

## **How should Huineng Speak?**

### **Text Complexity in Translations of the *Platform Sutra***

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#### ABSTRACT

The study is a comparison of four English translations (Wong 1930, Heng 1977, Cleary 1998 and Cheng 2011) of an ancient Chan Buddhist text, the *Platform Sutra*, which is a record of the public sermons and personal conversations of the Chan master Huineng. The focus of comparison is text complexity, which tends to be neglected in translation studies. Text complexity, according to Halliday, can be measured in two dimensions: grammatical intricacy (number of ranking clauses per sentence) and lexical density (number of content words per ranking clause). Analysis shows that while translations by Wong and Cleary are complex in one dimension (lexical density and grammatical intricacy respectively), Heng's translation is simple, and Cheng's translation is complex, in both dimensions. This finding is interpreted by taking the context of translation, especially the intended readership and translating strategies, into consideration.

**KEYWORDS:** text complexity, grammatical intricacy, lexical density, *Platform Sutra*