

## Saving Face of the ‘Saviour’: The Translations of the Thai Prime Minister’s 2015 Press Interview and the 2020 National Address

Narongdej Phanthaphoommee  
[narongdej.pha@mahidol.edu](mailto:narongdej.pha@mahidol.edu)  
Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia,  
Mahidol University, Thailand

### ABSTRACT

Thailand became a military dictatorship in May 2014, after the army deposed the democratically elected government. After being chastised for his lack of legitimacy and appeasing his opposition, Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha began to give official interviews to the international press in his second year in office and intermittently delivered the mandatory live broadcast address to the public. This paper focuses on English translations of Prayut’s 2015 interview with Al-Jazeera and his 2020 televised address. The former is characterised by an impromptu speech that demonstrates his informal speaking style, whereas the latter is a well-scripted address. Using the appraisal framework (Martin & Rose, 2007; Munday, 2012) to analyse both translations, the paper proposes negotiator as an additional resource for examining the speaker’s attitude and the translator’s evaluative choices in the English written version. This investigation demonstrates the translator’s active mediation in both subtitles for media presentation and official translation for national address: maintaining applause for the ruling government while negatively evaluating its critics; modifying the force of attitude; removing any improper features in the premier’s manner of speaking. Despite differences in time and commission, the study argues that both translations support and sustain the Thai government’s aspiration of gaining international attention in order to improve their post-coup image or save the face of the nation’s ‘saviour’, who staged the coup to help the Thai people from the political dispute. Furthermore, the findings on negotiator can be used to inform quality translation training and practice, particularly the translator’s decision-making regarding spoken features in political speeches.

**Keywords:** appraisal; negotiator; political text; Thai politics; translation

### INTRODUCTION

In the June 2015 interview with Al-Jazeera, Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha assured the reporter that “no one else could do the job”, highlighting the military’s strong justification for staging the 2014 coup, which ended the protest-induced political upheaval in Bangkok that caused the tragic loss of many lives. The coup represented an ironic political position of the established urban middle class in support of the army’s usurpation of power (Tejapira, 2016, p. 219). It was the result of ineffective Thai body politics and a return to authoritarian structures and attitudes, with a powerful ally in the aristocracy, military, and middle classes (Sopranzetti, 2016, p. 7).

The coup sparked numerous protests, which were quickly quenched by harsh measures to limit political gatherings and even comments on online social media platforms (Maida, 2019). The junta launched multiple public relations campaigns, including a weekly prime ministerial address and interviews with international media, in order to legitimise themselves, win over Thais, and capture the attention of international audiences. The junta tried hard to impose on Thai citizens

their version of morality and values of the hierarchical social class with the responsibility of being ‘good citizens’ in order to end the lengthy dispute and uplift their post-coup support (Chachavalpongpun, 2014), or in what Desatova (2018) calls ‘to rebrand Thailand’. This brings us to the first case in our investigation: the translation of Prayut’s interview with Al-Jazeera as part of the military government’s rebranding effort to gain international visibility and present their version of the coup.

The second case investigated in this study is the translation of General Prayut’s national address following the incident of anti-government protesters clashing with police on the night of 16 October 2020. The peaceful gathering in Bangkok’s centre was dispersed by police using water cannons, resulting in a number of arrests. General Prayut declared a state of emergency immediately, citing anti-government demonstrations against the constitution, threats to national security, and efforts to contain the Covid-19 pandemic (Nanuam & Bangprapa, 2020). Although no one was fatally harmed, it became a watershed moment in which the incumbent government attempted to appease the dissidents by delivering a televised address to quell the resentment, this time in the form of a prepared speech.

This paper is interested in knowing if there are any variations in attitude mediation between spontaneous speech (talk to Al-Jazeera) and prepared speech (televised address) after both texts have been translated. The reason for selecting these datasets is that they reflect different periods in Thailand’s recent political history, during which the junta used translation methods to legitimise its actions. According to Schäffner and Bassnett (2010, p. 13), translation can be an integrated, operational component of politics; texts that are translated are inherently a declaration of political intent. In this sense, translation becomes a form of mediation, as previously suggested by Hatim and Mason (1997). Mediation in translation is undoubtedly important for both texts in the current study, as they may present the prime minister’s tactical move for international appeal and expose his attitude towards his government’s and other people’s ideological positions.

When it comes to investigating ideological shifts in translation, Munday (2007) asserts that a thorough source-target text explanation can serve as a ‘forensic analysis’ to reveal not only what the meanings of the individual text are but also whether the translation manipulates the message of the original (p. 197). This paper thus employs the appraisal framework to interpret the speaker’s attitude, which may have been ideologically mediated during the translation process. The research questions are: (1) what are the patterns of attitudinal shift found in two translation cases, and (2) are those shifts in both datasets significantly different from one another or in terms of political implications? The following section provides a summary of the appraisal framework and its implementation by various translation studies scholars.

## APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDE

As part of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), appraisal theory has been introduced as a system for evaluating interpersonal meanings in a text/utterance (Martin & White, 2005). The appraisal system is a discourse semantic that ‘enacts’ social relationships by supplying values and connecting readers/listeners with the writer’s/speaker’s attitudes. It negotiates one’s emotions and judgements and provides resources that strengthen and engage with these evaluated attitudes (Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 25-26). Appraisal can be divided into three main concepts: attitude, engagement, and graduation.

