Now and xianzai
A contrastive study of two deictic adverbs

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The present study looks at the deictic adverbs now and 現在 (xianzai) and examines their respective roles in English and Chinese. Now and xianzai are commonly considered to be semantically equivalent. Their primary value is temporal: both now and xianzai refer to the time of utterance, or more generally to a temporal interval which includes the time of utterance. By examining a parallel corpus of Taiwanese and English novels, this paper aims to show that apart from this present-reference value, now and xianzai have little in common. The analysis of aligned texts reveals that: (1) now is more frequent than xianzai; (2) there is an asymmetry in the temporal use of both markers. Following Wang (2001), I argue that now has a wider semantic range than xianzai: whereas now might be used pragmatically (Now, why on earth did she leave at such a time?), xianzai is limited to strict temporal reference. It appears that even in its temporal use, now is more complex than xianzai: now is quasi-systematically contrastive, whereas xianzai tends to be purely deictic. We conclude that now is closer in function to the Chinese particle le than to the adverb xianzai.

Keywords: now, xianzai, particle le, temporal deixis, Chinese/English

1. Introduction

Chinese and English do not locate events in time in the same way. Whereas English primarily relies on tense for temporal reference, Chinese has no morphological marker of tense (Li and Thompson, 1981; Smith and Erbaugh, 2001; Lin, 2003, 2006) and has recourse to aspect, modal auxiliaries and contextual information to

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1. The notions of time and tense must be distinguished. Tense is not the only way to convey time in English. Modal auxiliaries and time adverbials often combine with tense to locate events in time. Smith explains that “temporal location is signaled in English by tense, modals, auxiliary have, and time adverbials.” (Smith, 1997: 184)
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convey temporal location (Smith and Erbaugh, 2001; Lin, 2003, 2006). In addition to that, both languages have at their disposal a number of temporal adverbs which supplement tense or aspect.

Among these adverbs, the deictic now / xianzai is typically used to refer directly to the time of utterance (Nef, 1980, 1986; Boucher, 1993). Comrie (1976) has argued that unlike aspect, tense has deictic features, in so far as it locates events in time with respect to the time of utterance. Considering the already deictic nature of the English tense system and the non-deictic nature of the aspectual Chinese system, one might think that in Chinese xianzai will be used more frequently in order to locate an event at speech time where English will just rely on tense. Surprisingly, our corpus study shows that this is not exactly true: now is much more frequent in English than xianzai is in Chinese. This paper aims to show that this is due to the fact that now and xianzai do not share the same properties. More specifically, whereas now is generally used as a contrastive marker, xianzai is used as a situational marker.

In this paper, I will first present the corpus and the method of analysis of the corpus in Section 2. In Section 3, I will provide an overview of the literature on the adverbs now and xianzai. Section 4 describes the correspondence pattern of now and xianzai in the parallel corpus. Finally, in Section 5 I try to provide an explanation to the many cases of non-correspondence of now and xianzai. This contrastive study indicates that now is closer in use to the particle le than to the adverb xianzai.

2. Material and Method

To explore this question, we used a translational parallel corpus composed of contemporary fictional texts (approximately 268,000 words in each language, not including the translations, cf. Table 1). Half of the corpus is made up of Chinese Mandarin texts and their published English translations (Chinese Narrative Corpus or CNC), and the other half is made up of English texts and their published

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2. Xianzai is given as one of the first equivalents of now in many dictionaries, such as MDBG (http://www.mdbg.net/), YellowBridge (http://www.yellowbridge.com/), etc.

3. The word count is based on the English data. Indeed, in order to have a balanced corpus, we first delimited the English Original Corpus (stopping at approximately 268,000 words), and extracted the same number of words from the body of English translations of the Chinese corpus. For the Chinese data, the Chinese translations of the selected English Original Corpora and the source texts of the selected English translations of the Chinese corpus were used.

