

Recreating the image of Chan master Huineng

The role of personal pronouns

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The article is on the recreation of the image of Chan master Huineng in four English translations of the *Platform Sutra* through the choice of personal pronouns. Adopting SysConc as analytical tool, the study looks at the use of personal pronouns and the image of Huineng recreated in each translation. In Wong (1930a), the use of *we* in combination with *you* presents Huineng as both friendly and authoritative; in Heng (1977b), Huineng tends to avoid personal pronouns and seems to be detached; in Cleary (1998b), Huineng is more involved in the interaction and uses many *I*'s as well as *you*; in Cheng (2011), Huineng speaks in an elegant way and uses generic *one* as personal reference. It is argued that both the choices of personal pronouns and the images of Huineng recreated can be better understood in terms of the context of translation.

Keywords: personal pronouns, Huineng, systemic functional linguistics, interpersonal distance, context

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the image of Huineng recreated in four English translations (1930, 1977, 1998, and 2011) of the *Platform Sutra* (1291) through the use of personal pronouns. Huineng (638–713) was a great Chan master in the Tang Dynasty in China and the Sixth Patriarch in the history of Chan Buddhism. He is considered the real founder of Chinese Chan, Japanese Zen, Korean Sŏn and Vietnamese Thiĕn (Jorgensen 2005, 1). The *Platform Sutra* is the only text dedicated to Huineng and “one of the best known, most beloved and most widely read of all Chan texts” (Schlütter 2007, 382). The sutra is a collection of Huineng’s public teachings, private conversations and deathbed instructions.

Due to cultural and linguistic differences, personal pronouns tend to pose challenges for translators (Marco 2000, 9–11). The interactional effect of

personal pronouns has been studied in translations between European languages (e.g., Sabater et al. 2001; Smith 2004; Baumgarten 2008; Baumgarten and Özçetin 2008), but not much attention has been paid to typologically different languages such as Chinese and English. The tendency in Chinese to omit personal pronouns wherever possible (Lü 1999, 8) and keep implicit the subject which may consist of a personal pronoun (Wang 2002; Halliday and McDonald 2004) usually leads to English translations having more personal pronouns than the original Chinese texts (Zhao 1996; Tong 2014; Hao 2015). Given that personal pronouns provide the speaker/writer with resources to establish a certain kind of relationship with the hearer/reader (Brown and Gilman 1960; Brown and Levinson 1987; Brown and Gilman 1989; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), it is conceivable that their addition or explicitation (see Baker 1996; House 2004) may have an impact on the translated text and the image construction of the writer/speaker.

The theoretical basis of this study is systemic functional linguistics (SFL), as it provides a systematic interpretation of the functions of personal pronouns from an interpersonal perspective. There are two questions to be answered in this study:

- (1) How do personal pronouns in the translations help recreate the image of Huineng?
- (2) What are the contextual factors that might have motivated the translators in their selection of personal pronouns?

2. Personal pronouns: A systemic functional perspective

SFL identifies three metafunctions of language: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational metafunction serves to construe human experience, the interpersonal to enact personal and social relationships, and the textual to construct texts (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, 29–31). Personal pronouns are used to realize the interpersonal metafunction, especially to establish interpersonal distance between the speaker and the hearer.

2.1 System of NOMINAL PERSON

The system of NOMINAL PERSON (see Figure 1) is concerned with the choice of personal pronouns according to their functions or roles in the speech situation (Matthiessen 1995, 687). It has two categories: “interactant” (person within the dialogue), including the first person (*I, we*) and the second person (*you*), and “non-interactant” (person outside the dialogue), including all other relevant entities (*he, she, they, it, one*).

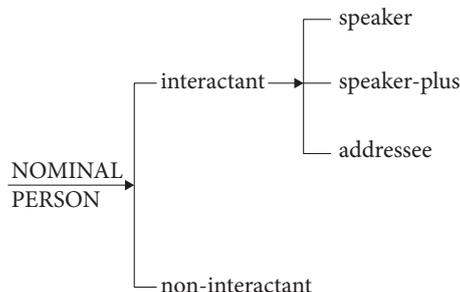


Figure 1. System of NOMINAL PERSON

The system of NOMINAL PERSON is a closed system. Once the speaker starts choosing from the system, s/he has to make a choice between “interactant” and “non-interactant.” If “interactant” is chosen, a further choice has to be made: either “speaker” (*I*), “speaker-plus” (*we*) or “addressee” (*you*). As will be demonstrated in the analysis below, such a feature makes it possible not only to look at the individual choices, but also to take into account the systemic notion of choice: one choice in relation to other possible choices.

The system of NOMINAL PERSON in English consists of the following personal pronouns, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Personal pronouns in the system of NOMINAL PERSON in English

interactant	speaker	I/me	my/mine
	speaker-plus	we/us	our/ours
	addressee	you	your/yours
non-interactant		they/them	their/theirs
		he/him	his
		she/her	her/hers
		one	one's
		it	its

By providing the speaker with means to refer to her/himself, the hearer and others, the system of NOMINAL PERSON constitutes an important resource for the realization of interpersonal distance, which in turn helps to construct an image of the speaker.

