

Original Paper

The translation of Hakka dialect into Hakka Language Is a Key
Task in the Study of Hakka Language, which Should Be
Analyzed from the Methodological Level in This Study, and the
Translation of the New Testament in the 19th century Is Taken
as an Example

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Received: April 02, 2026

Accepted: May 08, 2026

Online Published: May 25, 2026

doi:10.22158/eltls.v8n3p102

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/eltls.v8n3p102>

Abstract

Western missionaries compiled a large number of texts, and these texts have laid the foundation for the study of Chinese dialect grammar, but we should not ignore the existence of translation language interference in the compilation of these texts. This paper takes the New Testament written in Hakka as the research object, compares it with the grammatical materials of Hakka dialects in the same period or later periods, and constructs a three-tier analytical framework from three aspects: historical evolution, translation interference and underlying stability. Through analysis, it is found that the grammatical elements are relatively stable and should be included in the underlying stability layer, and the affirmative and negative interrogation structure and the “Jiang” clause have only appeared in the translation, and are consistent with the content of Putonghua, which is inevitably interfered with by translation, and should be included in the translation interference layer. The grammatical evolution of plural markers and the disappearance of comparative markers are inevitably related to historical evolution. Based on the above conclusions, this paper analyzes the principles of dialectal syntax research, including asymmetry and cross-validation strategies, in order to provide a reference for the analysis of similar texts.

Keywords

The New Testament in Hakka, Hakka dialect, translated texts, methodology, three-tiered analytical

framework

1. Introduction

After the Qing Dynasty, missionaries came to China to spread Christianity, translated the Bible into a large number of texts, compiled dictionaries and compiled textbooks. These texts have attracted the attention of scholars in the field of dialects, which can provide a large amount of data for the development of Chinese grammar, but there is a fundamental methodological problem: these texts are not the records of natural speech, but the records of language translation, and they are inevitably affected by the original text structure and the translator's strategy. For this reason, we need to sort out the real dialect data and eliminate the interference data, which is an unavoidable problem in the grammatical study of these materials.

In this study, the New Testament in Hakka is selected as the research object, and the relevant contents of He Gengyong's Hakka Dialect Grammar (mainly about the situation of the Hakka people at the end of the 20th century) (He, 1993) and Zhuang et al. (19th century) (2014) are compared and analyzed, and a reasonable framework is constructed. By classifying the grammatical phenomena described in this paper into "historical evolution layer", "translation interference layer" and "underlying stable layer", a reasonable research framework can be constructed for the grammatical analysis of translated texts.

2. The Proposal of the "Three-Layer Analytical Framework"

The study of translated texts should take into account the dual characteristics of these texts, that is, they can not only record the real situation of dialects in the 19th century, but also have high corpus value. However, they will inevitably introduce "interference elements". If we can not distinguish the grammatical components in these texts, we will confuse them with dialectal characteristics. Baker proposed the theory of "translation universals", pointing out that the translated language has the characteristics of explicitness and simplicity (Baker, 1993). Wu Fuxiang analyzed the contact between languages, put forward the concept of "grammar borrowing", and believed that the source language would have a certain impact on the target language (Wu, 2020). The above theories have laid the foundation for the analysis of translated texts.

Based on the above theoretical basis, this paper will take the comparison between Hakkas New Testament and He Zhuang's works as the research focus, and construct a three-tier analytical framework:

Basic stability layer: The grammatical elements of the three texts are consistent, which means that the deep grammatical structure of the Hakka dialect is relatively stable, and is not easily disturbed by translation and diachronic evolution. These characteristics are the core characteristics of the Hakka dialect.

Translation interference layer: This feature is unique to the New Testament, which is consistent with the grammar of Mandarin and the source text, but not reflected in the works of Zhuang and He, and is

not widely used in the Hakka spoken language. This is the inevitable result of translation strategy, not the real characteristics of Hakka.

Historical evolution level: There are obvious differences between Hakka and other dialects, but the root cause is not the impact of Mandarin, but the grammatical evolution of the two dialects in the 19th and 20th centuries, which has reference significance for the study of grammar.

The three-layer analytical framework is evaluated from the two dimensions of “similarity and difference” and “presence and absence”, and it is also necessary to eliminate the interference of geographical differences and textual content and other factors. In this paper, the explanatory power of the framework is analyzed, and the operational methods are described with the help of grammatical parameters.