Table 1. Overview of the English-Chinese parallel corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Narrative Corpus (ENC)</th>
<th>Chinese Narrative Corpus (CNC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Original Corpus</td>
<td>Chinese Translations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the English Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>268,000 words</td>
<td>Chinese Original Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English Translations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the Chinese Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>268,000 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, our corpus is a bidirectional corpus, on the model of the English-Norwegian parallel corpus (Johansson, 1997), which means that English original texts can be compared (1) with their Mandarin translations, (2) with English translated texts, and (3) with Mandarin original texts.

The advantage of such a corpus is the possibility it affords to:

– contrast two adverbs like *now* and *xianzai* in exactly similar contexts (by comparing parallel occurrences in a text and its translation),

– and then to verify the findings by comparing two original sets of texts, thus (1) avoiding the pitfall of using a potentially bad translation as a basis for analysis, and (2) neutralizing the effects of the frequent overuse of certain terms in translation under the influence of the source language (Johansson, 2007).

For the analysis of the parallel corpus, we used the software MkAlign, a textometric tool for multilingual textometric exploration of translation corpora developed by Serge Fleury.\(^4\) All the occurrences of *now* and their Chinese translations were parsed, as well as all the occurrences of *xianzai* and their English translations. We also examined the occurrences of *now* and *xianzai* in translation that were not elicited by the presence of *xianzai* / *now* in the source text and identified their correspondences in the source text. We found that the English Narrative Corpus

\(^4\) MkAlign was developed in 2006 by Serge Fleury, Paris 3 University, France (tp://tal.univ-paris3.fr/mkAlign/mkAlignDOC.htm), cf. Fleury and Zimina (2006).
counsants 623 occurrences of *now*, whereas the Chinese Narrative Corpus only has 207 occurrences of *xianzai*. This already suggests a major difference in use between the two markers.

Because of the limited size of our corpus as well as the limited variety of sources, the scope of this study is restricted to the use of *now / xianzai* in fiction, and only constitutes a first step in the contrastive study of these markers.

3. Literature review

3.1 Now

A great deal of literature has been produced on the adverb *now*. The three aspects of *now* that have aroused the most interest are its deictic value, its pragmatic value and its contrastive value.

Many authors have discussed the deictic value of *now* (Lyons, 1990; Boucher, 1993; Moeschler and Reboul, 1998; De Mulder and Vetters, 2008; etc.). Deictic markers allow for the direct localization of their referent relative to the situation of utterance. *Now* indicates that the time of the eventuality coincides with the time of speech.

(1) “Where is it *now*?” asked Harry jubilantly as Ron and Hermione looked gleeful. (EFC)

In this example, *now* refers directly to the time of utterance, or rather to a temporal interval which includes the time of utterance. It can thus only be properly interpreted deictically with reference to the situation of utterance. *Now* indicates that the time of the eventuality and the time of speech coincide.

The second aspect of *now* that has been much examined is its pragmatic value (Quirk *et al.*, 1985; Boucher, 1986, 1993; Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Brunaud, 1991; Celle, 2004; Hasselgård, 2006; etc.). *Now* might be used not temporally but to call the interlocutor to attention, or as a transitional or an argumentative marker. It is then always utterance-initial, and often separated from the rest of the utterance by a comma. In the following example, it signals a change of subjects.

(2) “Hello again, Barry, or whatever your name is,” she said to Harry. “*Now*, what were you saying about Rita Skeeter, Elphias?” (EFC)

Finally, the one unifying trait repeatedly attributed to *now* is its contrastive value (Fryd, 1991; Boucher, 1986, 1993; Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Celle, 2004; De
Mulder, 2006; De Mulder and Vetters, 2008; Ritz et al., 2012; Hunter, 2012; etc.). Now often signals a qualitative contrast between a new state of affairs and a former state of affairs. We argue that it is a key feature to consider in order to understand the differences between now and xianzai.

(3) Alice looked into his eyes, which had always charmed her so, and still did. But somehow the qualities that had attracted Alice to Thom in the first place were now her biggest worry.  

