

Same Chan Master, Different Images: Multi-functional Analysis of the Story of Huineng and Its Translations

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ABSTRACT

Based on the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), the study analyses meaning and meaning reproduction in the story of Huineng and its different English translations (Wong 1930, Heng 1977, Cleary 1998, Cheng 2011) from the experiential, interpersonal and textual perspectives. These three strands of meaning are closely related to the image of Huineng by depicting what he does, how he interacts with others and how the story unfolds. It has been found that variation in meaning, which is the result of translation shifts, leads to the recreation of different images of the same Chan master in different translated texts. Experientially, the suppression of Huineng's role as the Actor and the increase of his role as the Sayer, the Receiver and the Carrier in Wong's translation help to produce an image of Huineng that is less active. Interpersonally, the low status of Huineng is more or less lost in translations by Cleary and Wong

where most of the original terms of address are simply rendered as “I” and “you”. Textually, Huineng talks in a more cohesive way in all the translations than in the source text with an increase of textual, interpersonal and marked topical Themes.

KEYWORDS

systemic functional linguistics, experiential, interpersonal, textual, translation

1. Introduction

It has been recognised that in the process of translation, the reproduction of meaning, instead of wording, should be put at the central place (see Jakobson 1959; Newmark 1988; Matthiessen 2001; Nida and Taber 2003; Kim and Matthiessen 2015). Meaning, according to Halliday’s tripartite division of the meta-functions of language (Halliday 1973; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014) in systemic functional linguistics (SFL), can be neatly captured from three perspectives: ideational (further divided into experiential and logical), interpersonal and textual. Each strand of meaning is respectively realised through choices from the lexico-grammar, such as TRANSITIVITY, MOOD and THEME.

Although the equivalence in meaning is what most translators should aim at, translation shifts¹, which are “shifts in the recreation of meaning as part of the translation process” (Matthiessen 2014: 275), seem to be inevitable as well. Translation shifts may affect readers’ appreciation of the text and the image of the person depicted in the text. Based on the analyses of the story of Huineng and its different English translations, this study aims to investigate how the three strands of meaning contribute to the creation of the image of Huineng and how shifts in meaning lead to variation in the image.

Huineng (638-713) was a great Chan master in the Tang Dynasty in China and the Sixth Patriarch in the history of Chan Buddhism. His story, recorded in the first chapter of the *Platform Sutra*, is an autobiography told in front of a large audience. In the story, Huineng tells how he grew from an illiterate woodcutter into the revered Sixth Patriarch after going through many trials and tribulations. The story enjoyed great popularity in history and is still one of the best known in the Chan tradition (McDaniel 2013: 60).

The significance of the story lies in that it sets up an image of Huineng that is unique in the history of Buddhism (Suzuki 1972): he is illiterate, persevering and extremely brilliant. The image, as will be discussed in this study, is closely related to the experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings of the text. Experientially, the image of Huineng is created through what he does; interpersonally, it is reflected through his interaction with others; textually, it is established through the way in which the story is told.

Four English translations are selected in this study. They are the translation by Wong Mou-lam (1930), the first English translation of the *Platform Sutra* in history, the translation by Heng Yin (1977), the first English translation by an ordained Western Buddhist, the translation by the professional translator Thomas Cleary (1998), and the translation by Cheng Kuan (2011), a Buddhist master himself and abbot of two temples, one in Taiwan and the other in the U.S. All of these translations are based on the orthodox edition of the *Platform Sutra* which contains the most elaborate version of the story of Huineng.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Firstly, a brief introduction to the story of Huineng will be provided. Secondly, the source text (ST) and its four English translations will be analysed with the aim of investigating how the experiential, interpersonal and

textual meanings contribute to establishing the image of Huineng. Finally a conclusion will be drawn to sum up the whole study.

2. Huineng's story in the *Platform Sutra*

The story begins by depicting Huineng's unfortunate childhood. His father, formerly a government official, was dismissed and banished to the south of China, where he died early. Young Huineng was forced to take on responsibility for the family by cutting and selling firewood. One day after delivering wood to a customer's place, Huineng overheard a man reciting lines from a Buddhist text. As Huineng says, the moment the words struck his ears, he became enlightened in mind. Thus he enquired about the text and was advised to go to Huangmei, a far-away mountain in the north, to study Buddhism with the Fifth Patriarch.

Although full of enthusiasm and expectation, Huineng was not met with warm reception. The Fifth Patriarch doubted his ability to attain Buddhahood as he was from the South, the living place of uncivilized barbarians. Huineng was sent to split firewood and pound rice in the backyard. For more than eight months he did this manual work without entering the lecture hall or receiving any instruction.

One day the Fifth Patriarch announced a verse contest with the purpose to choose a successor to his position. Shenxiu, the head monk of the temple and a member of the literate elite, wrote his verse on a wall. Shenxiu's verse read,

*"The body is the tree of enlightenment,
The mind is like a clear mirror-stand.
Polish it diligently time and again,*

Not letting it gather dust" (Cleary 1998: 8).

While knowing that Shenxiu's verse failed to portray real enlightenment, the Fifth Patriarch still ordered all the other disciples to recite it, saying that it would help them in their practice.

Huineng, who was unaware of what had happened, heard Shenxiu's verse from a boy passing by his work place. Asking the boy what the verse was, Huineng obtained information regarding the verse contest and decided to present his own. Huineng's verse was to refute the ideas of Shenxiu and read,

*"Enlightenment originally has no tree,
And a clear mirror is not a stand.
Originally there's not a single thing--
Where can dust be attracted?"* (Cleary 1998: 10)

As the story goes, this verse made the Fifth Patriarch realise that Huineng was the one who had a complete understanding of sudden enlightenment. But due to Huineng's humble origin and the fierce competition, the Fifth Patriarch could only meet Huineng in the middle of the night to transmit to him the Dharma and the symbols of the patriarchate: a robe and a bowl handed down from Bodhidharma. Fearing that Huineng might be harmed by some jealous people, the Fifth Patriarch sent him off to the South at night.