3. Empirical Testing of the Three-Layer Framework

3.1 The Stable Base Layer: High Consistency in Core Grammar

In the process of comparing the three texts, we can see that the consistency of grammatical parameters is relatively high. Taking the negation particle as an example, the three texts use “meh” (indicating that a certain judgment or state is not true), “mao” (indicating that a certain action is not completed) and “mo” (indicating that a certain action is prohibited) in the same way. For example:

The New Testament in Hakka: “厝唔係基督.” (I am not Christ)

He’s work: “催唔系广东人.” (I am not a Cantonese person)

Zhuang’s work: “催唔系喊你.” (I am not calling you)

Passive sentence markers and structures are also consistent. All three texts use the “奔/分 + agent + verb” structure, such as in *The New Testament in Hakka*: “免致奔犹太人害,” in He’s work: “衫裤分但扯烂了,” and in Zhuang’s work, where the “分” construction is similarly used. The double-transitive structure also exhibits a high degree of consistency: the word order introduced by the giving verbs “奔/分” is uniformly “V + direct object + indirect object,” as in *The New Testament in Hakka*: “厝奔条新诫命禺兜,” and in He’s work: “分本书催.” This word order is a typical feature of Southern Chinese dialects, differing in type from the Mandarin pattern “V + indirect object + direct object.”

The above conclusions further confirm that the word order of double transitive structure and the use of negative particles are stable contents of Hakka grammar, and can not change for more than 100 years because of translation, historical changes and other reasons, and the stability of grammar is relatively strong.

3.2 Translation Interference Layer: The “Infiltration” of Mandarin Structures

The New Testament written in Hakka has prominent grammatical characteristics, which are not present in the works of Zhuang and He, but have a high degree of similarity with Mandarin. For example, positive-negative questions are typical.

“将”字句。他认为：“客家人没有严格的‘把’字句。”壮族的研究中没有提到“将”字句。现代客家语在表达处置意义时，更倾向于使用宾语前置句或“主语 + 宾语”的结构。然而，在《新约全书》

中，客家人用“将”字句来表达处置意义，如：“（耶稣）将该坭浆来涂吓盲人嘅眼”。这样的结构在壮族和何的研究中没有找到，但在普通话的《圣经》翻译中，语法结构与之高度一致。合理的解释是，译者“复制”了普通话的处置结构，而不是记录了客家语的实际情况。“将”字句只出现在文本的叙事部分，完全缺失于对话部分，进一步支持了“翻译引进”的本质。

In the study of yes/no questions, the most common structure is “V 唔 V”. In The New Testament, the structure of yes/no questions is “V 唔 V” or “有+冇”, such as “係唔係?” and “有冇?”. He pointed out that the correct structure should be “爱+V+mo²⁴”, such as “爱食 mo²⁴?”, and Zhuang also reached the same conclusion. When analyzing the modern Hakka dialect, it is found that it will not use the “V 唔 V” structure. It should be noted that although the “有+冇” structure exists in The New Testament in Hakka, it is also widely used in modern Hakka dialects, but the “係唔係” type of yes/no question is the product of Mandarin influence. There are relatively few “V 唔 V” questions in The New Testament in Hakka, but they are used more in translation dialogue, which is inevitably related to the “Mandarinization” of translators in the process of translation.

The most critical feature of the above two examples is that they are in line with Mandarin form, different from the inherent laws of Hakka, and appear only in the New Testament. It can be seen that the translation interference mechanism is triggered, the structure of the source language is copied into the target language through “grammatical replication”, and it is impossible to accurately grasp the grammatical characteristics of Hakka in the 19th century.

3.3 Historical Evolution Layer: Traces of Grammaticalization

There are obvious differences between the grammar of the New Testament and that of the modern Hakka dialect, which is not caused by the influence of Mandarin grammar, but by the evolution of grammar.

From the perspective of grammaticalization, the plural marker “duo” has been greatly grammaticalized in the New Testament, which can be directly connected after personal pronouns, such as “Ya duo”, “Qi duo”, and before nouns, such as “Xie duo students”. In his research, the plural marker “deu⁴⁴” is relatively weak in grammatical strength, which must be connected with “ren” after the plural personal form is formed, such as “qi duo ren”. Zhuang’s work is between the two: “qi duo” and “qi duo ren” coexist. In terms of grammaticalization, the typical evolution of plural markers is from indefinite quantifiers to plural markers, and then to plural markers for personal pronouns. In The New Testament, “duo” can be directly connected with personal pronouns, which means that the grammaticalization of “duo” has reached a high level by the 19th century. However, in the Dubei dialect, “duo ren” has been formed by the end of the 20th century, which means that the grammaticalization has changed. This shows that grammatical evolution is not a single path.

