

A STUDY OF TRANSLATION PRACTICES UNDER THE THEORY OF CATEGORY SHIFT-TAKING CHAPTER 6 OF THE YOUNG GAMBLERS AS AN EXAMPLE

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ABSTRACT

This study systematically examines the application and limitations of Catford's category shift theory through an English-Chinese translation case study of Chapter 6 of *The Young Gambler*. The four types of category shifts (class shift, structure shift, unit shift, intra-system shift) are found to effectively address syntactic mismatches between English and Chinese, particularly in parts-of-speech conversion and passive-to-active voice transformation. However, the theory has three critical limitations: (1) over-reliance on linguistic structure analysis, ignoring dynamic semantic reconstruction of culture-loaded terms; (2) lack of systematic account of textual coherence, leading to translational discontinuity; (3) insufficient consideration of translator subjectivity in shift strategy selection. The findings suggest integrating cultural translation theories and discourse analysis to enhance the holistic validity of translation practice while preserving the theory's strengths.

Keywords: Catford; Category Shifts; English-Chinese Translation; Discourse Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of translation studies, the notion that human languages share commonalities and universal features has been a subject of extensive scholarly inquiry. John C. Catford, a prominent figure in this field, posits that despite the profound differences in culture, geography, belief systems, and customs, any language in the world can find its corresponding meaning in another language. This implies that all languages are, in essence, translatable. Catford's theory of translation shifts, which encompasses level shifts and category shifts, provides a robust framework for understanding the mechanisms underlying this translatability. Level shifts refer to the phenomenon where a source language unit at one linguistic level is converted into a target language unit at a different linguistic level. Category shifts, on the other hand, involve the transition between different linguistic categories, enabling the source language and the target language to switch roles effectively.

This paper aims to delve into the intricacies of category shifts, employing concrete examples to elucidate the application of Catford's translation shift theory in English-Chinese translation. By examining specific instances of category shifts, we can gain a deeper understanding of how this theoretical framework facilitates the translation process, particularly in the context of two linguistically and culturally distinct languages like English and Chinese.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance the precision and fidelity of translations between English and Chinese. As globalization continues to blur the boundaries between nations, the demand for accurate and culturally sensitive translations has never been greater. By applying Catford's theory to real-world translation scenarios, this research seeks to

contribute to the ongoing discourse on translation practices and to provide practical insights for translators working within the English-Chinese language pair.

Moreover, this paper will explore the challenges and limitations inherent in applying Catford's theory to English-Chinese translation. While the theory offers a valuable lens through which to view translation shifts, it is not without its critiques and areas for further development. By addressing these challenges, the study aims to refine and expand the applicability of Catford's framework, ensuring its relevance in contemporary translation studies.

In summary, this paper will begin by providing a comprehensive overview of Catford's translation shift theory, with a particular focus on category shifts. It will then proceed to analyze specific examples of English-Chinese translations, demonstrating how category shifts operate in practice. Finally, the paper will discuss the implications of these findings for both theoretical and applied translation studies, offering recommendations for future research in this area.

2. CATFORD'S THEORY OF TRANSLATION SHIFTS

2.1 Definition of Shifts

The term "shift" originates from Catford's *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (Catford, 1965: 73), where he dedicates a chapter to discussing this concept. Catford initially defined "shift" as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the source language to the target language." This definition underscores the idea that translation is not merely a word-for-word substitution but involves a dynamic process where the form and structure of the source language may need to be altered to achieve equivalence in the target language.

2.2 Reasons for Shifts

Catford's theory of translation shifts is grounded in the linguistic models proposed by Firth and Halliday, and it employs Halliday's systemic functional grammar and linguistic categories to explain changes in translation at both categorical and structural levels. As Nida (1982: 16) pointed out, from a linguistic perspective, one of the most significant distinctions between English and Chinese lies in the difference between "hypotaxis" (explicit grammatical connections) and "parataxis" (implicit logical connections). Halliday's systemic grammar theory posits three basic levels (form, substance, and context), four fundamental categories (unit, structure, class, and system), and three scales (rank, exponence, and delicacy). Catford's theory of shifts primarily utilizes the grammatical and lexical levels and the four grammatical categories of unit, structure, class, and system.

