

The Conversion of Static and Dynamic Features between English and Chinese

--Taking Moonlight over The Lotus Pond And Its Translation As An Example

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Abstract: English and Chinese, rooted in two different language families, remains many differences, among which the difference between static and dynamic is one of the most significant ones. Chinese is a kind of flexible and dynamic language, which is reflected in the use of verbs and verb phrases. However, being subject to its grammatical rules and morphological changes, as well as its pursuit of objectivity and rationality, English shows its static characteristics, which are mainly indicated in the expression of various words with action meaning through adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and prepositions. This article starts with the classic Chinese prose Moonlight over the Lotus Pond, making contrasts between the prose with Zhu Chunshen's translation, to have a systematical study on the rendering methods of verbs when translating from Chinese to English. And then by means of quantitative analysis and example analysis, this essay will analyze the method and strategy of “staticizing the the words with intense action meaning” from the perspective of characteristics.

1. Introduction

From the perspective of language, English is a comprehensive language, which is characterized by the use of morphological changes to express grammatical relations. Therefore, in English verbs can be transformed into adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, nouns and so on the basis of abundant morphological changes. In addition, verbs themselves are often weakened. “Weakened words” refers to “words with weak action meaning.” For example, the verb “be” is the word with the least action meaning. “(Liu Linghui, 2010 (2) : 73) Besides, they can also refers to verbs have no meaning in themselves, and they are usually used with some nouns that express action meaning to express specific meaning “, such as: take, make, do and so on. (Yin Zhenyu, 2008:11)

In terms of culture and way of thinking, westerners have been paying attention to reason since ancient times. Western philosophy is the knowledge of wisdom, it is “love of wisdom”, which developed from exploring the essence of the objective world, so it pays attention to the exploration and understanding of the universe thus the western wise man are often good at using nouns especially abstract nouns for abstract and scientific thinking.

However, Chinese is analytic, using word order and function words to express grammatical

relationships. Therefore, the dynamic characteristics of Chinese are mainly reflected in the frequent use of verbs. First of all, the four common sentence patterns in Chinese, namely, the linkage, the concurrent language, the handle and the subject, all contain verbs, or even multiple consecutive verbs. Chinese verbs are not only used together, but also often repeated or overlapping. Verb overlap and repetition can greatly enhance the expression and appeal of language. Secondly, in addition to the predicate, the verb phrase in Chinese can also act as various components of a sentence, such as subject, object, predicate, supplementary attributive, adverbial, auxiliary verb and preposition.

In terms of culture and way of thinking, the Chinese people have always attached great importance to understanding. Chinese philosophy is the philosophy of life, ethics, morality and politics. Therefore, Chinese benevolent people tend to use verbs to express the world, interpersonal relations, joys and sorrows, likes and dislikes, and they are good at using verbs to think in images and emotions, so as to make subjective judgments and affect people.

2. Comparative Study of Moonlight over the Lotus Pond and Zhu Chunshen's English Version

2.1 A Quantitative Analysis of Verb Translation in the English Version of Moonlight over the Lotus Pond

In the Chinese original text, there are 147 predicate verbs, accounting for 12% of the total vocabulary of the original text, while in the translated text, there are 45 real predicate verbs, 75 non-predicate verbs and 19 link verbs, accounting for 8.6% of the total vocabulary of the translated text. In contrast, verbs are used more frequently in the original Chinese text. The verbs retained by the English translation of Chinese verbs, including non-predicate verbs, account for about half of the original verbs, while the other half of the verbs are converted to other parts of speech. Therefore, in terms of verb conversion, Chinese is more dynamic, while English is more static.

About 60% of the Chinese verbs are translated into English verbs--predicate, dependent and non-predicate verbs. It can be seen that verb translation plays an important role in verb translation. Next, in turn, is the main form: flexible processing (including the omitted verb and change the the subject), adjective or adverb (phrases), prepositional phrase and noun, proportion of these processing methods is about 40%. We can find the feature of verbs changes from dynamic to static in the process of translation from Chinese into English.

2.2 Examples of Strategies in Chinese-English Translation

2.2.1 English Translation of Chinese Verbs into Adjectives or Adverbs (Phrases)

Adjectives and adverbs expressing the meaning of verbs are very common in English. Some verbs have cognate adjectives, so English often uses adjectives when expressing the same meaning. In addition, most mental and physical adjectives can be combined with the verb "be" and a preposition to form a prepositional phrase, such as "be afraid of". Verbs that mean to go somewhere can be adverbs, such as 'out' meaning to go out and 'in' meaning to come back. Take a sentence in Moonlight over the Lotus Pond as an example:

The original text: "我悄悄地披了大衫,带上门出去。"

The English version: "Shrugging on an overcoat, quietly, I made my way out, closing the door behind me."