In parallel construction, “ding” does not exist. In The New Testament of Hakka, the parallel sentence structure is “A + Tong / He + B + Ding”, such as “Tong Ya Liang Chai Ding”, which means “the two of us”, and “ding” means “the same”, which is equivalent to “yi yang”, but more concise. In He’s view, the structure of parallel construction is “A + De + B + yi yang”, while Zhuang believes that it is “Tong...yi

yang” or “Tong...ping yang”, and neither of them uses the “ding” marker. In this case, it is speculated that “ding” is a commonly used parallelism marker in Hakka dialect in the 19th century, and “yi yang” is used more and more in the 20th century. From the principle of clarity of expression in linguistics, “yi yang” has a stronger analytical ability, and such substitution is reasonable. However, the literature has not provided more information, so it is difficult to determine whether there are geographical differences.

Although there is not much historical evolution evidence, it can be seen that the Bible has a unique value in the process of grammar study, which can record the specific stage of grammar, and grasp the grammar that has disappeared in the Hakka dialect.

4. Methodological Reflections: How to “Purify” Translation Texts

From the above analysis, we know that the three-layer framework has strong operability and strong explanatory power, which provides a basis for the use of translated texts in dialectal grammar research, and is conducive to the formation of reasonable methodological principles.

4.1 The Asymmetry Between “Presence” and “Absence”

In the translation text, the existence of some grammatical forms is enough to prove it, which at least shows that the form already exists in the dialect. However, the lack of a certain grammatical form can not prove that the form does not exist. In this study, gender suffixes such as “gu” and “lao” do not appear in the study of the New Testament, nor do they appear in the reduplication of adjectives, but these grammatical forms are more abundant in the works of Zhuang and He. Obviously, it is not that these grammatical forms did not exist in the Hakka dialect in the 19th century, but that the text content was constrained, and the text style was solemn, so these grammatical forms did not appear. Therefore, we should realize that existence can be proved, but non-existence can not be proved, and we should not equate the omissions in the text with the omissions in the system.

4.2 Levels of Interference

Whether it is from the level of vocabulary, syntax, function words or words, the degree of translation interference is quite different. In this study, it is concluded that the possibility of interference can be ranked from high to low: syntax > vocabulary > function words > word formation > core function words. Syntactic word order is easily interfered with by the source language, and function words are also interfered with, but the degree is relatively low, while the stability of core function words is relatively strong, and the degree of interference is the lowest. The existence of this level ranking can not only guide researchers to choose stable syntactic areas in the process of study, but also to be cautious in the areas where interference is higher.

4.3 Operational Procedure of the Three-Tier Framework

According to the above principles, the following operational procedures can be adopted when analyzing the translated text in depth: First, describe the text in detail from the grammatical level, and make a list of the grammatical items. Secondly, compare the grammatical characteristics of different

languages in different periods, and find out the “divergent items” and “consistent items”. Thirdly, conduct an in-depth analysis of the “divergent items”: if the translation results are consistent with the Mandarin, but the speech of the dialect is not, they belong to the “translation interference layer”; if the translation results are inconsistent with the Mandarin, but in line with the development law of the dialect, they belong to the “historical evolution layer”; if they can not be classified, they belong to the “undetermined items”. Fourth, we should carefully analyze the “translation interference layer” and deal with it properly.

5. Conclusion

The translation of the New Testament in the Hakka dialect in the 19th century is of great significance for the in-depth study of grammar. On the one hand, it objectively records the grammatical characteristics of the period, and on the other hand, it reflects the characteristics of “dialectal speech” and “translation language” in the process of contact. Through research, we put forward the framework of “historical evolution layer - translation interference layer - stable underlying layer”, which is a reasonable analytical tool, and in the process of research, it is proved to be effective: in this framework, double transitive word order, negative particles and passive markers belong to the stable underlying layer, which fully shows that the stability of Hakka dialect is related to its core grammar; “V 唔 V” Yes/No question, “will” clause and other contents belong to translation interference layer, which fully shows that the use of translation language is to make the target text fully reflect the characteristics of Mandarin; “叮” comparative marker and “兜” plural marker are classified as historical evolution layer, which records the trace of grammar evolution.

This analytical framework is not only suitable for the study of Hakka dialects, but also for the research of translated texts in other dialects, such as Cantonese, Min dialects and so on. However, there are some obvious shortcomings in this study, which is based on the New Testament in Hakka, and the corpus is relatively small. The translator’s background and the specific Hakka dialect used are not fully understood. At present, comparative analysis only focuses on the works of He and Zhuang, and the latter is Hong Kong New Territories Hakka dialect, which has a long history, while the former is DuBu Hakka dialect. In the follow-up study, we should use more texts to describe the translator’s background and identify the characteristics of the dialect, so as to continuously improve the rationality of the framework.

Acknowledgments

This paper is supported by Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, which provides support for undergraduate students to innovate and start businesses.

Project No.: S202410593342

Project Title: A Study of the Hakka Dialect of Guigang from the Perspective of Language Contact

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