EDUC6400 Literacy Development

Beyond Grammar-Translation:

Use of Translation Method in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Introduction

Among so many 'Aha' moments I've encountered during my graduate studies in ELL program, one of which impressed me most was once I read a research paper on the use translation between learner's native language and English to assist them learning second language literacy. The reason why this research surprised me was that I've never considered the use of translation as an innovative strategy or a teaching method that need particular research to gain more recognition from people, because it is one of the most often used teaching methods in English classes in China. Then I took a second think on what made this moment 'Aha' to me and I started to realize that there wasn't a clear distinction between learning English as a second language (ESL) and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in my mind at that time. Before I started to analyze the use of translation in EFL classrooms, it is important to make it clear the differences between ESL and EFL, which could explain the different priorities and frequencies of using translation as a teaching method in two different learning environments where learners also learning English with different purposes and motivations.

One of the most typical differences between ESL and EFL for English teachers is that ESL is teaching English in countries where English is the official language while EFL is teaching English in countries where neither people don't speak English as their native language, nor English is used in daily communication. Students in ESL classrooms often speak different first languages and a main purpose for them of learning English is seeking integration to the society. However, students in an EFL classroom share the same native language and culture and learning English is often a requirement of school. Due to these distinctions, the use of translation method would enjoy different priorities and frequencies in ESL and EFL classrooms. In ESL classrooms, translation may not be used as a dominant way of teaching reading and writing considering students' multiple language backgrounds, their different learning purposes from students in non-English speaking countries, and the influence of monolingual or English advocated language policies. However, as an English learner, I witnessed how translation method was constantly and effectively used in different instruction but to some extent even been misused or overused in teaching reading and writing in EFL classrooms. Therefore, this paper will make analysis mainly from an EFL perspective rather than from an ESL one. It is not only because I'm an EFL learner, but also because my future target students are more like to be EFL learners as well.

This inquiry paper mainly has three parts. The first part is an overview of translation as a teaching method in classroom. The traditional grammar translation method will be touched upon in this part as it has non-negligible effects on people's attitudes toward translation pedagogy. As translation has always been controversial on its effectiveness and validity in teaching English as a foreign language (Dagiliené, 2012), in this part, I would also demonstrate different attitudes towards this method from both positive and negative perspectives. Then, I would argue that translation method is still necessary and essential in EFL classroom and the use of which should be extended beyond the traditional grammar translation method, especially in English classes in non-English speaking countries like China. Analysis in this part would base on previous research and my own learning and teaching experience in EFL classrooms. Then, I would sample a reading class by using a new design of translation method—Pedagogical Translation Method to display how translation method could be improved with the combination of other effective pedagogies.

An Overview of Translation as a Teaching Method

Translation as a teaching method enjoyed a long history in foreign language teaching. It has gone through different stages with the emergence and advocacy of new teaching methods at different times.

The use of translation derived from teaching Latin and Greek and became popular in western European countries in the 18th and 19th centuries (Bowen, Madsen, & Hilferty, 1985). At that time, this method emerged in the form of Grammar Translation (GM), which focused on learning grammatical rules, vocabulary and translating the target language into their mother tongue (Machida, 2011; Kong, 2011). The term target language used here refers to either a second or a foreign language that is being taught (Larsen-Fremman & Anderson, 2011, p13). As Grammar Translation method was widely used in EFL classrooms, it was also under criticisms in terms its emphasis on solely literal and word-to-word fixed translation between target and language and learners' mother tongue and limitations in enhancing students' development in communicative language. Chang (2004) described what an English class dominated by Grammar

Translation Method looks like in China: "All class activities were teacher-oriented. Reading materials were taught word-by-word and sentence-by-sentence. Students were required to recite relevant grammar rules and remember word meanings without any support of context. There was little or no oral practice." (p35). Duff (1994) specified the reasons why foreign language teachers objected the use of translation by stressing that translation is text-bound and confined to only two skills-reading and writing; it is not a communicative activity because it involves no oral interaction; it is time-consuming and wasteful; the use of first language is required which is undesirable; it is boring, both to do and to correct (p.5). Similar to Duff's viewpoint, Richards and Rodgers (2000) also pointed out it puts far more attention on reading and writing than on developing speaking and listening skills. Stern (1999) also maintained that translation method never emancipates the learners from the dominance of the mother tongue (p.455). With these defects, the Grammar Translation Method started to give way to other methodologies such as the Direct Method¹, the Audio-Lingual Method², the Silent way³, Desuggestopedia⁴, Community Language Teaching (CLL)⁵ and Communicative

¹ Direct Method: Meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids, with no resources to the students' native language. The goal of instruction is learning how to use another language to communicate.

