Thai language when performing English writing and translation tasks. With omission of English subjects as one of the ten most frequent errors, the researchers concluded that it was interference of the participants' first language (L1) that caused them to commit such errors. Furthermore, the interference of Thai as the first language was also found to be the source of errors produced by the participants in Watcharapunyawong and Usaha's study (2013). Using narrative, descriptive, and contrastive writing as the materials to analyze their



participants' writing errors, they also found that omission of subjects was one of the sixteen categories of errors most frequently produced. It is probable that the participants originated their ideas in Thai and translated them into English while performing on the writing tasks. Consequently, the researchers pointed out that since L1 interference affected the participants' performance differently depending on the genre of writing, L1 interference should be taken into consideration so as to enhance EFL students' English grammatical and lexical accuracy.

In summary, the previous studies touched on the correlation between translation proficiency and reading and writing skills and arrived at a similar conclusion: translation proficiency and reading and writing skills share a direct variation, that is, the better an EFL learner's reading and writing skills were, the better their translation proficiency was, both from the source language to English as a target language, and from English to their mother tongue. However, these studies did not specifically mention the type of translation they employed to test their participants, while a few of them did not use the type of translation test that required participants to actually demonstrate their translation skills. Moreover, as far as the present study is concerned, previous research appears to have investigated translation from English to languages where pronoun ellipsis is allowed, but not vice versa. With respect to the studies conducted in a Thai environment, most focused on identifying the errors Thai EFL learners tended to produce on written tasks, and discovered that the interference of L1, Thai, contributed to erroneous production. Therefore, these studies appear to have left some questions unanswered: Is there a correlation between EFL learners' translation proficiency and their reading and writing skills on a specific type of translation, and what are the writing strategies learners may resort to if they do not omit pronouns when performing written or translation tasks? These questions, then – namely, what strategies do Thai EFL students adopt to translate omitted subjects from Thai to English, specifically in a news article, and does English reading and writing proficiency affect the grammaticality in the translation of ellipted subjects – are the focus of exploration in this study.

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1 Participants***

Eighteen first-year students from the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University volunteered as participants in this study. Aged 17-18, they enrolled in the course English I in the first semester, and Introduction to Translation in the second semester of 2015. All of them had taken a news article translation test (see Appendix), the results of which were used as the data in the study.



### ***3.2 Instruments***

Two types of documents were inspected: the raw scores indicating their English reading and writing proficiency from their English I course in the first semester and a 250-word Thai news article translated into English, which was a test taken during the translation course in the second semester of 2015. The test had not been graded by the instructor to avoid inaccuracy in inspecting students' pronoun translation strategies. In addition, SPSS Statistics software version 22 was employed to analyze the relationship between reading and writing skills and translation proficiency.

### ***3.3 Procedure***

In the news article translated from Thai to English, each omitted subject in the Thai version was identified. Subjects followed by omitted copula verbs เป็น (bpen), เหมือน (měuan), คือ (keu), and คล้าย (kláai) are not included in the scope of this study. Then, the manner in which each spot was translated into English was marked. In the translated version, the spots where no identifiable subject appeared and where the provided subjects were ungrammatical were counted as translation errors. The strategies the participants adopted to translate the omitted subjects in the Thai version were categorized into groups. Moreover, the translation proficiency of each participant in this study was judged based on their ability to translate the omitted subjects in the Thai news article into English in a grammatical and appropriate way according to Standard English grammar. Lastly, their reading and writing scores from the course English I were compared with the number of translation errors using Spearman's correlation coefficient to determine whether relationships between their reading and writing skills and translation proficiency, specifically in terms of the translation of ellipted subjects, exist.

## ***4. Results and discussion***

Seven omitted subjects within the scope of this study were identified in the Thai version of the news article, which appears with a word-for-word translated version in English. They are shown below with the symbol **(S) Number** indicating subject omission:



