

## **Translation of Pronouns and Deictic Positioning in the Thai Prime Minister’s Weekly Addresses**

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**Abstract.** This study investigates the translation of the weekly Thai prime ministerial addresses, focusing on pronouns and deictic positioning. The English translation is considered a new feature of this political genre, with implications for Thailand’s political situation. The study analyses Prayut Chan-o-cha’s weekly addresses using Munday’s pronouns and deixis categorisation based on the interpersonal concept in systemic functional linguistics. The central concerns are how the premier used Thai pronouns and positioned the addressees in his speeches and if their translation properly represents them. The findings reveal that the prime minister’s (PM) selection of pronouns defines his addressees into distant and proximate, positive and negative groups. However, his pronoun use is ambivalent and slippery. The translation of his pronoun use causes the obligatory shifts in the target text because of the structural differences between Thai and English. There is a tendency for explicitation of the PM’s deictic positioning due to the re-insertion of the missing pronouns. In rendering the PM’s temporal deixis into English, the translator managed to connect his imagined glorious past of Thailand with its hopeful future. These explicit time links evoke a nationalistic image and allude to Thailand’s recent political turmoil.

**Keywords and phrases:** deictic positioning, pronoun, Thai politics, translation, weekly address

### **Introduction**

In 2014, there were violent protests in Thailand against Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, who was accused of corruption and wanted to exonerate Thaksin Shinawatra, the former prime minister (PM) in exile, of his wrongdoings. In May 2014, the military intervened to topple the country’s elected government, allegedly

to keep the country calm. The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) was founded to confine public figures, control opposition groups and prepare an interim constitution (McCargo 2015). However, to legitimise and institutionalise their control, the military adopted a method pioneered by past PMs and has become a fundamental venue for promoting political discourse – the weekly address.

On 30th May 2014, a week following the coup, the Prayut administration delivered its first weekly speech. Every Friday evening, all television (TV) networks were required to broadcast the address. On television, Prayut, initially dressed in his uniform, stood at the podium and spoke straight to the camera, with the script running in front of him. A sign-language interpreter relayed the PM's address while English subtitles ran at the bottom of the TV screen (Nanuam 2014). Each speech was 25 minutes to one and a half hours long and covered more than 10 subjects. The significant issues are local monetary stimulus, annual budget spending, a reform strategy, anti-corruption initiatives and media criticism reactions. English subtitles, or the attempt to engage global audiences, are a new feature of Prayut's show. Arguably, the administration was striving to repair its image in the eyes of the international community, which had heavily criticised his coup. For example, the United States (US) Secretary of State, John Kerry, expressed disappointment and reconsidered their "military and other assistance and engagements, consistent with US law" (Brunnstrom and Mohammed 2014).

Prayut's address is a platform where his political stance is expressed through the use of pronouns and how he positions his addressee by including or excluding some of his audience from this political discourse. As van Dijk (1997, 204) has long advocated, pronouns in political speech can reveal the speaker's mental representations to his/her audience. They are especially vital when rendered across languages, particularly those with diverse culturally referenced sets of pronouns, such as Thai. The objectives of this study are to (1) classify Prayut's pronoun use in his weekly address, where the political boundaries between his addressees are examined and (2) compare the premier's pronoun use in his original addresses and their translations. The findings will be discussed in relation to the portrayal of Thai nationalism and translation as a political discourse.

### **Thai Nationalism**

Thai nationalism, in its conservative manifestation, has long been considered an integral part of Thai society. According to the Buddhist code of morality, the nation is inextricably linked to the royal institution and Buddhism, in which the monarch is expected to pursue justice as the one on whom the people can rely (Murashima 1988, 80). The ideological development of "Thainess", such as support for Thai

history and prestige in cultural heritage, seeks to preserve the sociopolitical system that classified people according to their birthright, with the monarch as the centre of allegiance and concord (cf. Chaloeontiarana 1979; Connors 2007).

As exemplified by our present case, the authorities have used the ideology of “Thainess” as a political strategy to obtain support for its policies. Prayut highlighted the 12 core values that define strong loyalty to the triad of nation, religion and king. He sought to instil these conservative ideals in the children and encourage them to act like “good Thais” by giving them the yearly Children’s Day slogan. Prayut frequently stressed the significance of “Thainess”, as seen by the official English translation of his address on 1st May 2015:

I am very glad to see Thai people place more importance on preserving the Thai culture and traditions [...] every Thai should love and pride themselves on having such unique cultural values which have become a part of everyone’s daily life, especially for our children and youths and should be passed on to future generations.<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt from one of his weekly addresses, broadcast to the public after the government introduced the so-called “Thai 12 core values”, clearly links to the idea that the linguistic strategy can invoke the sense of unity and nationalism and the formulation of inclusiveness with the first-person plural. Pronoun use helps the speaker polarise between a positive representation of the in-group (“we”) and a negative representation of the out-group (“they”) (cf. Fairclough 2015; van Dijk 2008, 226).