However, this did not prevent several hundred men from pursuing Huineng with the intention of killing him and taking the robe and the bowl. One of the events recalled by Huineng concerns a monk who was once a general in the army. He was strong and violent and finally caught up with Huineng. When Huineng surrendered the robe and bowl, however, the monk found that he could not pick them up. Desperate, he called to Huineng and said that he came for the

teaching, not for the robe and the bowl. Huineng then taught him, and he was immediately enlightened.

After spending fifteen years hiding among a group of hunters, Huineng decided to start spreading his ideas. He went to a temple where a well-known Buddhist master was lecturing. By solving a dispute between two monks, Huineng attracted the attention of the master and had the opportunity to prove that he was the chosen Sixth Patriarch. It was not until then that Huineng got public recognition and started preaching the ideas of Chan Buddhism.

Unlike most Buddhist literature, the story of Huineng recorded in the *Platform Sutra* is

. . . more akin to popular literature, a mixture of spiritual guide and gripping entertainment, showcasing a poor, young, illiterate commoner triumphing over a polished aristocratic monk in a battle of words that tests their true spirituality (Jorgensen 2012: 47).

The image of Huineng is central to the story as it is “the specific mission of the *Platform Sutra* to promote Huineng as the Sixth Patriarch” (Schlutter 2012, 16). Moreover, Huineng also serves as a living exemplar for the teachings of Chan, and as a model to be emulated by his audience. If an illiterate woodcutter can obtain Buddhahood, then it follows that Buddha nature is inherent in all living beings and everyone has the ability to be enlightened and become a Buddha.

How the image of Huineng is created in the source text and re-created in the translations will be discussed in the following.

3. Experiential meaning: what does Huineng do?

The experiential meaning is about the construal of experience of the world and is mainly realised through TRANSITIVITY.

3.1. Transitivity

TRANSITIVITY is concerned with “who does what in relation to whom/what, where, when, how and why” (Hasan 1988: 63). It includes the Process, the Participant(s) and the Circumstance. While the combination of Process and Participants constitutes the nucleus of transitivity, the Circumstance usually remains at the periphery of the configuration (Matthiessen 1995: 197-198). There are mainly six types of Processes recognized: material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioural and existential. Each Process involves one or more Participant(s) and may also have some Circumstance(s), which will be discussed in the following with examples (mainly from translations of Huineng’s story).

A material Process is a process of doing and happening, both concrete and abstract. It may have only one participant that does the deed, the Actor. If the action is directed at another participant, this participant will be the Goal. There may also be some other participants involved in the material Process, such as Recipient (the participant receiving goods), Client (the participant receiving service), and Scope (the participant that is not affected by the action).

We	moved					to Canton.
The boy	took	me				there.
He	accompanied				me	to Jiujiang.
The man	gave	some money	to me.			
He	wrote	the letter		for me.		
Actor	Process: material	Goal	Recipient	Client	Scope	Circumstance

A mental Process is a process of sensing. It is about the inner experience of human beings. In a clause of mental Process, there is always one Participant that is human, or human-like. This is the Senser, who feels, thinks, likes and wants. The other Participant that is felt, thought, liked or wanted is identified as the Phenomenon.

You	need not worry.	
He	understood	its profound meaning.
Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon

A verbal Process is a process of saying. The Participant who says something is called the Sayer, and there may also be a Receiver, to whom the words are spoken, and a Verbiage, which refers to what is said.

I	asked	the man	the name of the book.
Sayer	Process: verbal	Receiver	Verbiage

A relational Process serves to characterize or identify an entity. When a Participant is ascribed an Attribute, it is called the Carrier. When a relationship of identity is set up between two Participants, the one that is identified is called Token and the other is Value.

I	am	a commoner.
Carrier	Process: relational, attributive	Attribute

You	are	now	the Sixth Patriarch.
Token	Process: relational, identifying	circumstance	Value

A behavioural Process is a process of (typically human) physiological and psychological behaviour, such as breathing, smiling,

dreaming and coughing. The Participant who is “behaving” is labelled as Behaver. Sometimes there may be another Participant called Behaviour, which is to add specification to the Process.

He	is sleeping.	
She	sang	a beautiful song.
Behaver	Process: behavioural	Behaviour

An existential Process is to represent that something exists or happens. The only one Participant in this process is the Existent.

There	are	one thousand disciples	under the master.
	Process: existential	Existent	Circumstance

Application of TRANSITIVITY to literary study was initiated by Halliday (1971) and then carried on by Kennedy (1982), Fowler (1986), Toolan (1988), Kies (1992), Simpson (1993) and others. Among the studies, those by Hasan (1985), Montgomery (1993), Hubbard (1999, 1994), Ji and Shen (2004) and more recently by Azar and Yazdchi (2012) and Nguyen (2012) focus on the function of TRANSITIVITY in constructing the image of the character. The relevance of TRANSITIVITY analysis and character construction lies in the fact that “. . . part of the basis of our perception of what a person is like derives from knowing what sort of Participant roles are ascribed to that person” (Hasan 1988: 65). By analyzing the participant roles assigned to a character, that is, what the character does, in a literary work, we can obtain linguistic evidence for the writer’s portrayal of the character as active or passive, demanding or submissive, and so on.

