

**Exploring Theme choices in an English TV documentary  
and its Korean translation:  
A Systemic Functional Approach\***

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**1. Introduction**

It seems to be widely assumed that anyone who is bilingual is capable of generating a quality translation in terms of lexical choice. However, translation work is not only a word for word delivery process but it also has to deliver a natural sounding document and generate the same effect to its target readers as the original text on its audience. Venuti (1995) points out that a translated text

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should successfully achieve its readability, “reflect(s) the foreign writer’s personality or intention” and preserve the important meaning in the source text. He insists that the translation work should not be perceived as a translation but acceptable as the original. Baker (1992) also suggests that translation studies are trying to achieve not only the equivalence in lexical level but to achieve the “equivalence above word level”. It seems that finding equivalence in lexical items at the word level is not one of trends in translation studies any longer.

In regard to the text analysis tool, Hatim & Mason (1990) points that it seems inappropriate to apply linguistic theory whose interest is in structure and syntax. Rather, it would be appropriate to adopt analysis techniques that focus on meanings.

This paper draws on Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory as its primary theoretical framework since the theory focuses on exploring meanings of language, and thus can be used as an analytical tool to examine various issues related to meaning in translation.

SFL theory has a strong tie with sociology (Halliday 1973). The theory originates from the work of Saussure, and was further inspired by the anthropologist Malinowski who first conceptualized the theory of the context of situation as well as Firth who subsequently developed Malinowski’s notion into the linguistic theory (Halliday & Hasan 1985). The theory was further developed by Halliday as a full-fledged theory.

Due to this historical background, being informed and developed by both linguists and anthropologists, the theory allows systemic linguists to focus on describing functions and exploring meanings of language in various situations, and to study how language is structured for its use as a semiotic system (Eggins 1994).

According to SFL theory (Halliday 1994, Halliday & Matthiessen 2004), Theme is the element that tells what the message is about and the important textual resource that plays a vital role in the development of a text. Since Theme is an orienting element that leads readers to the following information,

it might be assumed that preserving Themes in the original text should be an effective way of translating into the target language to deliver the same message and to generate the same effects on the reader but there is little research undertaken to prove the assumption wrong or right. Therefore, this paper attempts to study discourse from three documentary programs in order to investigate Theme choices of a set of parallel texts and a comparable text employing SFL theory. A detailed discussion of readability in terms of different Theme choices is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

## 2. Theoretical Background

In SFL theory, the technical term ‘systemic’ refers to the theory’s view of language as a system network. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004: 23) explains that the theory takes the paradigmatic approach and sees a text as the “product of ongoing selection in a very large network of systems—a system network”

Structure is the syntagmatic ordering in language: patterns, or regularities, in *what goes together with* what. System, by contrast, is ordering on the other axis: patterns in *what could go instead of* what... Any set of alternatives, together with its condition of entry, constitutes a **system** in this technical sense. (*ibid* 22)

SFL theory prioritizes meaning and functions of language as can be seen from its name ‘functional’. Languages have purpose as it is generally agreed that people interact through utterances due to a certain reasons and to communicate certain things. Systemic linguists categorize the communicative purposes into three major categories: 1) to express what is going on, 2) to express personal view or to interact, and 3) to express 1) and 2) in coherent manner. The languages people use in order to achieve these purposes can

likewise be reflected into three functions: Ideational meaning that can be split into experiential and logical meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning, respectively. Halliday (1994) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) describe these elements with technical term “metafunctions”.

Three meanings or metafunctions are realised through various system networks proposed by Halliday, and the textual meaning is realised through the system of THEME.

Theme is defined as “the point of departure” by Halliday and a resource that sets up a “local context for each clause in a text” (Matthiessen 1995: 531). Themes are placed at the initial position of clause in English and its function is to deliver information which is chosen by speaker or writer to explicitate to the reader what s/he is going to talk about (Halliday 1994 and Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). Themes can be divided into textual, interpersonal and topical Themes according to their functions within a clause.

Halliday (1994), Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) and Matthiessen (1995) define textual Theme as those elements that signal the movement to the new clause (continuative) and link the new clause with the previous clause in order to show the relationship of expansion or projection. These devices are realised by continuative words, conjunction, and conjunctive adjuncts.

On the other hand interpersonal Theme enables the readers to realise what the speaker or writer’s feelings are about what is going to be discussed. Interpersonal Themes are realised by vocative elements, modal adjuncts and finite verbal operators.

In declarative clauses, the Subject of the clause is regarded as ideational (topical) Theme when it is placed at the beginning of the clause. In this case, the Theme is referred to as an ideational unmarked Theme. However, elements which are not the Subject, for instance, circumstantial Adjuncts and Complements, may occur in the initial position of the clause before the Subject. Then the Theme acts as a marked Theme. As it can be seen from the name ‘unmarked’ and ‘marked’, the former implies usualness while the latter

implies unusualness. Thus, having the Subject in initial position is usually expected by readers of English, which means the author did not intend extra special attention to be drawn to the Theme. However, when an element other than the Subject is positioned at the beginning, readers are oriented to the particular situation or time.