### **Potential Shift in Translation of Pronoun and Deictic Positioning**

According to Chilton (2004), a deictic marker such as a pronoun can help locate the participant in a conversation along spatial, temporal and modality lines. The deixis establishes the speaker’s position using the singular pronoun “I” or the plural pronoun “we”. Concurrently, spatio-temporal “here” and “now” can be used to define moral rightness. These axis lines can depict the speaker’s distance from him or her along (1) the temporal axis (past to future), (2) the spatial axis (geographical and cultural distance in terms of social and power divisions) and (3) the modal axis (the speaker’s portrayal of rectitude and reality) (Chilton 2004, 60).

Drawing on Chilton’s (2004) analysis of deictic markers, Munday (2012) examined the Spanish translations of US President Barack Obama’s inaugural address in 2009 and discovered that the then-President used pronouns to locate himself nearer to his addressees and draw an inclusive connection with the

American public (Munday 2012, 79). Chilton's (2004) and Munday's (2012) studies are crucial to our present case because they provide a well-established analysis model, particularly regarding the translation of pronouns.

Patpong (2006, 35) defines Thai pronouns as interactants or non-interactants. An interactant is any of the speaking roles in the exchange assigned to the speaker, speaker plus others, or addressee (first or second-person). Any speech role assigned to someone other than the speaker and/or the addressee is referred to as a non-interactant (third-person). Some examples of each type of pronoun are as follows:

1. Interactant type comprises (a) speaker such as ผม (*phom*) or ฉัน (*chan*) for "I", (b) speaker-plus which can be singular เรา (*rao*) or plural พวกเรา (*phuak-rao*) for "we" and (c) addressee which can be singular คุณ (*khun*) or plural พวกคุณ (*phuak-khun*) for "you".
2. Non-interactant type comprises (a) conscious subtype which can be singular เขา (*khao*) for "he" or plural พวกเขา (*phuak-khao*) for "they (male)" and (b) non-conscious subtype which can be numeral นี้ (*ni*) for "this" and พวกนี้ (*phuak-ni*) for "these" or distance นั้น (*nan*) for "that" and พวกนั้น (*phuak-nan*) for "those".
3. The lexical type can be occupation terms (หมอ [*mo*] for "doctor"), kinship terms (ปู่ [*pu*] for "paternal grandfather") or gender terms (นาง [*nang*] for "woman").

Thai pronouns differ from English pronouns in several ways. To begin with, the choice of pronouns in Thai demonstrates the speaker's social distance from the addressee. Second, a Thai pronoun obscures the speaker's identity from that of the addressee or other non-interactants. How references are distinguished is determined by politeness, register and context. Thirdly, Thai is a pro-drop language, which allows for the omission of certain classes of pronouns if they can be inferred from the clue phrases (Aroonmanakun 2000, 144). Translating Thai pronouns can be extremely difficult. Despite having the same morpheme, a pronoun might be understood as different persons. One assumption is that the obligatory and optional shifts between the Thai-English language pair are not conveniently classifiable. There are several borderlines in which translators choose English equivalents based on their evaluation, such as pronoun explicitation.

While Prayut's weekly addresses have piqued the interest of academics from various fields, only a few studies have examined his addresses concerning Thai political implications through his language use, such as trust-building strategies (Sudajit-apa 2019), the reflection of the government's image (Carreon and

Svetanant 2017), or generic structure (Phanthaphoommee 2021). To the best of my knowledge, no research has been conducted that focuses on Prayut's pronoun use in his speech. Many translation studies scholars have attempted to analyse other world leaders' speeches and their language use (e.g., Schäffner 2008; Romagnuolo 2009; Caimotto 2020). One of the theoretically informed studies is by Munday (2012; 2018), who pays attention to the translation of pronouns and deictic position of Obama's and Trump's inaugural addresses. The findings of both studies have laid the groundwork for research into ideological manipulation by translators/interpreters in other contexts. Drawing on Munday's (2012) categorisation of pronoun use and deictic positioning, the present study offers another perspective on differentiating politicians' pronoun use in their address, where the boundary between addressees is examined to see, in our case study, whom Prayut has included or omitted from his rhetoric.

### **Data and Methodology**

The article set out to compare the Prayut Friday's addresses and their official translations. His addresses started from 30th May 2014 to 29th March 2019. However, this qualitative study focuses primarily on addresses delivered near Thai national holidays celebrating national unity, Buddhism and the monarchy; for instance, Mother's Day (e.g., the address on 8th August 2014), Makha Bucha Day (e.g., the address on 29th January 2016) or the National Day (e.g., the address on 10th April 2015).

These addresses were chosen for two reasons. First, the designation of national holidays, such as the king's and queen's birthdays or Buddhist-related holidays, as symbols of sole national religious belief is frequently highly political. All of these days, presumably, contribute to the Thai state's legitimacy. Historically, both military regimes and elected governments have perpetuated and exploited the "Thainess" legacy. Second, Prayut often extolled the virtues of these days to the public in his speeches. For example, Prayut typically lauded King Rama IX's achievements prior to celebrating his birthday to demonstrate their adherence to this important pillar of Thai culture.

All the data used in this study were retrieved from the royal Thai government website<sup>2</sup> and the videos from its YouTube channel<sup>3</sup>. The selected source texts were analysed to find how the PM used the Thai pronouns in his speeches. The results were later discussed in relation to Munday's (2012) categorisation of pronouns and Chilton's (2004) model of deictic positioning in political speech. The translation shifts in pronoun use elicited by the source text-target text comparison were also

discussed, with a particular emphasis on the representation of nationalism. All analyses were double-checked to ensure that any errors were minimised.