2.2 Interpersonal distance and image of Huineng

The system of NOMINAL PERSON is one of the key systems to realize interpersonal distance, which has two end-points: intimacy and distance (Poynton 1991, 89–90).

Examples of intimate relationship include the relationship between lovers and members of a family, and a distant relationship may exist between two strangers on the train or a high-status master and his servant. In a variety of European languages where a two-term system (T/V) exists in the second person pronouns (Brown and Gilman 1960, 254), the T pronoun can be used to indicate intimacy, while the V pronoun usually serves as a sign of politeness/distance. In modern English, as the T/V distinction no longer exists, the exact interpersonal function of the second person pronoun may vary according to the context, but the inclusive first person plural pronoun *we* is usually considered a way to create intimacy with the audience.

Interpersonal distance itself is dynamic and flexible. As Poynton points out, although the actual distance imposed by social reality between the interlocutors is relatively stable, it is possible and sometimes even desirable for them to narrow or widen the distance through deliberate linguistic choices at the moment of communication:

the negotiation of distance is also a dynamic process, not simply a function of roles and statuses. Through particular configurations of linguistic choices, interactants may lay claim to greater intimacy or distance than the actual circumstances of their relationship would predict. (Poynton 1991, 90)

The possibility of creating a kind of “desirable” distance instead of the actual distance between participants reveals the power of language in communication. The speaker may be well aware of the actual social distance between her/him and the hearer, but s/he can still choose to establish a kind of temporary personal distance.

Similarly, in translating the *Platform Sutra*, the translator may try to establish certain interpersonal distance between Huineng and his audience for different target readers or translating purposes, even though their social roles are specified (a Chan master and the general public/his disciples). The kind of interpersonal distance established will further contribute to the construction of an image of Huineng. For example, in Huineng’s public teachings and conversations, does he try to be close to or keep a distance from his audience? Is he a friendly teacher or an aloof Chan master?

3. Methodology

3.1 Data

Like many classical Chinese texts, the *Platform Sutra* is known in different versions, which evolved in the many dynasties in China. Most versions, however, were

lost in the ups and downs of history and the final version of the sutra produced in the year 1291 by a monk named Zongbao became the “orthodox” or canonical version (Schlütter 2012, 18). For hundreds of years it was the only text read by monks and literati in East Asia. This version is included in the Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō (vol. 48, no. 2008), a collection of Chinese Buddhist canons, and is the basis of the present study.

The four translations selected in this study are: *Sutra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch (Wei Lang) on the High Seat of the Gem of Law (Message from the East)* by Wong Mou-lam (1930a), *The Sixth Patriarch’s Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra* by Heng Yin (1977b, second edition), *The Sutra of Hui-neng, Grand Master of Zen: with Hui-neng’s Commentary on the Diamond Sutra* by Thomas Cleary (1998b), and *The Dharmic Treasure Altar-Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* by Cheng Kuan (2011, second edition). Statements by the translators themselves (Wong 1930b; Cleary 1998a) and previous studies (Nanjio 1883; Bielefeldt and Lancaster 1975; Lin, Tsai, and Lin 2004; Low 2010; Chao 2012) show that they are all based on the orthodox version. These four translations are selected on the criterion of heterogeneity in terms of publishing time, translator’s identity, publishing agency, translating purpose, strategy and intended readership.

The data of analysis in this study includes all the direct speeches of Huineng in the four English translations. In cases where the original direct speech is translated into indirect speech, the indirect speech is excluded.

3.2 Analytical tools and procedures

The analytical tool used in this study is SysConc developed by Wu (2000), a concordance tool for corpus analysis. Different from other concordance programs, SysConc is specially used in systemic functional research from a theoretical perspective (Wu 2009, 137). It focuses on the lexical level and is powerful in investigating word frequencies and associations. It can produce frequency lists, collocational patterns and concordances and has been successfully applied to many studies (e.g., Herke-Couchman and Wu 2004; Herke-Couchman 2006; Wu and Fang 2006).

The procedure of analysis in this study is as follows. Firstly, the feature of NOMINAL PERSON is set up in SysConc. This feature has two sub-categories, “interactant” and “non-interactant.” “Interactant” is further sub-divided into “speaker,” “speaker-plus” and “addressee.” Each of them consists of specific personal pronouns (cf. Table 1).

Secondly, a “feature search” is conducted for all occurrences of direct speech by Huineng in the four English translations, with raw counts and relative percentages obtained automatically. These two are local measurements and valuable in looking into the internal composition of personal pronouns within each translation. As

illustrated in Figure 2, the raw count of all the personal pronouns used in Cleary’s translation is 1,721, which includes 1,123 “interactant” and 598 “non-interactant” types, with the former making up about 65.3% of the whole and the latter about 34.7%. Further divisions within each type are also presented.