To begin, attitude refers to one’s feelings and emotional reactions to people or things, which can be further classified into three types. Affect concerns one’s own positive or negative

feelings and can be classified according to emotional categories such as happiness/unhappiness, security/insecurity (Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 66-67), and inclination/disinclination (Munday, 2012, p. 46). Judgement is the institutionalised expression of one's attitude towards the disposition of others, and it reveals the speaker's ideas of social esteem (admiration or criticism) and social sanction (praise or condemnation) (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 68). Appreciation is also an institutionalised representation of norms about how things and actions are evaluated, including reaction, composition, and valuation (Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 69–70).

Appraisal of one's attitude can be explicitly inscribed in a text/utterance by using attitude-laden words, or it can be subtly invoked by using an attitudinal token such as metaphor, non-core words, or a factual message demonstrating 'common sense' (such as quote or statistics) (Martin & White, 2005, p. 67). This indirect invocation of one's feelings may convey different effects in the translated text, for there is a tendency for the translator to gloss over the attitude-rich layers of meaning in favour of terms with less strength in attitude. Munday (2007, p. 123) points out that these equivalent choices are suggestive of the translator's interventions.

Second, engagement is an indicator of one's stance towards the expression of a certain value that tries to shape the reader's or listener's reaction by limiting or broadening the possible array of emotions (Martin & White, 2005, p. 36). The engagement carries forward either monoglossic or heteroglossic expressions. By proffering an idea as pragmatism without necessary options, monoglossic expressions use inferential claims to construct common values with the reader/listener. Heteroglossic expressions, on the other hand, entertain the possibility of different perspectives, feedback, and alternatives (Martin & White, 2005, p. 102). Drawing upon the explanations by applied linguists to analyse translation, Munday (2017, pp. 87-88) focuses on reporting verbs as a heteroglossic indicator that can be divided into three rhetorical functions: research, cognition, and discourse acts. Reporting verbs signal a specific viewpoint towards an assertion and can be realised along the possible cline of opinion or level of confidence in the statement (e.g., *show, suggest, claim*).

Third, graduation refers to how the scale of force and focus influence attitude. It can be amplified (*far, significantly*), sharpened (*really, utterly*), or softened (*somewhat, rather*) (Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 42-48). These discourse markers are known as graduation resources, and they can be graded by degree (low, medium, or high) to display personal attitude and engagement (Munday, 2017, p. 94).

Besides the above three components of appraisal, this paper proposes an additional category for analysis that particularly concerns the case of Thai-English translation – negotiator. It is a resource for negotiating attitudes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 142), which can contribute to an understanding of the interpersonal meanings of language, especially the translation of spoken discourse. Negotiator (or modality realised through lexis) is a prevalent modal element in Thai spoken language that varies according to mood type (interrogative, declarative, imperative). It can be located at the start or end of a clause. There are four basic types: exclamatory (exclaiming wonderment, disappointment, and sympathy), polar (choosing between two elements), attitudinal (giving judgement), and politeness (exhibiting social distance) (Patpong, 2006, pp. 99-101). Negotiator is a feature that appears mostly in spoken discourse. Although the transcriptions of the prime minister's utterances are the source texts of the current study, the English translations are identified as constituting written texts to make them official, which inevitably affects how the translator evaluates the attitudinal pattern of negotiator. At this juncture, no research on translation has been conducted that directly applies the negotiator system to the

study of translated text; only a brief mention of the possibility of comparing negotiator between two languages as a tool for analysing the different interpersonal functions (Figueredo, 2021).

Many translation studies scholars have used the appraisal framework to examine translated texts of various genres. Munday (2012, 2017, 2018) was among the first to apply appraisal elements to the translation of evaluative language, particularly in analysing political speeches. Kamyantets (2020) used an attitudinal framework to scrutinise the evaluative vocabulary of Ukrainian opinion articles and their English version, discovering that the translation is typically less negative. Luporini (2021) adopted the appraisal framework to examine the metaphors and nominalisations used in news coverage of the coronavirus. In the Asian context, Pan (2015) applied the graduation system to look into news about China's human rights problem that was reported by major English media outlets and how they were rendered by Chinese state-run media. Qin and Zhang (2020) used the engagement system to investigate the stance of news headlines that were conditioned by the transediting process. Li and Zhang (2021) employed the same framework to examine the 2018 press conference interpretation of the Chinese Foreign Minister through engagement choices that were arguably motivated by the interpreter's ideological alignment with the institutional power. Similarly, Phanthaphoommee (2021, 2022a) also adopted the appraisal framework to study the Thai translations of the US presidents' inaugural addresses.

This paper seeks to further contribute to the application of the appraisal framework to translation studies with regard to political texts, particularly the English translation of the two Thai PM's discourses, along with the discussion of their implications for Thai politics.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper examines two sets of English translations of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha's speeches: the first is his 2015 interview with Al-Jazeera, and the second is the 2020 live address following the police's crackdown on anti-government rallies.

The international press interview lasted 25.22 minutes and aired on 13 June 2015, one year after the coup d'état in May 2014. The video was retrieved from YouTube and then, through a manual process, transcribed to generate a textual corpus of Prayut's original speech (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD5wHimG5Fw&t=153s>). The study did not include all the host's questions but only looked at relevant points to explain Prayut's specific responses. Following the coup, General Prayut assumed control as prime minister, promising to bring 'happiness' and 'reconciliation' to the nation. His opponents have chastised his tenure, citing the restrictions on political activity and the military control over the drafting of the new constitution as dangers to democracy (Abuza, 2021). Prayut's interview with Al-Jazeera was putatively meant to respond to his critics while also explaining his coup attempt and sociopolitical concerns; in other words, to justify his belief in his ability to control the country.