### Translation of Pronouns

Prayut's weekly address is frequently fraught with ambiguity and confusion regarding pronoun use. The first-person plural เรา (pronounced *rao*) is the most frequently used; for example, there are 168 instances of *rao* in the nearly hour-long video address on 1st May 2015. However, in Thai, the pronoun *rao* can refer to any person. It can be the first-person singular, the first-person plural, or even the second-person singular when a senior person talks to an inferior. Prayut's speech contains only the first-person plural *rao*, indicating a political text's specific time and place. It is pretty standard for political speeches to use the first-person plural, with the implicit assumption that the speaker is speaking on behalf of the government (exclusively) and the audience (inclusively) (Munday 2012, 70).

Prayut's use of *rao* not only reveals his political standpoint but also specifies a range of addressees as a group of individuals who directly engage with him (ท่าน, pronounced *than*) or those he refers to as "third parties" (เขา, pronounced *khao*). By addressing a particular group, Prayut defines himself against "the others". We found a similar political significance in the first group of pronouns in Munday's (2012, 71) differentiation of "we" in his analysis of the Obama inaugural address. However, based on Patpong's (2006) interpretation of Thai grammar, this research suggests an additional category of interactant and non-interactant. The following is a breakdown of Prayut's pronoun use, with instances of Thai source text and my literal translation.

The group of interactants can be classified as speaker-plus (first-person) and addressee (second-person). The following categories apply to the speaker-plus:

1. Inclusive *rao* for "we" is Prayut's presentation alongside ordinary Thais within and outside the country. It is an attempt to unite the populace through the presumption of Thainess. It is further broken down into two subcategories:
  - a. Broader temporal *rao* for "we" – Prayut and Thais having a shared Thai history and identity. This one is primarily found when Prayut shows his "Thailand-is-good" mentality by referring back to the ancient and recent "Thai common history". One of the examples is ประเทศไทย... กำลังจัดเชื้อโรคร้ายต่างๆ... ให้สมกับคำที่ว่าเราอยู่ในแผ่นดินสุวรรณภูมิ (18th September 2015) translated as "Thailand ... is curing itself of many ill ... so that it can live up to our being a land of Suvarnabhumi".

- b. Current temporal *rao* for “we” – Prayut and Thais at present have an imagined, unified future. The example is ผมรู้ดีว่าปัญหาประเทศอยู่ที่ไหน... แต่เราจะหาหนทางอย่างไรที่ทำให้ประเทศชาติเราเดินไปข้างหน้า (18th September 2015) translated as “I understand well what kind of problem the country faces... But, how are we going to find a way to move our country forward”.
2. Exclusive *rao* for “we” is the group of the military, the government, the NCPO and the civil servants. It is sometimes used exclusively to refer to individual groups (such as the military or the government), but it is frequently used to refer to more than two at the same time (the government plus the NCPO, or the government plus civil servants). An example of its usage is ทหารเป็นผู้ดำเนินการในเรื่องนี้อยู่แล้วในกองทัพ... เราต้องเตรียมให้พร้อม ผมก็นำประสบการณ์ตรงนี้ไปขับเคลื่อนตรงนั้น (8th August 2014) translated as “[T]he military has been doing them in the army... We have to be well-prepared. I use these [military] experiences to drive those [processes]”.
3. Ambivalent *rao* for “we” occurs when the pronoun is omitted, but the missing pronoun can be anaphorically referred to as *rao* the government-*cum*-Thais (the government acting on behalf of the people and the people complying with the government’s actions) or second-person *than* (as a form of imperative; see below) who must comply with such actions. The example is เราต้องระมัดระวัง... [ท่าน/เรา] ดูสัญญาเขาด้วย ดูกฎหมายระหว่างประเทศด้วย (29th January 2016) translated as “We need to be cautious ... [You/We] look at their agreements, look at international laws”.

The addressee can be listed as follows:

1. General *than* for “you” is used to refer to all Thais residing in or outside the country; for instance, ถ้าท่านเริ่มด้วยตัวเองได้ตามคำแนะนำ จะสะดวกแก่การบริหารจัดการของรัฐบาล (29th January 2016) translated as “If you can do this by yourself according to advice, it would be easier for the government to manage”. This category responds to exclusive *rao* and ambivalent *rao* when Prayut distances himself and the government from the general Thai population or takes advantage of pronoun omission and its ambiguity to criticise the addressee.
2. Specific *than* for “you” is used when Prayut addresses a specific group of people, which can be sub-divided into three main groups:
- a. Proximate *than* for “you” – civil servants who need to implement the government’s initiatives, as in ท่านมีตั้งหลายหน่วยงานในการทำงาน... ในการทำงานเป็นครู (29th January 2016) translated as “you have a lot of work to do ... in being a teacher”.

- b. Distance *than* for “you” – the farmers, the poor and people prone to be victims of corruption, as in ท่านต้องเริ่มกับผมก่อน เราต้องพัฒนาสินค้าให้มีคุณภาพมากกว่าปริมาณ (29th January 2016) translated as “you have to start with me first. We have to develop products that are of quality rather than quantity”.
- c. Negative *than* for “you” – former politicians, corrupt people and those who oppose the government, as in ถ้า [ท่าน] ผิด [ท่าน] ต้องถูกดำเนินคดี ... ถ้าท่านก้าวล่วงมาก ๆ กฎหมายไม่ทำตามใจ [ท่าน] (8th August 2014) translated as “if [you] are wrong, [you] must be prosecuted ... if you violate [the law] too much, the law will not indulge [you]”.

