



# A Study of Chinese Translation of *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* from the Perspective of Grammatical Metaphor

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**Abstract:** In Systemic Functional Linguistics, grammatical metaphor is categorized into ideational and interpersonal types. Translation, as a process of code-switching, involves choosing between congruent and metaphorical forms, each serving different communicative purposes. Distinguishing these forms clarifies their distinct functions. This paper explores the use and importance of grammatical metaphors in translating *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* based on the author's independent translation practice. Given this, the study achieves three objectives through quantitative and qualitative analysis: (1) examining the distribution of grammatical metaphors in the translation of *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*; (2) exploring the reasons behind their emergence; and (3) analyzing the role these metaphors play in the translation. Translation strategies were classified into two types based on the retention of grammatical metaphors: congruent translation, which simplifies the text and reduces metaphors, and metaphorical translation, which sustains a formal, academic, and concise style. The study reveals that the same translation techniques can be applied across various word, sentence, and text types, with different contexts requiring different methods even for identical grammatical and semantic units. Regardless of whether metaphors are retained, it is essential to ensure faithfulness, fluency, and aesthetics of the translation. Translators should avoid rigid application and decide on metaphor preservation based on the specific context and text type to best convey the original meaning.

**Keywords:** ideational grammatical metaphor, interpersonal grammatical metaphor, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, English grammar translation

## 1. Introduction

The concept of grammatical metaphor, encompassing both ideational and interpersonal metaphors, was initially introduced by Halliday in 1985. Halliday<sup>[1]</sup> emphasizes that a key element of language acquisition is grasping the most typical “unmarked” means of expression. The unmarked form corresponds to the congruent expression, while the marked form relates to the language's metaphorical expression. Extensive research on grammatical metaphor has been conducted both domestically and internationally, but studies specifically focused on *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (CGEL hereinafter) remain unexplored. So far, diverging from the traditional prescriptive approach that prescribes how individuals should communicate, CGEL as a descriptive grammar book, elucidating how people actually communicate. It explores the mechanisms that enable society to engage in communication and details individuals' knowledge regarding the sounds, morphemes, words, groups and sentences in their language. While prescriptive grammarians assert the existence of correct forms used by educated or superior individuals, descriptive grammarians contend that each grammar is equally intricate, rational, and capable of generating an infinite range of expressions to convey any idea<sup>[2]</sup>. That is the reason why an elaborate study of grammatical metaphor on the translation of CGEL is of great significance. Notwithstanding, translation from the perspective of grammatical metaphor presents several potential challenges. Firstly, preserving formality and style: Grammatical metaphors are often employed to convey a formal, academic, or technical tone. Translating them while maintaining the original style can be difficult, especially in languages with different stylistic norms. Secondly, audience reception: The target audience's familiarity with certain grammatical metaphors may vary. Translators must consider whether the metaphorical expressions will be understood and appreciated by the target audience or if they require simplification or explanation. Navigating these challenges requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages, as well as the ability to make informed decisions about when to retain, adapt, or transform grammatical metaphors in translation.

Methodology used in this study includes quantitative and qualitative analysis. The former aspect involves counting occurrences of specific types of grammatical metaphors (e.g., nominalizations, shifts in transitivity) during translation. Qualitative analysis provides in-depth analysis of the translation strategies used, focusing on how and why certain grammatical metaphors were retained, modified, or omitted. This analysis is likely supported by examples from the text with comparisons between the source text and its translation.

This section serves as an illustration of the layout of this five-chapter work for the English-Chinese translation. The first chapter elaborates on the background, aim, significance and the design of the paper. The second chapter broadly reviews the development of grammatical metaphor in the field of translation. A general overview of the theoretical basis of this study is expounded in Chapter Three. The core of this paper, Chapter Four, provides an analysis of ideational grammatical



metaphor through the lenses of transitivity and nominalization, while examining interpersonal grammatical metaphor with a focus on mood and modality. In each cases, congruent translation and metaphorical translation are put forward and utterly compared and each summarized translation techniques has been justified. Finally, the gains, limitations and reflections of the paper are concluded in the last chapter.

