Original Paper

Discourse Coherence in English-Chinese Translation of Literary Texts: A Case Study on Tess of the D'Urbervilles Translated by Zhang Guruo

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Abstract

Discourse coherence refers to the mechanism by which words, sentences, and sentence clusters in a discourse are logically related to form a larger semantic structure, which is one of the most important factors of effective communication. Whether a discourse is coherent determines the extent to which the reader understands the discourse. This paper explores the theory of discourse translation and discourse coherence, compares and analyses the original text of Tess of the D'Urbervilles with Zhang Guruo's translated version in terms of semantic, contextual, logical, and linguistic coherence. Then it describes the strategies and methods used by the translators to ensure discourse coherence in translation, to gain a deeper understanding of the theory of discourse coherence and its application.

Keywords

Discourse coherence, Discourse translation, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Zhang Guruo

1. Introduction

Discourse is the basic unit in the process of communication, and a clear discourse is conducive to effective communication. Coherence is an important attribute of discourse, which is a feature of discourse in which the components of discourse are rationally and appropriately linked together in terms of concept and logic. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is a novel written by Thomas Hardy, which belongs to literary discourse. The novel recounts in poetic language a tragic story of Tess, a pure and beautiful rural girl, who gradually went to doom at the mercy of fate, describing the conflict between her beautiful image and the dark reality around her, and showing the "destruction of love in a civilized society". This paper selects its translation by Zhang Guruo, a prestigious Chinese translator, and

explores the coherence of the original text and its target text with several examples from the perspective of discourse coherence theory.

2. Theory of Discourse Translation

Discourse, i.e., a relatively complete and independent piece of language in terms of communicative function (Li, 2011), usually consists of sentences, sentence clusters, or paragraphs that combine certain purposes and meanings. According to Hu Zhuanglin's definition of discourse in his book *Cohesion and Coherence of Discourse*, discourse refers to a natural language that is not completely bound by the syntax of sentences and expresses complete semantics in a certain context (Hu, 1994). Halliday, the founder of Systemic Functional Linguistics, also suggested that the actual unit of language use is discourse. The use of language is also affected by the context in which it is used, including different cultural and situational contexts.

Therefore, discourse translation requires the translator to treat the translated text as a complete whole, and the text is not a mechanical combination of sentences, but a combination with a certain logic between the contexts. The translator needs to translate based on a complete organic whole, taking into account the context, the style of the original text, the psychological activities of the characters, etc. Therefore, the final translated text is not a mechanical combination of phrases, but a combination with a certain logic between the context. Therefore, the final translation of the translation activity should also be a discourse.

3. Brief Introduction to Cohesion Theory

In 1962, Halliday, a British linguist, first proposed the concept of Cohesion, which turned cohesion from a common word into a linguistic term. In 1968, Hassan published *Grammatical Cohesion in Spoken and Written English.* According to the book, "the purpose of cohesion research is to discover the characteristics of a text that distinguish it from a group of sentences." In 1976, Gut Winski studied the cohesion of literary texts from the perspective of grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. In the same year, Halliday and Hassan published *Cohesion in English* (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), marking the founding of cohesion theory.

According to Halliday, "Discourse coherence consists of two main points: contextual coherence, i.e., register coherence; and discourse coherence itself, i.e., the whole text is closely connected" (Halliday, 2001). The register is the components of a discourse such as sentences and passages, and register coherence means that these components belong to the same topic, and context, and are semantically coherent. According to cognitive linguistics, coherence is the receiver's reasoning about the "schema" stored in the brain's memory during the process of comprehension of a discourse (Halliday, 1985). Comprehension of discourse is the process of reasoning and reconstructing the information stored in the brain by the receiver based on the relevant information. From this, it can be seen that the formation of coherence is actually the process of analysing and understanding the discourse, i.e., the dynamic

45

reasoning process, on the basis of the discourse entity, taking the information of the discourse as a cue, activating the background knowledge effectively, and then relying on cognitive reasoning (Yang, 2022). As we can see from the above scholars' research, most researchers merely analyze cohesion in English texts or Chinese texts, but few make contrastive studies of cohesive devices between English and Chinese texts. Even if there are studies on the application of cohesion and coherence to the E-C translation, the translator merely focuses on the literary works instead of academic texts. While, in this paper, the writer is concerned with the application of cohesion and coherence theory to the literary text, trying to provide some references for translators by comparing cohesive devices in English text with those in its corresponding Chinese version.