² Audio-Lingual Method: An oral-based approach drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns and helps learners to respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement.
3 Silent Way: The method emphasizes learner autonomy and active student participation. Silence is used as a tool to achieve this goal; the teacher uses a mixture of silence and gestures to focus students' attention, to elicit responses from them, and to encourage them to correct their own errors.
4 Desuggestopeia: The approach was based on the power of suggestion in learning, the notion being that positive suggestion would make the learner more receptive and, in turn, stimulate learning.

Language Teaching $(CLT)^6$. It worth noted that though each method takes different forms of pedagogies, they all devalue, even prohibit the use of translation method. For instance, the use of Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method and Communicative Language Teaching emphasizes developing students' communicative competence in target language. Therefore, using first language, especially translation, should be avoided while using these methods. Although the Silent way, Desuggestopedia Method and Community Language Teaching method allow necessary use of first language or translation in instruction, with students making more and more progress in second language learning, the involvement of translation would be much less or even reduced to none (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Machida, 2011). However, recent years have witnessed the revival of the translation method as researchers started to reemphasize advantages and benefits of using translation pedagogy, modify and redesign translation method by incorporating other methodologies (Yang, 2015). For example, Schäffner (1998) summarized six main benefits of using translation practice:

- 1) Improve verbal ability
- 2) Expand students' vocabulary in L2
- 3) Develop their style

⁵ Community Language Learning: A method in which students work together to develop what aspects of a language they would like to learn. The teacher acts as a counselor and a paraphraser, while the student is seen as a client and collaborator.

⁶ Communicative Language Teaching: an approach emphasizes interaction as both the means and the goal of study. Language learners in environments utilizing CLT techniques to learn the target language through interaction with one another and the instructor

- 4) Improve their understanding of how languages work
- 5) Consolidate L2 structures for active use
- 6) Monitor and improve the comprehension of L2.

(p.125).

In Aqel's (2013) experimental research on exploring the effect of using translation method on EFL learning, the researcher also pointed out that translation process in foreign "language acquisition is more than the process of conveying meaning from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). It is a pedagogic method that facilitates learning of four language skills and makes a foreign language more comprehended to English language learners." (p.2470). With regard to these benefits of translation method, most of them were generally demonstrated in both ESL and EFL learning environment, and few researchers have identified the different essentiality of using translation method in two different class environments as well as delved into factors leading to this kind of difference.

Why Using Translation is Still Necessary in EFL Classroom

If we look back through the history of translation method, we can easily find out that it is the close associations between translation method and Grammar Translation Method, which was widely criticized, that results in the prevention of using translation method from English teaching. In other words, people tend to consider translation method and Grammar Translation Method as interchangeable terms, which is not only unreasonable but also misleading. Even though it is undeniable that the Grammar Translation Method used to be a popular form of using translation in teaching practice, these two terms should not be understood with equal. Hence, I would make an argument that as the traditional Grammar Translation Method being criticized by many researchers, translation method itself in fact has never been treated as a defective way of learning, and people's criticism and objections to translation method actually aimed at the Grammar Translation Method. Also, this overview reflected another fact that nearly all condemnations on Grammar translation Method or translation method focused on their de-emphasis on communicative language development, which led people to ignore that the effectiveness of using this method in teaching reading and writing in a foreign language always exists and sustains. In this section, I would demonstrate the necessity of using translation method in literacy teaching in EFL classrooms from following aspects.