3.2 Xianzai

The adverb xianzai is a less common object of study than now. It has however been examined by a few authors who discuss the following points: the question of deixis; whether or not xianzai can be used as a pragmatic marker; the use of xianzai in temporally contrasted contexts.

All agree that xianzai is deictic. Li (2014) explains that the temporal marker xianzai is a ‘time noun’ that locates the eventuality at the time of speech. Kylie Hsu (1998: 80) explains that xianzai often occurs with the durative temporal markers zheng, zhengzai, and zai to signal that a situation is ongoing “at the moment of speaking, or (…) over an extended period of time but related to the present moment”. Thus, when combined with zheng, zhengzai, and zai, xianzai signals identification with the time of utterance while the durative temporal markers convey ongoingness.

(4) 我 現在 正 在 廚房 忙, 實在 不 方便 說話。
Wǒ xiànzài zhèng zài chúfáng máng shízài bù fāngbiàn shuōhuà  
I now just at kitchen busy really not convenient talk

There is a disagreement when it comes to the existence of a pragmatic use for xianzai. In their contrastive studies of Chinese and English, Methven (2006) and Wang (2001) both note that unlike now, xianzai cannot be used pragmatically. By contrast, Li (2014) identifies two uses of xianzai that he considers to be discursive, namely the use of xianzai as a result marker as in (5) and its use as a transition marker as in (6). As a result marker, xianzai introduces the consequence of the eventuality described in the preceding segment, just like the markers yúshì ‘thus’, suǒyì ‘so’, zhèxià ‘this time’. As a procedure transition marker, xianzai is only used in spoken Chinese, and introduces a new sequence of discourse. Its meaning is then similar to xiàmiàn ‘next’ or jiē xiàlái ‘following, next’.
“But you have lunch together. I saw you yesterday, you were talking so intimately, you didn’t even see me and Ruanlin walk right in front of you. Surely you should know her name by now!”

“Director Wu was tapping the table with a ballpoint pen: “Alright, now we have to look into the problem of the fence.””

However, we concur with Wang (2001) and Methven (2006) and do not consider these uses of xianzai to qualify as pragmatic or discursive. Indeed, even when xianzai is used to denote result or transition as in (5) and (6), it retains its temporal value and refers to a time interval; in other words it remains a temporal marker. One of the specificities of discourse markers is that they are non-referential, as explained by Fraser (1998). Xianzai is consistently referential and cannot be used as a pure procedural device.

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5. The examples taken from Li’s paper (2014) are translated into English by myself.

6. Fraser gives the following definition of discourse markers: “Although drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases, they do not play the
Finally, to our knowledge, Li (2014) is the only author to raise the question of the temporal contrast often implied by the use of xianzai in Chinese. He explains that xianzai is frequently used as what he calls a ‘connector of time relations’, as in (7) below. In that case, xianzai locates an eventuality at the time of utterance, but it is rarely used on its own. The eventuality located by xianzai is understood to occur after a preceding eventuality denoted in the previous segment (Past eventuality – xianzai + eventuality), or before a future eventuality denoted in the following segment (xianzai + eventuality – future eventuality). In (7), xianzai goes hand in hand with the time marker guoqu ‘in the past’. Li specifies that the presence of a past or future time marker is not necessary in the direct left or right context as long as the meaning of the preceding or following sequence is clearly past or future. However, the use of xianzai as a ‘connector of time relations’ implies the presence of a past or future eventuality in the direct context.

(7) 过去 我 也 想要 你 非 同 凡响 一些，
Guòqù wǒ yě xiǎng yào nǐ fēi tóng fánxiǎng yīxiē
In the past I too want you neg like ordinary some

和 别人 比 的 时候 能 超过 他们。
hé biérén bǐ de shíhou néng chāoguò tāmen
with other people compare DE time can surpass they

现在 （今天） 我 不 想 了，没 这些 也 可以。
Xiànzài （jīntiān） wǒ bù xiǎng le méi zhè xiē yě kěyǐ
now today I neg wish le neg this Cl. also can

多数 人 的 生活 不 也 是 碌碌无为 的 吗？
duōshù rén de shēnghuó bù yě shì lùlù wúwéi de ma
majority people DE life neg also be laborious without achievement DE INTERR.