4. Discourse Coherence in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles Translated by Zhang Guruo*

4.1 Semantic Coherence in Discourse Translation

It is necessary to consider the language segment as a whole in discourse translation from a holistic perspective to ensure semantic coherence. The original text belongs to the literary novels whose information is complex, so the translator adopted adjustment and reorganization of information, highlighting the discourse theme and clarifying semantic meaning.

Example 1

ST: On an evening in the latter part of May <u>a middle-aged man</u> was walking homeward from Shaston to the village of Marlott, in the adjoining Vale of Blakemore or Blackmoor. <u>The pair of legs</u> that carried him were rickety, and there was a bias in his gait which inclined him somewhat to the left of a straight line. <u>He</u> occasionally gave a smart nod, as if in confirmation of some opinion, though he was not thinking of anything in particular. <u>An empty egg-basket</u> was slung upon his arm, <u>the nap of his hat</u> was ruffled, a patch being quite worn away at its brim where his thumb came in taking it off.

TT: 五月后半月里，有一天傍晚的时候，<u>一个中年男子</u>，正从沙氏屯，朝着布蕾谷里的马勒村，徒步归去。（布蕾谷也叫布莱谷，和沙氏屯接壤，）<u>他</u>那两条腿，一走起来，老摇晃不稳，他行路的姿势里，又总有一种倾斜的趋向，使他不能一直往前，而或多或少地往左边歪。有的时候，<u>他</u>脆快俏利地把脑袋一点，好像是对什么意见表示赞成似的，其实他的脑子里，并没特意想任何事儿。<u>他</u>胳膊上挎着一个已经空了的鸡蛋篮子，<u>他</u>头上那顶帽子的绒头，都蓬松凌乱，帽檐上摘帽子的时候大拇指接触的那个地方，还磨掉了一块。他往前刚走了不一会儿，就有一个年事垂老的牧师，跨着一匹灰色的骒马，一路信口哼着小调儿，迎面而来。

Analysis: The original discourse is centered on "a middle-aged man". Since English is a static language, the subject of the second and fourth sentences in the original discourse is the objects "the pair of legs" and "an empty egg basket", while the subject of the first and third sentences is the personification "a middle-aged man" and "he". To avoid the confusion of perspective in translation and to echo the characteristics of the dynamic language in Chinese, the structure of the sentences is adjusted, and the subjects of the translated sentences are unified as "一个中年男人" and "他", thus clarifying the meaning of the sentence.

46

4.2 Contextual Coherence in Discourse Translation

From the perspective of cultural context, every discourse can be regarded as a specific genre, which plays a communicative role in social and cultural environment. Contextual coherence in translation means that translators should make different vocabulary choices in different contexts, especially different cultural contexts.

ST: What's done can't be undone! I'm sure I don't know why children o' my bringing forth should all be bigger simpletons than other people's—not to know better than to blab such as thing as that, when he couldn't ha'found it out till too late！

TT: 已经泼出去的水还有什么法儿收回？俺不明白，怎么俺养的儿女比别人的都傻——连这样的事该不该说都不知道！你要是不说，他自己会知道吗？等他发现了，那就生米煮成熟饭了！

Analysis: The cultural context of the original text is the English countryside, and the main characters are all townspeople, the dialogue between the characters is worldly, and the language is simple and vulgar, therefore, the translator uses the Shandong dialect, "俺", "泼出去的水", "生米煮成熟饭" and other more colloquial expressions, thus conforming to the target readers' cultural context.

4.3 Logical Coherence in Discourse Translation

The inherent logic of a discourse is the key point of discourse coherence. English is a hypotactic language and emphasizes grammar, and therefore, English sentences use obvious grammatical structures to form discourse components; Chinese is a paratactic language and relies on the logic between contexts to form the whole discourse. Therefore, when translating, the translator adjusted the word order to conform to the habit of Chinese expression and maintain the logical coherence of the context.

ST: ①The Vale was known in former times as the Forest of White Hart, ②from a curious legend of King Henry III's reign, ③ in which the killing by a certain Thomas de la Lynd of a beautiful white hart which the king had run down and spared, ④was made the occasion of a heavy fine.