## 2. Literature Review

Halliday<sup>[1]</sup> first introduced the concept of grammatical metaphor. Then, he delineated grammatical metaphor from lexical metaphor to further elucidate the concept. Grammatical metaphor and lexical metaphor are different from each other in many ways: Lexical metaphor is related to how a particular word is used, either literally or metaphorically while grammatical metaphor is to explore how the same meaning is realized, either congruently or metaphorically<sup>[3]</sup>. Halliday<sup>[1]</sup> posits that “metaphor is examined not ‘from below,’ as a variation in the meaning of a given information, but rather ‘from above,’ as a variation in the expression of a given meaning.” Martin<sup>[4]</sup> examined the functions and motivations underlying grammatical metaphors, placing significant emphasis on their linguistic roles. He posited that employing metaphorical forms to convey the characteristics of synonymous expressions results in a disparity between synonymous and metaphorical expressions in their textual functions. In the 1930s, the focus of metaphor translation studies began to transition from the cognitive domain to the pragmatical metaphoric field. Boyd<sup>[5]</sup> introduced and advanced the theory of interaction, which, through the analysis of context, phonology, and metaphor connotation, asserted that metaphors are a form of semantic behavior. This theory laid a theoretical foundation for explicit research in the field. Newmark<sup>[6]</sup>, a prominent figure in the field, established specific guidelines for metaphor translation. He argued that, upon identifying a metaphor, the translator should first determine the type of metaphor and then apply appropriate translation techniques based on its classification. Steiner<sup>[7]</sup> further developed hypotheses concerning the textual properties of translated texts by offering a detailed model of how the comprehension and deconstruction of grammatical structures may function as an independent variable. This is followed by an analysis of a translated text, utilizing methods to quantify lexicogrammatical properties. The objective is to demonstrate whether and to what extent it is feasible to bridge the gap between relatively high-level hypotheses and the “raw data” found in electronic corpora.

While the theory of grammatical metaphor has its roots in Western scholarship, Chinese academics have significantly contributed to its development and refinement. Numerous scholars have published relevant research and made substantial progress in this field. Huang<sup>[8]</sup> investigated the application of ideational, interpersonal, and textual grammatical metaphors in Chinese-English and English-Chinese translations. Through a detailed case analysis, he emphasized that translators should choose between the congruent and metaphorical modes based on key communicative factors. The theory of grammatical metaphor has been widely adopted by translators in scientific and technical translation due to its efficacy in achieving the stylistic functions characteristic of scientific discourse. Ding<sup>[9]</sup> argued that nominalization, as a primary means of grammatical metaphor, is one of the prominent features of written language and plays a significant role in the construction of scientific discourse. In the Chinese-English translation of scientific texts, nominalization mainly involves the nominalization of verbs, subject-predicate phrases, adjectives, and sentences. Xu and Wu<sup>[10]</sup> noted that ideational metaphor contributes to the genre characteristics of scientific and technical texts, including informativeness, objectivity, formal style, and conciseness. Consequently, they argued that in sci-tech translation, the metaphorical form should be favored over the congruent form. Translation studies of various discourse genres, including literary works, have incorporated the application of this theory. Chen<sup>[11]</sup>, for instance, attempted to apply grammatical metaphor theory to Jing Ye Si and its seven translations to assess poetry translation quality by adopting the six steps brought forward by Huang<sup>[12]</sup> and the overall outperformed translation quality of Xu Yuanchong and Amy Lowell is evaluated. Tang and Qu<sup>[13]</sup> classified English nominalization into lexical and phrasal types. Through an examination of metaphorical transfer and demetaphorization, Tang deduced that nominalization expressions in political and governmental documents, along with their English translations, exhibit considerable richness and diversity. Nominalization, as a resource of grammatical metaphor, has the conceptual function of reinterpreting experiences. Consequently, the transformations and selections of nominalization during the translation process modify the meaning construction of the source text. The conversion of word classes in translation is not absolute; the translator’s decision to alter the lexical grammatical form inherently signifies a change in the method of constructing meaning.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

Traditionally, the study of metaphors was limited to the lexical level. However, after Halliday<sup>[1]</sup> introduced the theory of grammatical metaphor, the scope of metaphor studies expanded significantly. In Halliday’s view<sup>[14]</sup>, congruent forms represent “the typical way in which experience is construed.” This “typical” mode may correspond to how one initially learns to articulate something in their native language or the most common way of expressing it. Metaphorical forms, or incongruence, emerge when this conventional pattern is disrupted, resulting in the realization of semantics through metaphorical grammatical structures<sup>[15]</sup>.