Any elements other than textual, interpersonal or topical Themes are Rheme.

### 3. Data and Methodology

#### 3.1 The corpus

Three reporting texts, which are transcripts of three documentary programs, are selected for this study. The first text (Text 1) is a transcript of narration from a BBC documentary called *Auschwitz : The Nazis & 'The Final Solution'*. The second text (Text 2) is its translation for dubbing into Korean, which was prepared to be aired for Korean audiences. The third text (Text 3) is a comparable text originally written in Korean. It is also a historical recount that was prepared to be read out for a documentary program in Korea. Overall, the three texts belong to the reporting genre of recount, and utilise a spoken channel yet were originally composed through a written mode.

The selected three texts are authentic since they are 1) aired on national television (BBC and KBS) and targeting a general audience that speaks the same language medium as is used in the program (English and Korean), 2) dubbing of the original discourse in the target text reduces the possibility of discrepancy made in the process of translation, where subtitles distort translation due to the limited space on screen for the script.

By analyzing Text 1 and Text 2, a set of parallel texts, the study aims to find similarities and differences in Theme choices made in the process of

translation. In addition, by comparing Text 2 and Text 3, the study tries to find patterns of Theme choice in a translated text into Korean and the authentic Korean text.

### 3.2 A clause as an analysis unit

In SFL theory, the clause is “the most fundamental message structure” in any language (Butt et al 2000: 33). For the first step, transcriptions of the three programs were divided into clauses for discrete analysis.

According to Matthiessen (1995), clauses imply its MOOD except for minor clauses (*Henry!*, *Hello!* *Good night!*), which do not have thematic structure. Clauses are categorised into major or minor clauses depending on whether the clause has predicator or not. Then, if the clause is major they are subdivided into indicative and imperative. Indicative types of clauses are then divided into declarative and interrogative clauses depending on in what order the Subject and the Finite are realised.

The three texts used in this study contain small number of interrogative clauses and minor clauses. However, their number was not sufficient enough to compare and as minor clauses do not have thematic structure, this study only focuses on analysing declarative clauses. In addition as embedded clauses do not have same status, which means “they are not at the same rank as independent or dependent clauses” (Butt et al 2000: 168), they were excluded from analysis.

Table 1. Number of clauses in texts

TEXT	Total clauses	Excluded clauses	Total clauses analysed
T1	566	51	<b>515</b>
T2	544	50	<b>494</b>
T3	712	61	<b>651</b>

### 3.3 Theme analysis of English and Korean

Study of the Korean language, from a Systemic Functional point of view, has only started recently. In particular, on the basis of a manual analysis of her corpus, Kim (2007) described the system of THEME in Korean and suggested a way of identifying Themes in Korean. Kim argues that the flexibility of word arrangement in the Korean language makes it clear that the element placed in the initial position should be interpreted as the “speaker’s intentional choice to orient the listener or reader to the rest of the message” (Kim 2007: 157). She also insists that Themes are important textual resources in Korean, just as they are in English.

In common with English, Themes in Korean also occur in the initial position of each clause. However, Themes in Korean are often realised by the postpositional particle *은/는 un/nun* and *이/가 i/ka* which distinguish whether the information in the unmarked Theme is treated as given (*un/nun*) or new (*i/ka*) (See Kim 2007, chapter 4). Another similarity discovered is that ideational Themes in Korean also could be divided into marked and unmarked Themes as in English. The ideational (topical) Theme identification for Korean suggested by Kim (2007) is briefly illustrated as follows.

Table 2. Ideational Theme identification for Korean

Ideational Theme	Realised by
Unmarked Given Theme	Subject marked by <i>un/nun</i>
Unmarked New Theme	Subject marked by <i>i/ka</i> (Without any absolute Theme)
Marked Theme	Circumstantial adjunct of Complement marked by <i>un/nun</i>
Extended circumstantial Theme	Circumstance not marked by <i>un/nun</i> (The Subject/Participant may have textual importance)

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

The Theme analysis of Text 1 and Text 2 identified different Theme choices made during the process of translation. The differences might have been caused by different syntactic features between the two languages, or they might have been triggered by the translator's own choices. In order to uncover some of the linguistic features of Korean, phonetic transcriptions for Text 2 and Text 3 are included in each example, and the translation used is a literal back translation from Korean into English.