TT: ①历来相传，都说国王亨利三世的时候，有一只美丽的白鹿，亨利王追上了，没舍得杀害，却让一个叫塔姆 德 拉 林得的杀害了，因此受了国王的重罚;（亨利三世, 英国国王（1216—1272）。②塔姆 德 拉 林得，亨利三世时布莱苑的邑长，是一个爵士。③英国从前有苑囿法，禁止在林苑内逐猎，重者甚至处死刑。塔姆 德 拉 林得受罚实有其事。）④由于这个稀奇的传说，从前都管这个谷叫白鹿苑。

Analysis: The original text is a complex sentence containing four clauses. According to the characteristics of English, English often puts forward the result first and then elaborates on the reason; while Chinese often explains the reason first and then puts forward the result. Therefore, the translator adjusted the word order in translation and placed ① in ④ after translation, which is in line with the Chinese expression habit and maintains the logical coherence of the context. Moreover, the grammatical structure of the original text is formed by some prepositions and relational adverbs "from" and "in which", thus forming the logic of the discourse; whereas the Chinese language usually omits the grammatical words and relies on the intrinsic connection of the context to form the logic of the

47

discourse. Therefore, these grammatical words were omitted by the translator, to avoid the redundancy of the translation and constitute the logical coherence of the discourse.

4.4 Linguistic Stylistic Coherence in Contextual Translation

Nida (1984) argues that translation is the reproduction of the message of the original language in the translated language with the closest/natural equivalent, firstly in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. So stylistic equivalence is also a dimension that translators should be concerned with in discourse translation.

ST: Her mother put on a deprecating look. "Now don't you be bursting out angry! The poor man he felt so rafted after his uplifting by the pa'son's news—that he went up to Rolliver's half an hour ago. He do want to get up his strength for his journey to-morrow with that load of beehives, which must be delivered, family or no.He'll have to start shortly after twelve to-night, as the distance is so long."

"Get up his strength!" said Tess impetuously, the tears welling to her eyes. "O my God! Go to a public-house to get up his strength! And you as well agreed as he, mother!"

TT: 她母亲露出不赞成这种态度的神气来说:"你先别发脾气！那老头子，可怜，让牧师那些话把他往天上一捧，可就刺挠起来啦，半点钟以前就跑到露力芬去啦。他很想养养神儿，好明儿个一早儿就带着那些蜂窝赶集去。那些东西，不管咱们阔不阔，反正都非送到集上去不可。道儿远着哪，所以回头夜里刚过十二点就得起身。"

"养养神儿?"苔丝满眼都是泪，疾言厉声地说。"哎哟老天爷，跑到酒店去养神儿!妈，你就由着他!"

Analysis: In the original novel, Tess and her family are all country folk and their speeches are all in dialect. In the translation, the translator keeps the style of the discourse coherent and adopts the Shandong dialect, which is a Chinese dialect, such as "刺挠", "养养神儿" and "阔", which makes the image of Tess's family vivid. In the original novel, Tess does not pursue status and identity, and cannot agree with her father's hypocritical behavior of pursuing fame and fortune, so when translating "Oh my God", the translator did not translate it as "我的上帝!". Instead, the translator uses the dialect and translates it vividly as "哎呦老天爷", which expresses Tess's helplessness and urgency. "And you as well agreed as he" is translated as "由着他", which shows Tess's puzzlement and helplessness towards her mother's indulgence of her father's behavior. The translator maintains the consistency of style with the original text and conveys the original character's image in the translated discourse.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of discourse coherence, this paper analyses the Tess of the D'Urbervilles translated by Zhang Guruo in terms of semantic, contextual, logical, and linguistic style coherence, to gain a deeper understanding of discourse translation theory and discourse coherence. Discourse translation requires the translator to treat the translated chapter as a contextually coherent whole, and to consider not only the internal semantics and logic of the text but also the context and style of the text from a holistic perspective. At the same time, English literary translation also puts high demands on the

48

translator's Chinese language skills and literary level. Studying and exploring Mr. Zhang Guruo's translations provides a good theoretical and practical guide for our translation practice.

At the same time, there are similarities and differences in the means of coherence between the English and Chinese languages. In the construction of translation, the translator should follow the cohesion standard of the target language and should not simply adopt the one-to-one correspondence method to deal with it but should make use of various translation methods to make the discourse accurately convey the content of the original language, and also to translate conform to the linguistic norms of the imported language, to produce a coherent discourse.

Research Projects

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