First, the social environment and learners' preferences made the translation method necessary in EFL teaching. Take China for example, English is not the official language in China. Therefore, students in China who learning English as a foreign language lack enough exposure of it compared to those people who are in English speaking countries learning English as a second language (Yang, 2015). Considering this social language environment, on the one hand, it is nearly impossible for EFL learners to get rid of the influence of their mother tongue. On the other, this social environment provides convenience for translation method because students in an EFL classroom all speak the same first language. While teachers' attitudes toward teaching methods are important, learners' reactions to teaching methods should be noticeable as well. In Rao's (2002)

research on Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom, she did a survey among thirty Chinese students on the appropriateness and effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative activities in their EFL courses in China. Results of the survey suggested that the students favored non-communicative activities more than communicative ones. "Of the ten non-communicative activities, six were favored by more than two thirds of the subjects while in communicative activities four out of nine items were claimed to be favored by most students." (p.91). Chang (2011) also conducted a contrastive study to compare Grammar-Translation method and Communicative Approach in teaching English grammar, this study selected 86 Taiwanese students to participate and the result showed that the Grammar-Translation method is better than the Communicative Approach in accuracy. Naiman et al. (1978) did study on exploring strategies used by Good Language Learners and found that 'referring back to their native language(s) judiciously and making effective cross-lingual comparisons' is one of the most often used learning strategies these learners one of the most often used strategies (p.14). Frequent use of translation method was also found in O'Malley et al.'s study (1985): 'among 11 cognitive strategies identifies by researchers, translation accounted for 11.3% of all strategy uses by beginning and intermediate-level ESL learners, second only to such strategies as repetition (19.6%), note taking (18.7%), and imagery (12.5%)' (Liao, 2006, p.196). What's more, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) did research among Japanese college students, which indicated that those students prefer to write English essays through

translation rather than writing directly in English since they felt 'ideas were easier to develop, thoughts and opinions could be expressed more clearly, and words could be more easily found through the use of dictionary'. These research-based results revealed that EFL students possessed positive perceptions on using translation method, especially in learning how to read and write in English.

Second, translating is a natural and inevitable process for EFL learners. Duff (1994) mentioned that English language learners mentally translate texts from English into their mother tongue and vice versa. Leonardi (2009) also pointed out that translation is a naturally occurring cognitive activity, which cannot be stopped or avoided and it seems to be quite normal to rely on translation when faced with foreign words and/or expressions. I totally agree with Leonardi's viewpoint that ' if it is not possible to stop learners from translating, then it could be good idea to teach them how to do it correctly by minimizing interference and making them aware of the fact that there does not always exist a one-to-one correspondence between two languages, in other words, students should be taught how to use their translation ability to the best' (p. 18-21).

Moreover, translation method nowadays has been improved and many researchers innovatively came up with different models in using translation in EFL classes. As people's understandings of translation method have been changed and extended by benefits brought up by previous researchers, they started to improve using translation method by incorporating effective strategies used in other methods such as the Audio-Lingual method and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method. In the next section, two modifying models of translation method will be introduced and showed how to support literacy teaching in EFL classrooms.

Beyond Grammar Translation: Pedagogical Translation Method (PTF)

The Pedagogical Translation was elicited by Leonardi (2010), who claimed that:

"translation in foreign language classes becomes a form of pedagogical translation aimed

at enhancing and further improving reading, writing, speaking and listening skills" (2011,

p.22). To be more specific, she said that:

The proper use of pedagogical translation can show how this activity is not uncommunicative and that it does not merely focus on accuracy. Translation exercises can serve a variety of purposes ranging from linguistic problems to more cultural, semantic and pragmatic concerns. Furthermore, translation can help learners enhance their analytical and problem-solving skills which are essential in everyday life as well as in most working fields (2010, p.81-82).

She also considered Pedagogical Translation as the fifth skill that supports and complement other four language skills. In order to implement Pedagogical Translation method, Leonardi has designed and devised a framework called The Pedagogical Translation Framework (PTF) (2010, p.87). The application of this framework not only includes the use of translation, but also incorporates activities aiming at developing more than on of four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Factors have been taken into account to adjust and modify instruction include (2010, p.87):

1) Students' proficiency level;

2) Direction of translation, that is, from L1 into L2 or vice versa;

3) Focus on one or more language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening);

4) School vs. University or professional courses teaching requirements;

5) General vs. specialized language requirements;

6) Time availability;

7) Small vs. large classes.

