

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,¹ 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

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)

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).² 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).³ 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

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.

Mandarin translations (English Narrative Corpus or ENC). The English data are taken from the American novels *American Gods* by Neil Gaiman (2001) and *Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown (2003), as well as from the British novel *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* by J. K. Rowling (2007). The Chinese data are taken from the Taiwanese novels *Decayed Lust* by Chung Wen-Yin (2012), *The Man with the Compound Eyes* by Wu Ming-Yi (2011) and *Sorceress Diguwan* by Badai (2013). To the original data are added the Chinese translations of the English novels and the English translations of the Taiwanese novels.

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

English Narrative Corpus (ENC)		Chinese Narrative Corpus (CNC)	
English Original Corpus	Chinese Translations of the English Corpus	Chinese Original Corpus	English Translations of the Chinese Corpus
268,000 words		268,000 words	

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](http://tal.univ-paris3.fr/mkAlign/mkAlignDOC.htm)), cf. Fleury and Zimina (2006).

contains 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 Veters, 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 Vettters, 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. (CFC)

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
 I am busy in the kitchen at the moment, I can't really talk. (CFC)

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’, *suǒyǐ* ‘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 *xiàmian* ‘next’ or *jiē xiàlái* ‘following, next’.

- (5) 都 一起 去 餐馆 吃饭 了。昨天 我 看见
 Dōu yīqǐ qù cānguǎn chīfàn le Zuótiān wǒ kànjiàn
 All together go restaurant eat-food LE Yesterday I look-see
 你们 了，谈 得 那么 亲密，连 我 和 阮琳
 nǐmen le tán dé nàme qīnmì lián wǒ hé Ruǎnlín
 you-PLUR LE discuss DE so intimate Even I and Ruanlin
 从 你们 面前 走过 也 看 不 见。
 cóng nǐmen miànqián zǒuguò yě kàn bù jiàn
 from you-PLUR front walk-cross also see NEG see
 现在 (这下) 你 知道 她 叫 什么 了 吧？
 Xiànzài (zhè xià) nǐ zhīdào tā jiào shénme le ba
 Now this time you know she call what LE BA

(Li Zongjiang, 2014: 64)

“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!”⁵

- (6) 吴 所长 用 圆珠笔 敲敲 桌面: “好
 Wú suǒcháng yòng yuánzhūbǐ qiāo qiāo zhuōmiàn: Hǎo
 Wu Headmaster use ballpoint pen tap tap table face Well
 啦，现在 我们 就 来 研究 一下 围墙 的
 la, xiànzài wǒmen jiù lái yánjiū yíxià wéiqiáng de
 la now we at once come research one time enclosure DE
 问题。”

(Li Zongjiang, 2014: 64)

wèntí.
 question

“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).⁶ *Xianzai* is consistently referential and cannot be used as a pure procedural device.

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 *guòqu* ‘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 shíhòu 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
 duōshù rén de shēnghuó bù yě shì
 majority people DE life NEG also be
 碌碌无为 的 吗？ (Li Zongjiang, 2014: 62)
 lùlù wúwéi de ma
 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 2. Occurrences of *now* and *xianzai* in the parallel corpus.

	English (ENC)	Chinese (CNC)	Total
<i>Now</i>	623	494	1117
<i>Xianzai</i>	317	207	524

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.

	Correspondences of <i>Now</i> in the English Narrative Corpus		Correspondences of <i>Xianzai</i> in the Chinese Narrative Corpus	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Correspondence <i>now</i> / <i>xianzai</i>	224	35.96	99	47.83
Non-correspondence <i>now</i> / <i>xianzai</i>	399	64.04	108	52.17
Total	623	100	207	100

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.

	Now in the English Narrative Corpus		Xianzai in the Chinese Narrative Corpus	
	N	%	N	%
Zero correspondence	100	25.06	63	58.33
Untranslated clause or sentence	2	0.50	3	2.78
Other time expressions (congruent translations)	197	49.37	25	23.15
Pragmatic <i>now</i>	27	6.77	0	0
Other (divergent correspondences or faulty translations)	73	18.30	17	15.74
Total	399	100	108	100

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,⁷ *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.⁸

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 *le*. Other divergent correspondences include *zai*, *zheng*, *-zhe*, and

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 看著 他， 那 雙 眼睛 曾經 如此
 Àlisī kàn-zhe tā nà shuāng yǎnjīng céngjīng rúcǐ
 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
 míhuò tā cǐkè réng shì dàn bù zhīdào wèishéme yuánběn
 confuse she now still be but NEG know why originally
- 傑克森 最 吸引 阿莉思 的 特質， 卻 變成 最
 Jiékèsēn zuì xīyīn Àlisī de tèzhì què biànchéng zuì
 Jackson most attract Alice REL characteristic but become most
- 讓 她 掛心 的 一部分。
 ràng tā guàxīn de yībùfèn
 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.

- (9) 只 剩下 我 一個人 了。 (CNC)
 Zhǐ sheng xià wǒ yīgèrén le
 only remain I alone LE
 Now it's just me.

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.

- (10) a. 雖然 我們 吃的 東西 離不開 海鮮， 但
 Suīrán wǒmen chī de dōngxi libùkāi hǎixiān dàn
 Although we eat DE thing inseparable seafood but
 現在 沒有， 你們 知道 的。 (CNC)
 xiànzài méiyǒu nǐmen zhīdào de
 now NEG have you-PLUR know DE.

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

- b. 雖然 我們 吃的 東西 離不開 海鮮， 但 現在
 Suīrán wǒmen chī de dōngxi libùkāi hǎixiān dàn xiànzài
 Although we eat DE thing inseparable seafood, but now
 沒有 了， 你們 知道 的。
 méiyǒu le nǐmen zhīdào de.”
 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 situationally 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 sentence stress as in (11) below:

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

『現在 在 哪裡?』	哈利	歡天喜地	地	問，	榮恩	和
<u>Xiànzài</u>	zài	nǎlǐ	Hāli	huāntiānxǐdì	de	wèn Róngēn hé
Now	be	where	Harry	delighted	DE	ask Ron and
妙麗	也	一臉	高興。			
Miàoli	yě	yīliǎn	gāoxìng.			
Hermione	also	whole face	happy.			

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, because 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 grammaticized 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.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the Center for Chinese Studies (CCS, Taipei) for funding this project.

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