The second dataset came from the Thai Spokesman Bureau's official Facebook page, *Thai Khu Fa* (<https://www.facebook.com/ThaigovSpokesman>). In this address, Prayut stated that lifting the emergency decree is the first step towards avoiding the confrontations that have been brewing since late 2019, with the younger generation playing a key role (Sinpeng, 2021). He also suggested parliamentary involvement to quell protesters' calls for his resignation. Their demands, in fact, include a revamp of the 2017 Constitution, which devalues the electorate's power by establishing a designated Senate group. His speech themes revolved around portraying himself as a timely leader who united the nation and settled disputes among its citizens, as well as urging protesters to put their trust in parliament to deal with the crisis (Paddock & Suhartono, 2020).

Using both datasets, this paper focuses on Prayut’s speaking style, which has been described as distinct and full of discourse features indicative of colloquialism and informal speech. Despite being in such a formal setting as his previous weekly address, his speaking style is characterised by a mix of modes: “avuncular, patronising, self-pitying, tough-talking, and downright obnoxious” (McCargo, 2015, p. 344). The study gives equal weight to Prayut’s recurring theme of the country’s peace and order, along with his use of both negative and positive attitude-laden terms that may elicit emotional responses from the audience. These evaluative elements in his speeches are prone to being shifted in translations due to the different natures of spoken (source text) and written (target text) language.

The framework used in this investigation is based on appraisal resources for examining the speaker’s evaluation of feelings and attitudes towards individuals and phenomena. This paper highlights the comparison of source and target texts on shifts in attitude-laden terms, graduation, and engagement, as well as the proposed appraisal resource of negotiator. Table 1 displays the investigating tools for data analysis and examples retrieved from the corpus.

TABLE 1. Resources for investigating speaker’s and translator’s evaluations

<b>Source text:</b>	พูดจริงๆ ... ไม่ได้มีความสุขมากมายนักอะนะ เพียงแต่มีความสุขที่ได้ทำงาน ผมเสียสละเหมือนกัน
<b>Gloss:</b>	[I truly say ... I’m not too much happy. Only happy when I can work. I’ve sacrificed (something) too.]
<b>Target text:</b>	neither I nor my family are [sic] particularly happy except for being happy about being able to work ... forsake something

Resource	Original speech	English translation
Appraisal	มีความสุข ‘happy’, เสียสละ ‘sacrificed’	<i>happy, forsake</i>
Graduation	มากมายนัก ‘too much’	<i>particularly</i>
Engagement	พูดจริงๆ ‘truly say’, เพียงแต่ ‘only’	n/a, <i>except for</i>
Negotiator	อะนะ [negotiator]	n/a

Table 1 illustrates how Prayut’s appraisal profile can be analysed by considering each category of evaluative items in his speeches and their English translation. The findings interpretation includes both obligatory shift (caused by syntactical differences between languages) and optional shift (caused by translator choices or institutional influence), with the latter more likely to reflect an interventionist approach motivated by the translator’s ideological position. The obligatory shift will be discussed in particular with the case of negotiator, which is typically realised in Thai by lexis but is often overlooked when rendered into English. The next sections show the results from the examination of translation shifts, beginning with the Al-Jazeera interview and then the national address.

### DIFFERENT ATTITUDES IN THE SUBTITLE OF THE TALK TO AL-JAZEERA

Prayut spent most of his Al-Jazeera interview justifying the 2014 coup, which is replete with direct expressions of attitude towards the former elected government and the recent political turmoil. By contextualising the political situation as “no one else could do the job, only me” (07:02 mins), he showed the sense of insecurity and criticism of legal problems that the previous administration was unable to untangle. However, only his military force could resolve the conflicts brought about by such problems. With the undertone of urging the country to move forward, his speech is

saturated with the sense of inclination or the increase in tendency in Munday's (2012, pp. 45-46) subcategory of affect. The examination of original speech and translation appraisal profiles reveals some remarkable tendencies in praising the incumbent government while adversely judging his opposition, changing the degree of attitude, and obscuring the improper characteristic in spoken language.

### TAKING CREDIT FOR SAVING THE COUNTRY WHILE CONDEMNING OTHERS

Prayut's speech is filled with positive portrayals of himself and his administration, but the English version even enhances the polished image of his regime. Each example below will begin with Prayut's Thai original, followed by their gloss and the English translation as shown on the news agency's screen.

- (1) เพราะฉะนั้นสิ่งที่ผมทำวันนี้ นอกจากผมเสี่ยงตัวเองแล้วนะ ผมยังต้องสร้างอนาคตให้ประเทศ  
[So, what I'm doing today is that, apart from **risking myself**, I must also build a future for the country.]  
So apart from **putting myself in the firing line**, what I now want to do is to build a future for the country.

Despite the fact that his speech is only found with the term 'risking myself', example (1) is an instance of eliciting a positive response by the use of a lexical metaphor: *putting myself in the firing line*. As a result, the subtitle emphasises the soldier's concept as the nation's fence, which has been ingrained in Thai mentality since the cold war era (Reynolds, 2004).

- (2) ผมก็สัญญากับเขาว่า ผมจะวางพื้นฐานไม่ให้นมันเกิดขึ้นม้ออีก โดยผมไม่อยู่มันก็ต้องไม่เกิด  
[I promise them that I will **lay the foundation not to let it** happen again; while I'm not here, **it** must not happen.]  
I promise them that I will **take measures to ensure** that there is no recurrence of **unrest**.

The sense of security in Prayut's English subtitle was increased in (2) with the use of such terms that convey a more robust attitude ('lay the foundation not to let it' vs *take measures to ensure*). Furthermore, the explicit negative attitude is highlighted because the translator foregrounds the term *unrest* instead of the pronoun 'it' in the original, thereby showing Prayut's emphasis on a perilous situation in which the army's responsibility is to keep the society in order.

