

Research on Strategies for Improving Translation Accuracy through English - Chinese Contrastive Analysis

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Abstract

In the tide of globalization, cross - language communication is becoming more and more frequent. As a crucial link connecting different languages and cultures, the accuracy of translation plays a decisive role in the effective transmission of information. Since English and Chinese belong to different language families, there are significant differences in language structure, cultural connotation, etc., bringing many challenges to translation work. The theory of English - Chinese contrastive analysis provides an important idea for solving these problems. By systematically comparing the languages and cultures of English and Chinese, the essence of their differences can be revealed. Based on this theory, this study deeply analyzes the differences between English and Chinese from three language structure levels of vocabulary, syntax, and discourse, as well as the cultural connotation level. Furthermore, it puts forward targeted strategies to improve translation accuracy, including methods such as choosing words in combination with context and using paraphrasing at the vocabulary level, adjusting the structure at the syntax level, optimizing the organizational method and cohesion means at the discourse level, and using literal translation with annotation in dealing with cultural factors. These strategies aim to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for translators, helping them to overcome language and cultural barriers, achieve more accurate translation, and promote the high - quality development of cross - language and cultural communication.

Keywords

English - Chinese Contrastive Analysis; Translation Accuracy; Language Structure; Translation Strategies.

1. Overview of Contrastive Analysis Theory

The contrastive analysis theory was born in the United States in the mid - 20th century. Its development is closely related to behaviorist psychology and structural linguistics. This theory studies the phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, etc. of two or more languages through systematic comparison, finding out their similarities and differences. In the early days, the contrastive analysis theory focused on the comparison of language structural forms, expecting to help language learners avoid mistakes by predicting language differences. With the gradual deepening of linguistic research, the scope of contrastive analysis has gradually extended to levels such as discourse and culture, not only considering language forms, but also focusing on the functions and contexts of language use. In the field of translation research, the contrastive analysis theory provides a scientific method and perspective for translators to understand the differences between the source language and the target language, and has become an important theoretical basis for improving translation quality.

2. Contrastive Analysis of English - Chinese Language Structures

2.1. The Vocabulary Level

In terms of word formation, the word - building forms of English are extremely diverse. Word - building means such as derivatives and compound words are widely used, and the morphological changes of words are also diverse. Through adding prefixes, suffixes and other affixes, English words can achieve part - of - speech conversion, and at the same time present grammatical points such as tenses, singular and plural forms. Such a word - building mechanism endows English words with a strong derivative ability[4-5]. Most Chinese words are monosyllabic and disyllabic words. The word - building method mostly adopts the compound form, generating new semantics through the combination of Chinese characters. The pictographic and ideographic attributes of Chinese characters play a key role in the compound word - building process. From the perspective of semantic correspondence, English and Chinese words do not have a one - to - one correspondence. The phenomena of one word corresponding to multiple senses and multiple words corresponding to one sense are common. English words often have multiple senses, and their actual meanings need to be determined in combination with the context; multiple words may correspond to the same concept. This difference in the semantic system puts forward higher requirements for translators to accurately grasp the meaning of words.

2.2. The Syntactic Level

There are essential differences between the syntactic structures of English and Chinese, as shown in Table 1. The subject - predicate structure is the core of an English sentence, emphasizing the strict formal logical relationship between sentence components. English uses various conjunctions, prepositions, and grammatical means such as tenses and voices to create a well - structured and hierarchical sentence pattern, and the grammatical relationships between components are clearly defined by explicit markers. Chinese sentences place more emphasis on semantic coherence and the smoothness of expression. The syntactic structure shows relatively more flexibility. Chinese often omits components such as the subject and conjunctions, and the various parts of the sentence are naturally connected by semantic logic, presenting the characteristic of parataxis as the dominant feature. This paratactic situation makes Chinese sentences more open and flexible in structure. Such differences in the syntactic structures of English and Chinese imply that translators need to appropriately change the sentence structure during the translation process to meet the expression requirements of the target language.