เมื่อเวลา	10.30 น.	วันที่	5 ก.พ. 59	ร.ต.อ.วัชร แสงเพชร	ผกก. สน.บางโพธิ์พาง
At	10.30 a.m.	on	February 5 <sup>th</sup> 2016	Pol. Capt. Watchara Saengpet	superintendent of Bang Pong Pang Police Station
รับแจ้ง	เหตุเพลิงไหม้ อาคารหุ 10 ชั้น	ใน	ในซอยนราธิวาส ราชนครินทร์ 18	(S)1 จึง	แจ้ง
was informed of	a fire at a luxurious 10-story building	in	Soi Narathiwas Rachanakarin 18.	(S)1 then	informed
สำนักงานป้องกัน และบรรเทา สาธารณภัย กรุงเทพมหานคร	ให้	ส่ง	รถดับเพลิงกว่า 10 คัน	ไป	ระงับ
Bangkok Fire and Rescue Department	to	send	over 10 fire trucks	to	extinguish
เหตุ	อาคารดังกล่าว	เป็น	ของนายวิกรม อัยศิริ	(omitted copular be)	อดีต ส.ว. ระนอง
the fire.	The building	was owned by	Wikrom Aisiri	(omitted copular be)	former Ranong senator.
เจ้าหน้าที่ดับเพลิง	พบ	กลุ่มควันดำ	พวยพุ่ง	จาก	ตัวอาคาร
The firefighters	found	black smoke	pouring out	from	the building
และ	ไฟ	ที่	ชั้น 3	ลุกลาม	ไปสู่
and	the fire	on	the 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	was spreading	to

ชั้น 4 และ 5	อย่างรวดเร็ว	เนื่องจาก	เป็นอาคารสูง	(S)2 จึง	ทำได้เพียง
the 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> floors	quickly.	Because	the building was tall	(S)2 so	could only
ฉีดน้ำสกัด	เพลิง	ไม่ให้	ลุกลาม	ไป	บ้านเรือนใกล้เคียง
spray water to prevent	the fire	from	spreading	to	nearby buildings.
มีรายงาน	ว่า	นางอังคณา อัยศิริ	(omitted copular <i>be</i> )	อายุ 65 ปี	(omitted copular <i>be</i> )
A report	said	Angkana Aisiri	(omitted copular <i>be</i> )	65 years old	(omitted copular <i>be</i> )
ภรรยาของนาย วิกรม	ร้องขอความช่วยเหลือ	อยู่ใน	ตัวอาคาร	ก่อน	(S)3 หมดสติ
Wikrom's wife	was crying for help	in	the building	before	(S)3 passed out
แต่	เจ้าหน้าที่	เข้าไป	ช่วยเหลือ	ไม่ได้	(S)4 เสียชีวิต
but	firefighters	get in	to help	could not	(S)4 died
ในที่สุด	เจ้าหน้าที่	ต้อง	เร่ง	อพยพ	ผู้พักอาศัย
eventually.	The firefighters	had to	hurry	evacuate	the residents
ใกล้เคียง	รวมทั้ง	นักเรียนหลายร้อยคน	จาก	โรงเรียนอนุบาล มณีรัตน์	ที่อยู่ในซอยดังกล่าว
nearby	including	hundreds of students	from	Maneerat Kindergarten School	in the Soi
ออกไปอยู่ใน	พื้นที่ปลอดภัย	(S)5 ใช้เวลาดับเพลิง	ประมาณ	3 ชั่วโมง	จึงสงบ
to	a safe area.	(S)5 spent	around	3 hours	to extinguish the fire.
ผู้สื่อข่าว	รายงาน	ว่า	มี	ผู้ได้รับบาดเจ็บ	1 คน
The reporter	said	that	there was	an injured	person

คือ	นางพิมพ์ภัท จิระ ศุภเชษฐ์	(omitted copular <i>be</i> )	อายุ 58 ปี	(omitted copular <i>be</i> )	แม่บ้าน
who was	Pimrapat Jirasupachet	(omitted copular <i>be</i> )	58 years old	(omitted copular <i>be</i> )	a housewife
(S)6 มีอาการ สำลักควัน	(S)7 นำตัวส่ง	รพ. เลิดสิน			
(S)6 suffocated by the smoke	(S)7 was admitted to	Lerdsin Hospital.			

Eight types of strategies were found to be adopted by the participants to translate these omitted subjects into English. The use of each strategy is described as follows:

1.	Conjunctions	The participants refer back to the subject of the first clause before the conjunction without having to repeat the subject.
2.	Personal pronouns	The participants infer from the context and produce personal pronouns that do not appear in the source text after dividing long complex Thai sentences into short simpler English sentences and either adding conjunctions or starting new sentences.
3.	Adverbial participles	The participants use present participles after the whole clause without having to use either conjunction or pronouns.
4.	Participles after nouns	The participants use present participles after nouns or pronouns without having to use either conjunction or pronouns.
5.	Participles after conjunctions	The participants use present participles after conjunctions without having to use pronouns.
6.	Relative pronoun <i>who</i>	This strategy allows the participants to refer back to the pronoun preceding the relative pronoun without having to repeat the pronoun or starting a new sentence.
7.	Preparatory <i>it</i>	The participants make use of the preparatory <i>it</i> to avoid producing appropriate pronouns omitted in the Thai version.
8.	Structural transformation	The participants translated the sentences in the Thai version into English using a different structure such as changing the object of a sentence to the subject of another sentence.