Table 3. Theme patterns of analysed declarative clauses

Text	Textual	Interpersonal	Ideational			excluded clauses	Total
			Marked	Unmarked			
				Explicit	Elliptical		
T1	174	6	55	384	76	51	566
	30.7%	1.1%	9.7%	67.8%	13.4%	9%	100%
T2	52	11	110	224	161	50	545
	9.6%	2%	20.2%	41.2%	29.4%	9.2%	100%
T3	87	12	82	319	250	61	712
	12.2%	1.7%	11.5%	44.8%	35.1%	8.6%	100%
Total	313	29	247	927	486	162	1822
	17.2%	1.6%	13.6%	50.9%	26.7%	8.9%	100%

##### 4.1 Textual Theme

From the analysis, textual Themes accounting for 30.7% of total clauses were found in Text 1. However textual Themes in Text 2 were only 9.6% of the total analysed clauses. The discrepancy in the percentage might have been triggered due to the different linguistic features between two languages. Unlike English, conjunctions such as *그리고 kuliko* (and) and *하지만 haciman* (but) often come at the end of a clause as verbal or verbal group suffixes since Korean is a verb-final language. Therefore, conjunctions or conjunctive adjuncts are realised as suffixes such as *~고 ~ko* (and), *~지만 ~ciman* (but), and *~때문 여 thaymwuney* (because). This clause chaining feature (Kim 2007) allows Korean language to have less textual Themes realised in the Theme position.

This linguistic feature is also observed in Text 3.

Example 1

T1	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1	66	My whole family	would have been destroyed.
T1	67	Half the camp	would have been destroyed.
T1	68	And in his place,	someone else would have come.
T1	69.1	While Höss	lived in comfort
T1	69.2	the prisoners	struggled
T1	69.3	(the prisoners)	to survive

T2	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T2	76.1	제 가족이 <i>cey kacok-i</i> My family	몰살 당했을 것이 <sup>고</sup> <i>molsal tanghayssul kesiko</i> would have been destroyed and
T2	76.2	다른 죄수들 까지 <i>talon coyswutul kkaci</i> other inmates too	목숨을 잃었을 것입니다. <i>mokswumul ilhessul kesipnita.</i> would have lost lives.
T2	77	그리고 다른 사람이 <i>kuliko talon salam-i</i> And another person	그의 후임으로 왔겠죠. <i>kuuy hwuimulo wasskeysscy.</i> would have come as his replacement.
T2	78.1	헤스가 <i>heysu-ka</i> (while) Höss	호사스러운 삶을 누리는 동안 <i>hosasulewun salmul nwulinun tongan</i> was enjoying luxurious life
T2	78.2	죄수들은 <i>coyswutul-un</i> inmates	살기 위해 <i>salki wihay</i> to survive
T2	78.3	(inmates)	몸부림을 치고 있었다. <i>mompwulimul chiko issessta.</i> were struggling.

Example 1 shows textual Themes realised in a parallel set of clauses from Text 1 and Text 2. Where Text 1 expresses clauses 66 and 67 as two separate clause simplexes, Text 2 translates these into one clause complex (clause 76.1 and 76.2). This is facilitated by the verb ending suffix ~고 ~ko (and) which smoothly links clauses 76.1 and 76.2. This pattern would support a

generalisation that Korean tends to link clauses that are in paratactic relation by using verb ending suffixes rather than explicitly marking and separating a new clause with a complete textual Theme such as *그리고 kuliko* (and). This discrete conjunction can be positioned initially in a separate sentence, where it acts as a textual Theme, however, reduced to the suffix, joins clauses more tightly.

Additionally, the textual Themes ‘And’ and ‘While’ of clauses 68 and 69.1 in Text 1 are positioned in the Theme position. The parallel clause, clause 77 in Text 2 also shows that the textual Theme ‘And’ is positioned in the Theme column. However, in clause 78.1 in Text 2, the difference in position of textual Theme in Korean is found. Textual Theme, in this case, ‘while’ is changed to suffix and realised by *~동안 tongan* (while) at the end of Rheme in Text 2.

This clause chaining feature should be taken into account in the translation process, since otherwise the translated work would have too many unnatural textual Themes per clause, which would be a distraction from the key message of a text.

#### 4.2 Interpersonal Theme

From the analysis, 6 interpersonal Themes in Text 1 and 11 interpersonal Themes in Text 2 were observed. Since the analysed texts are reporting texts which inform and explain explicit historical events, they are expected to be impersonal and express unbiased facts. Accordingly, interpersonal Themes were rare in the three texts. However, some parts of Text 1 in which scenes were reconstructed included some interpersonal Themes. Table 4 shows patterns of interpersonal Themes found in the three texts.

Table 4. Patterns of interpersonal Themes

Text	From narrator's voice	From testimony, interview and reconstruction	Total interpersonal Themes in Text
T1	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	6
T2	0 (0%)	11 (100%)	11
T3	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	12

The two interpersonal Themes in Text 1, are shown in Example 2 below:

Example 2

T1	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1	122.1	Consult the experts in this field !	
T1	122.2	and your problem	resolves itself.
T1	123	Gentlemen, the camp	will be expanded.
T1	124	My reasons for it	are far more important than your objections.
T1	125	Unsurprisingly Himmler	got his way.

From clause complex 122 to clause 124 are the part that was reconstructed according to Höss's testimony, and they are remarks made by Himmler, the Reichsführer of the Nazi regime. 'Gentlemen' in clause complex 123, is an interpersonal Theme realised by a vocative element. And in clause simplex 125, the interpersonal Theme 'Unsurprisingly' marks the narrator's appraisal that he is not surprised to see Himmler insist and finally achieve his goal. The writer specifically inserted this interpersonal element in the Theme position to show the readers that Himmler's plan would be carried without any distraction. Neither of them was translated with the same interpersonal element in Text 2.

