Vocabulary Characteristics of Military English and Translation Strategies—Take the E-C Translation of *The Agincourt War* as an Example

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Abstract: The Agincourt War is a book that presents the causes and consequences, the specific process, and the relevant war material source of the Battle of Agincourt, which broke out between England and France in the Middle Ages, and it is an excellent work of military war literature. It has far-reaching implications for the study of historical and political developments in medieval Europe. Taking the translation practice of the Agincourt War as an example, this paper analyzes the typical lexical features of the text, and discusses the translation strategies of military English from the aspects of general vocabulary, specialized vocabulary, and terminology, to provide some reference value for the translation of military war works.

Keywords: Military English; Lexical Characteristics; Translation Strategies

1. Foreword

Military English is a kind of specialized English applied specifically in the field of military disciplines, which has both the general characteristics of the English language and the linguistic uniqueness brought by its specialty. Military English is often very different from general English and literary English. For military translation, it is necessary to master the key elements and accumulate professional knowledge, only in this way can we improve the quality of the translation. Translation of war literature not only accumulates experience in translating military works, but also plays a helpful role in exploring the development of human civilization and history, and in thinking about philosophical issues such as humanity and ethics.

This paper analyzes the Chinese translation practice of the book *The Agincourt War* by Alfred H. Burne, mainly analyzes the basic characteristics of military English vocabulary contained in it, and discusses the translation strategies of military English in terms of specialized vocabulary, military ranks, and name textual research and so on. Translators interested in this aspect can master the translation strategies of military ranks and other professional military terms in some English-speaking countries. This not only helps to introduce excellent English military works to the world, but also promotes military exchanges among countries around the world.

2. Characteristics of Military English Vocabulary

Military professional English vocabulary involves a wide range, a large number, with "specialization, jargon, polysemous, visualization" [1] and other characteristics. Therefore, many military English vocabularies will have different meaning from those in daily cognition, we must accurately grasp the characteristics of these vocabularies to translate relevant military English works more accurately.

2.1. Specialization of general vocabulary

In military professional English, the meaning of many words is borrowed from ordinary English vocabulary, which are often terminized and given new professional meanings when used in a particular

military professional field, and they are called semi-professional vocabulary. Semi-specialized vocabulary has a very different military-specialized meaning in military war texts than in ordinary English. The translator has counted semi-specialized words that are used more frequently and have more typical meanings in *The Agincourt War*, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Specialization of general vocabulary in military English.

Vocabulary	Ordinary meaning	Military meaning	Number of occurrences/times
operation	the process of cutting open a part of a person's body to remove or repair a damaged part; organized activity	military activity	99
resistance	dislike of or opposition to a plan, an idea, etc.; refusal to obey	an organization that resists the authorities, especially in a country that an enemy has control of	22
strike	to hit sb. / sth. hard or with force	to attack sb. / sth., especially suddenly	13
division	the process or result of dividing into separate parts	a unit of an army, consisting of several brigades or regiments	40
quarter	one of four equal parts of sth.	to provide sb with a place to eat and sleep	41
company	a business organization that makes money by producing or selling goods or services	a group of soldiers that is part of a battalion	9
captain	the leader of a group of people	an officer of high rank in the navy, the army, and the US air force	24
general	normal; usual	an officer of very high rank in the army and the US air force	63

In the above table, there are some typical examples of specialization of common nouns in *The Agincourt War*, which are frequently used. According to statistics, we can see that some common English words have completely different meanings in military texts. Therefore, when translating, we must pay attention to the significance of these words in the military English text, but this does not mean that all these words are used their military significance in military war works. We should combine the sentence and the preceding and following text, specific context specific analysis. We must not put the cart before the horse and lead to errors in the overall translation because of the concept of "semi-professional words".

Example 1: Although the idea was not as clear-cut as it was afterwards to become, this transference was bound to set up the sort of condition in a state that a surgical <u>operation</u> sets up in a body.

This sentence appeared in the first chapter of *The Agincourt War*, the word "surgical" and "operation" used in conjunction just with the meaning of "the process of cutting open a part of a person's body to remove or repair a damaged part", the sentence also wants to express that the country's changes like surgery will leave traces, obviously the "operation" in this sentence does not adopt the ordinary vocabulary specialization of the military meaning, but the original meaning of the "手术".

Example 2: King Charles VI and the Dauphin had taken up their <u>quarter</u>s at Vernon whilst the main body of the French army was assembling at Rouen.