“In the past I wanted you to be extraordinary, I wanted you to surpass other people. Now I don’t want that anymore, it’s okay if it is not like that. Isn’t the life of most people a lot of work with no achievement?”

role in a sentence that their classes would suggest, but instead, they are separate from the propositional content of the sentence and function to signal the relationship between the segment of discourse they introduce, S2, and the prior segment of discourse, S1. Their meaning is procedural, not conceptual, with each discourse marker providing information on how to interpret the message conveyed by S2 vis-à-vis the interpretation of S1.” (Fraser, 1998: 302)
As we will see in 5.2., this use of *xianzai* is not exactly equivalent to the contrastive use of *now*. Indeed, we will argue that whereas *now* is inherently contrastive, the temporal contrast that is often retrieved from sentences with *xianzai* is contextually implied.

Based on examples from our parallel corpus, we will now attempt to determine the properties shared by *now* and *xianzai*, as well as the variations in their distribution patterns and meanings.

### 4. Distribution of *now* and *xianzai*: data description

In this section, we look at the variations in the patterns of occurrence of *now* and *xianzai* in the parallel corpus. First, we contrast the frequency of the two forms in each section of the corpus before examining their correspondence patterns. Finally, we study the cases in which *now* and *xianzai* do not correspond.

#### 4.1 Frequency of *now* and *xianzai*

*Now* occurs more frequently in English than *xianzai* in Chinese. Table 2 indicates that in the overall corpus, *now* is twice as frequent as *xianzai*. But if we only consider the occurrences of the adverbs in the original texts, *now* is in fact three times as frequent as *xianzai* (623 occurrences of *now* for 207 occurrences of *xianzai*).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English (ENC)</th>
<th>Chinese (CNC)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Now</em></td>
<td>623</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>1117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Xianzai</em></td>
<td>317</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While *now* is more frequent in the original English texts than in the English translations of the Chinese texts (1.3 *now* in the original corpus for 1 *now* in the translations), *xianzai* is more frequent in the Chinese translations of the English texts than in the original Chinese corpus (1.5 *xianzai* in the translations for 1 *xianzai* in the original corpus). The fact that *xianzai* is more frequent in translations than in the original Mandarin texts suggests that the Mandarin translations of the English texts are influenced by the source language (*i.e.* English). The translators seem to overuse *xianzai* when translating an English text into Chinese. Conversely, *now* is underused in translation, probably due to the low frequency of *xianzai* in the CNC.
4.2 Correspondence pattern of now and xianzai

The correspondence pattern of two forms in a parallel corpus corresponds to the frequency at which they are translated into each other. Table 3 below gives the general correspondence pattern of now and xianzai in the parallel corpus, i.e. the frequency at which now is translated by xianzai in the Chinese translation of the English corpus, and the frequency at which xianzai is translated by now in the translation of the Chinese corpus. It appears that now is translated by xianzai less than 36% of the time, whereas xianzai is translated by now almost 48% of the time. Thus, they are translated into each other 38.9% of the time, which means that they have a Mutual Correspondence (MC) of 38.9% (Altenberg, 1999).

Table 3. Correspondence pattern of now / xianzai in the parallel corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correspondences of Now in the English Narrative Corpus</th>
<th>Correspondences of Xianzai in the Chinese Narrative Corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence now / xianzai</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-correspondence now / xianzai</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>623</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering that many bilingual dictionaries (MDBG, YellowBridge, etc.) give xianzai as one of the principal equivalents of now, this MC value is rather low. Now and xianzai are chosen as equivalents by translators less than half the time. This suggests that these two seemingly semantically identical markers do in fact differ in function and use. Let us examine the correspondences that are the most frequently chosen over now or xianzai in translation.