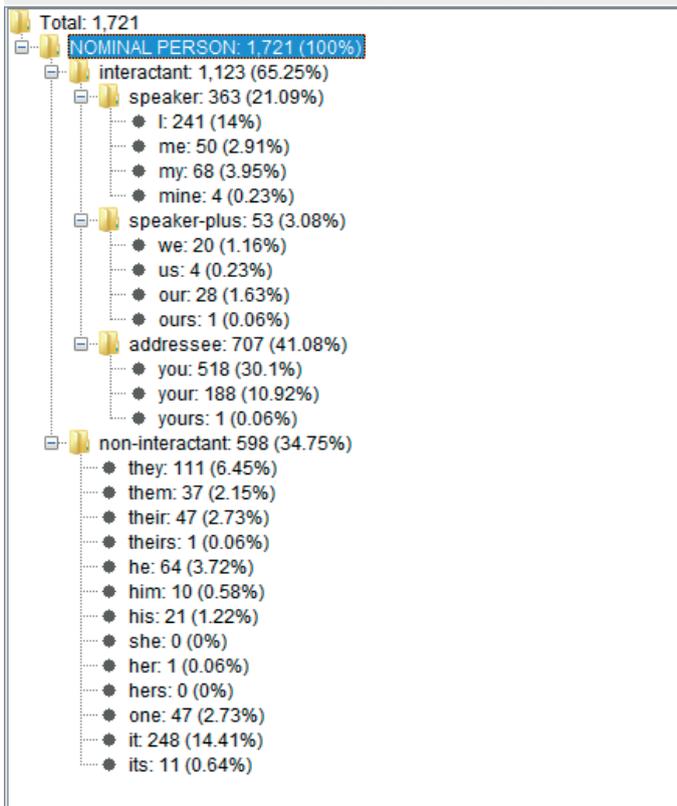


Figure 2. Feature search result of Cleary’s translation

Thirdly, the normalized percentage of each category (and sub-category) is obtained by dividing the total number of words by the number of personal pronouns used in a translated text. In this way the percentage of each category of personal pronouns is normalized against text length and the normalized percentage makes it possible to compare the use of personal pronouns across translations regardless of text length. Using again Cleary’s translation as an example, it can be seen that the normalized percentage of all the personal pronouns (1,721) against the text’s total number of words (19, 486) is 8.8%, of which the “interactant” type (1,123) takes up 5.8% and “non-interactant” type (598) 3.0% (cf. Table 2 in the next section).

4. Analysis and findings

In this section, we are going to answer the two research questions put forward in the introduction. Firstly, the use of personal pronouns in each translation will be presented, and the image of Huineng thereby recreated will be analysed. Then the contextual factors affecting the linguistic choice and the image construction will be explored.

4.1 Personal pronouns in the four translations

Table 2 presents the use of personal pronouns in each translation. In the table, “number” (no.) refers to the raw count of pronouns. There are two types of “percentage” (pct.): relative percentage and normalized percentage (inside the brackets). “Relative percentage” refers to the proportion each type of pronouns takes up within the NOMINAL PERSON system (cf. Section 2.1) in a specific translated text, and is obtained automatically in SysConc by dividing the total number of personal pronouns by the number of a specific (category of) personal pronoun in each text. “Normalized percentage” refers to the percentage of personal pronouns that is normalized against text length and is obtained by dividing the total number of words by the number of each category of personal pronouns used in a translation. As a local measurement, relative percentage can show the choice of “non-interactant” vs. “interactant” (“speaker” vs. “speaker-plus” vs. “addressee”) pronouns within each translated text, while normalized percentage is to compare the use of personal pronouns across different translations.

In discussing the result shown in Table 2, we will first point out the characteristics of each translation as against other translations by referring to normalized percentages. Then we will look at the internal distribution of personal pronouns within each translation by referring to relative percentages. It should be noted that comparison of normalized percentages across translations can only exhibit a generalised difference, which, though sometimes minimal, is still able to reveal much on the use of personal pronouns with further probe, as can be seen in the following discussion (Section 4.2.2).

A distinctive feature of Wong’s translation is the high normalized percentage of “speaker-plus” (2.0%), which is nearly ten times that used in the translations by Heng (0.2%) and Cheng (0.2%) and seven times that used in the translation by Cleary (0.3%). Within Wong’s translation, “speaker-plus” takes up the largest proportion (22.5%) of the “interactant” category, while “addressee” is most frequently chosen in all the other translations.

Compared with other translations, Heng’s translation has the lowest normalized percentage of personal pronouns (7.7%, against 8.8%, 8.8% and 8.2% in Wong,