## Example 3

T2	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T2	131	전문가들을 불러들여서 Bring experts and	<i>cenmwunkatulul pulletulyese</i>
T2	131.2	문제를 해결하시오 <i>mwunceylul haykyelhasio.</i> solve the issue !	
T2	132	강제수용소는 <i>kangeyswuyongso nun</i> The concentration camp	확장될 것이요. <i>hwakcangtoyl kesiyu.</i> will be expanded
T2	133	[[꼭 그렇게 해야만 하는]] 중요한 이유가 [[ <i>kkok kulehkey hayyaman hanun</i> ]] <i>cwungyohan iyu-ka</i> The important reason [[that (we) must do]]	있소 <i>isso.</i> exist.
T2	134	결국 히틀러는 <i>kyelkuk himulle-nun</i> Finally Himmler	자신의 주장을 관철시켰다. <i>casinuy cwucangul kwanchelsikhyessta.</i> got his way.

In Text 2 (Example 3), the textual Theme, 결국 *kyelkuk* (Finally) in clause 134, substituted the interpersonal Theme ‘Unsurprisingly’ of Text 1. The original writer’s intention which was emphasizing that Himmler’s plan would be carried out despite many objections and that this would not be surprising, was not transmitted, rather the translation delivered the meaning that Himmler’s order was ‘eventually realised’.

The example confirms that different Theme selection as well as the failure of choosing explicit lexical item changed the original meaning the author intended.

### 4.3 Ideational Theme

#### 4.3.1 Unmarked Theme

Unmarked Themes can be divided into two groups, that is, unmarked

Themes realised by explicit Subjects and unmarked Themes realised by Subjects that have been elided. In English, Subjects are usually realised in explicit form whether they are nouns, proper nouns, or nominal group, since they are essential elements which distinguish the Mood of a clause.

However, Korean seems to allow more frequent Subject ellipsis. Sohn (1999: 15) states that Korean is “a situation - or discourse - oriented language”, therefore, frequently, subjects and objects which can be “contextually or situationally” discovered or understood are not explicitly expressed. As expected, the Theme patterns of data (Table 2) showed that Text 2 and Text 3 have a number of elliptical unmarked Themes when compared to Text 1. In Text 2 and Text 3, the percentage of elliptical unmarked Themes ranged from approximately from 30% to 35 % while Text 1 has less elliptical Themes which account 13.4%. The percentage confirms that frequent ellipsis of Subjects or Participant is a distinctive linguistic feature of Korean. The results show that it is pertinent to the translator operating between Korean and English, to make Theme explicit or elliptical in order to produce a natural-sounding target text.

In Example 4, from Text 2 of clauses 71 to 74 (except for minor clause 73) all unmarked Themes are cases of ellipsis, while clauses 60 to 63 of Text 1 express the same unmarked Themes explicitly (except for clause 62.2). Clause 62.2 in Text 1 is linked with clause 62.1 by the conjunction ‘and’. It is in a paratactic relationship with the preceding clause and continues to introduce another action conducted by ‘I’, necessitating the ellipsis of the Theme ‘I’ in clause 62.2. However, other clause simplexes begin with explicit Themes (‘It’ and ‘I’). On the other hand, topical Themes in Text 2 are all elliptical. The differences between Text 1 and Text 2 are caused by the recoverability of Subjects and unmarked Themes in Korean. The interrogative clause (clause 59 in Text 1 and clause 70 in Text 2) inquires of the interviewee whether he had ever wanted to stick the scissors into Höss’s neck. While viewing this documentary film, the audience quickly grasps that the interviewee is talking

about his experiences. For this reason the topical Theme ‘I’ in Text 1 was realised as an elliptical Theme in Text 2.

#### Example 4

T1	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1	59		Weren't you ever tempted to stick the scissors in his neck?
T1	60	It	could have happened.
T1	61	I	had a razor in my hand.
T1	62.1	I	could have grasped him
T1	62.2	and (I)	slit his throat.
T1	63	It	could have happened.

T2	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T2	70		가위나 칼로 그의 목을 찌르고 싶지는 않았습니까? <i>kawina khallo kuuy mokul cciluko sipcinun anhasssupnikka?</i> Didn't you want to stab his neck with scissors or a knife?
T2	71	(I)	그렇게 할 수도 있었죠. <i>kulehkey hal swuto issesseoyo.</i> could have done it that way
T2	72.1	(I)	그의 목을 붙잡고 <i>kuuy mokul pwuthcapko</i> grasp his neck and
T2	72.2	(I)	면도칼로 그을 수도 있었습니다. <i>myeontokhallo kuul swuto issesssupnita.</i> could have slit with a razor
T2	73	예 yey Yes	
T2	74	(I)	그렇게 할 수도 있었습니다. <i>kulehkey hal swuto issesssupnita.</i> could have done it that way.

