

A Contrastive Study between  
English and Chinese on Cohesive  
Devices and Their Translation

# 英汉衔接手段对比 与翻译研究

岳洪锦 著



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# 前 言

语言的基本功能是社会交际，在社会实际的交往中，语篇则是语言表达的基本单位。如果语篇语言学的理论与翻译相结合，视野会更广阔，方法会更全面，因此，我们就可以在语言结构的高层次上处理信息再现的问题。衔接是生成语篇的必要条件之一，是理解语篇的基础。衔接在语篇中是使语言简练、信息突出、逻辑连贯的重要手段。无论在外语教学中，还是在翻译实践中，了解英汉衔接手段的异同，都有着重要的意义。本书以韩礼德和哈桑的衔接理论为依据。根据他们的划分，衔接手段可分为语法衔接，即照应、省略、替代、连接和词汇衔接。英汉语言对比是翻译理论的核心。本书通过对大量英汉互译例句的分析，重点探讨英汉语法衔接手段以及词汇衔接的异同，及在翻译中的一些规律，力图从不同的角度丰富语言对比与翻译理论及实践。

本书共分七章。

自 20 世纪 60 年代以来，国外一些翻译研究人员开始将相关学科的研究成果引进翻译研究，如此一来，可以以不同的视角对翻译实践进行观察、总结和系统性阐述。第一章有针对性地、简要总结了中外语言学者将语篇语言学，尤其是衔接理论应用于英汉对比及翻译所做出的努力。并通过对几部中外学者的著作进行评述，阐述了近几十年以来这一研究的发展道路。英汉语言结构的主要差异在于英语重“形合”，而汉语重“意合”。而就英汉衔接手段对比而言，这一特点则是至关重要的。有关“形合”与“意合”，在第一章中有所阐述。第一章还阐述了翻译实践中对衔接理论研究的意义、本书的理论依据、研究方法和主要内容。

由于英汉思维方式殊异,语篇的构建模式也就不同。译者对源语和目的语的衔接手段都要有深入的了解,因为对原文衔接手段的认识并不必然导致译文衔接手段的得体。因此,对语篇衔接的认识和把握,无论在理解原文还是在生成译文的过程中,都起着举足轻重的作用。第二章至第六章,通过大量英汉互译语料的对比,分别对语法衔接中的照应、省略、替代、连接以及词汇衔接分章进行对比描述,找出英汉语篇衔接手段的异同及在翻译中的一些规律。

在翻译实践中,甚至在已公开出版的翻译作品中,有些译文还存在质量问题,其中之一就是衔接手段使用不当。译者对源语的衔接手段了解不透,甚至错误,导致译文不符合译语习惯,语篇衔接不当,上下文不连贯。第七章通过从公开出版的作品中找出实例进行分析,并试图找出产生这一问题的原因。

笔者写这本书的目的,不是在于对英汉语篇衔接手段做全面系统的对比,也不是大量旁征博引,更不是纯理论地对一些衔接手段的枝节问题作烦琐的描述,而是通过选取英汉互译的语篇,对英汉衔接手段的某些主要特点与异同进行对比与分析。希望读者在简单的英汉互译例句分析中,静静观察,透过现象看本质,了解英汉语篇衔接的特点与语言效果。本书力求简洁明了,注重实例的比较与实际的应用。

本书部分章节曾由苗兴伟教授审阅过,并提出了宝贵意见,在此表示衷心的感谢。特别还要感谢对外经济贸易大学出版社编辑刘丹女士,在百忙之中为本书的出版付出努力与指导。

# Preface

Text is the ultimate linguistic unit in any activities having to do with communicating in language. If we look at translation from the perspective of text linguistics, we can deal with the issues of information transfer at a higher level of linguistic structure. As a result, our vision will be more broadened and the techniques will be more comprehensive.

Cohesion, as one of the ways a text is held together, is the basis of textual understanding. The cohesive devices are the ones that make the language concise, information prominent and logic clear. It is of significance to understand the similarities and differences of the cohesive devices between English and Chinese in the translation practice as well as in foreign language teaching. The theory of cohesion provided by Halliday and Hasan (1976) is taken to be the theoretical basis of this book. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), the cohesive relations are divided into grammatical cohesion, which are reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, and lexical cohesion. The contrast between English and Chinese is the core of the theory of translation in China. This book will discuss, through a detailed analysis of numerous examples, the differences of the grammatical cohesive devices and lexical cohesion between English and Chinese, and attempts to enrich translation theory and practice from the point of view of contrastive text linguistics.

This book consists of seven chapters.