Table 2. Personal pronouns in each translation

	Wong		Heng		Cleary		Cheng	
	no.	pct. %	no.	pct. %	no.	pct. %	no.	pct.%
NOMINAL PERSON	2166	100.0 (8.8)	1552	100.0 (7.7)	1721	100.0 (8.8)	2038	100.0 (8.2)
interactant	1279	59.1 (5.2)	893	57.5 (4.4)	1123	65.3 (5.8)	1096	53.8 (4.4)
speaker	380	17.5 (1.5)	235	15.1 (1.1)	363	21.1 (1.9)	384	18.8 (1.5)
I	215	9.9	152	9.8	241	14.0	246	12.1
me	83	3.8	21	1.3	50	2.9	61	3.0
my	77	3.6	57	3.7	68	4.0	72	3.5
mine	5	0.2	5	0.3	4	0.2	5	0.2
speaker- plus	487	22.5 (2.0)	33	2.1 (0.2)	53	3.1 (0.3)	50	2.5 (0.2)
we	218	10.1	12	0.8	20	1.2	33	1.5
us	50	2.3	3	0.2	4	0.2	2	0.1
our	215	9.9	18	1.2	28	1.6	13	0.6
ours	4	0.2	–	–	1	0.1	2	0.1
addressee	412	19.1 (1.7)	625	40.3 (3.1)	707	41.1 (3.6)	662	32.5 (2.7)
you	321	14.8	427	27.5	518	30.1	499	24.5
your	90	4.2	197	12.7	188	10.9	160	7.9
yours	1	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1	3	0.1
non-interactant	887	40.9 (3.6)	659	42.5 (3.3)	598	34.7 (3.0)	942	46.2 (3.8)
they	135	6.2	88	5.7	111	6.5	90	4.4
them	48	2.2	33	2.1	37	2.1	34	1.7
their	71	3.3	53	3.4	47	2.7	52	2.5
theirs	–	–	–	–	1	0.1	–	–
he	162	7.5	93	6.0	64	3.7	126	6.2
him	26	1.2	21	1.3	10	0.6	26	1.3
his	69	3.2	53	3.4	21	1.2	52	2.5
she	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
her	2	0.1	–	–	1	0.1	3	0.2
hers	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
one ^a	46	2.1	62	4.0	47	2.7	189	9.3
it	301	13.9	235	15.1	248	14.4	356	17.4
its	27	1.2	21	1.4	11	0.6	14	0.7
total words in text	24485		20185		19486		24892	

Note.

a. As SysConc cannot distinguish “one” and “one’s”, they are put together in the search; only pronominal use of “one” and “one’s” is included in this table.

Cleary and Cheng). More specifically, the category of “speaker” (1.1%) is used less in Heng’s translation than in other translations. Within Heng’s translation, “addressee” (40.3%) assumes a dominant position in relation to “speaker” (15.1%) and “speaker-plus” (2.1%) of the “interactant” category of personal pronouns.

Cleary’s translation is significant in its high normalized percentage of the “interactant” category (5.8%). This shows that the translation is more interactive than all the others. Focusing on the use of personal pronouns within the translation, we can see that it favours both “addressee” (41.1%) and “speaker” (21.1%). Therefore, it can be said that though the hearer *you* is the focus of attention in Huineng’s teachings, there is also active interaction between the speaker *I* and the hearer *you*.

Cheng’s translation is interesting in that it has similar normalized percentages of “non-interactant” (3.8%) and “interactant” (4.4%) categories of personal pronouns, which makes it distinct from other translations where the “interactant” type is preferred. This indicates that third person pronouns are used more often by Cheng than by other translators. In fact, a significant feature of Cheng’s translation is the use of *one* as generic personal reference (9.3% against 2.1%, 4.0%, and 2.7% in Wong, Heng and Cleary).

The following section will discuss the impact of the different personal pronouns on the interpersonal distance between Huineng and his audience, and more importantly, on the image of Huineng recreated in each translation.

4.2 Images of Huineng in four translations

4.2.1 *An intimate spiritual mentor with authority*

As has been pointed out above, a significant feature of Wong’s translation is its frequent use of *we*. Although *we* in English can be either “inclusive” (speaker plus hearer) or “exclusive” (speaker plus others instead of the hearer) (Haas 1969; Levinson 1983; Pennycook 1994; Biber et al. 1999; Baumgarten 2008), analysis shows that *we* used by Huineng in Wong’s translation refers to both himself and the hearer (inclusive *we*). A vocative is often added at the beginning of the sentences containing *we* when Huineng gives public teachings in front of a large audience, or has personal conversations with his disciples.

For example, the first sentence uttered by Huineng in the *Platform Sutra* is translated as follows by Wong:

Example (1)

ST: 善shàn知zhī識shì 菩pú提tí自zì性xìng本běn來lái
 Vocative Bodhi self nature originally
 清qīng淨jìng 但dàn用yòng此cǐ心xīn直zhí了liǎo
 pure clean [Ø] only use this mind directly [Ø]

成chéng 佛fó

become Buddha

(T2008_48.0347c28-29)¹

Wong: Learned Audience, *our* essence of mind (literally self-nature) which is the seed or kernel of enlightenment (Bodhi) is pure by nature, and by making use of this mind alone *we* can reach Buddhahood directly. (1930a, 1)

The use of inclusive *we* in English is to achieve solidarity and communality with the hearer (Hyland 2001, 559) and to construct a “chummy” and “intimate” tone (Wales 1996, 67). By using the inclusive *we*, Huineng intends to be closely identified with his audience. The image of Huineng recreated here is not a solemn Chan master standing high above the listeners, but a kind and considerate mentor who positions himself as being part of the group.