Catford argues that language is inherently communicative and functions within a context. These functions are realized through various levels (such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis) and ranks (sentence, clause, phrase, word, and morpheme). In his 1962 work *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, Catford introduced the concepts of "formal correspondence" and "textual equivalence", distinguishing between the two and highlighting the necessity of translation shifts due to their significant differences. Translation shifts are categorized into level shifts and category shifts.

2.3 Classification of Shifts

2.3.1 Level Shifts

Level shifts refer to the conversion between source language and target language at different linguistic levels, primarily involving grammatical and lexical transformations. This means that “a source language unit at one linguistic level has a target language equivalent at a different linguistic level.” The levels can be divided into four types: grammar, lexis, phonology, and morphology. Therefore, level shifts can be employed to transform English grammar and vocabulary into Chinese expressions, thereby accurately conveying the original message.

For example, in English-Chinese translation, a grammatical structure in English might need to be converted into a lexical expression in Chinese to maintain the meaning. This is particularly relevant given the differences in grammatical systems between the two languages, such as the use of articles in English, which do not have direct equivalents in Chinese.

2.3.2 Category Shifts

Category shifts occur when the categories (sentence, phrase, word, and morpheme) of the source language do not align with those of the target language. Catford identifies four types of category shifts: class shifts, structure shifts, unit shifts, and intra-system shifts.

Class Shifts: These primarily involve changes in word class. When the equivalent element in the target language differs in word class from the source language, a class shift occurs. For instance, an English noun might be translated into a Chinese verb to preserve the meaning.

Structure Shifts: These involve changes in grammatical structure. Common examples include shifts between active and passive voice, positive and negative constructions, and the prominence of subjects in English versus topics in Chinese. For example, an English sentence with a passive construction might be translated into an active construction in Chinese to better align with Chinese syntactic preferences.

Unit Shifts: Also known as rank shifts, these involve conversions between different linguistic units such as sentences, clauses, phrases, words, and morphemes. A typical example is translating an English word into a Chinese phrase or an English clause into a Chinese sentence. This type of shift is particularly common in English-Chinese translation due to the differences in syntactic structure and the tendency of Chinese to use more paratactic constructions.

Intra-system Shifts: These occur when the source and target languages have roughly corresponding structures, but the translation requires selecting a non-corresponding term within the target language system. For example, the English word “brother” might be translated into either “哥哥” (older brother) or “弟弟”(younger brother) in Chinese, depending on the context, even though English does not make this distinction.

In conclusion, Catford’s theory of translation shifts provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities involved in translating between languages, particularly between English and Chinese. By categorizing shifts into level and category shifts, and further subdividing them, Catford offers a nuanced approach to analyzing and executing translations, ensuring that the target text maintains the intended meaning and function of the source text. This theoretical framework not only aids translators in navigating linguistic differences but also contributes to the broader field of translation studies by providing a systematic method for examining translation processes.

3. APPLICATION OF CATFORD’S CATEGORY SHIFTS IN CHAPTER 6 OF *THE YOUNG GAMBLER*

3.1 Class Shift

3.1.1 Class Shift between Adverb and Adjective

Source Text (ST): Jesse Livermore's four years in Boston's bucket shops had been tremendously educational.

Target Text (TT): 杰西·利弗莫尔在波士顿对赌行鬼混了四年，这有着重大的教育意义。

Application Analysis: The adverb *tremendously* and the adjective *educational* are respectively converted into the Chinese adjective “重大的” (significant) and the noun “教育意义” (educational significance), exemplifying the Class Shift defined by Catford (1965:78). This transformation aligns with the syntactic disparities between English and Chinese: English employs an adverb-adjective compound structure (tremendously educational) to convey evaluation, whereas Chinese favors a static judgment pattern of “有+名词化结构” (have + nominalized structure), as noted by Baker (1992:112). The nominalization not only accommodates the Chinese grammatical feature of emphasizing nouns but also reinforces the reification of abstract concepts through the compound noun “教育意义”, rendering the translation congruent with the cognitive habits of target-language readers.