Likewise frequent elliptical Themes were also observed in Text 3. In the following Example 5, the Participant, General Eulji Mundeok, was introduced in clause 296.1. In the following clauses (296.2 and 296.3), the same Participant is elided since who the Participant refers to is recoverable through the actions of General Eulji Mundeok in the Rheme content. The next clause,

clause simplex 297 does not possess the explicit Theme, although it starts whole new clause, as it is again recoverable in actions presented in the Rheme. The feature also emphasises the importance of the recovering of elliptical Themes in translating from Korean into English, as well as the flexibility for elliptical Themes when translating English into Korean.

Example 5

T3	CI No.	Theme(s)	Rheme
T3	296.1	을지문덕은 <i>ulcimwuntek-un</i> Eulji Mundeok	거짓항복을 하면서 <i>kecishangpokul hamyense</i> by declaring false surrender
T3	296.2	(Eulji Mundeok)	적진의 동태를 살피고는 <i>cekcimuy tongthaylul salphikonun</i> spied enemy's camp and
T3	296.3	(Eulji Mundeok)	도로 압록강을 건너갔다. <i>tolo aplokkangul kennekassta.</i> crossed Yalu River back (to Goguryeo).
T3	297	(Eulji Mundeok)	[[적의 식량이 부족함]]을 알았던 것이다. [[ <i>cekuy siklyangi pwucokham</i> ]]ul <i>alasten kesita.</i> knew [[that enemy lacked food supply]]
T3	298.1	수나라의 30만 대군은 <i>swunalauly 30man</i> <i>taykwun-un</i> Sui's 300,000 troops	을지문덕을 좇아 <i>ulcimwuntekul coca</i> chasing Eulji Mundeok
T3	298.2	(Sui's army)	압록강을 건넜다. <i>aplokkangul kennessta.</i> crossed the Yalu River.
T3	299.1	고구려 군대는 <i>k o k w u l y e</i> <i>kwuntay-nun</i> Goguryeo army	수나라 군에 패하며 <i>swunala kwuney phayhamye</i> by defeating to Sui army
T3	299.2	(Goguryeo army)	달아났다. <i>talanassta.</i> ran away

T3	300.1	(although)(it)	[[군량이 부족했던]] 수나라 군 이지만 [[ <i>kwunlyangi pwucokhayssten</i> ]] <i>swunala kwun iciman</i> was Sui's army [[whose food supply was insufficient]]
T3	300.2	(Sui's army)	고구려 군을 쫓아 <i>kokwulye kwunul ccocha</i> to chase Goguryeo army
T3	300.3	(Sui's army)	깊숙이 들어오고 말았다. <i>kipshwuki tuleoko malassta.</i> followed them deep into Goguryeo's territory.

#### 4.3.2 Marked Theme

The analysis reveals that Text 1 has 9.7% of marked Theme while Text 2 and Text 3 show 20.2% and 11.5% of marked Theme for total Themes, respectively. From the result, it is found that Text 2 has marked Themes that are more than twice the count of the original, Text 1. In order to examine further the patterns of marked Themes, a summary is provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Patterns of marked Theme

Text Realised by	T1	T2	T3
Adjunct	55 (100%)	104 (95%)	76 (93%)
Complement	0 (0%)	6 (5%)	6 (7%)
Total	55	110	82

First of all, marked Themes realised by circumstantial adjuncts will be discussed.

Example 6

T1	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1	24.1	But when Höss	first arrived in April 1940,
T1	24.2	few of these buildings	existed.
T2	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T2	30	1940년 4월, [[헤스가 도착했을] 당시에는 <i>1940myen 4wel, [[heysuka tochakhayssul]] tangsiey-nun</i> In April 1940, at that time [[when Höss arrived]]	이러한 건물들이 존재하지 않았다. <i>ilehan kenmwultuli concayhaci anhassta.</i> these buildings did not exist.

In Example 6, clause complex 24 in Text 1 contains one dependent clause (clause 24.1) and one independent clause (clause 24.2) but these two clauses and their hypotactic relationship were translated into one clause simplex (clause 30) in Text 2. The Thematic structure of clause complex 24 in Text 1 and clause simplex 30 in Text 2 are drawn as follows

Figure 1. Thematic structure of clauses in Example 6

T1	But when Höss	first arrived in April 1940,	few of these buildings	existed.
clause	Themes	Rheme	Themes	Rheme
<b>clause complex</b>	<b>Theme (clause 24.1)</b>		<b>Rheme (clause 24.2)</b>	
T2	1940년 4월, [[헤스가 도착했을] 당시에는 <i>1940myen 4wel, [[heysuka tochakhayssul]] tangsiey-nun</i>		이러한 건물들이 존재하지 않았다. <i>ilehan kenmwultuli concayhaci anhassta.</i>	
<b>clause simplex</b>	<b>Theme</b>		<b>Rheme</b>	

As can be seen from Figure 2, in the process of translation, clause 24.1 in Text 1 itself was thematised and used as an embedded clause having a circumstantial element realised by the postposition 는 *nun* ‘at that time’ as its head. Sohn (1999: 265) explains that this is because Korean is a “head-final language” so often “dependent elements precede their heads”. However this is not the only feature triggering this marking of the Theme in Text 2. The

unique order of arranging information in Korean also makes clauses marked Themes.