2.3. The Discourse Level

English discourses unfold according to linear logical thinking, mostly adopting a deductive structure. The main idea is stated at the beginning, and then the discussion is gradually developed through layer - by - layer argumentation. Sentences and paragraphs rely on explicit conjunctions such as "however", "moreover", "therefore", and cohesive means such as pronominal anaphora to build a clear logical chain. The "argument - evidence - conclusion" structure frequently seen in academic papers is a typical example of this discourse organization method. Chinese discourses mostly tend to develop in a spiral way of thinking, adopting an inductive structure. By listing specific examples and phenomena, readers are gradually guided to draw the final conclusion. Discourse cohesion relies more on the internal coherence of semantics and the common cognition of the cultural context. During the process of writing essays, authors often naturally lead to the theme through scene description and emotional presentation, and rarely use explicit logical conjunctions. When dealing with discourse translation, translators should fully consider the organizational differences between the two

languages, reconstruct the discourse structure, optimize the cohesion methods, and ensure that the translated text can communicate effectively in the cultural context of the target language.

Table 1. Contrastive Analysis at the Syntactic Level

Dimension of contrast	Features of English syntactic structure	Characteristics of Chinese syntactic structure
Core structure	With the subject-verb structure as the core, the sentence components are developed around the subject-verb structure	The structure is relatively flexible, there is no strict fixed core, and the subject-verb structure is not mandatory
Logical relation	It pays attention to formal logical relations and relies on grammatical means such as connectives, prepositions, tenses and voices to construct relations, and relations are clearly defined by explicit markers	Semantic coherence is emphasized, and the parts of the sentence are connected naturally by semantic logic, and less dependent on explicit grammatical markers
Form of sentence	The form is strict, the hierarchy is clear, the relationship between the components in the compound sentence is clear, and the grammar rules are strict	It is flexible in morphology, often omits subjects, connectives and other components, mainly parataxis, and has a strong open structure
Translation adjustment requirements	When translating from Chinese to English, necessary subjects, conjunctions and grammatical components should be added to construct a complete subject-verb structure, which is in line with the characteristics of hypotaxis	When translating from English to Chinese, redundant connectives and pronouns can be appropriately omitted to make the translation conform to parataxis expression habits and simplify formal markers

3. Contrastive Analysis of English - Chinese Cultural Connotations

3.1. The Influence of Cultural Background on Language Expression

As the deep-seated soil for the formation and development of language, the cultural background profoundly shapes the expression patterns and semantic connotations of English and Chinese. In terms of values, the individualistic cultural tradition of English-speaking countries emphasizes personal rights and independent consciousness. This cultural characteristic is reflected in the language system, making English sentences generally tend to use clear personal subjects to construct the subject-predicate structure when expressing viewpoints, decisions, etc., highlighting the subject identity of individual behavior. For example, in a business negotiation scenario, English speakers usually say "I propose we modify the contract terms", directly stating their personal opinions. Chinese culture has long been immersed in the values of collectivism, emphasizing group harmony and interpersonal relationships, which is reflected in language expression, presenting the characteristics of flexible and collective subjects. In Chinese sentences, the phenomenon of subject omission is common, such as "Get ready to set off", and the implicit collective subject is naturally understood through the context; it is also common to use collective words such as "we" and "everyone" to express, emphasizing the behavior pattern of joint participation. Cultural elements such as geographical environment and historical traditions also leave distinct marks

on language. Taking the United Kingdom as an example, its insular geographical characteristics and prosperous navigation experience have contributed to a large number of professional words and idioms related to marine activities[6-7]. For example, "between the devil and the deep blue sea" (in a dilemma) uses a nautical scene to metaphorize a difficult situation, reflecting the characteristic of language's concretization of specific cultural experiences. Thousands of years of farming civilization in China have given birth to a rich vocabulary system of agricultural affairs. Expressions such as "spring plowing and autumn harvesting" and "intensive cultivation" not only record the agricultural production process, but also extend to the cultural connotation of diligence and practicality, constructing a unique language - cultural symbol system.