Limitations Analysis: However, this conversion fails to adequately address the semantic reconstruction of culture-loaded terms. In the Chinese context, “教育意义” (educational significance) implicitly embodies Confucianism's moralized interpretation of “education,” suggesting character development through experience. In contrast, the English educational merely denotes the accumulation of knowledge or experience. Catford's theory, which primarily focuses on linguistic structural transformations, overlooks such profound cultural semantic discrepancies. The neutral connotation of educational in the source text acquires an additional moral-educational connotation in the target text, a cultural filtering effect beyond the explanatory scope of Catford's theory. Complementary strategies from cultural translation theories, such as Newmark's *Semantic and Communicative Translation theories* (Newmark, 1988:45), are thus required.

3.1.2 Class Shift from Adjective to Verb

Source Text (ST): ...considerably less than his peak fortune of \$25,000...

Target Text (TT): ... 远低于他 25,000 美元的财富峰值...

Application Analysis: The conversion of the adjective *less* into the Chinese verb “低于” (lower than) represents a quintessential Class Shift (Catford, 1965:78). English uses an adjective as a predicative (be less than) to express quantitative comparison, while Chinese predominantly relies on verb-predicate sentences (e.g., “低于”, “少于”) to construct comparative relations (Li & Thompson, 1981:468). This transformation converts a static adjective-based comparison into a dynamic action description, conforming to the Chinese syntactic feature of emphasizing verbs. Moreover, the directional verb “低于” enhances semantic clarity by indicating a downward comparison, circumventing the verbosity that might arise from a literal translation of “比... 少”.

Limitations Analysis: This conversion exposes Catford's theory's neglect of pragmatic functional differences. The English *less* objectively describes quantitative disparity, whereas “低于” in Chinese, while indicating comparison, also conveys a pragmatic implication of hierarchical order. For instance, the comparison between “财富峰值” (peak fortune) and the current amount, when expressed by “低于”, subtly suggests a status change from high to low. Such context-dependent pragmatic meanings, being non-structural elements, transcend the theory's focus on linguistic form

conversion. Translators need to consult pragmatic theories, such as Austin's Speech Act theory (Austin, 1962:14), to determine whether to preserve or adjust these implicit meanings, an aspect inadequately addressed by Catford's theory.

3.1.3 Class Shift from Adjective to Verb Phrase

Source Text (ST): ...because my mind was untrained...

Target Text (TT): ... 因为我的头脑未经训练...

Application Analysis: The transformation of the adjective untrained into the Chinese verb phrase “未经训练”(untrained) represents an overlap of Class Shift and Structural Shift (Catford, 1965:78). The static English adjective (untrained) is reconstructed into a dynamic negative structure of “未 + 经 + 动词” (un + through + verb) in Chinese, reflecting the typological difference between English's static and Chinese's dynamic language systems (Newmark, 1988:48). This conversion translates an abstract state description (“an untrained mind”) into a concrete action negation (“not having been trained”), aligning with Chinese syntactic norms that express states through verb phrases and enhancing the logical transparency of the translation.

Limitations Analysis: Although the implied self-critical tone in the source text is retained through “未经训练”, Catford's theory fails to explain the translator's choice of “未经” over alternatives like “没有” (without). In fact, “未经” emphasizes the absence of an active training process, while “没有” merely denotes the lack of a result. This nuanced semantic distinction stems from the translator's subjective choice. By over-relying on structural correspondences within the language system, the theory overlooks how pragmatic lexical choices by translators impact tone conveyance, potentially undermining translational style consistency (Venuti, 1995:56).

3.1.4 Class Shift from Noun to Verb

Source Text (ST): The realization that his time in Boston was over had appeared to trigger a small chemical change in his brain.

Target Text (TT):

他意识到在波士顿的时光已经结束，这似乎在他的大脑中引发了一场小小的化学变化。

Application Analysis: The conversion of the noun *realization* into the verb “意识到” (realize) is a classic instance of Class Shift (Catford, 1965:78). English constructs an objective narrative through a nominalized structure (the realization that...), while Chinese reverts it to a subject-verb-object sentence pattern (“他意识到...”). This transformation reflects the English-Chinese contrast between abstract and concrete thinking (Baker, 1992:112). By converting the abstract mental process into an active cognitive action of the subject, the translation breaks the semantic density of English nominalization and conforms to Chinese narrative style, which emphasizes the subject and de-emphasizes formality.