The revised version of Pedagogical Translation Framework has been displayed in Figure

1 as follows (Leonardi, 2011, p.23):

Pre-Translation Activities: - Brainstorming - Vocabulary preview - Anticipation guides **Translation Activities:** - Reading activities - Speaking and Listening - Writing - Literal translation - Summary translation - Parallel texts - Re-translation - Grammar explanation - Vocabulary builder and facilitator - Cultural mediation and intercultural competence development **Post-Translation Activities:** - Written or oral translation commentary - Written or oral summary of the Source Text (ST) - Written composition about Source Text (ST)-related topics

Figure 1. Pedagogical Translation Framework (PTF), adapted from Leonardi (2010, p.88).

Using Pedagogical Translation in EFL classroom

This section will use a sample reading class to show how to use this framework step by step in the EFL classroom. Here are some class information:

- -- Topic: Comparison between Chinese and American New Year
- -- Key words: Festivals; customs; cultural differences
- -- Student proficiency level: Intermediate level in English (high school students);
- native speakers of Mandarin Chinese

-- Materials used for teaching: 1) Article: *The Comparison Between Chinese and American Festivals*. 2) Contrastive Form: Christmas VS. Chinese New Year (see Appendix 1).

-- Content objectives:

- SWBAT have an overview of main festivals in American and China.
- SWBAT summarize differences and similarities between Christmas and Chinese Spring Festival.
- SWBAT understand the underlying cultural backgrounds behind Christmas and Spring Festival.

-- Language objectives:

- SWBAT acquire new vocabularies including names of different festivals and corresponding customs.
- SWBAT extract information from article and relate it to self-experience

• SWBAT utilize contrastive connectives to do comparison

The class starts with pre-translation activities, which mainly includes three parts: Brainstorming, Vocabulary preview and Anticipation Guides. These activities aim at assisting students to be familiar with the main topic and preparing them for further explorations.

Brainstorming:

In this part, I would use some introductory activities to help students examine the main topic. In this reading class, for example, I would ask my students what do they know about ways or festivals to celebrate new year's coming in different places around the world, then ask them to exchange their knowledge and experience in small groups (3-4 people in each group). Then students need to share their opinions with the whole class. This activity is a good example of making connections to students' prior knowledge, which is also another important purpose of this part.

Vocabulary preview:

This activity devotes to deal with unfamiliar words that play key roles in comprehension of the text. There are some words I selected for this class, such as *sacrifice, Tomb-sweeping, commemorate, ferocious, utensil* etc. The use of dictionary should be emphasized in this activity since it is a necessary skill for students to acquire that will be helpful to other translation activities. As Leonardi (2010) mentioned that due to the restriction of time and class size, students may not be accessible to use dictionaries all the time (p.90). I also think it is not so convenient to use dictionary books whenever we do this activity. Therefore, the machine translation comes to be a better choice. As students all have accesses to Internet and electronic devices, I would like them to incorporate technology in our class and I would ask them to use their electronic dictionaries devices or smart phones to check meaning of unfamiliar words both in English and in Chinese. As vocabulary plays a critical role in reading comprehension, this activity has set a good foundation for the following reading activities.

Anticipation Guides:

The anticipation guide is an assessment or pretest on students' prior knowledge on a specific topic. The teacher will write down some statements related to the topic on a handout and let students to choose whether each statement is right or wrong. After the class, students will do this test again and compare their answers with those in the pretest. Teachers can use the Anticipation Guide Sheet offered by Leonardi (2010, see appendix2) or use design their own handout.

After these three pre-translation activities, translation methods would be used in various ways in the main translation activities part according to the framework. *Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing:*

As Leonardi separated the incorporation of four language skills into three steps called *Reading Activities, Listening and speaking* and *Writing*. I would integrate them in my reading class. First, students need to read carefully to analyze the texts. As I choose to use an article and a contrastive form in this reading class, I would do some close reading on the academic article and let students do independent reading on the contrastive form considering different complexities of these two materials. Reading aloud and oral discussion in both Chinese and English can effectively develop students' listening and speaking skill. In terms of writing practice, it goes with the analysis of the article. Students would be asked to do writing tasks including write a summary of the article, write down some bulletin points regarding the comparison between Chinese and American festivals and write down appropriate translations of festival names from English to Chinese and vice versa.