3.2. Participant roles of Huineng: his image through actions

The unit of Transitivity analysis is the clause, and it is recognised by identifying Process (in the form of a verbal group), which is “the one obligatory constituent of a clause” (Butt et al. 2012, 35). Processes pertaining to Huineng in the source text and each translation are extracted and manually analyzed in Excel. Transitivity analysis of Chinese is conducted by following descriptions of Halliday and McDonald (2004) and Li (2007). Ambiguous cases are managed by comparing different translations and consulting with other scholars. Participant roles assigned to Huineng in each text are summarized and the profile of Huineng in each text is presented in Figure 1. The Participant roles are listed in the order of dynamism (Hasan 1985; Thompson 2008), i.e., whether the Participant is able to affect the world around him or bring changes to the surrounding environment. While Actor with an animate Goal is the most dynamic, the role of Scope puts the Participant on the margin of the Process and is considered the most passive.

Figure 1. Participant role profiles of Huineng in the source text and translations

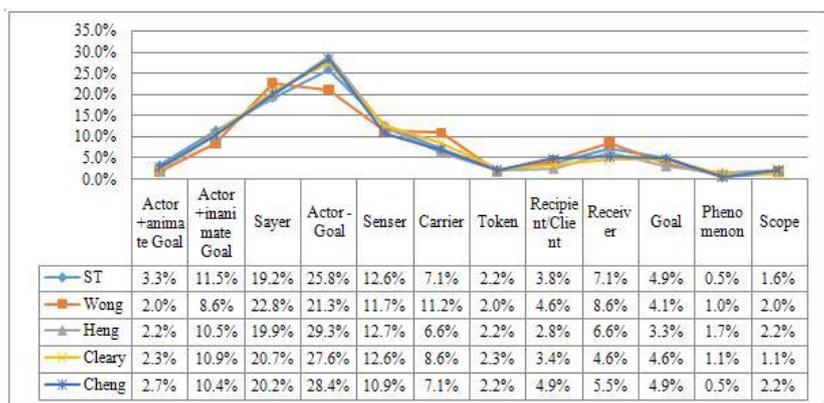


Figure 1 shows that the profile of Huineng is generally dynamic in all the target texts. If we follow Hasan (1985: 46) and take the role of Senser as the half-way point in the cline of dynamism, we can see that there are more dynamic participant roles assigned to Huineng than passive ones. Apart from this general trend, however, Wong's translation differs from all the other texts in that it depicts Huineng less frequently as Actor (Actor +animate Goal, Actor +inanimate Goal and Actor -Goal), but more often as Sayer, Carrier and Receiver. In this way the overall activeness of Huineng is toned down in the translation.

The function of the Participant roles of Actor, Sayer, Carrier and Receiver in creating a certain image of Huineng and the variation in Wong's translation will be discussed in the following.

3.2.1. Huineng's role as Actor

While discussing the story of Huineng, Jorgensen made the following comment.

. . . [the story] is a form of romance, a successful quest involving a journey to distance past; a contest, in this case through the medium of poetry; and a life-and-death struggle in which the hero triumphs because he is superior (2012: 31).

The "quest", "journey" and "struggle" are mainly presented through material Processes in which Huineng takes the Participant role of Actor. While the Participant role of "Actor - Goal" depicts his "quest" and "journey" through actions of movement, as shown in Example 1, the Participant role of "Actor +inanimate Goal" highlights Huineng's hard "struggle" by depicting how he worked as a manual labourer in the temple for a considerable period of time, as shown in Example 2,

Heng: I [Actor] have been *pounding* [Process: material] *rice* [Goal] here for over eight months.

Cleary: I [Actor] have been here *pounding* [Process: material] *rice* [Goal] for over eight months.

Cheng: ...I [Actor] have been *treading* [Process: material] *this pestle* [Goal] for more than eight months by now.

In Example 2, Huineng was telling the boy that ever since he arrived, he had never entered the lecture hall but spent all the time doing manual work. No matter whether the work is “*pounding rice*” or “*treading pestle*”, the circumstance here is again revealing: he had been doing the manual work “*for over eight months*”.

However, as pointed out above, there is a tendency in Wong’s translation to downplay Huineng’s role as the Actor compared with both the source text and other translations. Wong achieved this mainly by adopting a “passive” structure, as illustrated in the following examples.

Example 3

ST: 慧能安置母畢
huìnéng ānzhì mǔ bì

Huineng [Actor] *arrange for* [Process: material] mother [Goal]

Wong: After *arrangements* [Goal] *had been made* [Process: material] for her...

Heng: After *Huineng* [Actor] *had made arrangements* [Process: material] for his mother [Client]...

Cleary: After (I) [Actor] *having gotten* [Process: material] *my mother* [Goal] *settled*...

Cheng: After *I* [Actor] *made arrangements for* [Process: material] the ensconcement of my mother [Goal]...

While the source text and the translations by Heng, Cleary and

Cheng all put Huineng in the role of Actor (\pm Goal), Huineng is absent from Wong's translation. A similar strategy is adopted by Wong in the following example.

Example 4

ST: huineng yu dōngshān dé fǎ
惠能於東山得法

Huineng [Actor] at East Mountain *obtain* [Process: material] *Dharma* [Goal]

Wong: ...*the Dharma* [Goal] *was transmitted* [Process: material] *to me* [Recipient] in Tung Shan

Heng: Huineng [Actor] *obtained* [Process: material] *the Dharma* [Goal] at Tung Shan...

Cleary: I [Actor] *attained* [Process: material] *the teaching* [Goal] on East Mountain...

Cheng: ...I [Actor] *obtained* [Process: material] *the Dharma* [Goal] at East-Hill...

In Example 4, Huineng appears as a Recipient in the Process of transmitting in Wong's translation, rather than the Actor of the Process of obtaining in all the other three translations.