4.3 Non-Correspondence pattern of now and xianzai

Now can be translated by a variety of forms other than xianzai, and xianzai can be translated by various forms as well. Conversely, sometimes now and xianzai are not translated at all. The non-correspondence pattern of now and xianzai is detailed in Table 4. Following Johansson’s terminology (2007) ‘zero correspondence’ is an instance where the target text does not contain any form that can be related directly to the form under study in the source text; ‘congruent translations’ correspond to instances in which the form used to translate the form under study belongs to the same category in terms of part of speech; ‘divergent correspondences’ are forms that belong to different categories in the two languages.
Table 4. Non-correspondence of now / xianzai in the parallel corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Now in the English Narrative Corpus</th>
<th>Xianzai in the Chinese Narrative Corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero correspondence</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untranslated clause or sentence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other time expressions (congruent translations)</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>49.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic now</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (divergent correspondences or faulty translations)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 indicates that 399 out of the 623 occurrences of now are not translated by xianzai. These data do not contradict Table 2: only 224 of the occurrences of now indicated in Table 2 correspond to xianzai in the English Narrative Corpus, and 93 occurrences of xianzai are found in the Chinese translation without now as a correspondence in the source text. Similarly, 99 occurrences of xianzai are translated by now in the Chinese Narrative Corpus whereas 108 are not, and now appears in the translations without xianzai as a correspondence in the source text 395 times. This discrepancy confirms that the use of now is much more frequent in English than the use of xianzai is in Chinese.

This table shows that the main correspondences of now apart from xianzai are congruent translations. Indeed, whereas now is often preferred to its hyponyms in English, xianzai is often supplanted by other rather more formal adverbials such as jintian ‘today’, muqian ‘now’, cishi ‘now’, cike ‘now’. The fact that these adverbs are often preferred to xianzai in narration can be explained by the very nature of the text: it is a literary text, and the language used is quite formal.7

25.06% of the occurrences of non-correspondence of now and xianzai correspond to cases in which now is not translated. For the greatest part, the cases of zero correspondence of now are instances of a contrastive use of now. We will analyze this type of zero correspondence in Section 5.2.

Divergent correspondences of now are quite frequent too (18.30%). The most frequent form that is found as a divergent correspondence for now is the Chinese final particle 了. Other divergent correspondences include zai, zheng, -zhe, and

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7. We propose that now, as a deictic pro-form (Quirk et al., 1985: 487), can be regarded as the hyperonym of all the adverbials referring to any time interval including S (today, at the moment, this week, etc.).

8. The demonstrative form ci ‘this’ only occurs in written texts.
shifts to space deixis with zheli ‘here’, etc. Le is a final particle that encodes a change of state and the current relevance of the new state (Li and Thompson, 1982). It seems that one of the reasons why le often occurs as a translation equivalent of now is because now shares these semantic properties: it encodes change and current relevance. Another frequent divergent correspondence for now is the use of a verb of inchoation in Chinese, i.e. a verb denoting a change of state. As we will see in the next section, we find many occurrences of biande ‘become’, chengwei ‘become’, biancheng ‘become’ as correspondences of now.

Finally, the last cause of non-correspondence between now and xianzai is the use of now as a pragmatic marker. In the corpus, no occurrence of now as a pragmatic marker is translated by xianzai. However, the use of pragmatic now in narration is limited and this phenomenon can only account for a small number of the cases of non-correspondence between now and xianzai. Thus, the inability for xianzai to translate pragmatic now cannot account for the high non-correspondence between now and xianzai.

As for xianzai, the table shows that the main reason for its non-correspondence with now is that it tends not to be translated at all into English (58.88%). We did not include tense as a divergent translation for xianzai; indeed xianzai might be used in what corresponds in English to past or present contexts, thus the use of different English tenses in translation cannot be attributed to the presence of xianzai in Chinese. However, as a deictic marker, xianzai is an anchoring device, i.e. it is used to relate the eventuality to the situation of utterance or of reference. We call this function of anchoring a situational function. English tenses are deictic and also have an anchoring function. Thus, the large proportion of zero correspondence of xianzai in the Chinese Narrative Corpus might be attributed to the mere presence of tenses in English.

