Original Paper

On the Translation Strategies of Chinese Verbs in *Aerial China: Jiangxi* from the Perspective of Chinese-English Comparison

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Abstract

Chinese is a verb-dominated language, while English is a noun-dominated language. In Chinese-English translation, Translators must deal with Chinese verbs based on the characteristics of English. Through analyzing the subtitle of Aerial China: Jiangxi, it found that translators have used different translation strategies to translate Chinese verbs into English. When dealing with Chinese verbs, translators mainly adopt the following strategies: translating Chinese verbs into English nouns, Translating Chinese verbs into English prepositions, and translating part of verbs of serial verb construction into English non-predicate forms. It is hoped that this article can provide reference for the translation of Chinese verbs in Chinese-English translation.

Keywords

Aerial China: Jiangxi, Chinese-English comparison, C-E translation, Chinese verbs

1. Introduction

Chinese and English belong to two different language families, the Sino-Tibetan language family and the Indo-European language family, which are quite different in phonetic, lexical and syntactic systems. Therefore, in Chinese-English translation, through comparison, we can master the differences between English and Chinese, master the rules of discourse transformation, and fully express the meanings of different levels of the source language in translation communication activities (Fang, 1997). English tends to use more nouns, so the narrative is static; Chinese tends to use more verbs, so the narrative is dynamic (Lian, 1993). Chinese syntax attaches more importance to paratransit while English syntax attaches more importance to hypotaxis. In addition, Chinese verbs are flexible and changeable and have a strong expressive force (Huang, 1986), so the English translation of Chinese verbs is a difficult task. This paper selects Jiangxi section of the documentary *Aerial China* as corpus to summarize translation

strategies of Chinese verbs and describes the translation strategies of Chinese verbs through case studies.

2. Characteristics and Translation of Chinese Verbs

One of the biggest differences between Chinese and English is in the use of verb (Gao, 2005). Chinese tends to use verbs (Lian, 1993). As Lin (1980) said, "Chinese is verb oriented and use a large number of verbs which are arranged according to time order, and even omits relative words as far as possible to achieve the effect of verb concentration and verb prominence, which is the basic tendency of Chinese sentence making techniques". That is, Chinese has a dynamic advantage. It is embodied in Chinese serial verb construction, pivot structure of Chinese verbs, the reduplication of Chinese verbs, and the fact that Chinese verbs can act as any components of sentence. However, English verbs are strictly restricted by tense, person, voice and so on, which are not as flexible and free as Chinese verbs (Gao, 2005). English is characterized by a noun advantage. A noun derived from a verb replaces the verb to show the concept of action or status. Some prepositions, can also replace verbs to express behavior and action.

Considering this difference between English and Chinese, translators must adjust language thinking patterns when translating Chinese verbs. As Wang (1983) said, "through comparison, we can determine which language components in the two languages correspond in translation, at what level of the language, and to what extent". That is to say, the translator should be clear about the noun advantage of English and the verb advantage of Chinese, and rationally change the part of speech to make the translation conform to the use norms of English. Famous scholars Bussmann (2000) and Crystal (2002) believe that "part of speech conversion is a translation technique, which converts the part of speech of a word into another part of speech without changing the form of the word in the translation process". That is to say, In Chinese-English translation, translators can translate Chinese verbs into other parts of speech with equivalent meaning in English, such as, Chinese verbs are translated into English nouns. As Gao (2005) said that in her paper, a Chinese sentence will change in one way or another when translated into English. Verbs, in particular, are sometimes translated with gerunds, sometimes with participles, sometimes with prepositional phrases, and sometimes with ellipses or in the passive voice. What's more, translation of Chinese verbs is not only a simple part of speech conversion but also accurate representation of semantics. Thus, the translation strategies of Chinese verb should be chosen in accordance with specific conditions. Therefore, Taking *Aerial China: Jiangxi* as example, the translation strategies of Chinese verbs will be specifically analyzed.