However, as inclusive *we* could also be taken as being non-authoritative on the part of the speaker (Quirk et al. 1985, 350), “addressee” (*you*) is therefore adopted as a compensation in both suggestions and demands. This is illustrated in the following example:

Example (2)

ST: 善shàn知zhī識shì 善pú提tí 般bō若rě 之zhī智zhì世shì
Vocative Bodhi Prajna wisdom worldly
 人rén 本běn 自zì有yǒu之zhī 只zhǐ緣yuán
 people originally self have only because
 心xīn 迷mí 不bù能néng 自zì 悟wù 須xū
 mind lost [ø] cannot self realize [ø] must
 假jiǎ 大dà 善shàn知zhī識shì 示shì
 rely on great learned people instruct
 導dǎo 見jiàn 性xìng 當dāng 知zhī
 guide [ø] see nature [ø] should know
 愚yú人rén 智zhì人rén 佛fó 性xìng
 the foolish the wise Buddha nature
 本běn 無wú 差chā別bié
 originally no difference (T2008_48.0350a11-14)

Wong: Learned Audience, the Wisdom of Enlightenment is inherent in every one of *us*. It is because of the delusion under which *our* mind works that *we* fail to realize it ourselves, and that *we* have to seek the advice and the guidance of enlightened ones before *we* can know *our* own essence of mind. *You* should know that so far as Buddha-nature is concerned, there is no difference between an enlightened man and an ignorant one. (1930a, 11)

1. Source text sentences are referred to by identifying their line numbers in the on-line database of Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō; see <http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-bdk-sat2.php?lang=en>.

The transition from the inclusive *we* to the addressee *you* can be understood as an indication of authority, and a slight adjustment on the part of Huineng of the close relationship with his audience. In fact, *you* and *we* are used alternatively in Wong's translation (19.1%% and 22.5% respectively), depicting Huineng as eager to be regarded as authoritative as well as amiable.

4.2.2 A detached Chan master

In Heng's translation, Huineng speaks in an objective and detached way, which is mainly manifested through the non-use of personal pronouns. This is most apparent in the first chapter, where Huineng tells his own experience of getting the Dharma and becoming the Sixth Patriarch. In the following example, Huineng relates his first meeting with the Fifth Patriarch, who asked him where he came from and what he wanted, and Huineng tells the audience how he answered this question:

Example (3)

- ST:** 惠 huì 惠 néng 對 duì 曰 yuē 弟 dì 子 zǐ 是 shì 嶺 líng 南 nán
 Huineng reply disciple be Lingnan
 新 xīn 州 zhōu 百 bǎi 姓 xìng 遠 yuǎn 來 lái
 Xinzhou commoner [ø] afar come
 禮 lǐ 師 shī 惟 wéi 求 qiú 作 zuò
 pay respect to teacher [ø] only seek to be
 佛 fó 不 bù 求 qiú 求 yú 餘 wù
 Buddha [ø] not seek other thing (T2008_48.0348a15-16)
- Heng:** *Hui Neng* replied, “*Your disciple* is a commoner from Hsin Chou in Ling Nan and comes from afar to bow to *the Master*, seeking only to be a Buddha, and nothing else.” (1977b, 44)

In Heng's translation, *Hui Neng* (his own name), *your disciple* (a humble term as self-reference), and *the Master* (an honorific term to refer to the Fifth Patriarch) in the source text are all retained. In comparison, personal pronouns are used in the other three translations, as can be illustrated by Wong's translation of the same sentences.

- Wong:** *I* replied, “*I* am a commoner from Sun Chow of Kwangtung. *I* have travelled far to pay *you* respect and *I* ask for nothing but Buddhahood.” (1930a, 2)

The linguistic choice in Heng's translation helps to create an image of Huineng that is different from those in the other translations. He is telling his own story, but first person pronouns are totally avoided. On the one hand, this is consistent with the traditional genre of jataka (birth story) in which the Buddha narrates stories of

his previous lives in third person (Jorgensen 2012, 48) and the no-self doctrine in Buddhism (Fink 2012, 289). On the other hand, however, self-naming and the use of the third person pronoun as self-reference (also called illeism) are unusual in English. Self-naming in English may be used to assert self-worth, to distance oneself from the immediate situation and achieve objectivity, to emphasize a tension between inner and outer self and so on (Curren-Aquino 1987, 149–156). Speaking of oneself in the third person is often associated with presenting the views of someone else on oneself (Land and Kitzinger 2007, 494–502). The adoption of these two strategies often signals a detached attitude from the speaker, and in this context, the politeness and humbleness manifested in the original text are lost in the translation.

The objectivity and detachment on the part of Huineng are also maintained in his later public sermons and teachings in Heng's translation. The high proportion of "addressee" (40.3%) in relation to "speaker" (15.1%) and "speaker-plus" (2.1%) shows that Huineng in Heng's translation pays great attention to his audience. He constantly refers to them using *you*, with little inclination to talk about himself as *I* and is even less inclined to identify the audience and himself together as *we*. Therefore, the image of Huineng in Heng's translation is a solemn God-like Chan master, with absolute authority and objectivity in imparting knowledge and all attention focused on his audience.

4.2.3 A friendly teacher

Unlike the image of a modest mentor who uses *we* to identify himself and the audience in Wong's translation or an aloof Patriarch speaking in a detached and indifferent manner in Heng's translation, Huineng is presented by Cleary as a friendly teacher, who addresses his audience and disciples as *you*, and is also willing to address himself in a personal way as *I*.