3.2. Comparison of Culture - loaded Words

English culture - loaded words are rooted in Western religions, history, and social life. Take "Thanksgiving" as an example. This word not only represents an important traditional festival in the United States, but also contains the historical memory of the early immigrants' communication with the Indians, as well as cultural values such as gratitude to nature and family reunion. Its rich cultural connotations are difficult to find a single corresponding word in Chinese. "Easter" is associated with the Christian Easter, containing cultural connotations such as religious ceremonies and the symbolism of Easter eggs. When translating, it is necessary to go beyond the literal meaning and make further explanations. Chinese culture - loaded words deeply reflect the historical heritage of Chinese civilization. The concept of "solar terms" comes from ancient Chinese astronomy, calendars, and farming wisdom. Words such as "Beginning of Spring" and "Waking of Insects" not only divide time nodes, but also are closely related to phenological changes and agricultural arrangements, highlighting the philosophical essence of "harmony between man and nature". Traditional philosophical concepts such as "yin and yang" and "the five elements", as well as historical and cultural symbols such as "the imperial examination" and "cheongsam", all present the social systems, aesthetic concepts, and living habits of specific historical periods. There is no direct equivalent in English for these words. To convey their cultural connotations, translators need to deeply study the source language culture and make adaptive conversions to the target language culture to ensure the integrity and accuracy of cultural information in cross - language communication.

4. Strategies for Improving Translation Accuracy Based on English - Chinese Contrastive Analysis

4.1. Translation Strategies at the Vocabulary Level

There are significant differences between the English and Chinese vocabulary systems. To achieve accurate translation, translators need to adopt various means. The word - building methods of English are diverse, and word - form changes realize the conversion of part - of - speech, tense, and other grammatical information through affixes, while Chinese words are mainly in the form of mono - and disyllables, and word - building mainly relies on the combination of Chinese characters. The semantic correspondence between English and Chinese words is complex, with a large number of cases of one word with multiple meanings and multiple words with one meaning. During the translation process, translators need to comprehensively analyze the source - language words. For the case of one word with multiple meanings, it is necessary to determine the specific semantic direction of the word according to the context of the text, combined with the grammatical structure, logical relationship, and discourse theme of the sentence where the word is located, and then find the most appropriate corresponding word in the target - language vocabulary. For English derivatives, translators must systematically master the semantic functions of affixes and the core meanings of roots,

and accurately restore the original meaning of the word through deconstruction and recombination. When there is no direct equivalent of the source - language word in the target language, the paraphrasing strategy can be adopted, that is, using the target language to make an explanatory statement of the concept carried by the word; the transliteration with annotation form can also be adopted, retaining the pronunciation of the word and supplementing cultural background and semantic information through annotation to help target - language readers understand.

4.2. Translation Strategies at the Syntactic Level

Due to the differences in the grammatical structures of English and Chinese, to achieve accurate translation, translators need to use a variety of strategies. English sentences take the subject - predicate structure as the core, using conjunctions, prepositions, tenses, and voices and other grammatical means to construct a strict morphological structure, focusing on the formal logical relationship between sentence components; while the syntactic structure of Chinese sentences is very flexible, mainly relying on the combination of meanings, usually omitting components such as the subject and conjunctions, and achieving sentence coherence through semantic logic. When translating from English to Chinese, translators need to appropriately reduce redundant conjunctions, pronouns, and other grammatical components in English according to the paratactic expression habits of Chinese, so that the translated text is more in line with the concise and smooth expression characteristics of Chinese. When translating from Chinese to English, it is necessary to supplement necessary grammatical elements such as the subject and conjunctions according to the hypotactic requirements of English, shaping a complete subject - predicate structure to ensure that the sentence is logically smooth and grammatically correct. For long and complex sentences in English, translators can, according to the internal logical relationships of the sentences, use means such as decomposition and recombination to convert them into multiple short sentences or clauses that conform to Chinese expression habits[8-9]. At the same time, adjust the word order of the sentences to make the translated text well - organized and easy to understand, as shown in Figure 1.