Halliday<sup>[1]</sup> focuses on ideational and interpersonal metaphors, with ideational meaning encompassing the transitivity system and nominalization. According to Halliday<sup>[14]</sup>, the ideational function of language is to represent various human experiences in the real world, including the inner world. This function captures occurrences in both the objective and subjective domains, encompassing the individuals and entities involved, along with contextual elements like time and place. Halliday characterizes transitivity as a system for categorizing processes, serving as a semantic framework to express conceptual functions. He identifies six primary process types within the transitivity system: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential, with the first three being the most commonly utilized in language. Halliday<sup>[1]</sup>

notes that ideational metaphor arises from the transference among these processes, causing variations in the functional elements of clauses and lexico-grammar. Nominalization, as a principal mechanism of grammatical metaphor, is a notable feature of written language, significantly contributing to the construction and cohesion of formal discourse. According to functional linguistics, language has conceptual function, with its lexical and grammatical systems structuring experiences into categories and relationships, thereby forming units of meaning and creating connections between the linguistic and experiential realms. The grammatical construction of experiences can be categorized into congruent and metaphorical modes. The former emphasizes a direct correspondence between form and meaning, with verbs representing processes, adjectives indicating attributes, and nouns denoting entities and participants. The latter disrupts this congruence, employing nominal forms to represent processes and attributes.

Interpersonal metaphor, when expressed as grammatical metaphor, is realized in two forms: metaphor of mood and metaphor of modality. According to Halliday<sup>[14]</sup>, metaphor of mood involves a mismatch between speech functions and the mood system, while metaphor of modality relates to the speaker's assessment of the probabilities or obligations in their statements. The fundamental objective of any exchange is to either provide or request a form of commodity, whether it be goods, services, or information. These variations lead to the identification of four primary speech roles: offer, command, statement, and question, each of which prompts either desired or optional responses. Typically, speech functions correspond with specific mood systems: statements with declarative clauses, questions with interrogative clauses, and commands with imperative clauses. Nevertheless, the relationship between speech roles and the mood system is intricate, and exceptions can occur, giving rise to mood metaphors. For example, a statement might be conveyed through an interrogative, a question through a declarative, or a command through an statement. Despite these variations, such clauses can semantically fulfill the same communicative function. The key distinction lies in the degree of metaphorical versus congruent expression, as this is always a matter of degree<sup>[16]</sup>. The metaphor of modality arises when a speaker's assessment of the likelihood of their observation is encoded as a separate, projecting clause within a hypotactic clause complex, rather than as a modal element within the clause, which represents its congruent form<sup>[14]</sup>. The key factor determining the realization of various types of modality is orientation, which distinguishes between subjective and objective modalities, as well as between explicit and implicit forms.

#### 4. Case Study of E-C Translation of Metaphors in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*

In this chapter, the author suggests translation strategies based on grammatical metaphor theory, illustrated by examples from their translation practice of CGEL. Within the realm of interpersonal metaphor, the tendency is to “upgrade” the realization from a single clause to a clause nexus, thereby enhancing its explicitness. Conversely, in ideational metaphor, there is a tendency to “downgrade” the domain of realization from clause nexus to clause, and from clause to nominal group, rendering the realization more implicit<sup>[17]</sup>. The italics, bold, capitalisation and other special marks in ST are the original forms of the CGEL and are not relevant to the analysis of the report. These forms have been restored in the TT in order to respect the original text. To facilitate differentiation from other enumerated concepts which are in double quotes, all references to ST and TT below are in italics.

##### 4.1 Ideational Metaphor

Ideational grammatical metaphor is a fundamental concept in Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics, with applicability extending to both general and specialized discourse analysis.