Although several second-person pronominal forms express aspects of the speaker-listener relationship, such as social position and contact (Uckaradejdumrong 2016, 15), Prayut addresses his audience solely with the pronominal form *than*. This pronoun is commonly used when the addressee has higher social standing and the speaker wishes to salute him or her. Regardless of socioeconomic status, politicians frequently use it when speaking to their potential voters.

The non-interactant is the third person which assumes a plural “they” by default, but in Thai, *khao* can be referred to as either third-person singular or plural. Some differentiation of *khao* can be made as follows:

1. Positive *khao* for “they” is found when Prayut refers to some specific groups of Thais corresponding with his recurrent theme of nationalism:
  - a. Inclusive *khao* “they” are soldiers who sacrifice their lives for the greater safety of the nation or Thai children who would carry on the “good Thai culture” into the future. This group is, in a sense, identified with the inclusive *rao* when Prayut addresses ordinary Thais but simultaneously points to this particular group for *us* to see. The example is ผมอยากให้เป็นความฝันของพวกเขาทุกคน... เราต้องสร้างบางอย่างให้รุ่นหลังเขาดู (8th August 2014) translated as “I want it to be a dream for all of us... we have to create something for them [future generations] to see”.
  - b. Distance *khao* for “they” are farmers, the poor and people vulnerable to corruption (or distance *than*). This group is defined against the exclusive *rao* and ambivalent *rao* when Prayut directly talks to civil servants and/or ordinary Thais (possibly, the middle class) about the need to help this group. One of the examples is [เรา] ก็อยากเรียนรู้ในสิ่งที่เขารู้ (17th October 2014) translated as “[we] want to learn what they know, to create pride for the farmers”.

- c. Remote *khao* for “they” is used to refer to foreigners, tourists and international organisations when Prayut addresses Thais by calling for unity and nationalism with the inclusive *rao*, as in เขามาเที่ยวบ้านเรา เพราะของเก่า ส่วนใหญ่เขามาเที่ยว โบราณสถาน (5th September 2014) translated as “they come to our home because of old things. Most of them came to visit the ancient sites”.
2. Negative *khao* for “they” is often used to show that the country is deteriorating and full of decadent people, so as to distinguish the junta from “the others” and to heighten the sense of patriotism:
- a. Material *khao* for “they” – those who oppose the junta, former politicians and corrupt people, as in ข้าราชการทุกคนต้องอย่าทำ... อย่าไปร่วมมือกับเขา (8th August 2014) translated as “All civil servants must not be involved in [corruption] ... do not cooperate with them”.
- b. Abstract *khao* for “they” – threats against the country or someone who harbours ill will towards the country, as in อย่าไปเชื่อตามเขา ปลุกปั่นอย่างโน้นอย่างนี้ (5th September 2014) translated as “do not believe in whatever they provoke [us]”.

In terms of translation, ambiguous pronouns appear to present a significant obstacle to the translator. Prayut’s pronoun use has several potential referents, especially when he ignores the referents altogether in his spoken discourse.

Following the source text-target text comparison of Prayut’s speeches, examples are given to show how the translator makes pronouns explicit in the English translation, starting with the Thai source text, followed by my literal translation and the official translation.

Example 1:

Source text: วันทหารผ่านศึกเป็นวันที่ประชาชนคนไทยทุกคนควรได้ระลึกถึงความเสียสละอันยิ่งใหญ่ของวีรชนในแนวหน้าที่พร้อมจะเสียสละ... ผมขอเชิญชวนพวกเราแนวหลังทุกคนได้ร่วมกันแสดงออกถึงความมีน้ำใจ

(29th January 2016)

Literal translation: Veteran’s Day is the day that all Thai people should commemorate the great sacrifice of heroes on the front line... I would like to invite all of us, the back line, to express the kindness

Official translation: It [Veterans' Day] is the day that we all commemorate the heroic acts of our soldiers standing on the front line ... I would like to invite all of us who living [sic] behind this wall of security to express our appreciation and respect to all veterans

Example 1 is the case of explicitation of the inclusive “we”. While mentioning Veteran’s Day, Prayut only states, “all Thai people should commemorate the great sacrifice of heroes in the front line”. However, there is a shift in Prayut’s perspective of “all Thai people” and an emphasis on the sense of collectiveness with the inclusive “we”: “we all” and “our soldiers”. Likewise, in later clauses where Prayut invokes the metaphor (“the front line” is soldiers; “the back line” is civilians), the translator further elaborates the metaphor and stresses the inclusiveness with a possessive adjective: “all of us who living [sic] behind this wall of security and our appreciation and respect”. Like the previous example, the inclusiveness of “we” in Example 2 is foregrounded:

Example 2:

Source text: ไม่ว่า [ท่าน] จะอยู่ในภาคประชาชน ภาคธุรกิจ หรือภาครัฐ ทุกคนก็คือประชาชนของชาติ... หากรัฐบาลทุกรัฐบาลมีธรรมาภิบาล ประชาชนกับรัฐบาลก็จะร่วมมือกันทำงาน ... จูงมือเดินไปพร้อม ๆ กัน.