3.2.2. Huineng's role as Sayer and Receiver

A significant feature of Huineng's story is the large number of verbal Processes, where the words spoken and heard help the story develop. As a poor and illiterate woodcutter, Huiennng lacked the resources that others might have except the ability to speak. Before obtaining the Dharma, Huineng was always "*asking*" for information. He only began to "*explain*" to others after becoming the Sixth Patriarch. The Participant roles of Sayer and Receiver mainly present Huineng as an eager knowledge seeker and active interlocutor with others.

High percentages of these two roles in Wong's translation are mainly a result of changing direct speech into indirect speech (in comparison with Heng's translation which adheres to the source text), as shown in Example 5, where only the verbal Processes are identified.

Example 5

ST: huinengyuē wǒ yì yào sòng cǐ jì lái shēngyuán shàng rén
惠能曰。我亦要誦此結來生緣。上人。

Huineng [Sayer] *say* [Process: verbal] I too will recite this create next-life affinity Superior person

wǒ cǐ tà duì bā gè yú yuè wèi céng xíng dào táng qián
我此踏碓。八箇餘月。未曾行到堂前...

I here tread pestle eight more months never walk to front hall

Wong: I [Sayer] then *told* [Process: verbal] the boy that I wished to recite the stanza too, so that I might have an affinity with its teaching in future life.

I [Sayer] also *told* [Process: verbal] him that although I had been pounding rice there for eight months I had never been to the hall...

Heng: Hui Neng [Sayer] *said* [Process: verbal], "I, too, would like to recite it to create an affinity. Superior One, I have been pounding rice here for over eight months and have not yet been to the front hall..."

In this example, the direct speech of Huineng is translated into indirect speech with the addition of a reporting clause "*I also told him*" where Huineng assumes the role of Sayer for the second time.

As for Huineng's Participant role as Receiver, while it is usually left implicit in the dialogues in the source text, it is often spelt out in Wong's translation and interestingly, in the form of "passive" structure again.

Example 6

ST: ^{sui wèn kè sòng hé jīng}
(遂問客誦何經)

(so ask guest recite what sutra)

^{kè yuē jīn gāng jīng}
客曰 金剛經

guest [Sayer] say [Process: verbal] Diamond Sutra

Wong: (Thereupon I asked the man the name of the book he was reciting)

and (I) [Receiver] was told [Process: verbal] that it was the Diamond Sutra

Heng: (Thereupon he asked the customer what Sutra he was reciting.)
The customer [Sayer] replied [Process: verbal], “The Diamond Sutra.”

Example 7

ST: ^{jǐ bài wú zǔ}
(禮拜五祖)

(visit and worship Fifth Patriarch)

^{zǔ wèn yuē rǔ hé fāng rén}
祖 問曰 汝 何 方 人

Patriarch [Sayer]ask [Process: verbal] you which place person

^{yù qǐ hé wù}
欲 求 何 物

want to ask for which thing

Wong: (I then went to pay homage to the Patriarch),
and (I) [Receiver] was asked [Process: verbal] where I belonged
and what I expected to get from him.

Heng: (Huineng) made obeisance to the Fifth Patriarch), who [Sayer]
asked [Process: verbal] him [Receiver], “Where are you from and
what do you seek?”

In Example 6 and 7, where only verbal Processes are identified, “the man” and “the Patriarch” take the role of Sayer in the source text and Heng’s translation, whereas Huineng’s role as Receiver is highlighted in Wong’s translation through a “passive” structure.

3.2.3. Huineng's role as Carrier

The Participant role of Carrier is often used in the story to describe the nature of Huineng. In most cases the Attribute is not something desirable, such as “*I am a commoner from Lingnan*”, which is to describe Huineng's humble origin and arouse sympathy on the part of the audience. This effect is actually enhanced by Wong through a more frequent involvement of Huineng as the Carrier.

Example 8

- ST:** cǐ shēn bù xìng fù yòu zǎo wáng
此身不幸 父又早亡
this body [Carrier] *not lucky* [Process: relational] father [Actor]
too early *die* [Process: Material]
- Wong:** *I* [Carrier] *was* [Process: relational] so *unlucky* that my father
[Actor] *died* [Process: material] when *I* [Carrier] *was very*
young [Process: relational] ...
- Heng:** Unfortunately, *his father* [Actor] soon *died* [Process: material]...
- Cleary:** Unfortunately for me, *my father* [Actor] also *died* [Process:
material] early.
- Cheng:** Unfortunately, *my father* [Actor] *passed away* [Process:
material] early...

Example 8 is at the very beginning of the story, where Huineng talks about his miserable childhood. In Wong's translation, there are three Processes, “*I*” as the Carrier in two relational clauses and “*my father*” as the Actor in a material Process. The two Attributes, “*unlucky*” and “*very young*”, highlight the pitiable image of young Huineng. By contrast, no Participant role is assigned to Huineng in the other three translations.

In summary, the translations by Heng, Cleary and Cheng are relatively equivalent to the source text in terms of experiential

meaning, and present an image of Huineng who is actively involved in his quest and struggle. By contrast, more translation shifts are observed in Wong's translation where Huineng is assigned fewer active but more passive participant roles, such as Receiver and Carrier. In this way Huineng appears to be less active in Wong's translation than in other texts.

4. Interpersonal meaning: how does Huineng interact with others?

Interpersonally, the story presents an image of Huineng who was of low status in a strictly hierarchical society. Unlike the protagonists in the previous Buddhist stories, Huineng was not a member of the royal family, not even a member of the educated elite. He was an illiterate, poor orphan who grew up in the most remote part of the country, as pointed out by de Bary,

The opening passage [of the story], as we have seen, presents Huineng as a very ordinary human being, unless one considers that he is more disadvantaged than most other humans in being poor, orphaned, and illiterate (2011: 138).