##### 4.1.1 Metaphors of Transitivity

Through an analysis of transitivity in the source and target texts, this study reveals that the processes in the translations are either preserved or modified.

##### Example 4-1

**ST:** The number of differences in grammar between different varieties of Standard English is very small indeed relative to the full range of syntactic constructions and morphological word-forms<sup>[18]</sup>.

**TT:** 较之句法结构和形态词形，标准英语不同种类之间的语法差异确实非常小。

Table 1:

ST/TT	Lines of the Example	Processes	Participants	Circumstances
ST	The number of differences in grammar is small relative to the syntactic constructions and morphological word-forms	Relational Process: is	Carrier: The number of differences in grammar Attribute: small	Location: relative to the syntactic constructions and morphological word-forms
TT	较之句法结构和形态词形，语法差异小。	Material Process: 较之	Actor: 语法差异 Goal: 句法结构和形态词形	

In the given sentence, *relative to* is a preposition phrase that introduces the comparison and indicates the standard against which the number of differences is considered. According to Goatly's<sup>[19]</sup> perspective, prepositions indicate relationships between objects and verbs convey the states and processes of objects. Nida encourages going beyond the confines of word categories, suggesting that translators can proficiently manage tasks only when operating at a more profound (or, in other words, elevated) level. Therefore, in translation, there is no need to rigidly adhere to word classes; instead, it is possible to make appropriate adjustments. Prepositions, unlike verbs, are not as prominent and straightforward as verbs in their usage. They typically carry a weaker emphasis and can be considered as minor verbs by Halliday<sup>[14]</sup>. Adapting the metaphorical form by changing the relational process into material process, i.e. translating prepositional phrases into verb phrases, for instance using 较之 can concretize abstract relationships and enhance reader comprehension.

**Example 4-2**

**ST:** This division gives special prominence to the **word**, a unit which is also of major importance in the lexicon, the phonology and the graphology<sup>[18]</sup>.

**TT:** 这种划分方式特别突出了**单词**，而单词在词法学、语音学和笔迹学中也是非常重要的单位。

Table 2:

ST/TT	Lines of the Example	Processes	Participants	Circumstances
ST	This division gives special prominence to the word	Material Process: gives	Goal: word	Location: This division
TT	这种划分方式特别突出了单词	Material Process: 突出	Goal: 单词	Location: 这种划分方式

Transitivity analysis in ST and TT of Example 4-2

In this sentence, the noun *prominence* serves as the direct object of the verb *gives*, referring to the state of being important, noticeable, or standing out and it is modified by the adjective *special*, emphasizing a particular kind of prominence. In translation, the translator simplified the verbal group *give prominence* to a single verb 突出, making the expression more concise and clear. The source text and the translation both use a material process, although the source text employs a weak verb, *give*. Chinese, being a dynamic language, often features sentences with multiple verbs and a more loosely structured form. Therefore, the translation also uses a material process, maintain the congruent form but opts for a stronger verb. In addition, adverbs represent the actions or states of something and are commonly employed to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs, indicating attributes such as time, location, intensity, and manner. Therefore, when English verbs undergo a change in part of speech in Chinese, the associated adverbs modifying them will similarly undergo adjustments to fit the new word class. Hence, a suitable adjustment of the adjective *special* into an adverb 特别(地) is needed here.

**4.1.2 Metaphors of Nominalization**

Nominalization contributes to the clarity and conciseness of linguistic expression, promotes seamless and cohesive text structure, and imparts an objective and formal tone to the writing, thereby embodying the scientific rigor and precision characteristic of written discourse.

**Example 4-3:**

**ST:** the descriptivist under the same circumstances will assume that it is precisely the constant features in the usage of the overwhelming majority that define what is grammatical in the contemporary language, and will judge the prescriptivist to be expressing an idiosyncratic opinion concerning how the language ought to be<sup>[18]</sup>.