Limitations Analysis: Catford's theory fails to elucidate the potential impact of such conversions on textual cohesion. In the source text, realization and trigger establish a causal chain (cognition triggers change). However, the translation splits realization into an independent clause (“他意识到...，这似乎...”), which, despite enhancing readability, weakens the direct logical connection between “cognition” and “change”. Lacking a systematic account of textual cohesion mechanisms, the theory may lead translators to sacrifice inter-sentential logical coherence in pursuit of individual sentence fluency when handling nominalized structures. Complementary strategies

from discourse analysis theories, such as Halliday's Cohesion theory (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:31), are thus essential.

3.2 Structural Shift

3.2.1 Structural Shift from Negative to Affirmative Sequencing

Source Text (ST): ...something that he did not understand or even realize was happening until it was way too late.

Target Text (TT): 直到为时过晚，他才理解甚至意识到的正在发生的这些事情。

Application Analysis: The negation structure *not...until...* in the source text is transformed into the affirmative sequential structure “直到...才...” in Chinese, exemplifying the Structural Shift defined by Catford (1965:77). English intensifies the semantic tension of “delayed cognition” through double negation (not + until), whereas Chinese relies on linear sequential logic, adopting a paratactic structure of “fronted temporal adverbial + affirmative predicate” (Li & Thompson, 1981:469). This transformation aligns with Chinese syntactic characteristics of “presenting events in chronological order,” converting the embedded negation in English syntax into explicit chronology in Chinese logic. By using “直到” to define the temporal threshold and “才” to highlight the inevitability of subsequent actions, it circumvents semantic ambiguity that might arise from literal translation of “直到...不...”.

Limitation Analysis: While achieving syntactic naturalization, structural shift diminishes the rhetorical force of the original text. The double negation structure *not...until...* in English creates a dramatic effect of “delayed epiphany” through semantic suppression. In contrast, the affirmative expression “直到...才...” in Chinese tends towards objective narration, diluting the implicit regretful tone of “missing the opportunity” in the source text. Catford's theory focuses on formal equivalence of linguistic structures but fails to establish an evaluation mechanism for rhetorical effects. Consequently, translators lack systematic considerations for stylistic equivalence when handling structural shifts involving tone conveyance. Incorporating Leech's stylistic theory (Leech, 1969:87), translators could reconstruct the tone intensity by adding modifiers (e.g., “直到彻底为时过晚，他才猛然理解”), which represents a pragmatic dimension beyond Catford's theoretical scope.

3.2.2 Structural Shift from Passive to Active Voice

Source Text (ST): I have been told that I am a good reader of the tape.

Target Text (TT): 有人告诉我，我是一个很棒的行情掌握者。

Application Analysis: The transformation from the English passive voice have been told to the Chinese active structure “有人告诉我” constitutes a typical Structural Shift (Catford, 1965:80). English passive sentences create an objective narrative effect by omitting the agent (agentless construction), whereas Chinese, as a topic-prominent language, prefers using “indefinite subject + active voice” (e.g., “有人”, “人们”) to specify the agent (Li & Thompson, 1981:468). This shift not only neutralizes the formal characteristics of English passive sentences but also transforms the indirect information reception (being told) into a direct interpersonal communication scenario via the generalized agent “有人”. This aligns with Chinese expressive habits that prioritize subjectivity over formality.

Limitation Analysis: This transformation exposes the explanatory gap in Catford's theory regarding “information focus migration”. The information focus of the English passive sentence

resides in “the content being told” (I am a good reader), with the agent in a backgrounded position. Conversely, the Chinese active sentence foregrounds “the act of information transfer” through “有人告诉我”, shifting the focus from “content” to “action”. Although enhancing readability, this focus shift may result in the loss of the implicit “objective authority” in the source text. The English have been told implies the broadness of the information source (e.g., industry consensus), which is weakened by the vagueness of “有人”. Lacking an analytical framework for information structure, Catford’s theory necessitates supplementation with Halliday’s functional grammar (Halliday, 1994:35) to consider theme-rheme distribution.

3.2.3 Structural Shift from Passive to Purpose-Marking Phrase

Source Text (ST): He finally realized he had never beaten the market but merely bucked the bucket shop system that was designed to rip off its customers.

