

# The Chapter Heading Characteristics and Translation Skills of Chapter Fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties

**Xu fang**

*Xi'an Aeronautical University Shaanxi, Xi'an 710077, China  
xufang.mail@163.com*

**ABSTRACT.** *The chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties is an important part of the novel and has distinct characteristics. The main manifestations are as follows: First, the language is concise and clear. Second, the syntactic structure is fixed. Third, it covers the elements of people, things, and verbs. In the process of translating the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing dynasties, translators need to master the characteristics of the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing dynasties, effectively and skillfully use parts of speech conversion, amplification and omission and attach importance to the translation of adverbs in chapter fictions. The translation of chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties will be more in line with their own characteristics and more accurate through the mastery and use of these translation techniques.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Chapter fictions in Ming and Qing dynasties novels; chapter heading characteristics; translation skills*

## 1. Introduction

The Ming and Qing Dynasties were the flourishing period for Chinese ancient novels, and a large number of high-quality novels emerged, and the Four Great Classical Novels were written in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The novels in Ming and Qing Dynasties are mainly chapter novels, that is, the titles of each chapter of the novel are neat and balanced couplets, which is also the typical textual characteristics of chapter fictions. [1]In the stylistic rules and layout of Ming and Qing novels in our country, it is an important requirement to divide the novel into chapters and name each chapter and the novel according to the types or forms. The establishment and development of chapter heading is one of the symbols of the maturity of the artistic form of Chinese ancient novels. The chapter heading has certain requirements in terms of word number, part of speech, structure and content, and its own characteristics are distinct. Its main function is to highly summarize and concentrate the plot of each chapter, not only to guide the various chapters of the novel, but also to help shape the characters. [2] However, how to accurately translate

it on the basis of grasping its characteristics and to introduce its image to Western readers is a big challenge for the translator facing this unique chapter fiction. In the process of translation, translators need to have an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of chapter fictions in Ming and Qing dynasties and effectively use relevant translation techniques.

## **2. The Chapter Heading Characteristics of Chapter Fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties**

In the development history of nearly 600 years, the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties has formed its own outstanding characteristics, especially it is unique in the chapter heading. The chapter heading of the novels in the Ming and Qing Dynasties has experienced a long period of development just like the novels in Ming and Qing dynasties, showing the following prominent features:

### ***2.1 The language is concise and clear***

Because the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties are specific in the position of the chapter heading, the degree of freedom is very limited compared to the couplets. In the process of creating a common couplet, the length can be set based on the need, while the chapter heading needs to transmit the fullest information with the least amount of words. In each chapter of the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, the chapter heading is at the forefront, and its important role lies in "introducing". A good chapter heading can effectively refine and summarize the content of each chapter through the most refined language, allowing readers to intuitively recognize the outline of the main story of the chapter, achieving the purpose of attracting readers.[3] Based on the purpose of returning to chapter heading, novelists usually pay more attention to the language of chapter heading and try to refine the text as much as possible, so that the content of each chapter is concentrated in couplets of fourteen or sixteen characters. For example, in the "Outlaws of the Marshes" (120 chapters edition), we can see that 14-character couplets are the main, followed by 16-character couplets in the 121 chapters. And the story of each chapter has been clearly explained in just more than ten words. If the chapter heading is too long, it tends to lead to visual fatigue of the reader, and it is easy to influence the chapter heading's function of dominating the full story and stating the meaning. Therefore, the conciseness and clearness are the basic characteristics of the chapter heading of the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties. This characteristic determines that its translation should also be concise and clear.

## ***2.2 Fixed syntactic structure***

Making a comprehensive survey on chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, there are generally fixed structures in the syntactic structure, especially S + V + O (subject + verb + object) and S + V (subject + verb) are very common, and most of them are S + V + O (subject + verb + object). This type of syntactic structure is the most basic structure in both Chinese and English. [4] This kind of structure is widely used in the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties. It can express the highly summarized plots in the simplest form, which can not only be easy to understand, but also to be easily memorized and widely read. No matter how complicated the story is, this kind of structure can clearly define what the protagonist has done. For example, in "A Dream in Red Mansions", the chapter heading of the thirteenth chapter is "Qin Keqing died and was declared the emperor's guard. Wang Xifeng assisted in the management of Rongguo Mansion", which is the structure of S+V+O. It can also be seen from the structure of the chapter heading for chapter fictions that the sentence structures of chapter heading are more antithesis and neat. And the even-numbered sentences are not only identical in the words number and structure of chapter heading, but also have relative parts of speech and they are very neat in the antithesis. The chapter heading in the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing dynasties seems to be simple in syntactic structure, and can achieve a high degree of generalization of content in each chapter. And in the perspective of visual sensing, this type of sentence structure is also easier to discriminate, which can greatly attract intuitive attention and dominate the chapter content.