There are three verbs in the original ("披", "带", "出去"), but due to grammar rules, only one predicate verb in the sentence is allowed, so the verb "披" and "带" are respectively into the predicate verb "Shrugging" and "closing", and "out" as the main predicate-- "make my way" and

the adverb “out” to express its meaning. As a result, the meaning of “get outside” is weakened, and just the result is retained.

2.2.2 English Translation of Chinese Verbs into Prepositions (Phrases)

The use of prepositions is also the main factor causing its static characteristics. “According to the statistics of G. Gurme, there are 286 prepositions of various kinds in English” (Lian Shuneng, 2010,75). Such words are short and concise so they are widely used. Prepositional phrases instead of verb phrases turn “dynamic” into “static”, and can be used with weakened verbs and “boring nouns” to achieve narratives that twists and turns. Take a sentence in *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* as an example:

The original text: “层层叶子中间,零星地点缀着些白花,有袅娜地开着的,有羞涩地打着朵儿的;正如一粒粒的明珠,又如碧天里的星星,又如刚出浴的美人。”

The English version: “Here and there, layers of leaves are dotted with white lotus blossoms, some in demure bloom, others in shy bud, like scattering pearls, or twinkling stars, or beauties just out of the bath.”

This sentence is mainly about the scenery of the lotus pond under the moonlight. In the original Chinese text, abundant adverbs are used to modify verbs to show different states of lotus flowers, and adjectives are used to modify noun phrases. Through multiple metaphors, the shape of lotus flowers under the moon is further imprinted in the reader's mind. There is no subject in the original text, but the English translation must have a subject, so the translator uses “layers of leaves” as the subject, and its predicate must be “be dotted with”. Later, the two states of lotus, namely the open flower and the flower bud, the original author used the auxiliary verb “着” to indicate the continuation of the action or state. The translator used two prepositional phrases, “in demure bloom” and “others in shy bud”, to express the static meaning implied by the two verbs “开着” and “打着”, so as to create a precise atmosphere and fit the keynote of the original text.

2.2.3 Translation of Chinese Verbs into Nouns (Phrases)

The static characteristic of English is mainly reflected in the use of nouns. First, a large number of nouns are used to express the information that originally expressed by verbs (phrases), and the most common is to use abstract nouns to express actions, behaviors, changes and states. Second, in English, agent nouns are used to express the meaning of verbs, that is, nouns derived from verbs are used to express a action, which not only retains the verb meaning, but also the shortenthe sentence. Take a sentence in *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* as an example:

The original text: “弯弯的杨柳的稀疏的倩影却又像是画在荷叶上。”

The English version: “Whereas the benign figures of the drooping willows, here and there, look like paintings on the lotus leaves.”

In the original text, there are two verbs “像是” and “画”. In translating, the translator chose a copula to connect the subject and the predicate, and derived the word “paint” into a noun form, avoiding the attributive clause or the passive form “those painted on the lotus leaves”, which would make the sentence twists and complicated, thus the whole sentence is concise and clear. In addition, the words “paintings” and “benign figures” here both refer to the shadows cast by moonlight on willow leaves. In other words, the two synonyms are used to make the “beautiful images” more vivid, so that readers can draw the picture of the moonlight again in their minds.

2.2.4 Flexible Translation of Chinese Verbs into English

The essence of translation is interpretation, especially prose, which is a literary style. The

depiction of images, the expression of emotions and the creation of artistic conception should be shown through poetic language. In particular, the translation of prose needs to replicate the expression effect of the original language, either free and lively, vivid and beautiful, or refined and elegant, profound and meaningful. Therefore, in addition to the above regular transformation, the flexible treatment of verbs is an important means of “turning the static into the dynamic”, which can better reflect the flexible and fickle sentence patterns and strong artistic factors in prose. Flexible translation includes changing the subject to replace the strong verb in the original text with a weak verb, changing the sentence structure or leaving out the verb directly, and using free translation to explain the meaning in a corresponding more poetic way in English. Take the English translation of *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* as an example:

The original text: “这令我到底惦着江南了。”

The English version: “So my memories drift back to the South after all.”

In the last paragraph of the original text, before the dash, this sentence lead readers to reality from the “suddenly remembered” things in last paragraph to stand in front of the lotus pond in moonlight, and this sentence again leads the reader's thoughts into the south of the Yangtze River, into the distance, leaving infinite space for imagination and endless aftertaste. However, the flexible handling of the verb in the English translation also shows the charm of this sentence. “So my memory drifted to the south of the Yangtze River”, the subject changed from “I” to “my memory”, and “电” to “drift”, which skillfully shows the state of the original text's thoughts gradually drifting away from the immediate scene.

3. Conclusion

Language is the carrier of culture and thinking while thoughts and culture are the deep factors of language. Chinese attaches great importance to understanding and believes that “identity of object and self”. Therefore, Chinese language often focuses on “I” and the actions of “I”, so Chinese are good at verbs. The English, on the other hand, oppose “I” from objectivity, and pursue the rational exploration of the objective world through reason, therefore rigorous logical thinking is embodied from flexible form changes and the feature of static.

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