There is also the case of Prayut's judgement towards the two groups of people who are in opposition to his ideological stance.

- (3)  
a. รัฐบาลที่มาจากกาเลือกตั้งจะไม่ทำเรื่องเหล่านี้  
[the government that comes from the election **would not address** all these issues (human trafficking)].  
the previously elected governments **had not addressed** these problems  
b. นักวิชาการไทยส่วนนี้เขาไม่ค่อยเคยปฏิบัติมาก่อน แต่เขามีความคิด มีหนังสืออ่าน มีอะไรต่างๆ แต่เขาทำไม่ค่อยได้  
[Thai academics **have not quite acted on** this part. But they have their ideas, have books to read, and many other things. But they **cannot really do it.**]

Thai academics **have not usually been involved** in the practice of politics. They can think and read, but they are **incapable of actually doing anything**.

In the above segment of his interview, it is clear that he was judging the social esteem of the participants in the clauses. Example (3a) shows Prayut criticising the former elected government ('the government ... **would not address**'); instead, the English subtitle appears with a higher degree of negativity in modality (*had not addressed*) that may shift the reader's perspective of the toppled government. Example (3b) demonstrates a similar negative criticism of Thai academics' capacity ('have not quite acted on' and 'cannot really do it'). However, the translator made Prayut's negative judgement explicit by using phrases *have not usually been involved* and *incapable of actually doing anything*. This manoeuvre has shifted the degree of capacity and possibility of the clause, especially with the different grading of attitude ('not quite' vs *not usually*, and 'cannot really' vs *incapable of actually*).

- (4) ทหารเนี่ยมีหน้าที่แก้ปัญหานี้มาโดยตลอด ... เพียงแต่ว่าเราก็ต้องทำให้ทหารทำอะไร ทำกัน  
[The military **has the duty to solve this problem** (of migrants) ... Only that **we** have to do it. **If you want the military to do anything, we can do it.**]  
It's the **military's responsibility to solve the problem of migrants** ... And the military has **had to take responsibility for it**.

There are several cases where the military is praised according to their ethical property: 'has the duty to solve this problem', 'If you want the military to do anything, we can do it'. This judgement certainly includes him, which can be seen in the use of 'we' representing the military and the speaker. However, the translation seems to be even more positive (*the military's responsibility to solve the problem of migrants ... had to take responsibility for it*) with the foregrounding of *migrants* as a problem and emphasis on the modality of obligation *had to*. This is not a surprising move and concurs with Prayut's positive evaluation of the soldier's role in other discourses in which he praised the army as the saviour of the nation (see also Phanthaphoommee, 2022b, p. 44).

#### VARYING DEGREES OF GRADUATION

Graduation is one of the most pronounced shifts in Prayut's English subtitle. Attitude may be graded by increasing or decreasing its volume (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 42). Due to the sheer translator's evaluative intervention, the strength of attitudinal values of a term may be altered in translation (Munday, 2012, p. 65).

As shown in Table 2, the current case confirms that there are some changes in graduation level in the translation of Prayut's interview.

TABLE 2. Shift in graduation of attitude in the English subtitle of Prayut’s interview

Original speech	Degree	Official translation	Degree	Evaluation
ที่เขาสบายมากที่สุดคือประเทศชาติสงบเรียบร้อย [what they are <b>happiest</b> about is that the nation is at peace and in order]	high	what people are <b>happy</b> about is that the nation is at peace and in order.	medium	showing the country’s valuation by people’s behaviour
ปัญหาความขัดแย้ง ซึ่งรัฐบาลที่แล้วแก้ไขปัญหามาไม่ได้ [Problem and conflict that the previous government couldn’t solve]	low	<b>all kinds</b> of disagreements which the previous government was unable to resolve	high	expressing insecurity
คนที่เสียประโยชน์ก็ไม่ค่อยพอใจ [Those who lose benefits are <b>not quite</b> satisfactory]	medium	The people who lose out are <b>not very</b> happy about that.	high with negative modality	expressing unhappiness
ในโลกด้วยซ้ำไปที่มีความขัดแย้งสูง [even in the world where there is a <b>high</b> level of conflict]	high	in the world where there is <b>serious</b> discord	high with attitudinal lexis	expressing insecurity
แต่เขาไม่ค่อยรับกันใจ [but they <b>don’t quite</b> accept it]	medium	but they <b>do not</b> accept it	high with negative modality	criticising the people’s capacity
นักวิชาการไทยส่วนนี้เขาไม่ค่อยเคยปฏิบัติมาก่อน ... แต่เขาทำไม่ค่อยได้ [Thai academics have <b>not quite</b> acted on this part ... But they <b>cannot really</b> do it]	medium	Thai academics have <b>not usually</b> been involved in the practice of politics. ... but they are <b>incapable of actually</b> doing anything.	high with negative modality	condemning academics’ ethics
แต่ก็แก้ปัญหาระบบไม่ได้ใจ [but we can’t solve the <b>whole</b> system]	high	But we cannot solve <b>every</b> problem.	high	expressing dissatisfaction
เราไม่ค่อยได้ใช้ตรงนี้ให้เป็นประโยชน์ ... มัวแต่ทะเลาะกันใจ [but we <b>not quite</b> make use of this ... We were <b>only</b> quarrelling with one another]	medium and medium	we were <b>too</b> preoccupied with arguing with one another.	high	expressing unhappiness

There are eight instances of explicit shifts in graduation throughout the entire 25.22-minute video session. The English translation tends to accentuate both negative and positive attitudes, particularly in phrases where Prayut criticised the general public’s capacity as in row (5), judged their actions as in row (6), or expressed his dissatisfaction and unhappiness as in rows (2), (3), (4), (7), (8). There seems to be an exception in the example in the first row: ‘they are happiest’ (source text) and *people are happy* (target text), which could be due to either a slip of the pen or the attempt to make the English subtitle concise enough to fit in the line on the screen. One noteworthy

difference is found in row (4) in that, instead of using the simple intensifier ‘high’, the translator opted for attitudinal lexis *serious* (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 44), which makes the translated clause seemingly more intense and eloquent.