(25th June 2015)

Literal translation: [It] doesn’t matter if [you] are in the part of the people’s, business or government sector. All people are the people of the nation... if every government exercise good government, the people and the government can cooperate to work ... hold hands and together walk forward.

Official translation: No matter which part of the country you live in, we are all Thais... a government that exercises good governance can cooperate with the people to solve problems and move our country forward.

Prayut does not specify the addressee or summarise “the people of the nation” as “we”. In translation, however, the general “you” and inclusive “we” are made explicit, as in “No matter which part of the country you live in, we are all Thais and to solve problems and move our country forward”. However, the original text has no emphasis on those pronouns at all. Next is the case where the translator takes advantage of the ambiguity caused by pronoun drop.

## Example 3:

Source text: เกษตรกรก็จนอยู่แบบนี้ ก็ปีก็ขาดแล้ว [ท่าน/เขา] ก็โทษรัฐบาล โทษอะไรไปเรื่อยเปื่อย ... แล้ว [ท่าน/เขา] มีความรู้เรื่องเกษตรสมัยใหม่ การรวมกลุ่มเกษตรกร แล้ว [ท่าน/เขา] ก็รู้ราคา

(10th April 2015)

Literal translation: The farmers will be poor like this, for however many years. Then [you/they] blame it on the government, blame it on whatsoever... Then [you/they] have knowledge about modern agriculture, creating farming organisation. Then [you/they] know about the price.

Official translation: They will remain poor if all sales continue to be made to middlemen. Farmers need to be knowledgeable and understand marketing and modern agricultural practices. They also need to gather into collectives and be aware of how to sell products.

At first glance, Prayut’s talk of overseeing farmers and breaking the cycle of dependence on go-betweens appears to be aimed at local administrative bodies. However, due to the pronoun omission that makes the clause sound commanding (“Then ... have knowledge ... know about price”), the direct addressee can also be interpreted as the farmers themselves (distance “you”). Prayut uses the pronoun drop to avoid directly addressing the farmers (to whom his speech is addressed), thus eschewing and condemning their actions. However, the translator prefers to make it more straightforward but avoids aiming it at the farmers by using the third person, thus distancing Prayut from the farmers and ostensibly switching his addressee from the farmers to the civil servants who must look after this group of people (“Farmers need to be knowledgeable... They also need to gather into collectives”). Not only does this make the farmers the indirect addressee, but it also emphasises Prayut’s reluctance to include this group of people in his inclusive “we”, thereby relegating them to the status of “the quasi-other”.

The traditional Songkran festival, which involves soaking people in the water and can occasionally devolve into sexual harassment, is another example.

## Example 4:

Source text: เราเองต้องอ้างไว้ ซึ่งแก่นแท้ของวัฒนธรรมประเพณีดั้งเดิม... ผมเห็น  
 แล้วที่ผ่านมา พ่อแม่ก็ร้องเรียนมาที่ผมมากกว่า [ผม] ปล่อยปละละเลยให้มี  
 การจัดกิจกรรมอย่างนี้ได้ยังไงไรสนุกก็จริง แต่เขาก็มองอีกอย่าง [ผม] ก็  
 อยากให้ [ท่าน] ต้อนรับนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างชาติด้วยไมตรีจิต

(8th April 2016)

Literal translation: We must maintain the essence of ancient culture and traditions...  
 I saw in the past, parents complained to me as to why [I] let this  
 kind of activity happen. [Although] it's true [that such activities]  
 are fun, they see [it] differently. [I]'d like [you] to receive the  
 foreign tourists with goodwill.

Official translation: It is also essential that we maintain our cultural heritage  
 through genuine traditional activities... Many parents have  
 made complaints to me, asking why improper celebrations were  
 allowed. We should welcome our guests with a true expression  
 of the warmth of Thai culture. Let's impress them with the  
 uniqueness of our country.

In Example 4, Prayut tries to give a warning about improper dressing for such cultural events. This is another case of explication of the inclusive “we”. Instead of rendering the clause as it is, the translator stresses the sense of inclusiveness by adding a possessive adjective: “we maintain our cultural heritage”. When mentioning the complaints made to him about the harassment and indecent dressing in public places during the festival, Prayut uses first-person ผม, pronounced *phom*, (“parents complained to me”), but drops it in the clause that follows (“as to why [I] let this kind of activity happen”), which is a feature of Thai spoken discourse. The translator plays along by passivising the clause, which also helps conceal the participant responsible for the action (“Many parents ... asking why improper celebrations were allowed”).

In the same example, Prayut also mentions the foreign tourists (the remote “they”) whom the junta seems to be so keen to please: “[Although] it's true [that such activities] are fun, they see it differently”. In doing so, he condemns any Thais who celebrate the events improperly, telling them how to behave themselves, though without an explicit pronoun: “[I]'d like [you] to receive foreign tourists with goodwill”. However, the translator again makes the sense of inclusiveness clearer by adding a new clause and referring to the tourists as “our guests” (“We should

welcome our guests”). The translator then repeats the inclusiveness by twisting the declarative clause (“I’d like you to receive...”) into an inclusive imperative (“Let’s impress them with the uniqueness of our country”).

