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英汉对比与翻译导论

Comparison of English and Chinese and Translation: An Introduction

熊 兵 编著



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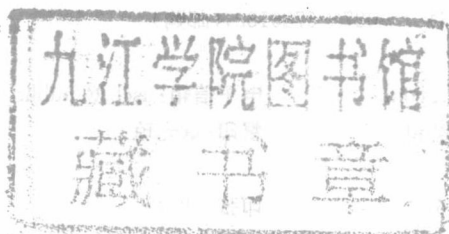


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You could know your own language only if you compared it with other languages.

—Friedrich Engels

一种事物的特点，要跟别的事物比较才显出来。拿汉语和英语比较，汉语的特点和英语的特点就都显出来了。

——吕叔湘

它(翻译)天生是比较的，跨语言、跨学科的，它必须联系文化、社会、历史来进行。

——王佐良

Foreword

The present book is intended to introduce, by making comparison and analysis, to students the similarities and (especially) the differences between English and Chinese from the levels of phonetics, orthography, morphology/lexis, syntax, semantics, discourse, rhetoric and culture, and to explain how the similarities and differences are related to the shift mechanism in translation, which leads to various kinds of shift needed in practical work of translation. On the basis of this, the book incorporates translation exercises in an effort to train and develop students' ability to do translation from English to Chinese and vice versa.

The book is intended for both senior college students who major in English as well as for graduate students who major in English language and literature (or linguistics/applied linguistics), and for MTI students. Besides, those who are engaged in theoretical study of translation and those who work as translators and interpreters will also find it of some help to their work, as the book incorporates linguistics-oriented contrastive study between English and Chinese and practice-oriented translation exercises as a whole, making the book an ideal integration of theory and practice.

Though the book is based on the lecture notes compiled by the author, it is actually the result of combinatory efforts of many people, whom the author would like to extend his sincere thanks to. These people include Prof. Yao Xiaoping, Prof. Zhang Weiyu, Prof. Hua Xianfa, Prof. Hu Dexiang, Prof. Yin Wei, etc. who have offered the author considerable encouragement, unreserved help and invaluable advice during his composition of the book. The author is also indebted to Ms. Emily Petersen from Britain, who has helped to clear up a number of problems in the manuscript, and to Ms. Zhao Caixia, his graduate student who has done her utmost to do editing and proofreading in an

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Xiong Bing

November 18, 2012

Contents

Foreword	i
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Overview of differences between English and Chinese and translation	3
Chapter 2 Comparison of Sound Systems and Translation	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Comparison of English and Chinese vowels	16
2.3 Comparison of English and Chinese consonants	18
2.4 Comparison of tone and intonation	21
2.5 Comparison of rhythm and rhyme and translation	23
Chapter 3 Comparison of Writing Systems and Translation	43
3.1 Introduction	43
3.2 Chinese writing system	45
3.3 English writing system	52
3.4 Translation involving the orthographic features of the two languages	56
3.5 Untranslatability due to the orthographic features of the two languages	58
Chapter 4 Comparison of Morphology/Lexis and Translation	60
4.1 Comparison of morphological structure	60
4.2 Comparison of the recognition of words	66
4.3 Comparison of word formation	71

4.4	Comparison of parts of speech	83
4.5	Shift of parts of speech in translation	101
Chapter 5	Comparison of Syntax and Translation	111
5.1	Comparison of subject and translation	112
5.2	Hypotaxis vs. parataxis	118
5.3	Subject prominence vs. topic prominence	125
5.4	Passive vs. active	133
5.5	Word order	138
Chapter 6	Comparison of Semantics and Translation	147
6.1	Three categories of meaning and translation	147
6.2	Four types of semantic relation and translation	156
6.3	Translation of terms bearing the semantic relation of absence	162
6.4	Functions of language and translation	165
Chapter 7	Comparison of Text and Translation	171
7.1	Introduction	171
7.2	Comparison of cohesion and translation	173
7.3	Comparison of thematic structure and translation	198
Chapter 8	Comparison of Rhetoric and Translation	205
8.1	Simile	205
8.2	Metaphor	211
8.3	Pun	216
8.4	Zeugma	224
Chapter 9	Comparison of Culturally-loaded Terms and Translation	228
9.1	Comparison of color terms and translation	228
9.2	Comparison of animal terms and translation	238
	Reference Key to the Exercises	260
	Glossary	282
	Bibliography	288

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Translation studies has witnessed an enormous boom worldwide in the past decades, with various schools of thoughts emerging one after another, and the study of translation-based topics is also assuming an increasingly high profile. It is generally agreed that, while our grasp of certain matters connected with translation remains somewhat hazy, we are gradually increasing our knowledge and understanding of this intriguing yet highly complex subject.