#### ELIMINATION OF RELUCTANCE AND SARCASM

Prayut’s original speech contains a strong feeling of hesitancy due to the features of the Thai spoken language. However, when his interview was subtitled, these discourse features were deleted and replaced with more logically structured phrases. Example (5) shows that the translator managed to eliminate those unfavourable effects derived from Prayut’s unique use of language.

(5)

- a. ท่านก็ไม่เข้าใจ คือผมไม่ได้เป็นศัตรูทั้ง Red-shirt, Yellow-shirt อะไรต่อมิอะไร  
[you don’t understand. I’m not an enemy of the Red-Shirts, Yellow-Shirt, **whatsoever.**]  
you do not understand. I am not an enemy of the Red-Shirts, or the Yellow-Shirts.
- b. เพราะผมเมตตาเขา ผมไม่อยาก...ผมจะ...  
[because I’m kind to them [journalists]. **I don’t want, I will...**]  
I am always so kind and compassionate towards them [journalists].

Any terms indicating Prayut’s hesitation and uneasiness are usually removed, especially when discussing the decade-long, significant polarisation between conservative, ultra-royalist middle-classes and progressive, liberal minds of people in rural areas (Tejapira, 2016, pp. 229-230). In (5a), the term ‘whatsoever’ is not retained in the final subtitle. Similarly, (5b) demonstrates Prayut’s original reluctance to handle the sensitive topic of his once-threatening to punish the journalist. The statement ‘I don’t want, I will’, which reveals his awkwardness, is simply avoided.

Another aspect found in his interview is sarcasm. Sarcasm, like irony, appears to be a form of triggered evaluation since it may represent the latent force of attitude, and its meaning can be uncovered by the mutual cognitive environment (Kamyants, 2020, p. 400). Interestingly, Prayut’s speech contains an instance of sarcasm, which is also altered.

- (6) พอมีความสุขมากๆ ก็เลยทะเลาะกันชักหน่อย ไข่มะ แต่ความทะเลาะเบาะแว้งอะไรเหล่านี้ อาจจะยาวนานบ้างอะไรบ้าง เพราะเราไม่เคยปฏิรูปมาเลย  
[**once we have too much happiness, then [we] quarrel with one another. Is that so?**  
But these quarrels may have been going on for quite some time because we have never reformed.]  
**but we start arguing with one another.** And these disagreements have existed for quite some time because the country has never been reformed.

The phrase ‘once we have too much happiness...’ is reinterpreted in the English version as *but we start arguing with one another*. The illocutionary function of the speech in which the speaker aims to mock and convey contempt has inadvertently disappeared from the subtitle. It is possible that this rhetorical feature, if retained, could make the final subtitle look out of place and inconsistent with the overall information flow of translation.

### INEVITABLE LOSS OF ATTITUDINAL NEGOTIATOR

According to Patpong (2006), negotiator is an interpersonal particle that functions as an interpersonal ‘punch’ in the clause (p. 120). It can be instantiated by an exclamation or an ending modal particle, as is typical in Thai and other Asian languages. What we can observe from the translation is an unavoidable attempt to free the negotiator from the translation due to the differences between spoken and written language, which necessitates a shift in the tone of the speech. Another feature connecting to negotiator is modality, which can be divided into four main types: obligation, usuality, probability and inclination (Thompson, 2014, p. 70). As seen in the following examples, both negotiator and modality of the clauses are changed in the English translation.

- (7) ในการทำหน้าที่ของผม ผมก็จะเชิญมาพบ คุณอะ บอกว่า เอ้ย มันผิดนะ อันนี้มันไม่ถูก  
[It is my duty. I would request them to meet me and **talk [negotiator]**, [I’ll] tell them that, **eh, it is wrong [negotiator]**, this isn’t right.]  
then it is my duty to request that they meet me and to tell them that they have done wrong, that they **must** cease to behave in a way that is not right.

Example (7) shows how the translation avoids Prayut’s colloquial style, which indicates the patronising mode at the end of the clause: คุณอะ [*kui-sa*] ‘talk’ and ผิดนะ [*phit-na*] ‘it is wrong’. The translation subsequently adds an extra degree of obligation in the final clause with *must*, heightening the sense of urgency in the English version over the original. This way of adding information somewhat shifts the interpersonal meaning of the text by making sense of obligation higher in the subtitle.

The following example is a mixture of Prayut’s reluctance, negative negotiator and modality.

- (8) สื่อก็ต้องมีการปฏิรูปไป ... ว่า เออ ทำอย่างงี้ไม่ได้ อย่างงี้ไม่ได้ อย่างทำได้มัย บางครั้งผมก็อาจจะพูดเกินเลยไปบ้าง เช่น ไปลงโทษ  
ลงโทษ  
[The media needs to be reformed ... that, **oeh**, [you] **can’t do it this way, that way. Can you not do this?** Sometimes I might go a bit over the top, like **punishing them**]  
The media needs to be reformed ... I have to tell them **what they can and what they cannot do. Can you not do this please.** Sometimes I might go a bit over the top in what I say for example like saying that I **will punish them**.