## ***2.3 Covering the elements of people, things and verbs***

In the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, the main purpose of chapter heading is to summarize the plot of the story, which mostly includes names and events. While, as a bridge connecting names and events, predicate verbs are also indispensable elements. Through the analysis on the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, we can find that people, events and verbs are the important elements. Supported by these elements, people can clearly understand what the protagonists will do in the plot, and these elements are inseparable, which are the core elements of the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties. For example, in the 47th chapter of the "Outlaws of the Marshes", from the chapter heading "Yi Zhang Qing catches Wang Ai Hu alone", the reader can intuitively realize that "Yi Zhang Qing" will "catch Wang Ai Hu alone". In the 33rd chapter of "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms", from the chapter heading "Cao Pi marry Lady Zhen in the chaos", the reader can know from the chapter heading that "Cao Pi" will "marry Lady Zhen in the chaos". Because the main task of the novel is to shape the characters and the creation of the characters can not be separated from the complete plot of the story, the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties will inevitably cover the elements of people, things and verbs, so as to achieve the narration of the things the hero has done.

### **3. Translation Skills of the Chapter Heading for Chapter Fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties**

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties have unique characteristics. How to translate it accurately and smoothly in the process of translation is an important challenge for translators. This requires the translator to master the following translation skills on the basis of clarifying the chapter heading characteristics of the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties.

#### ***3.1 Skillfully use parts of speech conversion***

In the process of translating the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, it is necessary not only to conform to the original text, but also to conform to the linguistic norms of the original text. In many cases, it is impossible to locate the words in the original parts of speech, and it is hard to translate them word by word. This requires the translator to appropriately change some of the parts of speech. That is to say, to properly transform the part of speech in the original text into another part of speech in translation. This kind of translation method is a relatively common and important method for Chinese-English translation. If it can be used properly, it will help the translation of texts to be smooth and fluent, to be consistent with English habits, and to be easier understood by English context readers. [5] For example, in the chapter heading of chapter 61 of "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms", the translation of "赵云截江夺阿斗" in English is "Zhao Zilong recovers Ah Dou at the river". Here "Recovers at the River" is a verb-object structure, which is transformed into a prepositional objective phrase in English translation. [6] In English translation, if we make literal translation on "stop and seize" will lead to the translation too bloated, which is contrary to the concise linguistic style of chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties. This problem can be solved by the parts of speech conversion.

#### ***3.2 Skillfully use amplification and omission***

When translating the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, due to the differences in expression between Chinese and English, some words that are not found in the original text need to be properly added for translation. However, the addition of words is not added arbitrarily, it needs to be added according to the meaning of the original content to ensure the integrity of the meaning of the original content. [7] Take the chapter heading in chapter 10 of "A Dream of Red Mansions" as an example. The translation of "张太医论病细穷源" is "Dr.Zhang diagnoses Keqing's illness". On the translation of "论病细穷源", the translator translates it into "Diagnoses Keqing's illness". In the novel, this chapter mainly refers to the analysis of the etiology and symptoms of Qin Keqing by Dr.

Zhang. But for the sake of neat sentences, the name Qin Keqing was omitted from the Chinese chapter heading. However, in English translation, in order to make the readers understand the contents of this chapter more clearly, the translator added the main pronoun "Keqing's" to make the meaning of the chapter heading more complete. This is also the result of the change from literal translation to amplification due to the differences between English and Chinese. [8]

The omission is a translation method proposed compared to amplification. It mainly refers to appropriately deleted content that is redundant for the translation and unnecessary to be translated. [9] Taking the chapter heading for the ninth chapter of "A Dream in Red Mansions" as an example, the translation of "恋风流情友入家塾，起嫌疑顽童闹学堂" is translated as "Devoted friends join the clan school, Mud-slinging boys brawl in the classroom". [8] In English translation, the words "恋风流" and "顽" are omitted. The main purpose is to ensure that the number of translated texts and the form are neat, and be close to the characteristics of the chapter heading for chapter fictions in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. And although these two words are omitted from the translation, the meaning is still complete, and the omitted meanings can be found in the words of devoted and brawl.