An example can be seen at the beginning of Chapter Six, where Huineng is leading a large audience to perform a ritual of bestowing precepts. The opening speech of Huineng in Cleary's translation is presented as follows:

Example (4)

ST: 既 jì 從 cóng 遠 yuǎn 來 lái 一 yī 會 huì 于 yú 此 cǐ 皆 jiē
 since from far [ø] come [ø] meet here all
 共 gòng 有 yǒu 緣 yuán 今 jīn 可 kě 各 gè 胡 hú 跪 guì
 have affinity now [ø] can each kneel
 先 xiān 為 wèi 傳 chuán 自 zì 性 xìng 五 wǔ 分 fēn
 first [ø] transmit self-nature five-part
 法 fǎ 身 shēn 香 xiāng 次 cì 授 shòu
 dharma body incense then [ø] teach
 無 wú 相 xiāng 懺 xiǎn 悔 huǐ
 no-form repentance

(T2008_.48.0353c04-06)

Cleary: Since *you* have come from far away to gather here as one, *all of you* have affinity together. Now let *each of you* kneel: first *I* will transmit the perfumes of the five-part reality body in *our* own essential nature; then *I* will pass on formless repentance. (1998b, 37)

In Cleary's translation, Huineng addresses the audience directly using *you*, *all of you* and *each of you* while using *I* for himself, and *our* for the audience and himself. This indicates that he is willing to include his audience as part of the exchange in the public teaching.

The use of "addressee" (*you*) in conversation mainly has two advantages. First, as the second person *you* does not have any distinction in gender, number or social distance, it has greater potential to cater to more hearers. Anyone who hears may become the actual *you*. This also helps to create a one-to-one relationship between the speaker and hearer (Myers 1994; Smith 2004), and shows the speaker's recognition of the existence of and care and attention to the audience, especially in the genre of sermon (Bader 2010, 9).

Second, *you* can be used to indicate both informal and formal relationships between the participants. The voice of the speaker can "simultaneously be one of friendship, authority and respect" (Cook 2001, 183). Just as Huineng in Wong's translation uses *you* to offset the over-friendliness of inclusive *we*, the frequent use of *you* by Huineng in Cleary's translation can also be seen as a way to indicate authority. As pointed out by Pennycook (1994, 176) and Hyland (2001, 557), the use of *you* referring to the hearer, while acknowledging his existence, also has the possibility of creating an "Other" and a kind of distance between the speaker and hearer, especially when considered in relation to the simultaneous use of *I* to refer to the speaker.

Therefore, the image of Huineng in Cleary's translations is more flexible and realistic. Huineng addresses the audience directly as *you*, which can be understood as an indication of close interpersonal relationship established in a less formal situation. But the fact that he is the Chan master, the venerable Sixth Patriarch, may also indicate that *I*, Huineng, as a distinguished Chan master, am teaching *you*, who lack the knowledge and can only obtain enlightenment with *my* help. After all, a teacher is a teacher. What makes Huineng different is that he is at the same time friendly and aloof, close and distant. This kind of paradox is actually what makes Huineng attractive to the general public, as such an image can satisfy different needs and imaginings of the readers.

4.2.4 *An elegant truth transmitter*

The distinctive feature of Cheng's translation is its high frequency of "non-interactant" personal pronouns, especially the use of *one* to refer to people in general.

Such a linguistic choice helps to present Huineng as an elegant Chan master whose aim is to impart knowledge rather than establish any interpersonal relationship with his audience.

In the following example, the subject is omitted in the source text, and Cheng uses the non-interactant *one*. In comparison, *we/our* and *you/your*, which are all “interactant” personal pronouns, are used by the other three translators, as can be seen in their translations of the same sentences:

Example (5)

ST: 外 wài 若 ruò 著 zhù 相 xiāng 內 nèi 心 xīn
 outside if [ø] attach to form inner mind
 即 jí 亂 luàn 外 wài 若 ruò 離 lí
 will (be) disturbed outside if [ø] leave
 相 xiāng 心 xīn 即 jí 不 bù 亂 luàn
 form mind will not (be) disturbed (T2008_48.0353b21-22)

Cheng: If *one* is attached to external appearances, the mind will be perturbed. If *one* can be detached from extraneous phenomena, the mind will be freed from perturbation. (2011, 69)

Wong: If *we* are attached to outer objects, *our* inner mind will be perturbed. When *we* are free from attachment to all outer objects, the mind will be in peace. (1930a, 27)

Heng: If *you* become attached to external marks, *your* mind will be confused inwardly. If *you* are separate from external marks, inwardly *your* mind will be unconfused. (1977b, 219)

Cleary: If *you* are fixated on appearances externally, *your* mind is disturbed within; if *you* are detached from appearances outside, then the mind is not disturbed. (1998b, 35–6)

In Cheng’s translation, *one* is used as a “generic” reference, which refers to “people in general” (Wales 1980, 95). This usage is chiefly “formal” (Quirk et al. 1985, 387–388). Meanwhile, the generic *one* is primarily restricted to written registers, especially fiction and academic prose, as it helps to build an impersonal and objective style (Biber et al. 1999, 353–355).

A quick examination of the textual environment of *one* using SysConc (key word in context [KWIC], see Figure 3) shows that the two most frequent concordant words on its immediate left are *if* and *when*, indicators of hypothetical situations, and the frequently used words on its immediate right include *would*, *should*, *can*, *could*, and *shall*, all of which are modal auxiliaries. This is the typical use of *one* in theoretical or hypothetical contexts. As Wales (1980, 96) points out, when used in conditional clauses and in combination with modal auxiliary, the generic personal pronoun *one* is to indicate universal truth.