Each of these examples demonstrates an unmistakable pattern of pronoun explicitation. While identifying a pronoun (participant) for a clause in English may seem like an obligatory shift, pronoun explicitation in translation ultimately improves the coherence of the translation and even demonstrates how the translator re-evaluates Prayut’s attitude toward his audience.

### Translation of Deictic Positioning

This section presents Prayut’s person deixis but focuses on his spatio-temporal markers and their translations. In his study of Obama’s 2009 US presidential inauguration, Munday (2012) found that “Obama brings together past, present and future to link to the identity representation of the American people”, using terms that go beyond merely “inscriptions of time and place [...] to embrace a dazzling array of indirect tokens, brilliantly conjuring up historical and cultural references that fit deep into the shared American identity” (Munday 2012, 74–75). This appears to be supported by the current study’s findings. Despite differences in time and sociocultural context, it discovered similar political connotations in pronouns that bring attention to Prayut’s principle of collectivism.

Prayut’s political meanings, which include historical and traditional references, are expressed not only through lexical items with spatio-temporal connotations, but also through various “indirect tokens”, to use Munday’s term, such as metaphor, historical fact, or non-core lexis, to link Thailand’s past to its future. For example, to advance his incumbent government argument, he brings together many patriotic subjects in the opening ten minutes of his speech on 29th July 2016. When speaking of his pride in the Thai language, he uses a historical frame to allude to the past, as in พ่อขุนรามคำแหงมหาราช King Ramkhamhaeng, ภาษาประจำชาติของตัว เรา เองมากกว่า 700 ปีแล้ว translated as “[our] own national language for more than 700 years” and เรามีประวัติศาสตร์อันยาวนานของเรา translated as “we have our history that goes back a long way” [author’s translation]. To summarise, he produced his narrative with sentences that link the past, the present and the future all at once: เราก็อย่าทิ้งของเดิม จะเดินไปข้างหน้าก็กลับมาดูของเดิมไว้ด้วยนะครับ รักษาไว้ให้ได้ translated as “We do not abandon the original. To move forward, please look back at the original. Preserve it well” [author’s translation]. He then linked the past frame with today’s success (ข่าวสารด้านการศึกษาของลูกหลานของเราหวังเดือนกรกฎาคมนี้ translated as “news about the education of our children this July”) in international academic competitions, bringing to the audience all kinds

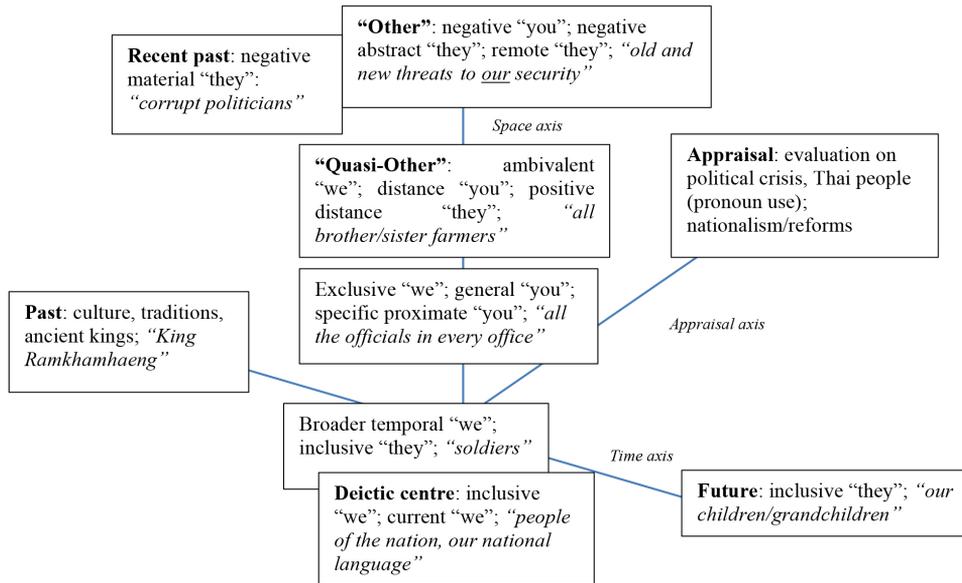
of success achieved by the Thai students. This example demonstrates a tendency toward expressing pride in Thai history and success while highlighting the need to improve today's country for the better welfare of future generations.

However, another framing has been assigned to the recent past, focusing on the political crises and former corrupt civilian governments/politicians. Prayut, for example, blames corrupt people for the political disputes in his address on 12th December 2014, asserting the necessity of good administration, ประเทศของเรานั้นเหมือนกับอยู่บนเรือฝ่าคลื่นลมการทุจริตมาโดยตลอด [และ] การหาผลประโยชน์ใส่ตัวของผู้มีอำนาจ มีผลประโยชน์ตลอดมา which translated as “Our country has always been on a boat through the waves of corruption [and] the exploitation of the powerful who have sought benefit only their interests, over many years” [author's translation].