### *3.3 Attach importance to the formal beauty of the sentences of chapter heading*

It can be seen from the characteristics of the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties that their antithesis is very neat, and they are mostly equal in number of words and consistent in sentence structure. From the perspective of syntactic structure, it attaches great importance to the echo of the syntactic structure of the preceding and following sentences, namely the S+V+O (subject + verb + object) and S+V (subject + verb) structure. For the Indo-European language family, the language is mainly auditory language, which pays more attention to the beauty of audio and video. But for Chinese, it is not only a kind of auditory language, but also a kind of visual language. It can not only produce audio beauty, but also produce visual beauty. Looking back at the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, the visual beauty is mainly embodied in the formal beauty of the neat antithesis. As far as English is concerned, the length of the words varies and the syllables are different. Although it is difficult to restore the structure of Chinese in the process of translation, based on the characteristics of the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, the formal aesthetics of the translated chapter heading sentences should be paid as much attention to. Taking chapter heading for chapter 23 of "Outlaws of the Marshes" as an example. The chapter heading "王婆贪贿说风情，郓哥不忿闹茶肆" is translated as "For money Mistress Wang arranges a seduction; In anger Yunge riots in the tea shop". Judging from the syntactic structure of this chapter heading, two parallel predicates are used in the title. One is "bribes + arranges a seduction". The second is "peeves + riots in the tea shop". But in the English language, this phenomenon does not happen. Through analysis, it can be seen that "bribes" and "peeves" are both reasons, and

they can be treated as reason adverbials in the process of translation. In the above translation, the word "bribes" is translated into "for money", the word "peeves" is translated into "In anger". And they are all placed at the beginning of the sentence to achieve the correspondence between the front and the back, so that the translated text shows the beauty of the form of antithesis, and the sentence meaning is also accurately expressed.

### ***3.4 Attaching importance to the translation of adverbs in chapter heading***

When novelists in Ming and Qing Dynasties created the chapter heading for chapter fictions, they usually added adverbs before verbs to render the atmosphere or promote the increase of color. In the chapter heading, these adverbs often play a key role in describing the way the hero acts. Therefore, this adverb is very important in the translation process. However, most of the adverbs in the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties are only one word, which are flexible and difficult in translation. [10] Taking the chapter heading for chapter 6 of "Outlaws of the Marshes" as an example. Pearl S. Buck translated "花和尚倒拔垂杨柳" into "The Tattooed Priest, and how he pulled up the weeping willow". Sidney Shapiro translated it into "The Tattooed Monk uproots a willow tree". It can be seen from this that with regard to the translation of adverbs, the adverbs can be incorporated into the verbs. Only the verbs can be left in the translation, and the meaning of the verbs disappears. For example, in the translation of "倒拔", whether it is translated as "pulled up" or translated as "uproots", it disappears in the sense of the word "倒".

In the chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties, chapter heading constitutes an important part of chapter fictions with its prominent characteristics, and it plays an important leading role in the story of the whole chapter. The translation of the chapter heading for chapter fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasties is also an important part of the translation of chapter fictions. In the process of translating the chapter heading, we should flexibly master and apply various translation techniques based on the characteristics of the chapter heading to ensure the accuracy of the translation of the chapter heading for chapter fictions in the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

### **References**

- [1]CHENG Guo-fu. Century Study on Nomenclature of Novels in Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties[J].Social Science Research, 2014(4):175-185.
- [2]HOU Gui-yun. The Unique Charm of the Beginning and the Ending: A Contrastive Analysis on the Stylistic Characteristics of the Chapter Heading and the couplet of the Romance of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms[J].Masterpieces Review,2010(5):40-43.
- [3]ZHANG Yong-wei. On the Argumentation and the Structure of the Novels in Ming and Qing Dynasties[J].Yinshan Academic Journal, 2016, 29(6):23-28.

- [4]CHENG Guo-fu. On the Connotation and Characteristics of the Naming by Meaning in the Novels in Ming and Qing Dynasties[J].Literary Review, 2016(1):203-215.
- [5]TAN Xing.Strategies of Translating Rhetoric Devices in Chapter Titles from Two English Versions of Three Kingdoms[J]. Journal of Chongqing Jiaotong University (Social Sciences Edition), 2015, 15(2):133-136.
- [6] CHEN Xiao-li, ZHANG Zhi-quan. The Translation of Chapter Titles in Two English Versions of San Guo Yan Yi from the Perspective of Skopostheorie[J]. Journal of Chongqing University(Social Science Edition), 2011, 17(4):164-168.
- [7]YU Tao, ZHANG Rui-e. Translation of the chapter headings in "A Dream in Red Mansions" from the Perspective of Classical Aesthetics and Modern Functional Linguistics[J]. Journal of Huaibei Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences), 2014(2):134-137.
- [8]HUANG Xiao-yi.Creation and Re-Creation in the Constraints of Narrative Function: A Comparative Study of the English Translation of the Chapter Heading in "A Dream of Red Mansions"[M].Beijing: Peking University Press,2014: 55-56.
- [9]ZHANG Jie. A Comparative Study of Two English Translations of the Chapter Headings in A Dream of Red Mansions: Discussing the Similarities and Differences of English Translations in the Context of the Existence of the Subject of Life[J].Literatures, 2010(12):78-78.
- [10]LIU Jin.Research on the Translation Arts of the Outlaws of the Marsh's Title[J].Journal of Qiqihar University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition), 2018(3): 68-69.