

Voice Conversion in C-E Translation

Wang Ke

College of Foreign Languages, Pingdingshan University, Henan, Pingdingshan, China

Abstract: *Language is a social phenomenon; each language reflects a unique culture. There are many differences between Chinese language and English. Chinese lay stress on parataxis while English pay more attention to hypo taxis. In English language, much more sentences with passive forms can be found, so voice conversion must be taken into consideration in C-E translation according to two different sentence structures and distinguishing patterns of thinking. The solution to voice conversion is to integrate culture with sentence expression. In this thesis, the author puts forward some concrete solutions on this.*

Keywords: *culture, sentence structure, passive voice, voice conversion*

1. Introduction

In the modern society, with the increasing communication and culture interaction between different countries, translation seems much more important than before. As we know, Chinese and English have so many differences, they belong to two language systems, and each has its own culture^[1], inevitably, misunderstandings exist in the process of communication owing to two different modes of expression. Broadly speaking, the chief aim of translation is to enable readers to understand and communicate successfully. As a result, knowing the differences between Chinese and English in translation is vital for reaching the goal of faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance. Chinese is a type of parataxis while English is a kind of hypo taxis, this difference enables English has more sentence styles than Chinese, passive voice is a style of them. Much more passive sentences can be found in the English language. The principle of dynamic equivalence can support us a lot, that is to say, voice conversion is a way to seek the unity of meaning between Chinese and English by showing the two distinctive language formulations. By doing this, each language styles are reserved and respected^[2]. The English language has more passive forms according to its language culture, so in C-E translation, this paper shows comparative studies on the two languages and approaches to converse voice in C-E translation so as to make the translation more like English style.

2. Language Differences between Chinese and English

2.1 Factors Resulting in Voice Conversion

2.1.1 Different ways of thinking

Oriental ways of thinking is described as integral, dialectical, subjective and indistinct while western is a kind of concrete, analytical, abstract, objective and exact^[3]. From the aspect of logical thinking, the following shows the differences between Chinese and western ways of thinking. As S.Baker pointed out in *the practical stylist*, “our massed, scientific, and bureaucratic society is so addicted to the passive voice that you must constantly alert yourself against its drowsy, impersonal pomp.” Westerns writing style causes various arrangements of sentence elements and generous passive sentences.

Different nations have different stress and tendency on account of historical and culture factors. Chinese way of thinking has a strong self-centered inclination while western can be called an abstract one. Chinese sentences stress more on what happened to the subject while English sentences pay more attention to what happened. Sentence elements are set at different places, Chinese system always lays the actor at the head of a sentence while English uses more passive voice to stress the elements they want to emphasize^[4]. Chinese integral mode of thinking vs English type of analytical thinking, In Chinese, the arrangement of sentence elements and clauses are determined by semantic logic. Western analytical way of thinking has various lexical forms, the order of sentence elements and clauses are

placed in diverse ways according to different needs. Elements of important status are put at the head of a sentence, which give a full application of passive sentences. For example:

- (1) The bottle on the table was broken by the child.
- (2) The city was attacked by terrorists.
- (3) Other processes will be discussed briefly.
- (4) History is made by the people.

2.1.2 Different Sentence Patterns

Chinese sentences lay stress on integral harmony and verb-centered sentence structure, that is to say, sentence elements are arranged in logical ways on the basis of time sequence, which can be called streamlined type. On the contrary, the subject and the predicate are the core of English sentences; they command other phrases and clauses. Therefore this type of sentences can be called tree-type sentences. Chinese sentences can be called end-focus sentences while western is a head-focus type. This kind of difference enables English sentences put all kinds of elements at the head of a sentence. In English, not only isolated, partial or simple details, but also integral parts could work as the subject of a sentence^[5]. All these factors above are favorable conditions for English passive voice.

Whatever is strange, different, or "other" has to be naturalized into the target language and culture, so that it is immediately understandable^[6]. Eugene A. Nida's principle of dynamic equivalence can give a full explanation of why it needs voice conversion in C-E translation. What we seek in translation is the closest communication value, but Chinese and English have different structures and habits of expression, word for word translation is not enough. Language style or sentence structure should be changed as for different readers^[7]. We should bring the readers nearer to their own language so as to avoid misunderstandings and culture shock.