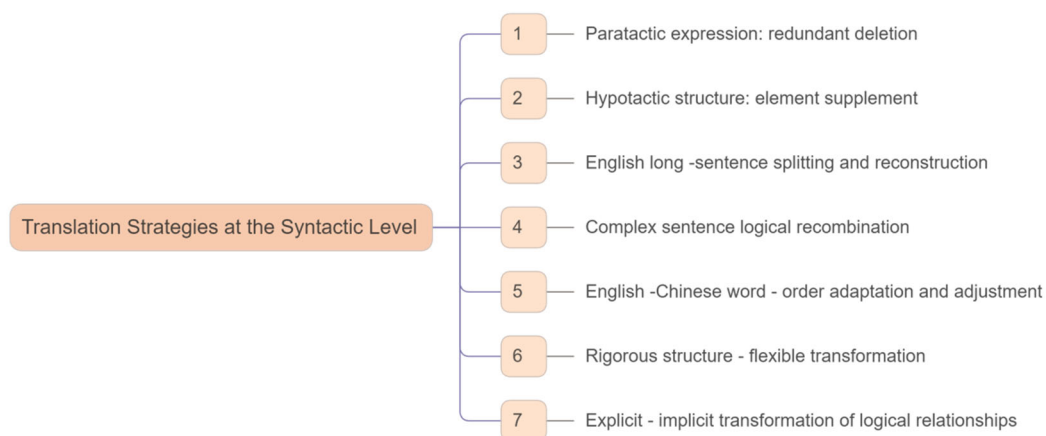


Figure 1. Translation Strategies at the Syntactic Level

4.3. Translation Strategies at the Discourse Level

English and Chinese discourses have their own characteristics in organizational patterns and cohesion means. Translators need to optimize the translated text according to these differences. English discourses tend to use a deductive structure, emphasizing logical rigor, and using explicit cohesion means such as conjunctions and pronouns to reflect the logical relationships

between sentences and paragraphs; Chinese discourses mostly adopt an inductive structure, relying on the natural coherence of semantics and context hints to connect the discourse. When translating from English to Chinese, translators can appropriately reduce the use of explicit conjunctions in English, and naturally connect sentences and paragraphs according to the semantic logic of Chinese discourses, making the translated text closer to the reading habits of Chinese readers. When translating from Chinese to English, it is necessary to enhance the logical connection of the discourse, add necessary cohesion means such as conjunctions and pronouns, adopt a deductive structure, and clearly show the logical relationships between sentences and paragraphs, so that the translated text meets the organizational norms of English discourses. Translators also need to pay attention to the overall style of the discourse, including the style of the language, emotional atmosphere, etc., as well as the coherence and consistency of the theme. During translation, retain the style characteristics of the original text, accurately convey the source - language information, and make the translated text achieve functional equivalence at the discourse level[10].

5. Conclusion

In summary, through systematic English - Chinese contrastive analysis, this study has deeply explored the differences in English - Chinese language structures and cultural connotations, and accordingly proposed strategies to improve translation accuracy. At the vocabulary, syntax, and discourse levels, as well as in dealing with cultural factors, the targeted strategies provide practical methods for translators to solve translation difficulties, helping to reduce translation deviations caused by language and cultural differences and promoting the improvement of English - Chinese translation quality. However, language is a dynamic symbol system, and culture is also constantly evolving and integrating. New language phenomena and cultural expressions continue to emerge. This means that the research on the impact of English - Chinese contrastive analysis on translation accuracy cannot stop. Translators need to continuously pay attention to the changes in language and culture from a dynamic perspective, constantly improve translation strategies, deepen their understanding of English - Chinese translation in the interaction between theory and practice, so as to better serve cross - language and cultural communication and promote understanding and dialogue between different cultures.

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