Korean tends to put time references in the initial position of clauses whether they have thematic importance or not. To investigate this, Text 3 was carefully examined but no clauses with time reference positioning in the Rheme part were found.

Example 7

T 3	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T 3	29.1	612년 수양제는 612 <i>nyen</i> , <i>swuyangcey-nun</i> In 612, Yangdi	29.2   고구려를 공격합니다.   29.2   <i>kokwulyelul</i> <i>kongkyekhpnita</i> .   29.2   attacks Goguryeo.
T 3	111.1	605년 [[장수 위문기가 이끄는]] 수나라 군대는 605 <i>nyen</i> , [[ <i>cangswu</i> <i>wimwunkika ikkunun</i> ]] <i>swunala</i> <i>kwuntay-nun</i> In 605, Sui's army [[that was led by General Wumanchi]]	돌궐 기병을 앞세우고 <i>tolkwel kipyengul aphseywuko</i> had Turk's cavalry unit in the front and
T 3	253.1	2월에 수양제가 2weley <i>swuyangcey-ka</i> In February, Yangdi	요하에 도착했지만 <i>yohaey tochakhayssciman</i> arrived at Liao River but

Kim (2007: 125) notes that the positioning of a circumstance which does not seem to be caused by writer's firm intention could have been triggered due to "a typical order of arranging information in Korean". Supporting her remark, the data above, and throughout the analysis, revealed that all clauses with specific time references such as 'in 1941'; 'in April'; and 'in the 1930s' were positioned at the beginning of clauses and were marked Themes in Text 2 and Text 3, unless they were found to be modifying something else.

Example 8

T1	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1	343.1	Today	it is your turn
T1	343.2	tomorrow	it will be mine.
T2	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T2	372.1	오늘은 <i>onul-un</i> Today	(it) 그들이었지만 <i>kutuliessciman</i> it was them but
T2	372.2	내일은 <i>nayil-un</i> tomorrow	제가 될 수도 있었으니까요. <i>ceyka toyl swuto issessunikayo.</i> because I could be the one.

The circumstantial elements ‘today’ and ‘tomorrow’ in Text 1 are selected as marked Themes. In the same way, Text 2 also chooses the marked Theme *오늘은 onul-un* (Today) and *내일은 nayil-un* (tomorrow) in clause 372.1 and 372.2. Kim(2007) indicates that circumstances realised by *un/nun* have “circumstantial information”, and they are “topicalised and/or they are contrastive” (122). In this particular example, marked Theme *오늘은 onul-un* (Today) and *내일은 nayil-un* (tomorrow) are not only representing circumstantial information but they are also contrastive. These marked Themes in Text 1 are delivered not only with their explicit lexical meaning but also with same Theme choices as Text 2 so that Text 2 effects the same response from the reader as Text 1 to its audience.

From the analysis, 6 complements in the Theme position were found in Text 2. Among the 6, 2 were translations of English passive clauses. Now the paper will discuss marked Themes realised by complements.

Example 9

T1	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1	30	True opponents of the state	had to be securely locked up.

T2	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T2	37	[[국가의 위협이 되는]] 적은 [[kwukkauy wihyepi toynun]] cek-un Enemies [[that are threatening the nation]]	(we) 가두어 두어야 했습니다. katwue twueya haysssupnita.  (we) had to lock up.

Clause 37 in Example 9 seems to be a good translation, for two reasons: First, it successfully avoided the passive voice, which is unnatural in Korean; and second, it successfully delivered the original message by preserving Theme in Text 1. The paper will fabricate two possible alternative translations, Example 9-1 and Example 9-2, in order to explain the two reasons in detail. First, Example 9-1 will show an alternative which translated English passive voice into Korean passive voice retaining the same Theme.

#### Example 9-1 Alternative 1

	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1 Clause 30	True opponents of the state	had to be securely locked up.
Alternative	[[국가의 위협이 되는]] 적은 [[kwukkauy wihyepi toynun]] cek-un	<b>간혀야만</b> 했습니다. <b>kathyeyaman haysssupnita.</b>
Back Translation	Enemies [[that are threatening the nation]]	<b>had to be locked up</b>

The item in bold in the Rheme, indicates that the verb is transformed into passive form with obligatory intention. In Korean the passive voice is realised by attaching a passive affix *ㅌ* *i*, *-히* *hi*, *-리*, *li* and *-기* *ki* (Choi 2004, Lee 2002, Nahm 2001) to the active tense of the verb. For example, lock up is *가두다* *katwuta*, and its passive form, 'be locked up', is *간혀다*, *kathita* in Korean. Since the verb was also conflated with 'had to', the verb was changed to *간혀야만* *kathyeyaman*.