In (8), the translator seems to have smoothed out all of those negative features in his English version. The first is the deletion of the exclamation [*oeh*], which indicates reluctance and doubt, and the modification of the clause ‘[you] can’t do it this way, that way’ to a nicely interwoven clause stating *what they can and what they cannot do*.

The next element is a shift in modality and the addition of a modal adjunct that tells the speaker’s attitude towards his proposition (Thompson, 2014, p. 67). The first point is due to the insertion of modal adjunct *please* that indicates the politeness in the translation, so as to ensure that Prayut sounds well-mannered despite the original speech’s fairly strong tone. The second point is the modality shift from a neutral state (‘like punishing them’) to a more positive state of potential (*saying that I will punish them*).

The last difference is another loss of a unique characteristic of the Thai spoken language: a consonant doublet. In colloquial and very informal expressions, terms such as ลงโทษลงเทิน [*longthot-longthoet*] ‘punish’ are common. These terms are invariably left out of the translation since they may be deemed inappropriate for news report subtitles, rendering the English version incapable of capturing the tone of informality that typifies Prayut’s speech. Furthermore, the translation inadvertently alters the speaker’s negative attitude towards the journalists to whom he referred. One probable explanation is that this is the compulsory change in format from spoken to written text, as well as the attempt to downplay the distinctiveness of Prayut’s spoken language.

### SCRIPTED SPEECH WITH A POLISHED IMAGE

Prayut’s prepared speech appears to be more eloquent than his impromptu speaking in the interview we have analysed in the previous section. It is also assumed that the translations were well-crafted before being posted online with the original script on the Thai Government House’s Facebook account. However, the comparison of the source and target texts indicates specific shift patterns in attitude-rich words, graduation, and engagement, as shown in the following sub-sections.

### DIFFERENT TERMS BUT SIMILAR ATTITUDES

According to Martin and White (2005, p. 65), non-core lexis is less expressive but implies that an evaluation is being triggered. It exhibits an evaluative circumstance by integrating the terms that have overlapping meanings with those of a core word. In translation, non-core lexis may demonstrate “how an otherwise neutral word in the ST [source text] may be evaluatively coloured by its habitual collocates or how non-core intensification affects the graduation of attitudinal strength” (Munday, 2012, pp. 30-31). This is most emphatically the case in the following examples.

(9)

- a. ไหลลงไปสู่ทางที่จะนำไปสู่ความวุ่นวายและหายนะ  
[... flows down the pathway to **chaos** and **disaster**]  
... becomes **ungovernable** and **chaos** descends.
- b. แต่เส้นทางนี้เป็นเส้นทางที่จะไม่สร้างความเสียหายให้กับประเทศ  
[but this way is the way that will not cause **damage** to the country]  
best avoids **injury** to our nation.

Example (9) suggests that there is a tendency to enhance semantic strength with non-core lexis that give varying degrees of intensification in the translation. The terms ‘chaos’ and ‘disaster’ are rendered as *ungovernable*, and *chaos descends* (9a). The translation, although having a lower degree of insecurity with *ungovernable*, conveys the current Thai administration’s perspective that the speaker was attempting to defend. The translator’s choice of *injury* for ‘damage’ (9b) seems to provoke the metaphor of the country as a human being, rather than a simple phrase in the source text. Despite displaying the same type of the speaker’s emotional reaction to the protest, all of these shifts to non-core words indicate the translator’s evaluation to make the target text relatively more eloquent and persuasive than the original Thai.

Prayut’s judgement towards anti-government protesters is also affected by the variation of non-core lexis in translation.

(10)

- a. และพฤติกรรมรุนแรงอีกหลายข้อต่อเจ้าหน้าที่ เป็นการตั้งใจทำร้ายคนไทยด้วยกัน  
 [and various **violent behaviours** towards the officials, with **the intention of attacking** the fellow Thais.]  
 in **brutal attacks**, with **the aim of severely wounding** fellow Thais.
- b. พวกเขาอาจจะชนะ และสามารถก้าวข้ามหัวรัฐสภาได้สำเร็จ  
 [They may win and be able to successfully **step over the head of the parliament.**]  
 maybe they will win by **side-stepping the parliamentary process.**

The terms ascribed to evaluating the anti-government protesters who took to the streets, such as ‘violent behaviour’ and ‘intention of attacking’ (10a), are replaced with ones that have a far more condemning tone: *brutal attacks* and *the aim of severely wounding*. However, the evokedness in the figurative core phrase ‘step over the head of parliament’ (10b) is downplayed with the use of the phrase *side-stepping the parliamentary process*. One plausible explanation for using such a neutral tone is that the literal translation of ‘step over the head’ is relatively strong; the translator may weigh the consequences and opt to render it with a more diplomatic tone.

The overall translation shifts may not be considered significant adjustments that dramatically influence the coherence of the text’s evaluative prosody. However, they do prove that the translator attempted to embellish the English translation with a more rhetorical and poetic writing style, as opposed to the already-meticulously scripted address.