However, “translation studies as a discipline is in many ways still in a state of flux” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004: v). Translation can be seen as a point of intersection between many different academic subjects, and it can be studied from different levels and perspectives. Chesterman once spoke of “four levels of ‘constraints’ as a way of structuring the different paradigms of translation studies” as follows:

- a. The level of the communicative task: the situational level, comprising clients, translators, computer programs, client’s instructions, the skopos, deadlines, etc.;

- b. The level of the text: the linguistic level, centering on the comparative analysis of source and target texts and also including comparison with non-translated target-language texts;

- c. The level of the translator: the cognitive level of individual subjective decision-making;

- d. The socio-cultural level, encompassing all the wider constraints of ideology, history, power, and so on. (Chesterman, 2002: 144)

These four levels actually outline different paradigms which constitute the body of translation studies with interdisciplinarity as its most striking feature. These different paradigms may have different goals and objectives—some may be highly practical, while the others may be highly theoretical. And it is widely acknowledged that translation studies has been enriched enormously by dint of possessing such a multi-faceted nature.

Among the above-mentioned four levels, “the level of the text,” which involves the study of translation from the perspective of linguistics, used to receive far more attention and treatment than the other three levels. However, with the emergence of “cultural turn” in translation studies in the early 1990s, more emphasis began to be laid on the social-cultural aspects of translation, and linguistics-oriented translation studies seemed to recede to a low ebb. In spite of this, the last several years have witnessed a fresh interest in the linguistics-oriented translation studies, for the simple reason that translators work under various kinds of constraints mainly in terms of linguistic as well as cultural differences between the source language and target language. These differences disperse at the phonological, lexical, syntactic and textual levels of the two languages involved, which give rise to various problems and difficulties for translators and translation theorists. Therefore, it is of great significance to approach translation from the perspective of comparative analysis of the two languages involved, which is sure to shed some light on the theoretical study and practical work of translation.

It is against this background that the present coursebook is written. The book is intended to introduce, by making comparison, to students the similarities and differences between English and Chinese from the angles of phonetics, orthography, morphology/lexis, syntax, semantics, discourse, rhetoric and culture, and on the basis of this, to train and develop students' ability to do translation from English to Chinese and vice versa.

The book is both theory-oriented and practice-oriented. It is theory-oriented as the book is based on the linguistics-oriented theoretical comparison between English and Chinese; it is practice-oriented as the book lays special emphasis on the practical work of translation which the author believes will be of some help for the cultivation of students' translation competence. In brief,

the book is an organic integration of theory and practice.

1.2 Overview of differences between English and Chinese and translation

The differences between English and Chinese can be found at various levels, which leads to the difficulty and complexity in translation. If these differences can be appropriately understood and handled, satisfactory translation can well be expected. Look at the following example:

Suppose a group of American tourists are visiting your school, and they decide to take a group photo before the school gate. The cameraman is a Chinese who knows nothing about English, and he focuses his camera and says (of course in Chinese): “说‘茄子’!” Suppose you are the tour guide/interpreter. Hearing this, what would you say to the American tourists?

Version 1: Say “eggplant”!

Version 2: Say “cheese”!

The first version “Say ‘eggplant’” is **lexically** equivalent to “说‘茄子’,” but **phonetically** (and thus **functionally**), it is irrelevant, as when we say “eggplant,” we do not form a smiling face. By comparison, the second version “Say ‘cheese’” is **lexically** irrelevant to “说‘茄子’,” but **phonetically** (and thus **functionally**) it is equivalent, as when we say “cheese” in English we form a smiling face just as we do when we say “茄子” in Chinese. Therefore, Version 2 is well acceptable while Version 1 is totally unacceptable, though it seems to be so lexically “close” to the original.

This kind of shift or conversion from the original Chinese “茄子” to English “cheese” is largely due to the **lexical-phonetic difference** between English and Chinese. In Chinese, saying “茄子” would form a smiling face while in English, it is saying “cheese” that has this effect.

The above example shows clearly that in translation certain shift^① or conversion may need to be introduced so as to make the original and translation

① For a full treatment of “translation shift,” see Catford (2000: 141-147).

functionally equivalent. The reason for this shift or conversion is due to the fact that English and Chinese are two different languages whose differences can be found at various levels. Therefore in the process of translation, we have to see how information is encoded at different linguistic levels in the two languages and try to decode and express it in the best way possible, in the process of which certain shifts are often warranted. The following is a brief bottom-up demonstration of the various levels of language which shows some of the fundamental differences between the two languages and the related translation strategies.