Use of Translation:

There are three activities directly use translation method in this framework. They are *Literal translation, Summary translation* and *Re-translation*. As literal translation can be used to do word-by-word translation, I would ask students translate specific parts of the contrastive form and do syntactic comparison between the English text and their Chinese translation. The summary translation would be used to deal with the more complex article used in this class. Since it is too time-consuming and challenging for high school students to translate an academic article, their abilities to summarize main ideas are more valued. Students can try to summarize in their native language and then translate to English, which would be very effective and easy to apply. The re-translation part is one of my favorite parts. It requires us to analyze students' translation work carefully and then translate their work back to English to see whether their previous translations are accurate enough and the gap between understandings in two different languages. The *Parallel text* activity could be conducted while using bilingual versions of the same text. Since this

reading class doesn't use this kind of material, it is reasonable for us to skip this step. *Grammar explanation:*

The grammar explanation activity aims to explain different grammatical rules in L1 and L2, which may result in inaccurate even wrong translations. Petrocchi's research (2006: 3) claimed that 'by starting from grammar, students can reach a higher level of translation and, vice-versa, by translating they acquire more competence in the knowledge of grammatical structures'. Therefore, direct instruction of grammatical rules is necessary in using translation method.

Vocabulary builder and facilitator:

We have checked meanings of unfamiliar words in the *Vocabulary Preview* activity. So in this activity, we need to build students vocabulary by pushing them to understand words in appropriate contexts. Accurate translation depends on accurate understandings of word meanings, which is highly dependent on contexts. Teachers need to prevent students from constantly using literal meanings of words to do translation and extend their understandings of each single word they are supposed to learn.

Cultural mediation and intercultural competence development:

As the topic I choose is about cultural differences, so it is pretty easy to conduct this activity in my class. The translation of the contrastive form could be seen as a kind of cultural mediation, and students' intercultural competences are developed through reading the cultural responsive article I chose, discussing and sharing their own opinions regarding different festivals and cultural elements.

Post-Translation activities:

The post-translation activities would involve more written or oral tasks such as written or oral translation commentary, written or oral summary, and written composition of related topics. In this reading class, I would ask students to finish the anticipation guide sheet first, and ask them to discuss whether they find any differences from their previous answers. I would also ask them to anonymously write down peer-comments on other students' translations. These post-translation activities aim to do a summary of their translation work in class and get feedbacks from peers and teachers.

<u>Summary</u>

This inquiry review of the application of translation method in EFL classroom first explored the history of translation method and displayed changes of people's attitudes towards the application of it at different stages. Then, the necessity of using translation method in nowadays EFL classrooms has also been supported by certain researchers study and students' preferences. In the third section, the Pedagogical Translation Method, one of the most typical innovative models of using translation method, has been used to demonstrate a sample reading class in order to show how translation could be used to develop the whole set of language skills including reading, writing, speaking and listening. Although translation method has been always controversial, its benefits in teaching reading and writing in EFL classrooms are unnegligible. There is no perfect teaching method that could fit all kinds of social and learning environments. Hence, we as modern teachers are more responsible for developing our teaching methods rather than giving up one method because of some of its defects. The Pedagogical Translation Method is a good example of improving traditional teaching methods but is not the only one, and we constantly need to find out new strategies and theories that could be supportive in designing new teaching methods or redesigning traditional ones.

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Appendix 1. Teaching Materials Used in the Sample Class

1. The Article: Wen, M. (2016). The comparison between Chinese and American

festivals, Cross-Cultural Communication, Vol.12, 61-65.