2.1.3 Language Processing in Culture and Society

As Bernard Spolsky pointed out in *sociolinguistics*, "Ethnic groups regularly use language as one of their most significant identifying features." Language can serve as a tool to test, to know and to identify a unique culture and society. In this thesis, studies on English's passive habit serve as a window which demonstrates its culture. The studies help to discover the societal rules and norms that explain and constrain language behaviors and the behavior toward language in speech communities. We can know the essence of western culture by analyzing its language, at the same time, language features are reflections of its culture. Translation is not merely translation; it correlated to values, conventions, and culture of a certain society. So first, we study its language, then we know its culture, and finally what we know about its culture helps us to have a better translation so as to improve mutual understandings and culture exchanging between different countries. According to me, each language reflects its unique culture and social context. There is no fixed criterion for judging which language is superior to other languages, what is in accordance with their language habits is considered right and property. In the world, nearly every culture has its own language, with different values, criteria of virtue, different angles of seeing things, different traditions and conventions, but they have the same purpose: to communicate and express their ideas. Sometimes, the same meaning turns out to be different language forms, so voice conversion is needed so as to make the expression tally with their own language structures and forms, which avoids misunderstandings and mistakes caused by culture shock.

What I analyzed above is a small branch of differences between two languages, voice conversion in one of the various skills in C-E translation, but we can see a world from a drop of water. That is to say, an angel offers us a window to see the two language systems, which gives us an opportunity to deepen our understandings and thinking on two languages, which will help us to know the western type of thinking. This will help English learners to know the nature of English so as to learn it correctly and effectively. How can two distinct languages seek unity in C-E translation? Why it needs voice conversion other than word for word translation?

As Claire Kramsch said in *language and culture*, Culture refers to what has been grown and groomed. The word culture evokes the traditional nature/nurture debate. Are human beings mainly what nature determines them to be from birth or what culture enables them to become through socialization and schooling?

With the development of linguistics, studies on voice conversion will shift to new related fields, that is, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. What we studied before are concrete situations need voice conversion, but the development of linguistics creates a large brand new research space. How are

languages related to mind and psychology is a question we confront with. Language is not just a reflection, but also a carrier of a unique pattern of thinking. Language has close ties with human, for human themselves create and develop their languages. Psycholinguistics can explain the interrelation of language and mind, in processing and producing utterance and in language acquisition, and the relationship between language and cognition.

2.2 Passive Forms in Science Articles

Informative articles, mainly technology writings, news reports, or official documents, always stress much on impersonal activity seen objectively, but not on subjective judgment. J. permuter once pointed out: "its traditional among technical writers to keep themselves in the background, to exclude personal pronouns and emphasize their work instead." The passive voice allows one to express his ideas without attributing them to specific individual source. That is why passive voice is so widely used in government communications and technology English. Anyone who does not wish to assume personal responsibility for his statements finds an "out" by writing "it is directed that" instead of "I direct that, "or" it is the opinion of the firm" instead of "I think". "It be + adj (p.p)" patterns. Some Chinese expressions should be conventionally translated into English passive forms in the pattern "It be +adj(p.p) + that clause". Chinese kind of a vague subject can be replaced by "it" in the English language, then the sentence can be converted to a passive one. There are so many expressions like this, such as: It is rumored that the accident was due to negligence; it must be pointed out that some questions have yet to be clarified.

2.3 Subject-less Chinese Sentences in C-E Translation

In C-E translation, some Chinese sentences with obvious passive marks should be translated into corresponding English passive voice. First we should bearing in mind Chinese and English are two different systems, Chinese can use just one word to express the passive meaning while English is "be +past participle" type. Sentences with sensational actions, He/she's feelings or perceptions of the outside world is active action, but we are used to the ways how the outside influences us or it seems that the outside give us the feelings. Actually, its the phenomenon of passive voice in covertness. Sentences with Chinese's habit of symmetry, and brevity^[8]. Some Chinese sentences are brief in styles, especially in old Chinese, brevity is its characteristic, Internal structure and meanings are embedded in it, so in C-E translation passivity should be revealed. For example: Words unspoken are not known, wood not bored remains as before.

Subject-less Chinese sentences. Sentences call for somebody or warn somebody. In Chinese imperative sentences, imperative verbs are emphasized and subjects are omitted^[9]. In English, behaviors or actions are emphasized and put at the head of sentences. That is to say, no matter who gives the order, the imperative action is what they want to stress. Sentences expressing one's feelings: We have got accustomed to expressing our feelings in an active way, but this is different from the western type, which always attributes feelings and perceptions to the outside world. As a result, the outside factors are stressed and put at the head of a sentence. Sentences without notional passive meanings. Some Chinese sentences are active without passive meanings, but they should be written in passive voice when they are translated into English. One of the reasons is that it lies on different angels of seeing things, and this causes different styles of expression. For example:

- (1) How long has the work been done?
- (2) The construction of the bridge will be completed by the end of this year.
- (3) The problem is now being studied.
- (4) The village is populated by about 13,000 farmers.