The humble origin of Huineng is mainly realised through terms of address used in the dialogues. In ancient China, it was considered that speech should be used appropriately in accordance with the user's status in society (Gu 1990: 238). Speakers and hearers were categorized according to their standing in the social hierarchy, which prescribed their use of terms of address in an interaction (Kádár 2007). More specifically, there was a strict restriction on the use of

first and second person pronouns in conversations (Wang 1980: 275). In most cases, only those with a higher social status can use first person pronouns to refer to themselves and second person pronouns to refer to the hearer. Those with a lower status can only use self-depreciatory terms or their own names as self-reference and honorific terms are used to refer to the hearer. Therefore, terms of address become an important indicator of the relative statuses of characters involved in the story of the *Platform Sutra*.

The function of terms of address (including pronouns and various designative terms) to establish personal relationships has been studied ever since Brown and Gilman (1960, 1989), and constitutes an important perspective to investigate the realization of interpersonal meaning in spoken English (Poynton 1991), pedagogical context (Doherty 2004) and literature (Busse 2006).

Terms of address used in the source text and the translations are summarized in Table 1, which include the terms used by Huineng to refer to himself and others and the terms used by others to refer to Huineng.

Table 1. Terms of address used in the source text and translations

	ST	Wong	Heng	Cleary	Cheng
Huineng's reference to himself	惠能	I	Huineng	I	I
	弟子 (disciple)	I	this disciple	I	I
	我 (I)	I	I	I	I
	吾 (I)	I	I	I	I

Huineng's reference to others	shī 師(teacher)	you	the Master; the High Master	you	Your Mastership
	hé shàng 和尚(monk)	Your Holiness; omitted	High Master	you	Your Holiness; Your Mastership
	shàng rén 上人(Superior Person)	omitted	Superior One	omitted	Elder; you
	bié jiā 別駕(attendant officer)	omitted	the official	omitted	you
	míng shàng zǔ 明上座(Elder Ming)	Venerable Sir	Superior One Hui Ming	you	Elder Ming
	rén zhě 仁者(kind person)	omitted	kind sirs	you	omitted
	fǎ shī 法師(Dharma master)	you	Dharma Master	you	Your Mastership
Others' reference toHuineng	nǚ 汝(you)	you	you	you	you
	nǚ 汝(you)	you	you	you	you
	hú liáo 獺獠(barbarian)	aborigine	barbarian	aborigine	backwater boor
	xíng zhě 行者(practicing man)	Lay Brother	Cultivator	Workman	Oblate; Your Oblateship
rén zhě 仁者(kind man)	you	Kind Sir	you	you	

In referring to himself, Huineng uses his own name for most of the time; the self-depreciatory term “弟子” (disciple), and first person pronouns “我” (I) and “吾” (I) are used twice each. In Huineng’s reference to others, all the terms used are honorific except the second personal pronoun “汝” (you). In contrast, when others refer to Huineng, they use the second person pronoun for most of the time, and even a derogatory term “獺獠” (barbarian) is used three times. Terms of address used in the source text are of such a strong hierarchical nature that they can also reveal, near the end of the story, the change of Huineng’s status from an illiterate woodcutter to the Dharma inheritor. Huineng’s use of first person pronoun “吾” (I) (twice) to refer to himself and second person pronoun “汝” (you) (seven times) to refer to others only occurs near the end of the story when

Huineng has become the Sixth Patriarch. This is the same for the use of “行者” (practicing man) and “仁者” (kind man) as polite references to Huineng by others.

A comparison of terms of address used in the source text and the four translations shows that Heng’s translation retains all references in the source text, Cheng retains most of them, Wong retains only a few and Cleary almost changes all of them simply into “I” and “you”.

Example 9

	the Fifth Patriarch	Huineng
ST:	<p>汝何方人° <small>rǔ hé fāng rén</small></p> <p><i>you</i> which place person</p> <p>欲求何物 <small>yù qiú hé wù</small></p> <p>want to ask for which thing</p>	<p>弟子是嶺南新州百姓° <small>dì zǐ shì líng nán xīn zhōu bǎi xìng</small></p> <p><i>disciple</i> is Lingnan xinzhou commoner</p> <p>遠來禮師 <small>yuǎn lái lǐ shī</small></p> <p>afar come to visit teacher</p>
Wong:	<p>...and was asked where I belonged and what I expected to get from him.</p>	<p>“I am a commoner from Sun Chow of Kwangtung. I have travelled far to pay <i>you</i> respect...”</p>
Heng:	<p>“Where are <i>you</i> from and what do <i>you</i> seek?”</p>	<p>“Your <i>disciple</i> is a commoner from Hsin Chou in Ling Nan and comes from afar to bow to the <i>Master</i>.”</p>
Cleary:	<p>“Where are <i>you</i> from, and what do <i>you</i> want?”</p>	<p>“I am a peasant from Hsin Province in Ling-nan. I have come from far away to pay my respects to <i>you</i>...”</p>
Cheng:	<p>“Where do <i>you</i> come from? And what do <i>you</i> desire to seek here?”</p>	<p>“I am a common citizen of Hsin State in Ling-Nan area. I came from afar to pay homage to Your <i>Mastership</i>.”</p>

This is the first conversation between Huineng and the Fifth

Patriarch. It can be seen that in the source text, the Fifth Patriarch uses second person pronoun “汝” (you) to refer to Huineng, and Huineng uses “弟子” (disciple) as a humble term to refer to himself and “師” (teacher) as an honorific term to refer to the Fifth Patriarch. Both the humble and honorific terms are replaced by “I” and “you” in translations by Wong and Cleary, but both are kept in Heng’s translation.