1. 2. 1 At typological level^①

English and Chinese belong to two different language families: English belongs to the **Indo-European language family** and is therefore related to most European languages such as German; while Chinese belongs to **Sino-Tibetan language family** and is therefore related to some East-Asian languages such as Vietnamese.

Old English is a highly inflectional language. During its development, it has lost most of its inflections and has become less inflectional and a little bit more analytic, therefore, modern English is both analytical and synthetical,

① The typological classification of the world's languages is as follows:

1) **Analytic/Isolating language**: a language which makes use of functional units (e. g. function words) and word-order to express syntactic relations, e. g. Chinese, Vietnamese. As to English, it is also moderately analytic (probably one of the most analytic of Indo-European languages).

2) **Synthetic language**: a language which makes use of inflection (e. g. affix) or agglutination to express syntactic relations. Most Indo-European languages are moderately synthetic. It can further be classified into the following two sub-types:

(a) **Agglutinative language**: a language in which individual morphemes can be individually identified and are juxtaposed, e. g. Japanese, Turkish, etc.

(b) **Inflectional language**: a language in which morphemes are not easily distinguishable from the root or among themselves, i. e. morphemes tend towards fusion, e. g. Latin, Greek, German, etc.

3) **Polysynthetic language**: a language which is highly synthetic, i. e. a language in which a word may be composed of many morphemes, e. g. American Indian languages.

while Chinese is typically analytical.

Take the modern English word “ride” as an example. Compared with the corresponding word in Old English and that in Chinese, it is found that the English word “ride” now has five forms (ride, rides, rode, riding, ridden), whereas the Old English word “ridan” had 13. While in Chinese, it has only one form “骑.”

It must be pointed out that most other differences between English and Chinese (e. g. phonetic differences, morphological/lexical differences, syntactic differences, textual differences, etc.) can eventually be traced back to the typological difference of the two languages.

1. 2. 2 At orthographical level

English and Chinese differ fundamentally in their orthographical system. English is an **alphabetic language**; the building blocks of the words are alphabetic letters, which to some extent represent sounds of the words. While Chinese is an **ideographic language**; the building blocks of the words are characters. Since modern Chinese originated from **pictographic language**, it's not surprising that some Chinese characters are to some extent still pictorial (i. e. They are still pictograms.), and they more or less resemble the shape of the things that they represent, e. g. 山, 伞, 川; while many others are ideographical (i. e. They are ideograms.), and they represent their meanings, e. g. 明 (The sun and the moon together bring us light or brightness.), 林 (Two trees make a wood.), 森 (Three trees make a forest.).

In Chinese “……字形” is often used to make description of the shape or form of a certain thing or object. In English there is no such a lexical unit as “字,” so in Chinese-English translation of “……字形,” it's often necessary to make appropriate orthographical shift so as to make the translation acceptable to the English reader. For example:

(1) 山字形结构

epsilon-type structure

(2) 我们抄近道吧。沿着这条之字形小道走要快些。

Let's take the shortcut. It is quicker/It takes less time to go along this zigzag path.

1.2.3 At phonetic level

English and Chinese differ considerably in their **phonetic system**. For one thing, they differ greatly in their vowel/consonant system. For example, they have different number of vowels and consonants, and the ways to pronounce them are greatly different, and the ways these vowels and consonants combine to form stretches of sounds are different as well. Besides, they also differ greatly in their **prosodic system**: English is an intonation language while Chinese is a tone language. All these differences lead to the fact that, in translation, many features related to sound system are simply untranslatable. For example:

- (1) The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free.
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

S. T. Coleridge: *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*

好风徐徐吹，浪花不绝飞；
行舟处处流浪痕。
俺们是古来第一遭冲开，
那片岑寂的穷溟。

In the original, the fricative sound [f] occurs repeatedly, which reminds the reader of the sound produced by the winds and sea-waves, and this sound feature (i. e. alliteration) echoes very well with the artistic conception depicted in the poem. But in translation, this feature of alliteration has to be left out because we can hardly come up with any Chinese words which convey the meaning of the original faithfully and at the same time, bear its alliterative sound feature of [f].

- (2) A little more than kin, and less than kind. Shakespeare: *Hamlet*
说不亲亲上亲，说亲又不亲。 Trans. 张今

In the original, three features are noticeable:

- ① Alliteration: /k/;
- ② “Kin” and “kind” are orthographically similar;
- ③ “More than” and “less than” are in contrast.