Other time expressions such as today are also used to translate xianzai, as well as a small number of divergent translations. But as we will see in the next section, the non-correspondence of xianzai and now is often due to the fact that xianzai is used situationally, i.e. as a pure deictic marker which anchors the eventuality in the situation of utterance, whereas the use of now would create a contrast between two situations.

5. Analysis of the data

5.1 Hypotheses

Having described our data in Section 4, we need to account for the following tendencies:
- Now is more frequent than xianzai
- Now, most of the time, is not translated into xianzai
- Xianzai, most of the time, is translated into now

We make the following hypotheses:

- The need for situational markers such as xianzai, which anchor the eventuality in the situation of utterance, is greater in Chinese interaction because of the absence of tenses which are often sufficient to anchor the utterance in English.
- English now is intrinsically contrastive, whereas Chinese xianzai is not. Unlike now, xianzai is fundamentally situational, i.e. its function is to anchor the eventuality into the situation. Thus, xianzai can only be used as a connector with a contrastive meaning when a past or future time interval is made explicit (cf. Li, 2014). Conversely, for now to be used situationally, its contrastive meaning needs to be neutralized.

5.2 Now / xianzai: Situational use vs. contrastive use

In their primary use, now and xianzai both refer directly to the time of utterance: they are deictic. Typically, when used in interaction they indicate that the time of speech and the time of the event coincide. However, whereas xianzai only provides this situational information, now does not; it indicates that the situation described contrasts with a qualitatively antithetical previous or future situation. This explains why now typically prompts the use of divergent translations or is used as a divergent translation of verbs such as verbs with inchoative meaning as in (8) or of the final particle le that encodes a change of state as in (9).

(8) 阿莉思看着他，那雙眼睛曾經如此
Alice watch-DUR he that CL eye once so
迷惑她，此刻仍是。但不知道為什麼，原本
confuse she now still be but NEG know why originally
傑克森最吸引阿莉思的特性，卻變成最
Jackson most attract Alice REL characteristic but become most
讓她掛心的一部分。
make she worry REL one-CL-PART

Alice looked into his eyes, which had always charmed her so, and still did. But somehow the qualities that had attracted Alice to Thom in the first place were now her biggest worry.
Inchoative verbs mark an opposition between two situations, and their use in the translations of sentences with *now* suggests that *now* possesses similar semantic properties, i.e. it expresses change. And indeed, Hasselgård (2006) notes that the presence of a verb of inchoation in English makes the use of *now* redundant. Conversely, *xianzai* does not seem to have these properties, which explains why it can often be dispreferred as a translation of *now*. In Example (9), the speaker finds himself stranded on a deserted island. He utters this sentence when he becomes aware of his new situation. The contrast between the former state of affairs and the new state of affairs is encoded with the sentence-final particle *le* in Chinese, and with *now* in English.

Conversely, *now* can often not be used when no contrast between two situations is implied, whereas *xianzai* can. In Example (10a), *xianzai* is used situationally in the original Chinese text: its function is to establish a relation of coincidence between the time of speech and the time of the eventuality ‘méiyǒu’ (not have). In the English translation, the contrastive value of *now* is neutralized by the addition of the preposition *for*. This becomes apparent if the preposition is dropped as in (10b), in which *now* has a contrastive meaning: it contrasts the present situation in which there is no seafood to be found with the previous situation in which seafood was abundant. Correspondingly, final particle *le* must be added in Chinese to match the contrastive meaning of the English version.

(9) 只剩下我一個人了。 (CNC)

Zhǐ shēng xià wǒ yīgèrén le
only remain I alone le

*Now* it’s just me.

(10) a. 雖然我們吃的东西離不開海鮮，但現在沒有，你們知道的。

Suīrán wǒmen chī de dōngxi lìbùkāi hǎixiān dàn xiànzài méiyǒu le nǐmen zhīdào de.
Although we eat de thing inseparable seafood but now neg have le you-plur know de.