However, it sounds unnatural since Korean tends to have less passive voice clauses than English. This is because Korean language is more flexible in arranging words within a clause (Kim 1998, Li and Thompson 1976). This feature of Korean language makes it much easier for a translator or writer to place the element of key importance at the beginning of a clause. However, changing word order is less flexible in English compared to Korean (Lee 2000). So English uses more passive voices in order to achieve the same effect (Cho 2005). A couple of empirical studies confirm that English passive sentences are often changed into active sentences when they are translated into Korean.

Chae (2006) found in her parallel corpus study that professional translators tend to translate the English passive into active voice in Korean. And Lee (2008) observed that novice translators are more likely to translate English passive constructions directly into passive form in Korean. By taking the results from their studies, it can be interpreted that rendering the English passive voice into Korean active voice is the professional translators' strategy as distinguished from novice translators. Thus it can be regarded that translating the English passive form into Korean active voice is one way of avoiding an awkward Korean translation. However, close examination of the second alternative shows that translating English passive into Korean active voice should be carefully considered as it can potentially distort original meaning in some cases.

Alternative 2 is given with an elliptical Theme, *we* or *I*, and the Theme in the original, *enemies*, was put in Rheme position. It sounds more natural compared to Alternative 1, but it fails to deliver the same Theme that is actually focusing on 'true opponents of the state' in the original. Alternative 2, on the other hand, focuses on 'we' even though it is elided.

## Example 9-2 Alternative 2

	Themes	Rheme
T1 Clause 30	True opponents of the state	had to be securely locked up.
Alternative	(we or I)	[[국가의 위협이 되는]] 적을 가두어 두어야만 했습니다. [[kwukkaey wihyepi toynun]] cekul katwue twueya haysssupnita.
Back Translation	(we or I Ø)	had to lock up enemies [[that are threatening the nation]]

Alred, Brusaw and Oliu (2003), Parrott (2000) and Roberts (1954) point that in English, passives are often used when one wants to avoid the implication of involvement or responsibility. This strategy was adopted by a Nazi SS member who initiates clause 30 in Text 1. In his testimony, the officer avoids implicating himself in the killing of innocent people during the war. To achieve this, he used the passive voice as shown in clause 30, thus distancing himself from responsibility and training the focus of the clause on his enemies, rather than him and the Nazis. Since the choice of passive voice seems to be a firm intention of the speaker, it is hypothesized that the Theme should be preserved in order to deliver the same message.

Therefore, if translation as shown in Alternative 2 were given, the target readers would think that this person was admitting his wrong doings, which is not true. Cho (2005) urges that a translator must not add an actor that is not in the original, particularly, when the English passive voice is used for avoiding involvement or responsibility. Additionally, she also argues that the passive voice in English are often used by politicians and diplomats for the same purpose therefore, a translator is not obliged to add an actor when there is none. Hence, it cannot be said that Alternative 2 delivers the same message as expressed in the original.

So far Alternative 1 and 2 were fabricated and examined in terms of their merits in translation. It is found that Alternative 1 sounds unnatural in the

target language and at the same time it implies a different Theme is emphasised, thus altering meaning. Alternative 2 was also not a good translation as it shifts its Theme and fails to deliver the same message.

However clause 37 in Text 2 (see Example 9) successfully positioned the complement, *[[국가의 위협이 되는] 적은* (Enemies [[that are threatening the nation]]), in the Theme part by replacing postposition *을 ul* (see Example 9-2) which indicates a complement with the subject marker *은 un* (see Example 9). These suffix features of Korean enable a relatively flexible word arrangement. Besides, when the postposition *을 ul* is replaced with *은 un* and is put in the initial position, it becomes the topic of the sentence. In this way, that is by “changing the word order and subject markers”, one can translate the English passive into Korean without distorting meaning (Kim 1998: 154). Similar examples are presented in Example 10.

Example 10

T1	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1	306	Those parts [[that were too high in the trees]]	were just left there.
T2	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rhemes
T2	326	[[나무 위까지 날아간] 시체는 [[ <i>namwu wikkaci nalakan</i> ]] <i>sichey nun</i> Bodies [[that were scattered above trees]]	(we) 수거할 수도 없었죠. (we) <i>swukehal swuto epsesscyo.</i> (we) could not even collect.

Likewise the clause 306 in Text 1 utilises the English passive voice and its translation in Text 2 has a marked Theme realised by complement. This part of data is also a segment from a testimony but this time, it is from a person of Jewish descent. He and other people were dragged to a place and they were ordered to collect bodies that were scattered all around. He tries to explain how awful that scene was by describing it scene by scene. Therefore, it is crucial that Themes, in other word, those scenes on which his camera is

focusing, should be preserved in order to deliver the same impact.