In translation, these features are not fully reproduced due to the great phonetic differences between English and Chinese. Despite this, through the repetition of the words “说” and “亲,” and the contrast between “不亲”/“亲” and “亲”/“不亲,” the playful and amusing effect of the original is more or less conveyed.

1.2.4 At morphological/lexical level

English and Chinese differ in their morphological/lexical system, though they also have something in common. Take **parts of speech** as an example. English, as opposed to Chinese, has no measure words (e. g. 个, 本, 头, 支), while Chinese, as opposed to English, has no articles (a, an, the). Therefore, in translation addition or omission of measure words/articles must be made so as to make the translation suit the grammatical conventions of target language. For example:

- (1) 老师应该为学生做出表率。

A teacher should set a good example for his students. (Adding indefinite articles)

- (2) 人总有一死, 或轻于鸿毛, 或重于泰山。

Though death befalls all men alike, it may be weightier than Mount Tai or lighter than a feather. (Adding an indefinite article)

- (3) 一个和尚挑水吃, 两个和尚抬水吃, 三个和尚没水吃。

One boy is a boy, two boys half a boy, three boys no boy. (Omitting measure words)

Another difference concerning parts of speech is that, in English **nouns/prepositions/adverbs** are more active and expressive than those in Chinese, and they often express the notion of an action, which in Chinese is normally expressed by a verb. So in translation, it's often necessary to make shift between nouns/prepositions/adverbs and verbs. For example:

- (1) For my daughter Clare. ①

Newmark: *A Textbook of Translation* (1988/2001)

① These are the words on the inside cover of P. Newmark's book *A Textbook of Translation* (1988/2001).

谨以此书献给女儿克莱尔。

- (2) The miners' strike is off.

矿工的罢工取消了。

- (3) 他算命已有 20 年了。

He has been a fortune-teller for twenty years.

Other morphological/lexical differences include word recognition, word formation, etc., which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

1. 2. 5 At syntactic level

English and Chinese differ greatly in their syntactic structures. For example, in English a sentence generally requires **a subject** and **a predicate verb** (except in imperative and exclamatory sentences), but this is not the case with respect to the construction of Chinese sentences. There are **sentences without a subject** or **a predicate verb** in both spoken and written Chinese. For example:

- 1) Sentences without a subject in Chinese (i. e. subjectless sentences):

- (1) 疼死我了。

It hurts me badly.

- (2) 受到夸奖，深感荣幸。

I'm very honoured to be praised.

- (3) 不到长城非好汉。

He is not a true man unless he reaches the Great Wall.

- (4) 不承认这个事实，就不是唯物主义。

Anyone who does not recognize this fact is not a materialist.

- (5) 弄不好就会前功尽弃。

If things are not properly handled, our labour will be totally lost.

- 2) Sentences without a predicate verb in Chinese:

- (1) 他多大了？他五十好几了。

How old is he? He's well over 50.

- (2) 他北京人。

He's a native of Beijing. /He's a Beijinese.

Besides, **the passive** is used differently between English and Chinese.

- 1) In English, the passive is indicated by "be + V-en" structure (i. e.

syntactic passive), while in Chinese it's often the case that no grammatical markers are used to indicate the (passive) voice (i. e. notional passive). For example:

(1) The rice is cooked.

饭做好了。

(2) The work is done.

工作做完了。

2) Passive structure is more extensively used in English than in Chinese.

For example:

(1) English is taught in most schools in China.

中国大多数学校教英语。

(2) The power is cut.

停电了。

Other syntactic differences include hypotaxis vs. parataxis, subject prominence vs. topic prominence, and word order, etc., which will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 5.

1. 2. 6 At semantic level

The semantic relation of a word or expression of a given language and its equivalent in another language may fall into the following four types: 1) correspondence, 2) inclusion, 3) intersection, and 4) absence. In translation, different semantic relations may require different translation strategies. For the first type of semantic relation (i. e. correspondence), we may find ready equivalent in both English and Chinese. For example, Vitamin C → 维生素 C; sulfured hydrogen → 硫化氢; 心碎 → heart-broken. For the rest three, we have to make a careful analysis of the original meaning and make appropriate conversion so as to bring out clearly the intended meaning of the original. For example, 杀 vs. kill. What is the semantic relation between the two?

Generally speaking, words in English often cover a wider range of meanings (i. e. **polysemy**) than their Chinese correspondents (张维友, 2010: 141, 199). As a result, the meanings of many Chinese words may be included