#### HIGHER DEGREE OF FORCE IN ATTITUDE

Similar to Prayut’s interview with Al-Jazeera, his special national address denouncing violence during the confrontation between the anti-government protesters and the Thai police tends to manifest in translation an increase in the intensity of attitude, as seen in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Shift in graduation of attitude in the English translation of Prayut’s prepared speech

Original speech	Degree	Official translation	Degree	Evaluation
ประเทศไทยของเราค่อยๆ ตกลงไปสู่หายนะ [our Thailand is <b>gradually</b> falling into disaster]	medium	that can <b>easily</b> slide to chaos	high	expressing insecurity
การกระทำที่น่าหดหู่ใจอย่างมาก [action that is <b>very</b> depressing]	high	We saw <b>terrible</b> crimes	high with attitudinal lexis	expressing insecurity
ปฏิบัติตัวไม่ตัวอย่างรุนแรง [ <b>severely</b> not-good behaviour]	high	<b>ruthlessly</b> violent people	high with attitudinal lexis	condemning protesters’ ethics
ทำมาหากินอย่างหนัก [ <b>heavily</b> struggle to make a living]	high	struggle, <b>every day</b> , to make an <b>honest</b> living	high with attitudinal lexis	admiring the people’s tenacity and ethics
-	none	<b>greater</b> good of society	high	admiring the government’s capacity

ซึ่งสร้างอารมณ์ความรู้สึกที่ร้อนมากยิ่งขึ้น [it makes the emotions <b>very</b> hot]	high	emotions take over our better judgement	none	condemning protesters' morality
ภารกิจที่ต้องเริ่มทำคู่ขนานกันไป [the mission that we must begin <b>concurrently</b> ]	medium	our <b>highest</b> priorities	high	praising the government's reaction

The trend of increasing the force of attitude is evident, with either direct use of intensifier or attitudinal lexis. The latter, in particular, may make the target text sound more dramatic than employing a basic intensifier as in rows (2), (3), and (4). However, there is only one exception in row (6), where the translation choice appears to suggest that the intensifier in the original text has vanished at first glance. Nevertheless, the idiom *emotions take over our better judgement* - a figurative sentence that indirectly provokes negative judgement towards the anti-government protesters - may implicitly invoke the same negative sense, compensating for the absence of such a straightforward, obvious intensifier 'very'.

#### LESS ENGAGEMENT IN ATTITUDE

Regarding the translation of engagement, Munday (2017) opines that the choice of reporting verb is determined by the translator's understanding of the source text's rhetorical function and that the most plausible option to reduce the risk of modifying the speaker's engagement "would be the most neutral one [...] or one which calques the source text" (p. 92). In the present case, the translator followed Prayut's monoglossic engagement in the source text by faithfully rendering all similar reporting verbs. However, there are three instances where the signals of his heightened investment in constrictive evaluation are omitted in the translation.

(11)

- a. บนผืนแผ่นดินเดียวกันได้ แผ่นดินของพวกเราทุกคน ที่ไม่ว่าจะมีความคิดเห็นไปทางไหน **ผมเชื่อว่า**ทุกคนรักผืนแผ่นดินนี้ด้วยกัน  
ทั้งสิ้น  
[in this one land, the land that belongs to us all, no matter how different our opinions may be. **I believe** that everyone loves this land altogether.]  
in this one land that belongs to us all and which we all love.
- b. **ผมรู้ว่า**เส้นทางนี้อาจจะต้องใช้เวลาและอาจจะไม่รวดเร็วทันใจ  
[**I know** that this pathway [to a peaceful society] may take some time and may not be as quick as expected]  
It is a slow process
- c. **ผมจะพูดได้อย่างเต็มปากว่า** ผมได้ยินเสียงความต้องการของผู้ประท้วง  
[**I will strongly say** that I heard the voices of the protesters]  
While I can listen to and acknowledge the demands of protesters

Example (11) shows the Thai original contains the reporting verbs of categorical statement that contracts other voices in his proposition of fact regarding the speaker's attempt to promote peace and order to the Thai society, as well as improve his administration. However, the cognitive functions of 'I believe', 'I know', and 'I will strongly say' that engage the audience with Prayut's earnest initiatives disappear entirely, leaving the English translation to imply his statement of fact

with a lesser degree of engagement intensification and perhaps open to other possibilities of factual events than the original.

There is also one instance of backgrounding the speaker but retaining the engagement with the same reporting verb, as illustrated in (12).

- (12) **ผมต้องทำให้แน่ใจว่าบ้านเมืองมีความสงบเรียบร้อย ... ผมต้องทำให้แน่ใจว่า ประเทศไทยยังคงมีความยุติธรรมในสังคม**  
[I must make sure that the country is in peace and order ... I must make sure that Thailand still have fairness in society]  
My duty as a national leader is also to ensure peace ... and fairness to all in society

Although the meaning of ‘make sure’ is preserved in the translation, the focus on the modality of obligation that denotes the speaker’s firm intention ‘I must’ is missing, and the speaker as a participant in both sentences is concealed behind the concise and well-structured English lines. The effect of such rendition might be that Prayut in English seems more prepared and shows alternative possibilities than his taking a great deal of credit. Prayut in English may thus sound open-minded and inviting rather than forceful and authoritative due to the original’s overemphasis on constrictive reporting verbs.

## DISCUSSION

Prayut’s 2015 interview with the international press is impregnated with the positive sense of crediting himself as the country’s leader during a period of political crisis. Despite its brief duration, the interview almost served as a paean to his administration, lauding his cabinet’s dedication and people’s cooperation on government reconciliation measures and as an indirect warning to his rival. Almost six years later, his televised address following the violent incident in October 2020 appears to consistently emphasise his justification of how to move the country forward while also coaxing young anti-government protesters into accepting the legitimisation of his rule. Prayut followed the scripted lines this time, making his own speaking style less noticeable. Yet, the core message in both of Prayut’s utterances is clear: do not disturb the peace and just let the government take care of the country.

The paper argues that, despite being produced at different times, for different purposes, and by different commissioners, both translations tend to continue praising the incumbent government while antagonistically judging the opposition, albeit with a change in the degree of attitude and the removal of improper characteristics in spoken language. Both texts show three similar patterns of translation shift.