Again, to avoid the awkward passive voice in Korean, the translator selected an active predicator, *수거할 수도 없었죠* (could not even collect) which has elided 'we' as its Actor. Then the Complement was legitimated as the Theme replacing the object suffix *~를 ~lul* with the postposition *~는 ~nun*. As a result, the translator successfully delivered the same message by orienting audiences to the same scene as in the original and achieved a more natural sounding translation.

#### 4.3.3 Theme choices and readability

Example 11 was chosen from the data in order to show briefly how the readability and the faithfulness of translation can be influenced by the choice of the Theme.

#### Example 11

T1	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T1	1	This	is the site of the largest mass murder in the history of the world.
T1	2	(it)	(is) Auschwitz.
T1	3	1.1 million people	died here.
T2	Cl. No	Theme(s)	Rheme
T2	1	이곳에서 인류역사상 가장 참혹한 학살극이 <i>ikoseyse inlyuyeksasang kacang chamhokhan haksalkuk-i</i> In this place, the most brutal mass murder in the history of the world	벌어졌다. <i>pelecyessta.</i> occurred.
T2	2.	(it)	아우슈비츠. <i>awusyupichu.</i> (is) Auschwitz.
T2	3	총사망자 수 <i>chongsamangca swu</i> Total death	110만 명. <i>110man myeng.</i> (is) 1.1 million.

Text 1 starts with 'this', honing the camera zoom on the actual building of the Auschwitz concentration camp (see Martin 1995), and using a relational process (this – is) to identify the building displayed to the audiences. On the other hand, Text 2 starts with 'in this place, the most brutal mass murder in the history of the world', by presenting the particular circumstances to the audience in the first place and delivering the message using a material process (the murder – occurred).

This can be understood by considering that these two texts are focusing on different pictures, that is, while Text 1 is identifying and orienting readers to the specific building, Text 2 is showing the concentration building as well as explaining the event that had occurred. Besides, clause 3 in Text 2 chooses 'total death' instead of '1.1 million people'. Themes and Rhemes in clauses in Text 1 are tightly related in order to introduce the building, the concentration camp. Starting with clause 1, the author introduces the building by placing 'this' in the Theme position and the second clause picks up this information as Theme, and then the third clause orients readers to '1.1 million people' who died in that specific building. However, in Text 2, it is hard to follow the information since Themes were not preserved in the process of translation as expressed in the original. This may confirm the assumption made in the introduction section that different Theme choices may deliver different impacts on its target readers. Therefore, it can be said that giving a careful consideration on Theme selection is an important step for translators in their initial stage of translation practice.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper presented major findings from the analysis of three texts in terms of their Theme choices with the assumption that three texts are authentic (see section 3.1). The study compared a set of parallel texts, Text 1 and Text

2, and again compared Text 2 with Text 3 in order to determine its acceptability as a natural sounding Korean text. The study found that some Themes were preserved as they were in the original and some had been adjusted. In cases where Themes were shifted, the study searched for motives and reasons for them. Shifts in Theme choices seemed to be motivated, and were mainly caused in order to reflect Koreaness which makes the translated text sound more like original Korean text. Unmotivated shifts were also observed and one example was extracted and discussed in section 4.3.3. briefly.

The findings from the study showed that a set of parallel texts had similar Theme choices unless shifts were necessary or inevitable due to the linguistic and syntactic differences between two languages. The findings can be interpreted as an indication that preserving Themes in the original might be one possible strategy in generating a natural sounding target translation.

This study shows a compelling possibility that translation studies can benefit from SFL theory and concept of Theme which has a great deal of potential as an analytical tool for text analysis and translation error analysis.

Although the study provided some findings and discourse data from the corpus-based research, more empirical studies have to be conducted. In order to strengthen this study, readers' reaction or readability of translation in terms of different Theme selection should be studied further.

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[Abstract]

**Exploring Theme choices in an English TV documentary  
and its Korean translation: A Systemic Functional Approach**

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This paper presents the Theme analysis of an English documentary program transcription and its translation into Korean to investigate patterns of Theme choice drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory (Halliday 1994, Halliday & Matthiessen 2004) and a description of Theme in Korean (Kim 2007). Choosing appropriate lexical choices are not the only task that translators have to deal with when translating a source text into a target text. Translators are required to deliver the same message, and to generate a natural sounding document. According to SFL theory, Theme is “a point of departure” (Halliday 1994, Halliday & Matthiessen 2004) which orients readers to what the message is about and acts as a textual resource for the text’s progression. Effectually, where a translator makes certain Theme choices, target readers can be possibly oriented to a different direction to which the original author intended. Therefore it is assumed that natural flow and readability of a translated text is, to a large extent, determined by the choice of Theme (Kim 2007a). With this theoretical framework, this paper investigates Theme choices in a BBC documentary called ‘Auschwitz’ and its Korean translation. The paper will present major findings from the analysis in terms of Theme choices in both the Source text and Target text, and then it will investigate patterns of Theme choices between the Korean translation of Auschwitz and a comparable text originally written in Korean.

▶ Key Words: Translation, Theme Rheme, Theme choices, SFL, Translation strategy.

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