Target Text (TT):

他最终意识到，他从未战胜过市场，而只是战胜了用来敲诈顾客的对赌行行业规则。

Application Analysis: The transformation of the English passive structure *was designed to* into a Chinese purpose adverbial phrase introduced by “用来” represents a voice reconstruction within Structural Shift (Catford, 1965:80). English emphasizes the objective attribute of the system (its designed purpose) through the passive voice (be designed), while Chinese directly reveals the behavioral intention with the active-functional marker “用来” (used for). This shift reflects the essential difference in voice between English and Chinese: English passive sentences focus on state description, whereas the Chinese “用来” structure emphasizes functional explanation, conforming to Chinese syntactic features of “parataxis over hypotaxis” (Nida & Taber, 1969:165).

Limitation Analysis: Structural shift weakens the implicit “power relations” in the source text. The English passive sentence *was designed to rip off* contains an implicit critique of the “designer” through the passive form (passive voice + infinitive) (Who designed this system?). In contrast, the Chinese “用来敲诈” concentrates on the system’s function, eliminating the inquiry into the responsible party (likely the bucket shop operators). Catford’s theory solely focuses on the transformation paths of linguistic forms, neglecting power discourse analysis at the level of sociosemiotics. By integrating Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992:23), translators can recognize that such structural shifts may lead to ideological filtering—the implicit critique of capital exploitation in the source text is partially diluted in the target text due to voice choices, exemplifying the absence of sociocultural dimensions in the theoretical framework.

3.3 Unit Shift

3.3.1 Unit Shift from Prepositional Phrase to Independent Clause

Source Text (ST): But in a pattern that was to continue for the rest of his life, he decided that there was no one to blame but himself.

Target Text (TT): 但这种模式将持续他一生，他断定除了他自己，没有人可以责怪。

Application Analysis: The transformation of the prepositional phrase *in a pattern that...* into an independent clause “但这种模式将持续他一生” exemplifies a classic Unit Shift, transitioning from the phrase rank in English to the clause rank in Chinese (Catford, 1965:79). English embeds background information through the prepositional structure (in a pattern), whereas Chinese tends to isolate modifier elements into separate clauses, forming a “flowing sentence” structure (Li &

Thompson, 1981:469). This shift restructures the original hierarchical relationship by elevating background information into an independent event. The use of “这种模式” to anaphorically reference the previous context enhances textual cohesion. By juxtaposing “the pattern’s continuity” and “self-blame,” the translation highlights the cyclical nature of the protagonist’s fate and the consistency of his character.

Limitation Analysis: While enhancing readability, unit shift weakens the logical embedding in the source text. As an adverbial, the English phrase *in a pattern that...* implies the contextual framework for the action of “deciding.” However, the independent clause in Chinese dilutes the dependency between “the pattern” and “the decision.” Catford’s theory focuses solely on hierarchical unit transformation without addressing logical embedding. Translators may disrupt the semantic stratification of the original text in pursuit of syntactic fluency. To re-establish cross-sentence logical connections, discourse analysis theories, such as Halliday’s Theme-Rheme Structure (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:31), are required.

3.3.2 Unit Shift from Complex Clause to Parallel Structure

Source Text (ST): But he also concluded that when he was absolutely sure he was right, he was always right.

Target Text (TT): 但他也得出结论，当他百分百确定自己是对的时候，他总是对的。

Application Analysis: The complex clause concluded that when... is transformed into parallel clauses led by “得出结论”，representing a hierarchical downgrading in unit shift (Catford, 1965:79). The three-level unit structure in English (sentence→clause→phrase) simplifies into a two-level structure (clause→phrase) in Chinese. The independent clause “当他百分百确定...” is semantically connected through the temporal marker “当”，aligning with Chinese narrative principles that prioritize chronological order (Li & Thompson, 1981:470). The amplified translation of absolutely sure as “百分百确定” not only accommodates Chinese preference for degree adverbs but also creates a rhetorical chiasmus through the repetition of “是对的”，enhancing rhythmicity.

Limitations Analysis: Unit shift obscures the logical recursiveness of the original text. The English clause when he was absolutely sure he was right embeds two layers of affirmation, forming a metacognitive confirmation structure. In contrast, the Chinese translation flattens this into a linear temporal description, weakening the logical reciprocity between “certainty” and “correctness”. Catford’s theory neglects semantic hierarchy mapping, potentially causing translators to lose the original text’s depth. Analyzing semantic integrity requires logical semantics theories, such as Toulmin’s argumentation model (Toulmin, 1958:97).