3. Translation Strategies of Chinese Verbs in *Aerial China: Jiangxi*

Aerial China is a large-scale aerial documentary series launched by CCTV Record Channel. The documentary series offers a panoramic view of China from the air, showing the cultural and historical landscape, natural geography and social and economic development in various parts of the country

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(Gao, 2017). As a bilingual documentary for external publicity, it carries the important mission of national cultural communication, and the accuracy and authenticity of subtitle translation are of great importance. When dealing with the Chinese verbs, the translator mainly adopts three translation strategies: translating Chinese verbs into English nouns, Translating Chinese verbs into English prepositions, and translating part of verbs of serial verb construction into English non-predicate forms, whose aim is to make the translated text more consistent with English expression habits and linguistic norms.

3.1 Chinese Verbs Are Translated into English Nouns

In English, nouns are dominant and widely used, which not only substitute some other parts of speech, but also replace many grammatical structures (Feng, 1995). Nouns can be used as subject, object, predicate, attribute and adverbial in English grammar. There are many verbs in Chinese, but there is only one corresponding verb in English. Therefore, other verbs, except the subject and predicate verbs in Chinese sentences, are usually translated into English nouns.

Case 1: 春天一到，婺源的油菜花就早早开放。

Version: With the arrival of spring, the canola flowers are booming in Wuyuan.

In the original sentence, there are two predicate verbs, and form two groups of subject-verb relations: "Spring is coming" and "canola flowers are booming". According to the meaning of the sentence, we can find the logical relation between the verb "到" and "开放", namely, the adjoint relation. Therefore, the translator uses the independent nominative structure, the verb "开放" as the predicate verb, The sentence in which the verb is found is the main sentence; "春天一到" is interpreted into a with-guided accompanying adverbial. From "春天一到" to "With the arrival of spring" is a process of changing from dynamic to static, which reflects the advantages of English nouns. From the analysis of the whole sentence structure, the translation avoids the complex subordinate clause structure, which makes the sentence structure more concise.

3.2 Chinese Verbs Are Translated into English Prepositions

Some English prepositions themselves can be used to express the meaning of action, so in the process of verb nominalization in Chinese-English translation, prepositions can be added if needed, or the verb can be directly translated into the corresponding prepositions or prepositional phrases. Chinese verbs expressing ideas, direction, position, or purpose are better to be translated into English prepositions, especially when the verbs in the original text actually imply a state.

Case 2: 东倚鄱阳湖，北临长江，丰沛的水汽让庐山一年中将近两百天被云雾缭绕。

Version: With Poyang Lake to the east and the Yangtze River to the north, Mount Lushan is well watered. It's also blanketed in cloud and mist for up two hundred days a year.

In the original sentence, "东倚" and "北临" are both directional verbs. "东倚鄱阳湖,北临长江"means "on the east is Poyang Lake and on the north is the Yangtze River". Observing the original sentence, we find that there are three verbs in the sentence: "倚", "临" and "缭绕". Consider that English sentences usually have only one predicate verb, and that "倚", "临" are location verbs while "to" in English is a

preposition, which means "You use 'to' when the position of something". Therefore, translating "倚" and "临" into the preposition "to" not only accurately conveys the original meaning, but also simplifies the sentence structure of the target text.

Case 3:白鹿洞书院占地 3000 亩，面积接近北京大学，但建筑只占很小比例。

Version: White Deer Academy, with 200 hectares, covers the same area as Peking University. Buildings account for just a small fraction of the campus.

"白鹿洞书院占地 3000 亩" is translated into "White Deer Academy, with 200 hectares". Obviously, the translator translated Chinese verb "占地" into English preposition "with". The preposition "with" can be interpreted as "Someone or something with a particular feature or possession has that feature or possession". Semantic equivalence is achieved by translating "占地" into "with". In this way, "with 200 hectares" acts as the postpositive attributive of "White Deer Academy". This conversion both manifests the exact size of "White Deer Academy" and simplifies the sentence structure, which conforms to the tree structure of English.

Case 4: 金黄色的油菜花，搭配徽派建筑的粉墙黛瓦，这是婺源旅游的招牌。

Version: The golden canola flowers with the exotic buildings in the background are a feature of Wuyuan's appeal to tourists.