This book starts with an introduction which elaborates the significance of the

study of cohesion in translation activities, the theoretical basis, approach and main aim of the present study.

Since the 1960s, some translation researchers abroad have begun to introduce the achievements in related disciplines into their study, so that they can, from the different perspective, conduct an observation, reach a conclusion and make a systematic exposition on translation practice. Making a general survey of the translation research since then, we can say that it has taken a course of interdisciplinary transplanting. Based on this historical development, Chapter One makes a summary in connection with the fact that linguists at home and abroad have attempted to apply text linguistics, especially the theory of cohesion to the contrastive study between English and Chinese and to translation activities. Meanwhile, it also reviews the development of the study during the past decades by commenting on several works of linguists at home and abroad.

The major distinction of the English linguistic structures from the Chinese ones is that English lays emphasis on hypotaxis and Chinese parataxis. As far as the contrast between the English and Chinese cohesion is concerned, this distinction is essential. Hypotaxis and parataxis are discussed in Chapter One.

The mode of thinking in English differs from that of Chinese, so the construction of text in the two languages is different, too. Translators must have an in-depth understanding of cohesive devices in both the source language and the target language, because the understanding of the cohesive devices in the source language doesn't necessarily lead to the appropriate use of them in the target language. It is of importance to comprehend and grasp the cohesive devices in the text, whether it is in the process of understanding the source language or

reproducing the target language. Based on a contrast of numerous examples, Chapter Two to Chapter Six respectively make a description and contrast of the grammatical cohesive devices, that is, reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, and lexical cohesion as well, and attempt to find out the differences between the English and Chinese cohesive devices of texts and some of the rules in the translation of cohesive devices.

In the translation practice, even in the published translated works, there still exist the quality problems, one of which is the improper use of cohesive devices. The fact that translators fail to appreciate them and even misunderstand them in the source language will lead to the consequence that the translated version does not quite fit in with the way of expression in the target language and that the translated sentences are not smooth and coherent. Chapter Seven makes an analysis of several cases found in some published translated works for the purpose of finding out the causes of neglect or mistranslation of cohesion.

Instead of making a comprehensive and systematic contrast between the English and Chinese cohesive devices in texts, or having a purely theoretical and complicated description of the minor issues of them, the main aim of this book is to make a contrast between some main characteristics of the English and Chinese cohesive devices according to the needs of translation, as well as to explore the reasons that cause the differences from both the linguistic and the cultural systems, especially to find out the places in connection with the cohesive devices where native speakers of Chinese will easily neglect or mistranslate in the E-C and C-E translations.

To sum up, the focus of this book is not on the systematic analysis of the theory



of cohesive devices and not on the citing of various authoritative works, but on the contrast of authentic examples of cohesive devices in English and Chinese original texts or translated versions, and on the analysis and interpretation of cohesive devices and the cohesive effect. The focus is also on the hope that readers, by carefully observing the simple and elaborately selected examples, can see through the appearance to perceive the essence, that is, to perceive the main features of cohesive devices and the language effect.

I would like to acknowledge the great debt which I owe to Professor Miao Xingwei, who gave me much valuable advice and spent a lot of time reading and revising the part of original book. I am also grateful to Ms. Liu Dan who gave me a lot of help for publishing this book.

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## *Chapter One* ❖❖❖

# **A Brief Introduction to the Contrastive Study of Cohesion and Translation**

## **1.1 A Brief Introduction to Text and Cohesion**

Text is a textual structure which is constructed by sentences in a specific way in a particular culture, with a conventional and relatively stable language use habits, and the cultural factors play an important role in the process of language use in a text.

Not until the 1960s did linguists begin to view text as a unit of study. Prior to 1960s linguists had pursued their linguistic research within the level of sentence. As we all know, language is a complete semiotic system. Language is used for communication, and the basic unit of communication is a text, while a sentence is only a grammatical unit.

Then, what is text? Text covers a wide range of definitions with many scholars providing different definitions of text. “Text is the verbal record of a communicative event” (Brown & Yule, 1983: 190). Halliday and Hasan (1976) point out that a text is a unit of meaning but not a unit of form and it is best regarded as a semantic unit.

“The word TEXT is used in linguistics to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole.” Michael Stubbs considers that text analysis “refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts.” Beaugrande (1980:2) believes that “text linguistics would constitute the verbal domain of semiotics, dealing with the entire range from one-word texts (e.g., ‘Fire!’) to texts as vast as *The Divine Comedy*.” All in all, text is the ultimate linguistic unit in any activities having to do with communication in language, just as Wilss (1982:112) argues that “Linguistic communication always appears in textual form.” According to Qian Yuan (1983), the textual function plays an important role in establishing cohesive relations between sentences so as to bring about a continuity of meaning.