Table 1 below shows the frequency with which each strategy was adopted by each participant, and the numbers with an asterisk refer to ungrammaticality found in the use of the strategy. The numbers with an asterisk in the brackets refer to the ungrammatical use of the strategy in comparison with the numbers of total frequency adjacent to them.

**Table 1** Strategies adopted by 18 participants

Participants	Conjunctions	Personal Pronouns	Adverbial Participles	Participles after Nouns/Pronouns	Participles after Conjunctions	Relative Pronoun <i>who</i>	Preparatory <i>it</i>	Structural Transformation
1	3	1	1				1	1
2	2	3 (1*)					1	1 (1*)
3		5		1			1	
4		5				1	1	
5	1	2	1		1		1	1
6		5						2 (1*)
7		4 (2*)		1			1	1*
8	1	5 (2*)					1	
9	1	2	1	1	1		1	
10		3			1*		1	2*
11	2 (1*)	2			1		1*	1
12	2 (1*)	3				1	1	
13	1	3			1		1	1*
14	2 (1*)	3					1	1
15	1	3			1		1	1
16		4		1	1*			1
17		4		1*	1*			1*
18	1*	3		1			1	1*
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

#### ***4.1 Strategies adopted by the participants***

It can be seen in Table 1 that the use of personal pronouns is the strategy most frequently adopted by every participant. They chose to infer from the context and supply the pronoun that they considered appropriate for the translated version. Since Thai, unlike English, does not have the punctuation mark ‘full stop’ to separate complete sentences, most participants seemed to prefer to divide each long sentence in Thai into two sentences and add an appropriate pronoun. A few chose to connect the sentence with a conjunction similar to that appearing in the Thai version before adding a pronoun. For example,

they translated ... (*omitted subject*) จึงแจ้งสำนักงาน...to then *HE* informed... The possible explanations as to why this strategy was adopted most frequently are as follows. First, translating long sentences from one language to another without separating them requires considerable analytical skills along with advanced translation proficiency which is more difficult than dividing long sentences into two or more shorter sentences. The participants enrolled in this course were freshmen, and most of them may not have achieved this advanced level of proficiency in English and translation. Secondly, most of the participants may have realized that news articles should be concise and easy for readers to understand, resulting in their decision to separate long complex sentences in Thai into several simple sentences in English. It is, however, interesting that they were aware of the distinction between the two languages and attempted to add subjects to the sentences when translating from Thai to English, which contradicts the result of Pojprasat's analysis of translation errors made by Thai 12<sup>th</sup> grade students (2007).

Conjunctions, preparatory *it* and structural transformation were the second-most used strategies in the study. It can be said that participants used conjunctions in the English version because they tended to translate the article word for word, and since some of the sentences in the Thai version were not clearly divided, they were not able to notice and separate the ideas conveyed within those sentences. Moreover, the use of conjunctions also allowed the participants to avoid adding an appropriate pronoun, which would require them to think of gender and number if they attempted to do so. As for preparatory *it*, since the omitted subject in the last sentence of the fourth paragraph mentioned the time taken to extinguish the fire, almost all participants appeared to find it appropriate to use the structure *it takes...* + *infinitive* in English, which is normally used to say how much time is necessary for a particular action to be done, even though the actual subject omitted is likely the เจ้าหน้าที่ดับเพลิง (*jâo nâa-têe dâp plerng*) or the firefighters. Thirteen of eighteen participants attempted to transform the structure of some of the sentences in Thai in which the subject was omitted into a different structure in English. For example, in order to avoid adding a personal pronoun, they used the object of the preceding sentence as the subject of the following fourth sentence as shown in Table 2 below:



**Table 2** An example of structural transformation

	Sentence 1			Sentence 2		Sentence 3		Sentence 4	
	Subject	Copula verb	Object	Subject	Comple- ment	Subject	Comple- ment	Subject	Verb
Thai	มีผู้ได้รับ บาดเจ็บ 1 คน	คือ	นางพิมรภัต จิระศุเขษณ์	(omitted)	อายุ 58 ปี	(omitted)	แม่บ้าน	(omitted)	มีอาการ สำลัก ควัน
English	Sentence 1								
	Subject				Verb				
	An injure named Phimraphat Chirasuphachet, 58, housekeeper,				suffered from smoke inhalation...				