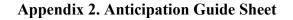
2. The contrastive form:

DIFFERENCES	CHRISTMAS	CHINESE NEW YEAR
DATES	Christmas is always on December 25th, the date never changes	Chinese New Year's date changes every year. It is celebrated on the first new moon of the lunar calendar, always between January 21st and February 20th.
ORIGIN	Christmas is a religious holiday linked to the Catholic religion. Christmas celebrates Jesus Christ's birth.	Chinese New Year has pagan roots; it is linked to the rural life. According to Chinese mythology, the origin of the Spring Festival dates back to an ancient legend that tells of a monster named Nian (年) who once a year used to go to the villages to eat livestock and children. This terrible monster was being banished by using red-color objects and loud noises, which frightened him. For this reason, in China it is usual to greet the arrival of the new year with fireworks and the use of the color red.
TRADITIONAL RITES	Christmas is a Catholic holiday, so the typical rite is to attend the Christmas Holy Mass, usually at	The Chinese New Year is welcomed with lion and dragon dances, made by martial artists and acrobats, who wear a great costume with the features of lions and dragons and dancing in a

DIFFERENCES	CHRISTMAS	CHINESE NEW YEAR		
	midnight December 24 or 25 in the morning to celebrate with the community the birth of Jesus Christ.	parade through the streets of the city, surrounded by the sounds of drums and dishes. Traditionally this dance is used to push away evil spirits and propitiate luck and prosperity for the new year.		
HOLIDAY DURATION	Christmas holiday season usually lasts two weeks, from December 24th until January 6th, the Epiphany. Not every day is a public holiday, except for schools, but it is a time for celebration.	Chinese New Year season also lasts two weeks. The celebration begins on Chinese New Year's eve and it ends 15 days later, with the traditional Lantern Festival (元宵节 yuanxiao jie). For the Lantern festival children hold parades with red lanterns of various shapes to celebrate the arrival of the first full moon and this is the end of the Chinese New Year Season.		
FAMILY HOLIDAY	Christmas is traditionally a family celebration, a time when you meet the extended family, with grandparents, uncles, cousins to celebrate all together.	Chinese New Year is the most important family celebration in China. The days before this festival are frantic, lots of people are traveling, because everyone wants to reach his/her family on time to celebrate together.		
FOOD	Once the family has gathered, the best way to celebrate Christmas is by eating and drinking	Chinese New Year is also celebrated around the table eating together the traditional foods of the feast. Certain foods are typical of Chinese New Year for		

DIFFERENCES	CHRISTMAS	CHINESE NEW YEAR
	together. Each region has its own dishes, but everyone celebrates spending hours around a table, eating the typical dishes of the festivities. Typical Christmas food include turkey, nuts, sweets and cakes. In general all the reunions with friends and family are always related to food and drinks.	their symbolic meaning often linked to their name or their appearance. Fish for example is a dish that cannot lack during this celebration. This is because the word fish (鱼 yú) has the same sound of the word abundance (余 yú), so eating fish brings fortune and prosperity to the new year. Another typical dish of this festival is dumplings (饺子; jiaozi) filled with meat and vegetables. Their shape remind people of the ancient Chinese coins and therefore represent wealth and prosperity.
GAMES	Once done eating the typical way of spending time together during the holidays is playing games as bingo or cards.	People in China are also used to spend time together playing games. One of the typical games is majiang, a Chinese game that could be compared to our chess.
PRESENTS	Christmas is also the time for gift exchange. Children wait anxious for Santa Claus to bring them presents and adults exchange different kinds of gifts, often food or drink or sometimes even money, especially among close relatives.	Gift exchange is also typical in Chinese New Year. The most popular gift is a red envelope (紅包; Hongbao) with money inside. The red envelope is usually given to children and the elderly. Adults generally exchange gifts as fruit baskets, sweets, alcohol, tea etc.
DECORATIONS AND COLORS	Christmas is the season to decorate the streets of the city, the shops and homes	Chinese streets, shops and homes are decorated as well during the Spring Festival. The typical decorations are made out of red paper cut out

DIFFERENCES	CHRISTMAS	CHINESE NEW YEAR
	with lights and Christmas trees. The typical colors of Christmas are red and gold.	and nodes with red thread. The typical colors of this festival are red and gold.
()		



ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Instruction: Read independently each statement below. If you believe the statement is true, put a check in the AGREE column otherwise put a check in the DISAGREE column.

Part I (Before)			Part II (After)	
Agree	Disagree	Statement	Agree	Disagree
Figure 11: An	nticipation Gui	ide Template		

Anticipation Guide Template (Leonardi, 2010, p.91)