Although the humble status of Huineng reflected through personal references is not fully retained by Cheng, it seems to be compensated by his use of speech functional metaphors (Matthiessen 1995: 438-444), where indicative clauses are used to realise requests and commands. Compared with other translations, Cheng’s translation uses the fewest imperative clauses (Table 2) as many of the original imperatives are rendered into modulated indicative clauses³.

Table 2. Mood types in the source text and translations

	ST	Wong	Heng	Cleary	Cheng
indicative	162 (86.2%)	130 (87.2%)	167 (88.4%)	156 (88.6%)	166 (91.2%)
declarative	141 (87%)	119 (91.5%)	146 (87.4%)	135 (86.5%)	147 (88.6%)
interrogative	21 (13%)	11 (8.5%) ⁴	21 (12.6%)	21 (13.5%)	19 (11.4%)
imperative	26 (13.8%)	19 (12.8%)	22 (11.6%)	20 (11.4%)	16 (8.8%)
total no. of clauses	188	149	189	176	182

The two ways of depicting Huineng as humble and polite: honorific terms used by Heng and speech functional metaphors used by Cheng, can be illustrated through the following example.

Example 10

ST: 惠能^{huìnéng}不識^{bù shí}字^{zì}。請^{qǐng}上^{shàng}人^{rén}為^{wéi}讀^{dú}

Huineng not know word ask *Superior person* read

Wong: ... (and I asked him) to read it to me, as I am illiterate.

Heng: “*Huineng* cannot read. Please, *Superior One*, read it to me.”

Cleary: “I am illiterate; please read it to me.”

Cheng: “I cannot read; *could you read it for me?*”

In this example, the use of Huineng’s own name as self-reference and an honorific term “上人” (superior person) to refer to the boy passing by his working place are both retained by Heng in her translation. Cheng’s translation, though renders these terms into “I” and “you”, changes the original imperative clause into an interrogative clause modulated by “could”, which achieves similar effect in the target language.

In summary, both the translations by Heng and Cheng are relatively equivalent to the source text in terms of interpersonal meaning and represent the image of Huineng as humble and polite. Translation shifts are more evident in the texts of Wong and Cleary, as most of the original terms of address, which are full of interpersonal connotations, are simply rendered as “I” and “you”. In this way the inferior social status of Huineng in a hierarchical context becomes less apparent to the target readers.

5. Textual meaning: how does the story of Huineng unfold?

5.1. Theme

The textual metafunction of language is to create text and one of its major grammatical systems is THEME, which is defined as follows.

The system of THEME sets up a local environment, providing a point of departure by reference to which the listener interprets the message. With this system the speaker specifies the place in the listener's network of meanings where the message is to be incorporated as relevant. The local environment, serving as point of departure, is the Theme; what is presented in this local environment is the Rheme (Matthiessen and Halliday 2009: 65).

The Theme in English appears in the initial position of the clause. It extends from the beginning of the clause, up to and including the first element that has a function in Transitivity, which is called topical Theme. A topical Theme can be either marked or unmarked. When a topical Theme is conflated with Subject in a declarative clause, with the finite verbal operator in a yes/no question or WH- element in a WH- question, or the predicator in an imperative clause, it is an unmarked Theme.

I	was selling firewood in the market one day.
Do you	understand the situation?
Where	are you from?
Go	to the backyard.
Theme	Rheme

A marked Theme is any element that does not belong to the above-mentioned categories but is put at the beginning of the clause.

One day	the Grand Master called all his disciples to him.
marked Theme	Rheme

Anything else that comes before the topical Theme is also part of the Theme of the clause, though of a different nature. Therefore apart from the topical Theme, the clause may also have a textual Theme, which is usually a continuative, conjunction or conjunctive adjunct,

or any combination of them, and an interpersonal Theme, which may be a vocative, a modal adjunct or a Finite verbal operator of a WH-interrogative, or any combination of them.

So and	I (I)	retired to the backyard, was told by a lay brother to split firewood.
textual Theme	topical Theme	Rheme

Barbarian, I think	your faculties these views of yours	are too sharp. can be of use.
interpersonal Theme	topical Theme	Rheme

Sometimes the topical Theme following a textual Theme may be implicit, but will still be counted in the analysis, as indicated in the above example.

As for Theme in Chinese, although it is generally agreed that Theme in Chinese can also be identified by the initial position, there is controversy over the markedness of the topical Theme. Fang et al. (1995) and Halliday and McDonald (2004) consider that there is no need to make the distinction between marked and unmarked Theme in Chinese, as it is considered that almost any element in the TRANSITIVITY system can be put at the beginning of the clause. But Li (2007) and later Fang (2008) maintain such a distinction and regard any clause-initial element other than the Participant (of the experiential function) which is conflated with the Subject (of the interpersonal function) as marked Theme. The reason for this is that the selection of the first element is usually not random and there is a strong tendency to use unmarked Themes (Li 2007: 164) in Chinese. This study thus follows Li and Fang and distinguishes between marked and unmarked Themes.

5.2. Huineng’s thematic status and ways of storytelling

The analysis in this section is conducted from two perspectives: references to Huineng as the topical Theme and the overall Thematic choices of the texts. Contrary to the interpersonal analysis that focuses on dialogues in Section 4, the analysis of data in this section covers the narrative clauses only.

As the Theme provides the point of departure for the clause and is what the speaker wants to focus on, anything that is put in the initial position obtains thematic prominence (Halliday 1979: 67). Therefore, how often references to Huineng serve as topical Theme can be seen as an indicator of his importance and personal involvement in the storytelling. The occurrences of Huineng as topical Theme in each text are summarized in Table 3, which includes cases where the unmarked topical Theme is left implicit.