**TT:** 在同样的情况下，描述论者会假定，正是绝大多数人固定不变的用法决定了当代语言的语法标准。描述论者会认为规定论者是在表达一种特立独行的语言使用观点。

Grammar books often use concise language, and nominalization effectively condenses information, reducing text length. Nominalization typically transforms clauses into phrases, compressing and repackaging sentences to avoid verbosity. This process involves converting verbs, adjectives, and other elements in congruent expressions into nouns, condensing sentences into succinct phrases and increasing lexical density, allowing for the communication of complex ideas with fewer words. In the original text, the underlined portion is a manner adverbial clause introduced by “how”, with the predicate verb constructed as “modal verb + be”. The translation nominalizes this clause into a noun phrase, simplifying the text and achieving a downward rank shift. Lexical density, calculated as the ratio of content words to clauses<sup>[9]</sup>, is significantly increased in the translation by compressing and reorganizing the original clauses, leading to a clearer and more terse expression.

**Example 4-4:**

**ST:** The number of sentences that have been spoken or written so far is already astronomically vast, new ones are being produced every second around the world by hundreds of millions of people, and no matter what the information storage resources available, the problem is that there would be no way to decide where to end the list<sup>[18]</sup>.

**TT:** 迄今为止，人们说过或写过的句子数量已经是一个天文数字，全世界每秒钟都有数以亿计的人在创造新的句

子，而无论可用的信息存储资源有多少，问题都在于无法决定在哪里结束这个清单。

In English to Chinese translation, adjectives can be transformed into nominalized metaphors that better align with the linguistic characteristics of Chinese, thereby improving the overall quality of the translation. Grammatical discourse prioritizes the objective presentation of facts, necessitating scientific precision in content expression. In congruent expressions, the properties of an object are conveyed through adjectives, often in conjunction with the agent, which can render the expression somewhat subjective. Through metaphorical expression, these properties are implicitly embedded within the semantics of the noun, thereby lending the discourse a more objective and authoritative tone. In academic and technical translations, nominalization is generally appreciated for contributing to a formal tone and precise expression. Readers in these fields may view nominalization positively because it aligns with the expected style and conventions of scholarly writing.

#### 4.2 Interpersonal metaphor

The studies of the mood system and the modality system are the core theoretical basis for the subsequent analysis.

##### 4.2.1 Metaphors of Mood

Semantically, imperative, declarative, and interrogative forms can all serve the same function. The distinction lies in whether an expression is more metaphorical or congruent, which is always a matter of degree.

#### Example 4-5

**ST:** The authoritarian prescriptivist whose recommendations are out of step with the usage of others is at liberty to declare that they are in error and should change their ways<sup>[18]</sup>.

**TT:** 如果专制规定论者的建议与他人向左，应该承认错误，改弦更张。

Given that CGEL as a whole holds a critical view of prescriptivism and uses the dictatorial and dogmatic term *authoritarian* to describe it, the author's stance on prescriptivism is likely to be quite resolute. The original dialogue employs a declarative mood, fulfilling the speech function of a statement. However, the translator identifies that the declarative mood alone is inadequate for conveying the author's emotions and attitudes. To faithfully reproduce the interpersonal meaning of the source text, a strategy of metaphorical form is adopted, transforming the declarative mood into the imperative mood. Compared to statements, commands are more concise and assertive, better aligning with the author's intent.

#### Example 4-6

**ST:** But why should we simply assume that the grammatical rules for case assignment cannot differentiate between a coordinated and a non-coordinated pronoun<sup>[18]</sup>?

**TT:** 但是，我们为什么要简单地认为语法中的格分配规则遇到并列代词和非并列代词时不能有所不同呢？

When the mood aligns with the speech function, the translator typically employs a literal translation approach, ensuring that the mood used in the original dialogue is preserved in the target text. The rules for case assignment are actually very sensitive to the distinction between coordinated and non-coordinated pronouns. The original interrogative helps the authors offer advice in a euphemistic way, attracting reader's attention and introducing the subsequent discussion. Therefore, the translation adopts a congruent form, retaining the question structure rather than changing it into a statement.