2.4 Sentences Favorable for Passive Voice

Sentences with unknown actors. The actor could not be told out, for no one knows about it or uncertain about it. On sense of euphemism, the actor is omitted on purpose. Sometimes, the actor is omitted for the sake of politeness. For example: Some unfair comment was made at the meeting. Sentences with emphasized elements. Elements emphasized on purpose, are always put at the head of the sentences in English. Passive voice works better in this kind of sentences. The under-goer always acts as the subject of a sentence, which underlines its important state. In view of this distinction,

Chinese active sentences should be changed into passive ones in C-E translation. Rhetoric needs. In order to build a compact, smooth, and harmonious structure the subject of a sentence should not be changed in one and the same sentence, and this can be solved by using passive structure. Syntactic needs. If the actor has several modifiers, and these elements are considered as a whole part put at the head of a sentence, it seems that it is a top-heavy type. This type of expression is acceptable in the Chinese language, but it is not widely used in the English style of expression^[10], then it should be improved by passive structures.

For example:

It is hoped that the world develop in peace and stability.

It is found that.....;

It is asked that..... ;

It is estimated that.....;

It will be seen from this.....

3. Conclusion

How can two distinct languages seek unity in C-E translation? Why it needs voice conversion other than word for word translation? As Claire kramsch said in language and culture, Culture refers to what has been grown and groomed. The word culture evokes the traditional nature/nurture debate. Are human beings mainly what nature determines them to be from birth or what culture enables them to become through socialization and schooling? With the development of linguistics, studies on voice conversion will shift to new related fields, that is, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. What we studied before are concrete situations need voice conversion, but the development of linguistics creates a large brand new research space. How are languages related to mind and psychology is a question we confront with. Language is not just a reflection, but also a carrier of a unique pattern of thinking. Language has close ties with human, for human themselves create and develop their languages. psycholinguistics can explain the interrelation of language and mind, in processing and producing utterance and in language acquisition, and the relationship between language and cognition. As Bernard spolsky pointed out in sociolinguistics, "Ethnic groups regularly use language as one of their most significant identifying features." Language can serve as a tool to test, to know and to identify a unique culture and society. In this thesis, studies on English's passive habit serve as a window which demonstrates its culture. The studies help to discover the societal rules and norms that explain and constrain language behaviors and the behavior toward language in speech communities.

Voice conversion in C-E translation is a way to seek unity under two different language systems so as to have a good communication. Through the preliminary study of conversion of voice in C-E translation above, we can have a better understanding of distinctions between two languages, especially their difference in voice. The two types of languages each has its own features and styles of expression, these differences not only reflect their respective languages, which have so many factors related to their expressions, such as: different patterns of thinking, historical culture, conventional factors, and accustomed usage. The Chinese language is a type of parataxis while English is hypo taxis. Chinese is a kind of me-centered language while English is a type of analytical and objective language. Chinese lays stresses on what happened to somebody while English pays more attention to what happened. All these factors enable English sentences to have much more forms and styles and a lot of elements could serve as the subject of a sentence, which are favorable for the passive voice to give a full application.

In view of this, communication between different cultures is a harsh task, for there exists so many obstacles. Under the principle of dynamic equivalence and the strategy of assimilation, the problem can be solved. Therefore, voice conversion should be taken into consideration in C-E translation so as to make smooth and pure English sentences. For most of the time, word for word translation is not satisfied, and then some conversion should be made in accordance with western ways of thinking and culture. In concrete situations, some particular Chinese sentences with internal passive meanings needing to be converted. Some Chinese sentences are visually active structures with passive implications, and some are sentences of the Chinese type which should be converted to passive ones according to English ways of expression. Two different language systems determine changes and conversions in C-E translation, and then the translation will be more readable and smooth in structure according to the criteria of the English language system. As for readers, it will avoid some

misunderstandings and mistakes caused by two respective cultures. Studies on voice conversion is so limited, how is the phenomenon related to culture, society, mind, and linguistics is a question worth of further attention and research.

References

- [1] Claire Kramsch, *Language and Culture*, Shanghai: Foreign Language Education Press, 2000, pp.50-52.
- [2] Andrew Radford, *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002, pp.33-35.
- [3] Edward Finegan, *Language Its Structure and Use*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005, pp.86-87.
- [4] Fanlin Lapoler, *Syntax Structure, Meaning and Function*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002, pp.43-44.
- [5] Georage Yule, *The Study of Language*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2000, pp.81-82.
- [6] Noam Chomsky, *New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2002, pp.77-78.
- [7] Li Xu, Jian Ping, *Practice and Techniques of English-Chinese Translation*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2003, pp.101-103.
- [8] Zhou Zhipei, *Comparison between Chinese and English and Conversion in Translation*, Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2003, pp. 112-114.
- [9] Yang Shoukang, "A Contrastive Study of Chinese-English Sentence Structures on Chinese-English Translation," *Foreign Language and Translation*, vol. 4, pp. 14—15, Apr. 2004.
- [10] Si Guo, *A New Study of Translation*, Beijing: China International Translation Publishing Company, 2000, pp. 56-58.