Table 3. Huineng as the topical Theme in the source text and translations

	ST	Wong	Heng	Cleary	Cheng
Huineng as topical	64 (34.0%)	53 (32.5%)	53 (30.6%)	60 (33.7%)	68 (33.3%)
total(unmarked) topical	188	163	174	178	178

As presented in Table 3, Huineng appears as the topical Theme more often in the source text than all the translations, though translations by Cleary and Cheng are closer to the source text than those by Heng and Wong. It should also be noted that as Heng’s translation retains the name “*Huineng*” for the whole story, there are many cases where the third person pronoun “*he*” (which refers back to “*Huineng*”) serves as topical Theme. This actually reduces the prominence of Huineng as topical Theme, since “*he*” is also used as anaphora to any one of the male character in the story. In contrast,

there is only one “I” (referring to Huineng) in the narrative parts of the story in other translations.

An analysis of Theme patterns in each text is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Theme in the source text and translations

	ST	Wong	Heng	Cleary	Cheng
interpersonal Theme	-	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)
textual Theme	21 (9.3%)	69 (25.8%)	70 (25.5%)	68 (24.9%)	91 (30.3%)
	206 (90.7%)	197 (73.8%)	203 (74.1%)	204 (74.7%)	208 (69.3%)
topical Theme unmarked	188 (91.3%)	163 (82.7%)	174 (85.7%)	178 (87.3%)	178 (85.6%)
marked	18 (8.7%)	34 (17.3%)	29 (14.3%)	26 (12.7%)	30 (14.4%)

Overall, there is an increase in interpersonal, textual and marked topical Themes in all the four English translations in comparison with the source text.

As for the interpersonal Theme, although there is no clause containing interpersonal Theme in the source text, there is one such a clause in each translation. While Heng, Cleary and Cheng use the same comment Adjunct “*unfortunately*” (Example 11) as interpersonal Theme, Wong uses a metaphorical modality (Example 12).

Example 11

- ST:** cǐ shēn bù xìng fù yòu zǎo wáng
 此身不幸 父又早亡
 this body not lucky father too early die
- Heng:** *Unfortunately*, his father soon died.
- Cleary:** *Unfortunately for me*, my father also died early.
- Cheng:** *Unfortunately*, my father passed away early.

Example 12

ST: 宿昔有緣。乃蒙一客取銀十兩與惠能。令充老母衣糧。

past have affinity so one guest give ten tael silver to Huineng
let buy mother clothes food

教便往黃梅。參禮五祖。

ask to go to Huangmei visit Fifth Patriarch

Wong: *It must be due to my good affinity in past lives that I could have heard about this, and that I was given ten taels for the maintenance of my mother by a man who advised me to go to Wong Mui to interview the Fifth Patriarch.*

Although they are different, the interpersonal Themes help to exhibit an inclination to interact with the audience on the part of Huineng, which is absent in the source text.

As for textual Theme, while there are only 21 clauses with textual Themes in the source text, the number increases to 91 in Cheng’s translation, and nearly 70 in the other three translations. This increase can be seen as the consequence of the typological differences between Chinese and English. As previous studies (e.g., Wang 1984: 468-472) have pointed out, the logical relations between clauses in a clause complex are often left implicit in Chinese with no overt transitions. In the process of translation, the translators may choose to ‘translate’ the implicit transitions by using explicit conjunctions, or, alternatively, by relating two or more clauses that are related cohesively in the source text through tactic structures (Matthiessen 2014: 290-293). This can be illustrated through the following example.

Example 13

<p>ST: <small>shén xiù zuò jǐ chéng yǐ</small> 神秀作偈成已° Shenxiu compose verse already --- <small>shù dù yù chéng</small> ---數度欲呈° ---several times want to submit --- <small>háng zhì táng qián</small> ---行至堂前° ---walk to front hall --- <small>xīn zhōng huāi cuō</small> ---心中恍惚° ---mind in a trance --- <small>biàn shēn hàn liú</small> ---遍身汗流° ---whole body covered by sweat</p>	<p>Wong: <i>When Shin Shau had composed his stanza, he made several attempts to submit it to the Patriarch; but as soon as he went near the hall his mind was so perturbed that he sweated all over his body.</i></p>
	<p>Heng: <i>After composing his verse, ShenHsiu made several attempts to submit it. But whenever he reached the front hall, his mind became agitated and distraught, and his entire body became covered with perspiration.</i></p>
	<p>Cleary: <i>After Shen-hsiu had composed his verse, several times he got as far as the front of the auditorium intending to present it, but each time he felt faint and broke out in a sweat.</i></p>
	<p>Cheng: <i>Having finished composing the Gatha, Shen-Hsiou tried several times to submit it. Yet when he walked up to the front of the hall, he became so distraught and perturbed that he perspired all over.</i></p>

It can be seen that the source text has five clauses all with “神秀” (Shenxiu) as the topical Theme, and there is no textual Theme. By contrast, each English translation has several conjunctions as textual Themes, which relate one clause to another.

As for the marked topical Themes, a considerable increase in the translations can also be observed. In the source text, there are 18 clauses with marked topical Themes. Most of them are temporal

circumstances, which are generally non-specific, such as “復兩日”(two days later) and “又經數日” (several days later). Instead of locating the event in a particular time, these Themes contribute more to the sequential development of the narrative. Time therefore serves as both (marked) topical and cohesive Themes, linking different events in a temporal sequence and making the narrative cohesive.