Prayut's deictic positioning profile can be inferred from a pronoun disposition, allusions to the enriched Thai history endowed by Thai/Siamese kings and the future frame with repeated comparisons to the next generation who must adhere to social norms and preserve traditional values. Figure 1 summarises Prayut's person, space and time deictic positioning; a clear picture of how Prayut positions himself in the spatio-temporal cline and distances himself from or aligns himself with different groups of people in the source text.

Prayut connects the broader temporal “we” with the inclusive current “we” in the time axis's centre (contemporary with and sharing the space with the speaker). The time axis begins in the past, positively referencing Thai culture and tradition (far back in time, but sharing the space with the speaker). The future, which Prayut attributes to children, is on the other side of the time axis (far ahead of time, but sharing the space with the speaker).

The space axis depicts the distance between Prayut (at the deictic centre) and each group of people he addresses and refers to in the third person. Starting with the exclusive “we” of the government, military and civil servants, the following point is the “quasi-other” represented by farmers and the poor (distance “you” or positive distance “they”). The “other” category is the most distant, referring to both domestic threats (negative abstract “they”) and foreign entities (remote “they”). Immediately adjacent to this farthest point, but in the recent past, is a group of corrupt minds and powerful politicians (negative material “they”) who exploited ordinary Thais (general “you” and inclusive “we”).



**Figure 1.** Deictic positioning in Prayut’s weekly address, adapted from Chilton (2004, 58) and Munday (2012, 76)

While third-person pronouns (such as “they”) are not typically used as deictics (Grundy 2008, 27), they can demonstrate how Prayut uses rhetorical devices to distance himself from those he refers to as *khao* for “they” by focusing attention on positive/negative information about us/them (van Dijk 2008, 105). The skewed axis represents the appraisal. Munday (2012, 69, 76) proposes that this axis extends Chilton’s axis of modality (2004, 60). It demonstrates how political speaker distributes their rectitude and portrays reality through modality and attitude values. This case exposes Prayut’s evaluation of the political crisis, his judgement of the Thai people (*rao*, *than* or *khao*) and his views on nationalism and reform.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding translation, pronoun explicitation leads to a more explicit connection between time and context in the official translation, as shown in the following example:

## Example 5:

Source text: ผมอยากใช้คำว่า ‘คนไทยที่ยังไม่ได้เกิดมามีอีกมากมาย’ วันหน้า [เขา] ก็มีเกิดมาเพิ่มเติม เราต้องวางพื้นฐานให้เขาตรงนั้นด้วย ... วันหน้า ประเทศไทยจะอยู่ตรงไหน แล้วเขาเกิดมาเขาต้องเผชิญกับความยากลำบากอย่างไร ... จะต้องไม่มีเหตุการณ์รุนแรงเกิดขึ้นอีก ในสถานการณ์ต่อจากนี้ไป

(29th May 2015)

Literal translation: I would like to use the words that many Thais who are yet to be born. In the future [they] will be born. We must lay the foundation for them over there too... In the future where will Thailand be? And when they are born, how will they face the hardship? ...there must be no violence again under any circumstances from now on.

Official translation: This is not only for us, but for the sake of our children and the next generations to come. We must build a strong foundation for them... How could the next generation cope when our generation causes all these problems and uses up all the resources? ... From now on, there must not be any more violence in our nation.

Two points are worth noting in Example 5. The first is the straightforward use of terms to represent future people. Prayut uses relatively lengthy phrases to describe the next generations (“many Thais who are yet to be born. In the future [they] will be born ... foundation for them over there”), but the translator makes it concise by applying direct references (“for the sake of our children and the next generations ... a strong foundation for them”). The current temporal “we” (“not only for us, our children”) also help specify the location of Prayut and the current temporal Thais while sharing the same view of the next generations. However, the circumstantial adjunct “over there”—that somehow distances the next generation from the speaker while indicating the point in the future where the inclusive “they” are supposed to be born—is altogether missing. Only “them” is referred to as the next generations in the target text. In a later clause, the translator even makes the temporal location of the speaker clearer by distinguishing “the next generation” from “our generation”, as in “How could the next generation cope when our generation causes all these problems”.

The second point is about retaining the speaker’s presupposition and explicit current temporal location. The whole clause “there must be no violence again in any circumstances from now on” presupposes that there is violence at some point

“in the past” on the temporal cline because Prayut does not want such “violence” to happen again. The translation manages to retain the presupposition (“any more”) and translate and put “From now on” in front of that clause as a marked theme, again with the emphasis on the current temporal “we” (violence in our nation).

The final example is interesting because it does not appear to follow the trend of explicitly stating the time frame but rather illustrates the fuzziness of future temporal location and the translator’s reduction of the constant repetition of the inclusive “we”.

#### Example 6:

Source text: วิสัยทัศน์ที่กำหนดไว้คือ การคาดหวังหรือความหวังของพวกเราว่า 5 ปีข้างหน้า เราจะเป็นอย่างไร ... ถ้าเราไม่คิดแบบนี้ เราก็ไม่มีอนาคต เราต้องมองอนาคตของเรา 5 ปีข้างหน้า เราจะเป็นอย่างไร เราจะต้องเป็นประเทศที่มีความมั่นคง มั่งคั่ง อย่างยั่งยืน

(9th January 2015)

Literal translation: The specified vision is our expectation or hope [as to] how in the next five years we will be ... If we do not think like this, we then have no future. We must foresee our future in the next five years. How will we be? We shall be a country with stability, prosperity and sustainability.