Cohesion, as one of the ways a text is held together, is the basis of text understanding. Cohesion is normally defined as the use of lexical and grammatical or structural devices to guarantee text integrity. A number of researchers have attempted to provide a systematic and theoretical account of how speakers of English come to identify a text (eg. Van Dijk, 1972; Gutwinski, 1976; de Beaugrande, 1980; de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). These scholars are concerned with the principles of connectivity which bind a text together and force co-interpretation (Brown & Yule, 1983: 190)<sup>①</sup>. The study of cohesive devices in English linguistics has gained wide attention from language researchers after the publication of *Cohesion in English* by Halliday and Hasan

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① Brown, G. & Yule, G. *Discourse Analysis* [M]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2000: 190.

(1976), who suggest the cohesive devices as follows: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

The notion of cohesion has been expounded by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 4)<sup>①</sup> in their *Cohesion in English*, which is based on Halliday's theory of language functions. Halliday and Hasan define cohesion as follows:

The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text. Cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text.

As Brown and Yule (1983:190) comment, this is by far the most comprehensive treatment of the subject and has become the standard text in this area.

The Chinese scholar Qian Yuan points out that the cohesive devices are the linguistic resources which help establish "cohesion", that is to say, relations of meaning between sentences in a "text". Therefore, cohesion is part of the text-forming component in the linguistic system. A foreign language learner or a translator is always facing the problem of text creation or interpretation. In addition, cohesive devices in one language are usually different from those in another language, so it is necessary to know them well both in source language and in target language. However, the study of cohesion has been relatively neglected in

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① Halliday & Hason. *Cohesion in English* [M]. London: Longman Group Limited, 1976: 4.

translation activities, especially in foreign language teaching, compared with grammar, sentence patterns and vocabulary.

## 1.2 The Contrastive Linguistic Study in China

Linguists in China have always attached great importance to the contrastive study of languages. Mr. Lv Shuxiang said: “Only by comparison can we see the common points and special points of the means of expression of various languages.” That is to say, it is through comparison with other things that the characteristics of one thing can be seen. Mr. Zhao Shikai (1979) also admits the value of contrastive research in theory and application. He believes that through the contrast of the two language structures, we can better understand the structure of language and further understand the nature of language, and that by using the achievements of contrastive linguistics in foreign language teaching, whether in the preparation of teaching materials or in the process of teaching, we should consider the “original language” factors, and be able to predict, explain, correct and eliminate errors that may arise as a result of the interference of the original language to the target language.

In the 1950s, contrastive linguistics started to spring up, which is devoted to a detailed contrastive study of two languages, mainly seeking the similarities and differences between the two language structures through the comparison of the synchronic phenomenon of language structure system. In China, the earliest contrastive study between English and Chinese should probably start from Yan Fu’s *English Grammar Annotated in Chinese*. (*Collected Papers of Contrastive Study between English and Chinese*, 1990:2) Lv Shuxiang studied Jespersen’s *Essential of*



*English Grammar* and wrote *Essentials of Chinese Grammar* in 1942. In addition to studying the grammar of Jespersen, Wang Li also studied Bloomfield's *Language* and other works, and wrote *Modern Chinese Grammar* in 1943, and *Chinese Grammar Theory* in 1944. Their research has made a great contribution to the establishment of Chinese linguistics and contrastive linguistics. It was until the late 1970s that the application of contrastive analysis in language research was gradually carried out and attracted people's attention in China (*Collected Papers of Contrastive Study between English and Chinese*, 1990). Many scholars in China reach an agreement that contrastive linguistics, firstly, is a branch of linguistics, the task of which is to make contrasts between two or more languages. Secondly, contrastive study is synchronic, that is, an objective description is conducted to the actual use of two or more languages at the same period of time. Thirdly, the aim of description is to find out the similarities and differences, especially the differences.

Contrastive study plays a very important role in translation work. The contrast between English and Chinese is the core of translation theory, which helps to improve the quality of translation. The contrastive study of English and Chinese in China contributes to translation research and translation practice. Liu Miqing's *Contrastive Study of Chinese and English and Translation* in 1991, Chen Ding'an's *Comparison and Translation between English and Chinese* in 1991, and Lian Shuneng's *Contrastive Study of English and Chinese* in 1993 are some of the well-known books in this field. And Xu Yulong's *Introduction to Contrastive Linguistics* is the first systematic theoretical work in China, which lays a foundation for the construction of contrastive linguistics theory in China.

Many scholars in China have made the valuable attempts in the contrastive