The number of clauses containing marked topical Themes sees an increase from 18 in the source text to 34 in Wong’s translation, 30 in Cheng’s translation and 29 and 26 in Heng’s and Cleary’s translations respectively. As a large number of the marked topical Themes in the translations are temporal circumstances, this increase indicates that the story is told in a more cohesive way than in the source text, as shown in the following example.

Example 14

ST: <small>zǔ sān gē huàn xiù</small> 祖三更喚秀 Patriarch midnight call Xiu <small>rù táng</small> 入室 to Hall	Wong: <i>At midnight</i> , the Patriarch sent for Shin Chau to come to the hall.
	Heng: <i>At the third watch</i> , the Patriarch called Shen Hsiu into the hall.
	Cleary: <i>In the middle of the night</i> , the Grand Master asked Shen-hsiu to his quarters.
	Cheng: <i>At the third hour that night</i> , the Patriarch summoned Shen-Hsiou to his chamber.

If the focus were put on the clause alone, it would be difficult to understand why all the four translations have “三更” (at midnight) at the beginning of the clause (thus a marked topical Theme). However, if the choice is examined in a broader environment, i.e., the Themes of the previous and following clauses or the thematic progression of

the text, it becomes clear that the shift is to enhance the cohesion of the text. The clause in Example 14 is part of the description of an event that happened during one day. Each of the marked topical Themes in the translations actually corresponds to another marked Theme in a previous clause. Taken together, the correspondence and cohesion of the two marked Themes can be clearly seen.

Example 15

<p>ST: <small>tiānmíng zǔ huàn lú sòngfèng lái</small> 天明祖喚盧供奉來</p> <p>Morning Patriarch call officer Lu to come</p> <p>.....</p> <p><small>zǔ sān gē huàn xiù rù táng</small> 祖三更喚秀入堂</p> <p>Patriarch midnight call Xiu to hall</p>	<p>Wong: <i>In the morning</i>, the Patriarch sent for Mr. Lo, the court artist... </p> <p><i>At midnight</i>, the Patriarch sent for Shin Shau to come to the hall.</p>
	<p>Heng: <i>At daybreak</i>, the Patriarch called Court Artist Lu Chen... </p> <p><i>At the third watch</i>, the Patriarch called ShenHsiu into the hall.</p>
	<p>Cleary: <i>In the morning</i> he called the artist Lu Kung-feng... </p> <p><i>In the middle of the night</i>, the Grand Master asked Shen-hsiu to his quarters.</p>
	<p>Cheng: <i>At dawn</i>, when the Patriarch called Kong-fong Lu... </p> <p><i>At the third hour that night</i>, the Patriarch summoned Shen-Hsiou to his chamber.</p>

It is probable that the translators noticed the use of the marked Theme in the first clause and then chose to keep the same pattern in the second, making a shift in the selection of Theme. This shift, however, is a kind of trade-off as coherence and emphasis are

enhanced at the same time (Eggins 1994: 298).

As discussed above, both the marked (topical) and textual Themes quite often serve as transitions in the texts, and thus provide the speaker with a means to guide the audience in interpreting the unfolding text by linking the current clause to its preceding or following clauses. Compared with the source text, Huineng in the English translations speaks in a more explicit and logical way, providing more guidance to the audience's interpretation of the story. Among the translations, there is a tendency for Wong and Cheng to explicate the connections between clauses more than Heng and Cleary.

6. Conclusion

Based on the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics, this study analyses the meaning reproduction in four English translations of the same story from three perspectives: experiential, interpersonal and textual. It has been found that shifts occur in almost all the translations and consequently lead to variation in the image of Huineng.

Experientially, translations by Heng, Cleary and Cheng are relatively equivalent to the source text in depicting Huineng as an active pursuer of the Dharma, while suppression of Huineng's participant role as Actor and increase of his role as Sayer, Receiver and Carrier in Wong's translation produce an image of Huineng that is less active. Interpersonally, the low status of Huineng is retained in translations by Heng and Cheng, but more or less lost in translations by Cleary and Wong. Textually, all the translations shift away from the source text by reducing references to Huineng that serves as

topical Theme and increasing textual, interpersonal and marked topical Themes. Therefore, Huineng talks in a more cohesive way in the translations than in the source text.

While it can be said that translation shifts are inevitable as “all choices in translation arguably constitute shifts in meaning” (Matthiessen 2014: 275), the various shifts in the translations discussed in this study differ according to their “motivatedness” (ibid). Some of the shifts might have been “motivated” by contextual considerations, such as the shifts in the interpersonal meaning in the translations by Wong and Cleary. As both translations are targeted at ordinary readers, it is probable that the culture-specific terms of address are left out for the sake of acceptability of the translation. Some of the shifts may be considered “motivated” as well, but only tentatively. For instance, the shifts in textual meaning may partly be due to the typological difference between the source and target languages, and may also be the result of the translator’s effort to assist the reader’s comprehension. Still there may be other shifts that seem to be less “motivated”, such as Wong’s preference for the “passive” structure and the consequent creation of a less-active image of Huineng.

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NOTES

1. The term “translation shifts” is first introduced into translations studies by Catford and

- originally refers to “departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL (source language) to TL (target language)” (1965: 73). This definition has been revisited and expanded by many scholars, such as Popovic (1970), van Leuven-Zwart (1989), Munday (1998) and Matthiessen (2014). Matthiessen’s definition is adopted in this study as it is SFL-oriented and pays attention to “meaning”, which is the focus here.
2. In Heng’s translation, the story is told in third person. For more details, see Yu and Wu (in press).
 3. For a detailed discussion on Cheng’s use of modulated indicative clauses, see Yu and Wu (2016).
 4. The low percentage of interrogative clauses in Wong’s translation is due to the change of many questions from direct into indirect speech.

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