However, half of the participants who transformed the structure committed some grammatical errors in terms of voice and word choice, indicating that they were not advanced in their English proficiency and translation skills.

The use of a participle after nouns/pronouns and a participle after conjunctions was occasionally adopted, while adverbial participles and the relative pronoun *who* were the least adopted strategies, as shown in the table. By using participles, participants did not have to provide an appropriate pronoun in the translated version; yet, using them correctly and appropriately requires advanced English proficiency which these participants were yet to acquire, resulting in limited use of participles. Lastly, the least adopted strategy, which was the relative pronoun *who*, appeared only twice, used by only two participants in this study. Both participants were found to use the relative pronoun *who* in the last paragraph of the article. The last paragraph contained long sentences with several omitted subjects. To translate them, the participants would have to either divide them into many shorter sentences and supply personal pronouns as subjects, or use participles or relative pronouns instead. However, it seemed that neither participant knew how to use participles as no use of participles was found in the articles they translated.

#### ***4.2 The relationship between English reading and writing skills and Thai to English translation proficiency with respect to pronoun provision***

Considering only the provision of pronouns in the English version, Table 3 illustrates the number of errors the participants produced in comparison with their English reading and writing scores from the course English I. More than half of the participants, twelve, committed errors. Individually, the scores of reading and writing do not seem to have a

relationship with the translation errors as some participants who produced many errors had higher reading and writing scores than those who produced fewer errors.

**Table 3** Errors in comparison with reading and writing scores

Participants	Error (7)	Reading (40)		Writing (60)	
		Raw Scores	Percentage	Raw Scores	Percentage
1		32	80	53.5	89
2	2	23	58	46	77
3		24.5	61	43	71
4		30.75	77	45	75
5		37.5	94	49.5	83
6	1	28	70	46	77
7	3	15.25	38	40	67
8	2	23.5	59	45.5	76
9		34.5	86	49.75	83
10	3	24.25	61	41.75	70
11	2	32	80	53	88
12	1	31.5	79	51.5	86
13	1	29	73	44	73
14	1	13	33	41.5	69
15		36.5	91	53	88
16	1	26.5	66	46	77
17	3	25	63	45.5	76
18	2	22.5	56	44.5	74

Nevertheless, when the scores of those who produced errors were separated from those who produced no errors and calculated into percentages, as shown in Table 4, it was found that those who did not produce errors had higher reading scores and moderately higher writing scores than those who committed translation errors in terms of English pronoun provision by 21% and 6%, respectively.

**Table 4** Reading and writing skills in comparison with translation proficiency in terms of English pronoun provision

Participants	Average Reading Scores	Average Writing Scores
producing errors	61%	76%
producing no error	82%	82%

To ascertain if there is a significant relationship between the participants' Thai to English translation ability with respect to subject pronoun provision and their reading



and writing skills in English, it is necessary to determine the inferential statistic. Due to the small number of participants in this study, it is suitable to employ the Spearman correlation coefficient which is a statistical measure of the strength of a monotonic relationship between paired data on the ranked value. The data is rearranged as shown in Tables 5 and 6. This time, the eighteen participants are ranked based on their reading and writing scores and the number of translation errors. For each table, the first one has the lowest score with the highest number of translation errors, whereas the last one has the highest score with the lowest number of translation errors.

After using the SPSS program to run a Spearman's correlation, the value of 0.649 showed a significant correlation between the number of errors produced and the reading scores. This indicates that the higher a learner's reading scores, the fewer incorrect subject pronouns they produced. In contrast, the correlation between writing scores and errors, with the value of 0.419, was found to be insignificant, meaning that the learners' writing scores do not reflect their proficiency in translating Thai omitted subject pronouns to English.