In case 4, "搭配" is a Chinese verb, which means "and or add", and the golden canola flowers and hui-style architecture are linked together to form a coordinating relationship. Instead of using the conjunction "and" to connect the two nouns, the translator uses the preposition "with", which translates as "in the company or presence of somebody or something", adding the meaning of fusion". That is, the golden canola flowers and Hui-style architecture echo each other and create the beautiful scenery of Wuyuan together.

3.3 Chinese Verbs Are Translated into English Non-Predicate Forms

The so-called Chinese serial verb construction is that two or more verbs and the same subject constitute the predicate relationship. It is extremely common in Chinese but extremely rare in English. In English, if you want to describe more than two actions in a sentence, you have to do something with the verb, either by using the non-predicate form of the verb, or by adding a conjunction to make it a coordinate member, or by changing the verb into other forms, such as nouns, prepositional phrases, etc. Therefore, when two or more verbs in a Chinese sentence form a subject-predicate relationship with the same subject, the translation needs to judge the logical relationship of these verbs in meaning, such as whether they represent means and ends, or causes and results, or the sequence of actions. Then it is determined that a major verb is translated into the predicate of the Main sentence in English, and other verbs are translated into non-predicate forms such as infinitives, participles or prepositions.

Case 5: 它们共同构成了发达的交通网络，江西得以与整个中国快速连接。

Version: They form an advanced transport network linking the province with other parts of China.

Case 6:等到枯水期，水位下降，湖底裸露，茫茫草原出现，水下的小岛才会完全显露出来。

Version: During the dry season, the bottom of the lake is exposed, revealing a vast grassland with the

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submerged island at its heart.

Case 7:一旦发现敌情，立刻以炮火还击。

Version: Cannons could be deployed in them, to repel attacks.

In example 5, the translator translated the verb "连接"into a present participle—"linking". In example 6, the verb "显露" is translated into a present participle—"revealing". Two example sentences both contain multiple verbs, it's necessary to judge the logical relationship between these verbs in Chinese-English translation. In example 5, the verb "构成" expresses the cause, the verb "连接"conveys the result. It is because of the composition of the transportation network that Jiangxi is connected to the whole of China. Therefore, the translator determines that "构成" is the predicate verb of the Main sentence in English, and translates "连接" into the non-predicate form—present participle, indicating the result or consequence; Similarly, it is because of the dry season that the lake bottom is exposed and so on that the underwater islands are exposed. The verb "显露" in example 6 is translated as a non-predicate present participle—revealing, indicating the result. The treatment of Example 7 is a little special. The translator first changes his thinking that the sentence is explained to "to repel the enemy with fire", so that the conditional relation of the original sentence is removed. However, the translator still uses the non-predicate form "to repel attacks" to imply the conditional relation in the original sentence.

4. Conclusion

According to the above analysis examples, it can be found that the two strategies of "translating Chinese verbs into English nouns" and "translating Chinese verbs into English prepositions" can be summarized as part of speech conversion. Based on the advantages of English nouns and the conciseness of English syntactic structure, and considering that English prepositions can express the meaning of action, the translator flexibly uses part of speech transformation to accurately convey the complete meaning of the original sentence, so as to make the translated text conform to the reading habits of the target language audience. Two scholars in their paper *on the Conversion of Parts of Speech English-Chinese Translation* mentioned "English words often have a variety of parts of speech, and some of them are unique in English. Therefore, in the process of Chinese-English translation, it is necessary to translate specific parts of speech skillfully. Otherwise, 'Chinglish' will be produced, so that readers can not feel the true significance and charm of the original work" (Liu & Yu, 1988). The strategy of "translating part of verbs in a Chinese serial verb construction into English non-predicate forms" pays more attention to the syntactic structure of English and the logical relationship between multiple verbs in the original text. Therefore，Translators need to be familiar with the conversion between Chinese verbs and Various parts of speech in English, and flexibly choose translation strategies according to the context to maximize the representation of the original content.

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