Official translation: This vision is our hope and aspiration for the country. Everyone in the country needs to look at the future that lies ahead of us. This can only be achieved through cooperation ... If successful, Thailand will become a stable and prosperous nation.

To advocate for Thailand’s future strategic planning, Prayut uses the present temporal “we” and direct tokens to connect the present to the future (“our expectation or hope [as to] how in the next five years we will be”) as a political strategy to introduce consequences or conditions that will be fulfilled in the near future. Although the translator maintains a sense of inclusiveness (“our hope and aspiration”), it appears to weaken this manoeuvre by obliquely displaying the future frame (“Everyone in the country needs to look at the future that lies ahead of us”). Next is the reduction of emphasis on the pronoun *rao* for “we”. In Example 6, there are five instances of the inclusive *rao* within a short time, but all of them vanish from the target text. What remains is the emphasis on the term *Thailand*. One plausible explanation for this could be an attempt to establish textual coherence in

written discourse, as opposed to the nature of spoken language, which is constantly repetitive, especially when Prayut goes off-script.

### **Discussion and Concluding Remarks**

The interim junta stayed in power due in part to the concept of “Thainess”, along with a nation-branding campaign aimed at envisioning economic prosperity to bolster their power and legitimacy (Desatova, 2018). As part of “Thainess”, social conformity overrides other progressive values in Thailand’s political order, where discord and dissidents are perceived inappropriately harmful. According to Sattayanurak (n.d., 25), the belief that Thailand is inherently devoid of social division has been entrenched for centuries; a nation that exhibits liberty and rights is viewed as unpredictable and detrimental to the country’s reputation. This mindset is epitomised by Prayut’s statements, which dissuaded all types of activists suspected of disrupting the NCPO-guided peace and order.

The ethos of “Thailand-is-good”, to use Sattayanurak’s (n.d., 29) term, runs deep in most of Prayut’s utterances. His remarks repeatedly evoke Thai pride, such as “We Thais are never inferior to other nations” (official translation on 1st May 2015) and “preservation of Thai good culture” (official translation on 10th April 2015). According to Sombatpoonsiri (2015, 98–99), the junta has defined threats to national order as the possibility of civil war, an unstable democracy and national discord linked with lengthy conflict. The inclusive “we” is employed to generate a sense of collectiveness to persuade people to recognise the junta’s newly identified dangers. The burden that the junta would bear for the sake of ordinary Thais is made imposing and emphatic by the exclusive “we”; meanwhile, Prayut highlights different sets of his addressees, distinguishing “us” from “them”, thereby portraying his mental classification of the addressees. (cf. van Dijk 2008, 226).

Prayut’s deictic positioning is somewhat fluid due to some omissions of his pronouns, which is a unique property in Thai spoken discourse and the way he switches his position in and out of the inclusive “we”. There is an unclear pattern of addressing the second-person while referring to the third. This seems to support the findings of Uckaradejdumrong’s (2016) study on Thai pronouns, which found that social status and degree of intimacy can influence pronoun choices when one addresses interactants from different social backgrounds. However, the deictic positioning derived from Prayut’s slippery use of pronouns differs from that seen in the Obama and Trump inaugurations (Munday 2012, 2018). Prayut’s case contains additional groups of “quasi-other” and “other in the recent past”.

The former primarily refers to Thai farmers, while the latter frequently to corrupt politicians (former elected PMs and their cronies, to be precise).

Nonetheless, although Prayut's pronoun choice in the ST tends to be ambivalent, their English translation still evokes a sense of Thai collectiveness. The pronoun-explicitation tendency reinforces Prayut's deictic positioning and its relationship to each point of his spatio-temporal cline. Consequently, Prayut in English seemingly emphasises the security discourse that comes with the formation of addressee groups through pronoun use, echoing the culturally ingrained power structure that values social hierarchy and collective harmony.

In this respect, translation may be considered a form of image-refining discourse aimed at a global audience. The findings of this study contribute to our knowledge of national image translations, such as reshaping views on China in political discourse (Li and Pan 2021) or self-framing of a Spanish newspaper's English version (Valdeón 2016). As an extension of previous research on subtitling and ideology in Thailand (e.g., Saejang 2021), the English subtitles in our case essentially project a distinct, polished image of the military regimes for international appeal and justification of their usurpation of power, which gives a more significant implication of the state-commissioned translation in this context.

To conclude, I would like to urge that more questions be addressed concerning who translated and edited this political rhetoric, whether in-house or outsourced, which may lead to a substantial debate about the commissioner's translation approach and influence over translation.

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### **Notes**

1. This excerpt was initially available on the Thai government website (<http://www.thaigov.go.th/en/speech-2/item/91756-91756.html>), but the recordings of his speeches have since been removed. The video clip, however, is still available on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/KEt5mOVL2TU>).
2. [www.thaigov.go.th](http://www.thaigov.go.th)

3. [www.youtube.com/channel/UCSbNMvh\\_0czHteUnSqIQNVA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSbNMvh_0czHteUnSqIQNVA)
4. Based on Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics, the appraisal is a resource for indicating the speaker's attitude (Martin and Rose 2007) in relation to interpersonal meanings. The analysis of Prayut's appraisal profile is beyond the scope of this article.

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