There’s seafood in almost everything we eat, but there isn’t any seafood *now*. You know how it is.

b. 雖然我們吃的东西離不開海鮮，但現在沒有，你們知道的。

Suīrán wǒmen chī de dōngxi lìbùkāi hǎixiān dàn xiànzài méiyǒu le nǐmen zhīdào de.
Although we eat de thing inseparable seafood, but now neg have le you-plur know de.

“There’s seafood in almost everything we eat, but there isn’t any seafood *now*. You know how it is.”
Thus, we argue that now is primarily contrastive, and can only be used situational-
ly when its contrastive meaning is neutralized, i.e. when it is used in combination
with a preposition or another adverb, e.g. for now, right now, etc. The contrastive
meaning of now can also be neutralized by intonation when now receives a sen-
tence stress as in (11) below:

(11) “Where is it now?” asked Harry jubilantly as Ron and Hermione looked gleeful.

In English, tense already marks the anchoring of the eventuality in the situation
of utterance. Thus when now is used as a situational marker in a tensed sentence
such as (11), it is redundant. Its use is necessarily marked (here by intonation).
Conversely, unmarked now is naturally read as contrastive.

On the other hand, the use of xianzai in Chinese is not redundant, hence its
situational reading. In order to be interpreted contrastively, the clause modified
by xianzai must be combined with a past or a future situation (Li, 2014). In that
case, the contrastive reading is obtained by implicature and is prompted by the
context. This sheds light on a major difference between now and xianzai: whereas
the main function of xianzai is to locate the eventuality at the time of speech or
at Reference time, the main function of now is to oppose the located situation to a
past or a future situation. Thus, the situational use of xianzai is unmarked, whereas
its contrastive use (cf. Li, 2014) is marked. On the other hand, the contrastive use
of now is unmarked, whereas its situational use is marked. For now and xianzai
to be translation correspondences, they need to yield the same reading: when the
contrastive meaning of now is neutralized it can be translated by xianzai, and
when xianzai occurs in a contrastive context, it can be translated by now.

6. Conclusion

We conclude that now is closer in meaning, or rather in use to the sentence-final
particle le than to the deictic adverb xianzai. Xianzai is mostly used situationally
to mark coincidence between the time of the event and the time of speech, be-
cause there are no tenses to do so in Chinese. Following Methven (2006), we can
say that xianzai is more purely deictic than now insofar as it is wholly devoted
to time deixis. When the speaker wants to signal a contrast with the preceding situation, she will use *le*. When *xianzai* and *le* are combined, *xianzai* operates the identification between the time of the event and the time of speech, and *le* has an inchoative value, inaugurates a new state and it is its presence that creates a contrast between a new and a preceding situation. Conversely, *now* is first and foremost contrastive, and can only have a purely situational meaning when its contrastive meaning is neutralized.

We suggest that the divergent specializations of *now* and *xianzai* are linked to the English and Chinese ways of coding time location. The Chinese aspectual system is equipped with *le*, an aspectual particle that encodes temporal contrast between two situations and inchoation of the process. But Chinese lacks grammat- icized elements to encode temporal deixis and time anchoring, hence the deictic specialization of some adverbs such as *xianzai*.

On the other hand, English has a deictic temporal system, with tenses that already encode the relation between the time of the event and the time of speech. Thus, deictic adverbs such as *now* are often temporally redundant, and the anchoring that they provide is not crucial to the understanding of the sentence. Moreover, English has no grammaticized element (such as Chinese *le*) to signal changes of state. These two factors account for the fact that *now* has developed into a contrastive marker.

These findings open the door for further research. First, the scope of this study is limited to narrative contexts, and the pair *now / xianzai* should be examined in interactive contexts to confirm the results. Further, we plan to conduct a contrastive analysis of the English adverb *now* and the aspectual particle *le*, in order to determine on the one hand to what extent *now* could be said, like *le*, to be a marker of perfect aspect and an operator coding change of state; and on the other hand, whether the aspectual particle *le* could be considered to be a marker of temporal deixis.

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