3.3.3 Unit Shift from Relative Clause to Coordinate Clause

Source Text (ST): ...he met a girl called Nettie Jordan whose family lived in Indianapolis.

Target Text (TT): 他遇到了一个名叫内蒂·乔丹的女孩，她的家人住在印第安纳波利斯。

Application Analysis: The transformation of the relative clause whose family lived in Indianapolis into a coordinate clause “她的家人住在印第安纳波利斯” represents clause splitting in unit shift (Catford, 1965:79). English constructs a modifying relationship through the relative pronoun whose, while Chinese converts it into an independent clause, maintaining reference through “她的”，reflecting the fundamental contrast between hypotactic English and paratactic

Chinese (Hatim & Munday, 2004:124). This shift avoids overly long modifiers in Chinese and adheres to the principle of “one event per sentence”. The coordinate structure equalizes “meeting the girl” and “family background”, facilitating incremental information processing for target readers.

Limitations Analysis: Splitting the relative clause shifts the information focus of the original text. In the English main clause he met a girl, the information focus is clear, with the relative clause serving as supplementary detail. However, the coordinate clause in Chinese elevates the “family background” to primary information, blurring the hierarchical relationship. Catford’s theory lacks strategies for information focus transformation, leaving translators uncertain about adjusting word order to maintain the original focus. This limitation highlights the necessity of integrating information structure theories, such as Chafe’s Topic-Focus theory (Chafe, 1994:87), to prevent semantic imbalance during unit shift.

3.4 Intra-system Shift

3.4.1 Tense System Shift

Source Text (ST): By the time he left Boston, Livermore had already lost most of his \$25,000 stake.

Target Text (TT): 离开波士顿时，利弗莫尔已输掉了 25,000 美元本金的大部分。

Application Analysis: The conversion of the English past perfect tense *had lost* into the Chinese dynamic particle structure “已输掉” represents an intra-system shift in the tense system (Catford, 1965:81). English marks temporal precedence through verb morphology (-ed participle + had), whereas Chinese relies on the adverb “已”(already) and the dynamic particle “掉” to convey tense meanings. This shift aligns with Chinese’s characteristic of “emphasizing lexical means over morphological changes” (Li & Thompson, 1981:472). By pairing the temporal adverbial “离开波士顿时” (by the time he left Boston) with “已”, the translation reconstructs the “past-in-the-past” aspectual relationship in Chinese, a language lacking morphological inflections, ensuring clear temporal logic.

Limitation Analysis: The intra-system shift theory fails to account for the loss of implicit emotional connotations in tense conversion. While the English past perfect *had lost* states a fact, it also implies regret over the rapid dissipation of wealth. In contrast, the neutral Chinese expression “已输掉” weakens this emotional dimension. Catford’s theory focuses on formal correspondences within grammatical systems but overlooks the pragmatic functions of tense choices in specific contexts. Translators need to employ Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005:37) to identify attitudinal resources in the source text—for instance, the intensifying adverb “already” amplifies regret—an aspect beyond the scope of intra-system shift analysis.

3.4.2 Modal System Shift

Source Text (ST): You must remember that bucket shops were not in the business of **taking risks**. **Target Text (TT):** 你要知道，对赌行从来不做冒险的生意。

Application Analysis: Translating the English modal verb *must* into the Chinese modal auxiliary “要” constitutes an intra-system shift in the modal system (Catford, 1965:82). English expresses degrees of obligation through the strength hierarchy of modal verbs (must > should > may), while Chinese uses modal auxiliaries like “要”, “应该” (should), and “得” (have to). Here, translating

must as “要” instead of “必须” (*must*) precisely matches the “obligation–suggestion” gradient in Chinese’s modal system. “要” conveys both admonition and reminder, fitting the pragmatic context of a dialogue (Palmer, 1990:78).

Limitation Analysis: Intra-system shift may lead to misjudgments of modal strength. English *must* implies compulsion in formal contexts, whereas Chinese “要” leans towards suggestion, highlighting cross-linguistic disparities in modal systems. Catford’s theory merely focuses on grammatical correspondences (e.g., equating *must* with “必须/要”) without establishing a context-dependent framework for analyzing modal semantic fields. Ignoring the background information “bucket shops were not...” may cause translators to misinterpret *must*’s pragmatic function, resulting in translations that are either too forceful (e.g., “必须”) or understate its cautionary tone (e.g., “需要”). Analyzing the contextual adaptability of modal verbs requires Pragmatic Memetics (He, 2018:45).