**Table 5** Ranking of participants based on reading scores with translation errors

Participants	Errors	Reading Raw (40)
1	3	15.25
2	3	24.25
3	3	25
4	2	22.5
5	2	23
6	2	23.5
7	2	32
8	1	13
9	1	26.5
10	1	28
11	1	29
12	1	31.5
13	0	24.5
14	0	30.75
15	0	32
16	0	34.5
17	0	36.5
18	0	37.5

**Table 6** Ranking of participants based on writing scores with translation errors

Participants	Errors	Writing Raw (60)
1	3	40
2	3	41.75
3	3	45.5
4	2	44.5
5	2	45.5
6	2	46
7	2	53
8	1	41.5
9	1	44
10	1	46
11	1	46
12	1	51.5
13	0	43
14	0	45
15	0	49.5
16	0	49.75
17	0	53
18	0	53.5

In light of the results, the existence of a relationship between reading skills and translation proficiency found in this paper is in accordance with the results of the study of Tavakoli, Shafiei and Hatam (2012), which indicated that their participants' proficiency in reading comprehension positively correlated with their proficiency in translation. On the other hand, the same cannot be said of the correlation between writing skills and translation proficiency, which in this study was found to be insignificant. Therefore, further explanation is necessary to account for the discrepancy between the correlation of reading and translation competence and that of writing and translation skills.

An interview with one of the instructors of the English I course who was also the course supervisor revealed that the reading scores of participants were at least in part dependent on their ability to comprehend the logical construction of different types of English passages. Reading tests also asked participants to identify pronoun references, a skill that may have aided participants with higher reading proficiency to recognize the functions of pronouns in English, and thus be more sensitive to the need to supply pronouns in positions where they need not appear in Thai. Based on the results that personal pronouns are the most frequently adopted strategy among the participants in the study, it is possible that the participants with high reading scores were competent enough to ensure that the English news article they translated from Thai included the 'who' in the subject position in each English sentence, while those with low scores did not manage to do the same. In the meantime, the writing scores were based on the participants' ability to express their ideas and opinions on given topics and make sure that their ideas in each paragraph were clearly connected holistically. The instructors in the course were likely to grade the writing focusing on the exposition of ideas and their coherency through the use of certain vocabulary and connectors, suggesting that they may have put little emphasis on smaller details e.g., whether a sentence included a grammatical or appropriate subject pronoun or not. That being so, the participants' writing scores may not reflect their knowledge of subject pronouns. Furthermore, the instructor also pointed out that each reading question had only one answer, as a key was prepared in advance to ensure consistency across graders, whereas the students' writing in each class was graded by a different instructor whose personal preferences could have affected the writing scores, causing variation whereby a student's writing considered well-written in one section might be deemed average in another. To recapitulate, the different focuses on reading and writing competencies the students were required to demonstrate and how their performance in the two skills was graded may explain at least in part why the reading scores reflect the participants' translation proficiency in the Introduction to Translation Course better than their writing scores.



## 5. Conclusion

This study examined how Chulalongkorn University first-year students enrolled in the course Introduction to Translation translated omitted subjects in Thai news articles into English and the relationship between English reading and writing skills and Thai to English translation proficiency with respect to pronoun provision. Based on the results of the study, the use of personal pronouns after separating long complex sentences into short simpler ones was the most frequently adopted strategy among the participants, followed by the use of conjunctions, preparatory *it*, and structural transformation. The use of participles and the relative pronoun *who* were the least frequently adopted strategies. The reasons behind these results may lie in the fact that the participants did not possess advanced English proficiency to translate long complex sentences from Thai into English without dividing them into short simpler sentences. The fact that they might have been taught that a good news article translation should be concise and easy for readers to understand may contribute to the separation of long complex sentences in Thai into several simple sentences in English. Also, the results reveal that there exists a significant and strong relationship between reading in English and translating from Thai to English, while writing in English and Thai to English translation were found to be independent of each other.

## 6. Pedagogical implications of the study

On account of the results of this study, instructors of an introductory translation course should place more emphasis on teaching the use of English participles in several types of writing as well as pointing out differences between Thai and English news articles, specifically how ideas are conveyed in journalistic writing in English and Thai. Translation students should note that a concise and readable English news article need not contain only many short simple sentences. In fact, they should be aware that the use of English participles and relative pronouns can contribute to a more economical and concise writing style in English, which can also be easily comprehensible to readers. In addition, the unexpected fact that writing scores do not reflect the students' translation proficiency in this study, along with the interview with the skills course coordinator, imply that the correct use of English subject pronouns should be given equal emphasis as the exposition and coherency of writing as a whole in order for students to be equipped with adequate and appropriate English proficiency for Thai to English news translation of good quality.