##### 4.2.2 Metaphors of Modality

Modality can be conveyed through modal auxiliary verbs and modal adjuncts or through clauses, which are referred to as modality metaphors<sup>[20]</sup>. Halliday<sup>[14]</sup> defines the expression of modality from subjective and objective perspectives as orientation. Implicit subjective and implicit objective expressions align with congruent forms, utilizing modal auxiliary verbs and modal adjuncts to convey meaning, whereas explicit subjective and explicit objective expressions correspond to modality metaphors.

#### Example 4-7:

**ST:** Confusing informality with ungrammaticality again, a strong prescriptivist tradition says that only [2a] is grammatical<sup>[18]</sup>.

**TT:** 由于再次混淆了非正式性和非语法性，强烈的规定论传统认为只有 [2a] 才符合语法。

The dialogue lacks any modality metaphors; however, within the context, the interpersonal meaning conveyed by the original text does not fully align with its form and includes some intention of subjectivity. Translating strictly according to the original form would therefore not reproduce the same interpersonal meaning. Consequently, a metaphorical approach is necessary. By substituting the more objective action verb *say* with the strongly subjective *认为*, the subclass of modality, "probability" is made explicit by coding the speaker's view on the likelihood as a separate, projecting clause in a hypotactic clause complex, rather than as a modal element within the clause, which would be its congruent form<sup>[14]</sup>. Thereby enabling the authors' perspectives and conjectures to be accurately communicated to the target audience.

#### Example 4-8:

**ST:** The same book objects to *centre (a)round*, calling it incorrect, although 'probably more frequently used than the correct *centre on*'. Again, we wonder how *centre (a)round* can be determined to be incorrect in English if it is indeed more commonly used by English speakers than what is allegedly correct. The boundary would appear to have been drawn in the wrong place<sup>[18]</sup>.

TT:这本书还反对 *center (a)round*, 称其为不正确的, 尽管‘可能比正确的 *center on* 更常用’。同样, 我们不禁要问, 如果英语使用者使用 *center (a)round* 的频率确实高于所谓的正确用法, 那么如何说它在英语中是不正确的。如此划定界限似乎是不合理的。

The modal words *probably*, *indeed*, and *would* fall under the category of “probability”, and along with “usuality”, they are implicitly constructed forms of modalization. Implicit subjective and implicit objective expressions align with congruent forms, utilizing modal auxiliary verbs and modal adjuncts to convey meaning. Modal auxiliaries and adjuncts are crucial in conveying the tone and subtlety of the original text. Readers often note that the appropriate use of these elements helps maintain the author’s intent, particularly in translating expressions of doubt, suggestion, or politeness. As a result, the original text does not contain modality metaphors, and its interpersonal meaning can be effectively conveyed by adhering to the original content and form. Consequently, the translator employs a literal translation approach, rendering the text directly.

## 5 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the translator’s key findings and acknowledges the limitations of the present report, while also offering recommendations for future research.

### 5.1 Achievements

This paper investigates the role of grammatical metaphors in translating CGEL, using Halliday’s framework to explore ideational and interpersonal metaphors, including transitivity, nominalization, mood, and modality. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, the study identifies the presence of grammatical metaphors, explores their reasons for emergence or absence, and assesses their impact on the translation. The translation strategies are categorized into two types: congruent translation, which simplifies and enhances clarity by reducing grammatical metaphors, and metaphorical translation, which retains the original text’s scholarly tone while effectively expressing the author’s sentiments.

This study finds that both ideational and interpersonal metaphors can undergo rank shifts. Ideational metaphor offers a fresh way to depict events, while interpersonal metaphor expands social roles and relationships, allowing interactants to adjust power dynamics. Although different forms can be applied to the same case, the choice of whether to amplify or omit grammatical metaphors should depend on the specific context and text type, ensuring that the translation remains the meta-functions of the source text.

### 5.2 Limitations

This study’s analysis of interpersonal meaning is limited to mood and modality, excluding other frameworks like the appraisal system. The data, derived solely from CGEL, limits the findings to non-literary dialogues and does not account for variations in interpersonal meaning across different genres. Additionally, although Halliday initially focused on ideational and interpersonal metaphors, Martin later explored textual metaphors, which are rich in content and significance. Due to space constraints, textual metaphors are not covered in this paper but represent a valuable area for future research.

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