3.4.3 Number Category Shift

Source Text (ST): The tips from these so-called friends often led to disastrous **trades**. **Target Text (TT):** 这些所谓朋友的建议常常导致灾难性的交易。

Application Analysis: The conversion of the English plural noun *friends* into the morphologically unmarked Chinese “朋友”, with the plural concept conveyed by the demonstrative pronoun “这些” (these), exemplifies an intra-system shift in the number category (Catford, 1965:81). English marks plurality with the -s suffix, while Chinese relies on numeral classifiers (这些/那些) or contextual cues. The translation clarifies plurality through “这些”, adhering to Chinese grammar rules that require explicit marking for countable nouns in the plural. It also avoids the colloquialism of a literal translation “朋友们”, since the source text’s “so-called friends” carries derogatory connotations, and the singular form “朋友” conveys greater detachment.

Limitation Analysis: Number category shifts may obscure the source text’s evaluative meanings. The plural form *friends* in the English ST is ironic—ostensibly referring to multiple companions but actually denoting fair-weather friends. Chinese’s lack of plural morphology in “朋友” necessitates the use of “所谓” to reinforce negativity. Catford’s theory only addresses grammatical correspondences in number categories, neglecting the reconstruction of evaluative meanings in lexical category shifts. Translators should apply lexical semantics—such as Leech’s theory of associative meanings (Leech, 1981:12)—to identify the additional connotations of plural forms in context and prevent emotional meaning loss.

3.4.4 Negation System Shift

Source Text (ST): There was no way to predict the fluctuations without studying the **tape**. **Target Text (TT):** 不研究行情就无法预测价格波动。

Application Analysis: Translating the English double negative structure *no way...without* into the Chinese conditional negation pattern “不... 就无法” represents an intra-system shift in the negation system (Catford, 1965:83). English intensifies necessity with “no + noun + without + gerund”, while Chinese achieves equivalent logic through the chain structure of “不” (premise negation) and “无法” (result negation). This shift aligns with Chinese’s linear “condition–result” expression

style, deconstructing the English's three-dimensional negation (where "no way" denotes the result and "without" the condition) into sequential clauses, enhancing semantic clarity (Nida, 1982:67).

Limitation Analysis: Negation system shifts may weaken logical intensity. English *no way...without* creates a strong assertion of "absolute necessity" through double negation, whereas the Chinese "不... 就无法" retains the logical relationship but softens the absoluteness of "no way". Chinese more strongly expresses this meaning with "除非... 否则无法" (unless...otherwise unable). Catford's theory focuses solely on grammatical correspondences of negation forms without establishing a mechanism for evaluating logical modal strength. Mechanical application of intra-system shift rules may cause translators to miss the ST's pragmatic force; thus, analyzing the modal hierarchy of negation structures requires logical semantics (e.g., Kratzer's modal logic theory, 2012:55).

4. CONCLUSION

Catford's Translation Shift Theory provides an objective and meticulous description of translation shifts at lexical, syntactic, and other linguistic levels, with a primary focus on the relationship between source and target texts. Guided by this theory, this paper analyzes selected chapters of *The Young Gambler*, examining the application of translation shift theory in translation practice through concrete case studies.

However, the theory also exhibits limitations. While it thoroughly delineates the translation process and shifts, it fails to establish criteria for evaluating the quality of translated texts and neglects considerations of textual cohesion and coherence. Consequently, translators must not only apply translation shift theory but also enhance translation quality by addressing linguistic differences between English and Chinese, such as adjusting cohesive devices, supplementing conjunctions, or retaining lexical repetition.

Furthermore, the theory cannot account for all linguistic transformations and overly emphasizes linguistic factors while overlooking non-linguistic elements, such as cultural, psychological, and social dimensions. This study argues that future research on translation practice should explore the role of these non-linguistic factors in translation. While this paper offers a preliminary application of the theory, its depth remains limited. Further in-depth investigations are warranted to advance the development of translation studies.

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