Left-		Right+	
Word	# of	Word	# of
if	38	s	41
When	20	is	24
of	11	would	16
Dharma	4	should	14
is	4	can	13
perceive	4	who	8
on	4	of	6
Mind	3	could	5
only	3	single	4
every	3	to	4
no	3	shall	4
that	3	comes	2
through	2	implements	2
make	2	needs	2
should	2	perceives	2
would	2	will	2
way	2	might	1
whence	2	insists	1
the	2	fosters	1
from	2	be	1
Sutra	2	comprehends	1
moment	2	becomes	1
each	2	does	1

Figure 3. KWIC search of “one” in Cheng Kuan’s translation

By using the personal pronoun *one*, Huineng in Cheng’s translation shows an inclination to be both impersonal and formal in his teaching. The image of Huineng presented here is an elegant Chan master who speaks in a formal manner and pays more attention to the validity of what he is saying than to the people who are listening.

4.3 Contextual considerations

From the above analysis and discussion, it can be seen that different translators favour different personal pronouns, thus recreating different images for the same Chan master Huineng. To account for this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the context in which each translation was produced, as “no translation should ever be studied outside of the context in which it came into being” (Toury 2012, 22).

In SFL, context can be described in three parameters, field (what is being talked or written about), mode (the kind of text that is being made), and tenor (the relationship between the speaker/writer and hearer/reader) (Butt et al. 2006, 5). These three parameters resonate with the three metafunctions of language: field resonates with ideational, tenor with interpersonal and mode with textual metafunction. As personal pronouns indicate the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the hearer, tenor will be the focus of the discussion, namely the identity of the translators and the intended readers, and the relationship between the translators and the readers. By following Hasan (1996, 52) and House (2001, 151), this study holds the view that the relationship between characters in

a literary work is relevant to that between the author (translator) and the reader, and the author's (translator's) view on the characters. It should also be noted that the contextualization here is better considered tentative rather than conclusive.

4.3.1 *Wong Mou-lam (1932): The first translator and his Western readers*

Wong Mou-lam was the first person to translate the *Platform Sutra* into English. Born in Hong Kong, Wong went to Shanghai to work in a law firm in 1923. He was "discovered" by one of the founders of the Pure Karma Society, which published his translation later, as he was both good at English and interested in Buddhism (Welch 1968, 180). In 1928, Dih Ping Tsze, another founder of the society, invited Wong to stay in his house and translate the *Platform Sutra*, which took one and half years. The translation was sold in Shanghai and more than one hundred copies were taken to London and soon sold out (Humphreys 1973; Ko 1996).

The purpose of translating the sutra into English, according to the preface by Dih, was to make the ideas of Chan Buddhism known to Westerners as "it is rather sad to see that so far this Good Law has not yet been made known to the Western people in Europe and America" (Dih 1930, i). Therefore, the intended readers of the translation were Westerners with an interest in the ideas of Chan Buddhism. However, it is interesting to see the ambivalent attitude towards these targeted readers. On the one hand, Dih admitted that "so far as felicity in the form of material comfort is concerned, the occidentals are in a more favourable position than our Eastern people" (ibid.). On the other hand, he claimed that "but in spite of their favourable position, the Great Law reaches them at a later date than it reached us" (ibid.).

This kind of self-contradictory tenor relationship between the translator trying to introduce Chinese Chan Buddhism to the West in the 1930s and the targeted Western readers is reflected in the recreation of the image of Huineng. On the one hand, Huineng was portrayed as an Eastern Chan master intimate to his audience by addressing them with *we*. On the other hand, however, the belief that Chinese people, though in lack of material comfort, were able to help their Western counterparts by transmitting to them the "Message from the East" (part of the title of the translation) led the translator to choose *you* alongside *we*, in order to ensure that the authoritative image of Huineng, the much respected Sixth Patriarch in China, would be maintained.

4.3.2 *Heng Yin (1977): The first Western Buddhist translator and early American Buddhists*

The former Bhikshuni Heng Yin was the first ordained Buddhist and Westerner to translate the *Platform Sutra* into English. Becoming a Buddhist nun in 1969, Heng was one of the first five Americans ordained by Hsuan Hua (Baur 1998).

The purpose of Heng's translation of the *Platform Sutra*, as stated in Hsuan Hua's introduction, was to help the Westerners to "realize Bodhi and accomplish the Buddha way" (1977, xvi). It was hoped that "westerners will now read, recite and study it [*Platform Sutra*], and all become Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and/or Patriarchs" (ibid., xv). The intended readers, therefore, were mainly American Buddhist practitioners, especially those who were studying under the teaching of Hsuan Hua.

Heng's translation contains not only Huineng's words in the *Platform Sutra*, but also a running commentary by Hsuan Hua, which was originally Hsuan Hua's Chinese lectures on the sutra. The commentary was praised highly by the translator, who stated that "if you wish to understand the wonderful meaning of this sutra, you should study this [Hsuan Hua's] commentary, for within it are set forth the limitless, inexhaustible, profound principles of the Buddhadharmā" (Heng 1977c, xvii).