First, the translator appears to have made the speaker’s positive attitude explicit, casting an even more favourable light on the speaker and his administration (as in Examples 1 and 2). The shift in negative attitude towards the opposition to the coup (Example 3) and anti-government protesters (Examples 9 and 10) also seems to persuade the audience that it is tasked upon his government to control the political unrest because this is the army’s responsibility (Example 4).

The second pattern is concerned with varying scales of graduation. According to Munday (2017, p. 94), the translator’s intervention may disrupt the shared value in the source text because the translator has less investment in the text; therefore, “the omission and changes generally reduce the intensity and directness of the source texts” (p. 96). Our cases, on the other hand, produce a trend reversal. Both translations follow a pattern of increasing force of attitude, making Prayut sound both confident (in the case of the interview) and open-minded (in the case of the prepared

speech). Moreover, the pattern of engagement shift found in the translation of Prayut's prepared speech is relatively similar to those identified in Li and Zhang's (2021, p. 8) study that shows the active mediation for diplomatic ground.

Third, this study has added an additional resource of negotiator to the appraisal framework. This is evident in the case of the interview, which is prolific with senses of uncertainty and reluctance. Nevertheless, when translated, these characteristics are omitted and replaced with more logically structured sentences (as in Examples 5 and 6). All negotiators arising in spoken discourse and conveying Prayut's patronising tone are altogether omitted. Such features as ending modal particles and consonant doublets (as in Examples 7 and 8) are distinctive to the Thai spoken language. These attributes are invariably excluded from the final translated text because they are deemed inappropriate for written discourse. Due to the apparent removal of those attitudes' negotiators, the translation fails to convey the nature of Prayut's informal speaking style, even during a rather formal interview session. In so doing, the translator has modified the speaker's attitude expression to be more appropriate for the situation, such as in an interview with international media, or even more expressive in the case of the prepared address. These cases can be compared to the previous work on weekly Thai prime ministerial addresses (Phanthaphoommee, 2022b), which found that the translation of the Thai leader's discourse tends to filter out negative attitudes for strategic reasons—a repackaging scheme of the Thai self or “a form of image-refining discourse aimed at a global audience” (p. 45).

On the contextual level, there are three additional aspects to consider. First, given the passage of time, the translation of Prayut's impromptu speech from almost a year after the coup in 2014 appears to require more attitude mediation than the prepared script. The latter was addressed nationwide in 2020, at a time when anti-government sentiment was on the rise, yet many of the government's strict measures aimed at taming the opposition were lifted. This time, the government team made sure that no unwanted attitude was included in the script (as opposed to his usual speaking style) before it was translated. As a result, the address foreclosed all potential negative negotiators the speaker might make.

The second aspect is text-type and genre convention. The first case is a conversation. It is possible that, instead of completely rendering the attitude-rich elements of Prayut's speech, the news report of the video interview might be ‘re-presented’ as a type of informative text. Compared to translation of other genres (e.g., literary text or even political speech), subtitling for news reports is inherently different, with more focus on content (see also Valdeón, 2009; Wu et al., 2022) rather than transferring all expressive elements of attitudinal negotiators and consonant doublets. Whereas the second case is the already well-prepared text, and the translation was created to improve those attitude-laden terms in order to make them even more evocative and engaging.

The third aspect is the translation commissioner and the agency that the translator belongs to. This is comparable to the concept of institutional translation by news organisations. The present study, however, acknowledges that it is impossible at this stage to determine whether Prayut's interview with Al-Jazeera was translated in-house or outsourced, and whether the news agency's ideological stance and translation brief influenced the translator's choice. This is in contrast to previous research, which found a direct impact of news agencies on translation outcomes (e.g., Ping, 2018; Caimotto, 2020). The goal of Prayut's 2020 address, on the other hand, is unmistakably different. The prepared speech demonstrates the trace of institutional (Thai government) influence on translation in order to ensure that the translation represents an even more positive outlook of the administration with much more eloquent prose and a polished image of the ‘saviour’— the junta that has arguably helped the Thai people from the prolonged political dispute. This could be

interpreted in light of Persons' (2016) contention that face value in Thai society is intrinsically tied to the flow of power. Hence, the translation generated from the authority serves as a form of denial of the leader's real image, which is prescribed by norms in such a hierarchical society to shape any official texts that the Thai state considers diplomatic and sensitive in order to save their leader's face.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The appraisal theory was used in this study to analyse the two translations of Thai prime ministerial discourses. The paper also considers negotiator as an additional resource for the framework. Both translations clearly show concurring trends: applauding the sitting government while judging its opponents, changing the force of attitude, and removing any inappropriate characteristics in the prime minister's speaking style. Despite the time and commission differences, the paper contends that both translations continue to support the objectives of the Thai government to gain more attention from global audiences in order to improve the regime's post-coup image. Finally, given that different commissioners have different production goals, the case of the interview appears to unintentionally serve the Thai government's purpose of international appeal in the same way that the prepared script does by completely eliminating the prime minister's unique, informal style of speaking.

To complement this paper, future studies on negotiator in other Asian languages could be conducted to determine whether it can be influenced by the translator's ideological viewpoint or genre convention, which may require such a verbal component to be excluded from the final translation result. It is hoped that the findings of such research on negotiator will improve translation training and practice in the future, especially the decision on how to render those spoken features in political utterances.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Narongdej Phanthaphoommee is a lecturer at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand. His recent publications have appeared in *Multilingua* and Peter Lang collections. His research interests lie broadly within the field of Translation Studies, more specifically on ideology and translation, translation of political texts, and public service translation/interpreting.