## 7. Limitations of the study

It should be noted that this is a preliminary study with implications for larger research projects in the translation discipline. Owing to the small number of participants in this study, the results of the two research questions cannot be generalized to all Thai EFL

learners. Moreover, due to its scope and time limitation, the study has been primarily concerned with one news article translation from Thai to English and the analysis has concentrated on how students translated omitted pronouns in the Thai version into English. Reading and writing scores from English I, a course they took in the first semester, might not be the major factor influencing their translation proficiency because students may have improved their skills between the first and second semesters. Lastly, the fact that this piece of translation is categorized as news might affect the types of translation strategies the students adopted, provided that they were aware of the general characteristics of news articles beforehand.

## 8. Recommendations

The number of news articles used in this analysis could be higher if more students from other translation classes also volunteered as participants. It is recommended that the same type of research be replicated but with participants of different English proficiency ranging from low to advanced. Using the same data, other aspects of translation such as the translation from one language in which object omission is allowed to another where objects must be overt should be explored.

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## Appendix

### Original text:

เมื่อเวลา 10.30 น. วันที่ 5 ก.พ. 59 ร.ต.อ. วัชร แสงเพชร ผกก. สน. บางโพธิ์พาง รับแจ้งเหตุเพลิงไหม้อาคารหุ 10 ชั้น ในซอยนราธิวาสราชนครินทร์ 18 จึงแจ้งสำนักงานป้องกันและบรรเทาสาธารณภัย กรุงเทพมหานคร ให้ส่งรถดับเพลิงกว่า 10 คันไประงับเหตุ

อาคารดังกล่าวเป็นของนายวิกรม อัยศิริ อดีต ส.ว. ระนอง เจ้าหน้าที่ดับเพลิงพบกลุ่มควันดำพวยพุ่งจากตัวอาคารและไฟที่ชั้น 3 ลุกลามไปสู่ชั้น 4 และ 5 อย่างรวดเร็ว เนื่องจากเป็นอาคารสูง จึงทำได้เพียงฉีดน้ำสกัดเพลิงไม่ให้ลุกลามไปบ้านเรือนใกล้เคียง

มีรายงานว่า นางอังคณา อัยศิริ อายุ 65 ปี ภรรยาของนายวิกรม ร้องขอความช่วยเหลืออยู่ในตัวอาคาร ก่อนหมดสติ แต่เจ้าหน้าที่เข้าไปช่วยเหลือไม่ได้ จึงเสียชีวิตในที่สุด

เจ้าหน้าที่ต้องเร่งอพยพผู้พักอาศัยใกล้เคียงรวมทั้งนักเรียนหลายร้อยคนจากโรงเรียนอนุบาลมณีรัตน์ ที่อยู่ในซอยดังกล่าวออกไปอยู่ในพื้นที่ปลอดภัย ใช้เวลาดับเพลิงประมาณ 3 ชั่วโมงจึงสงบ

ผู้สื่อข่าวรายงานว่า มีผู้ได้รับบาดเจ็บ 1 คน คือนางพิมรภัส จิระศุภเชษฐ์ อายุ 58 ปี แม่บ้าน มีอาการลำลักควัน นำตัวส่ง รพ. เลิดสิน



***Suggested translation:***

At 10.30 on Feb 5th 2016, Bang Pong Pang Police Station Superintendent Pol. Capt. Watchara Saengpet was informed of a fire at a luxurious 10-story building in Soi Narathiwas Ratchanakarin 18. He then informed Bangkok Fire and Rescue Department to send over 10 fire trucks to extinguish the fire.

The building was owned by a former Ranong senator Wikrom Aisiri. The firefighters found black smoke pouring out of the building while the fire was quickly spreading from the 3rd floor to the 4th and the 5th floors. Because the building was tall, the firefighters could only spray the building with water to prevent the fire from spreading to surrounding buildings.

A report said that Wikrom's 65-year-old wife Angkana Aisiri, was crying for help in the building before she passed out. The firefighters did not manage to get in to rescue her, eventually resulting in her death.

The firefighters quickly evacuated the residents nearby including hundreds of students from Maneerat Kindergarten School in the Soi to a safe area. It took around 3 hours to extinguish the fire.

The reporter said that a 58-year-old housemaid named Pimrapat Jirasupachet was injured. She suffered smoke inhalation.