In this way, equal importance is put on the words of Huineng and Hsuan Hua. By translating both at the same time, the translator also assumed the role of being the mouthpiece of her own teacher, who enjoyed great obedience and devotion from his students, as a result of the early Buddhism institutionalization in the U.S. in the 1970s (Lachs 2008).

The tenor relationship between the translator and her intended readers is therefore unequal, as the translator served as an appointed representative of the authority and the intended readers were those waiting to receive instructions. This may have further influenced the translator's recreating of the image of Huineng, a historically significant Patriarch who is said to have served as an inspiration for the present Master (Heng 1977a, xix). Possessing absolute authority and high status, Huineng was divine and noble. His sole mission was to convey the profound knowledge to his disciples and the audience, help them to get enlightenment and save them from the endless circle of birth and death.

4.3.3 *Thomas Cleary (1998): A professional translator and the general public*
 Thomas Cleary is a professional translator of East Asian culture and philosophy, and one of the major authors of Shambhala Publications, the publisher of his translation. Up to now, he has translated more than eighty works from eight languages into English, with the themes mainly covering Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, conflict studies and women's spirituality (Burton-Rose s.d.).

The identity of the translator and the publisher enables one to infer that the general public are the intended readers of Cleary's translation. This is further revealed by the description of Huineng in the blurb of the book as "perhaps the most respected and beloved figure in Zen[Chan] Buddhism" and the introduction

of the translator as a person who “holds a doctorate in East Asia languages and civilizations from Harvard University.”

The tenor relationship between Cleary and his target readers is therefore likely to be intimate, as the translator mainly served to bring East Asian wisdom to those who had similar Western cultural background. Accordingly, Huineng was presented as a friendly teacher speaking in a less formal way, talking about himself as *I* and his audience as *you*. He was kind, simple and approachable. His high status in history and the reverence towards him from past and present Buddhists were no longer the main concern for the translator as well as the target readers.

Such a construction of the image of Huineng is also reflected in the title of the translation and the translator’s introduction to the text. The translation was entitled *Sutra of Hui-neng*, and in his introduction, Cleary spent two pages talking about the legendary life and influence of Huineng, using the name “Hui-neng” whenever reference is necessary. Actually, this kind of attitude was criticized by Cheng Kuan, who indignantly stated that it is greatly disrespectful to refer to the highly revered Sixth Patriarch directly by his name, and it is improper, and even frivolous to use his name in the title of the translation (Low 2010, 97).

4.3.4 Cheng Kuan (2011): An abbot and his disciples

Previously an English major in college and a translator after graduation, Cheng Kuan was ordained in 1988 and is now the founder and abbot of two temples, one in Taiwan (Maha-Vairocana Temple, 1991) and the other in the U.S. (Americana Buddhist Temple, 1993). From 2005 he began translating Chinese Buddhist texts into English and up to now he has translated six books into English. All these translations were published by the publishing institutions under his charge and distributed for free.

Cheng’s translation is mainly targeted at his American disciples (most of them are Chinese Americans), as well as Buddhist experts and practitioners (Low 2010, 41, 87). The tenor relationship between Cheng and his intended readers is therefore not equal, as the identity of Cheng as an abbot of two temples, the successor of two Buddhist sects and a Buddhist master gave him an authoritative status. This, in combination with Cheng’s dissatisfaction with most of the existing translations, which he thought were too informal and lacking in the solemnity of a Buddhist canon (86), resulted in his choice of the general personal pronoun *one* and recreating of the image of Huineng as highly revered and talking in a scholarly and genteel way.

As Cheng considers that both the sutra and Huineng as the Sixth Patriarch deserve great reverence, his translation has a formal style and focuses on knowledge transmission. This is also reflected in the structure of the book, which contains nearly one-hundred pages of glossaries and index at the end of the translated text.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the images of Huineng presented in four English translations of the *Platform Sutra* through the use of personal pronouns, a resource to establish interpersonal distance between communication participants. Why particular personal pronouns were chosen and a certain type of image recreated was further interpreted in light of the context of translation.

Being the first one to translate the *Platform Sutra* into English, Wong presented Huineng as a modest spiritual mentor who addresses his audience with inclusive *we*, whereas, as a professional translator who translated the book for a publishing company, Cleary presented Huineng as a friendly teacher interacting with his audience with *I* and *you*. Huineng in translations of Heng and Cheng, however, is more detached and impersonal though the underlying reasons are different. Influenced by the popular patriarchal ideas in a certain period in history, Heng's translation used fewer personal pronouns to present Huineng as a detached Chan master. With a clear aim to construct a formal and respectable image of Huineng, Cheng's translation adopted the generic personal pronoun *one*, which makes Huineng's speech formal and scholarly.

Translating is a decision-making process, and the translator needs to select "among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives" (Levy [1967] 2012, 72). In most cases these selections are not random as different translations tend to be made under different conditions and to satisfy different needs (Lefevere and Bassnett 1990, 5). Although personal pronouns are traditionally classified as merely 'functional words,' they do make an important contribution to establishing a specific interpersonal relationship between the speaker/writer and hearer/reader, and thus constitute a good scenario to exhibit the variety of choices, and the interaction between linguistic choices and the context of different translations of the same source text.

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