When we use "quarter" in our daily life, we use it in sentences that express quantity and time, such as one quarter of: one of four equal parts of sth.; quarter day: the first day of a quarter (= a period of three months) and so on. However, in this sentence, "quarter" obviously does not mean "one of four equal parts of sth." or "a period of three months", but "barracks" in the military sense, which is used in conjunction with "take up" in this sentence, and is directly translated as "start building barracks". Combined with the Chinese expression habit we can translate it as "安营扎寨" to make the sentence expression more concise and accurate.

2.2. Purely specialized vocabulary

Secondly, just like other professional fields, military English major needs to have purely specialized vocabulary that conforms to its own characteristics, such as military language that indicates military system, weapons, strategy and tactics, and army organization and command. This type of vocabulary is highly specialized and has relatively fixed lexical and lexical meanings that are not affected by the

contextual context [2], as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Military English Purely Specialized Vocabulary.

Purely Specialized Vocabulary	Translation	Number of occurrences/times
cavalry	(in the past) the part of the army that fought on horses; the part of the modern army that uses armoured vehicles	15
patrol	a group of soldiers, vehicles, etc. that patrol an area	11
infantry	soldiers who fight on foot	9
commander	a person who is in charge of sth., especially an officer in charge of a particular group of soldiers or a military operation	65
crossbow	a weapon which consists of a bow that is fixed onto a larger piece of wood	16
missile	an object that is thrown at sb to hurt them	11
archer	a person who shoots with a bow and arrows	130
outpost	a small military camp away from the main army, used for watching an enemy's movements	10

Example 3: although, in order to make up numbers, local levies of *les communes* were enrolled, and some foreign mercenaries who wielded the crossbow were recruited chiefly from Italy.

Example 4: The total cannot have been far short of 10,000 and it included three dukes-Alencon, Brabant and Bar-the Constable of France and commander-in-chief Charles D' Albret, together with no less than go other lords and 1,560 knights.

In these two examples, the crossbow and the Commander-in-Chief of the Magistracy are relatively common names for weapons and ranks in military works, and they are authoritative and accurate in the way they are translated, so the translator can just check the relevant literature after the direct translation to ensure that there are no errors.

2.3. Compound words

Compound words are new words formed by arranging two or more words together in a certain order. The use of compound words helps to simplify the sentence structure, refine expression, and create a large number of new words in a relatively simple way, which is an important way to form and expand the military English vocabulary. The main methods of forming military English compound words in *The Agincourt War* are as in Table 3:

Table 3. Military English Compound Words.

Morphological method	lexical category	Example	Translation
Noun + Noun	Noun	headquarters	a place from which an organization or a military operation is controlled; the people who work there
Adjective + Adjective	Adjective	highborn	spring from a noble origin
Participle + Noun	Noun	dismounted attack	attack on foot
Noun + Adjective	Adjective	churned-up	to damage the surface of the ground by walking or driving over it and making it rough
Verb + preposition	Noun	breakthrough	an important development that may lead to an agreement or achievement
Connection symbol	Noun	commander-in-chief	the officer who commands all the armed forces of a country or all its forces in a particular area
		man-at-arms	a soldier with full armored in Middle Ages

Example 5: For a deputation of three heralds arrived from the French headquarters at Peronne bearing a challenge from the dukes of Orleans and Bourbon.

From section 2.1, we can learn that "quarter" means "barracks" in military English. "head +quarter" literally means "a place from which an organization or a military operation is controlled".

Example 6: He rain was falling steadily most of the night, and the lords were shouting for their varlets, and sending them in all directions in search of straw to lay on the sodden <u>churned-up</u> ground (recently sown with autumn wheat) on which they had to lie.

The original meaning of "churned" is the noun "搅乳器，搅动", and combined with the word "up" has the meaning of being churned, so the compound word is directly translated as "to damage the surface of the ground by walking or driving over it and making it rough". In this part, "churned-up" is used in conjunction with "ground" to express the land that has become sticky and wet because of the rain, but the direct translation is not smooth and natural enough, so the translator combined the sentence and changed it to "泥泞不堪的土地".

2.4. Derivative word

There are many derivatives in military specialized English that are constructed by adding a prefix or suffix to the original word or stem. Some common prefixes and suffixes are shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Military English Derivative Words

prefix	Affix meaning	Example	suffix	Affix meaning	Example
counter	Reverse; inverse	counterattack (an attack made in response to an attack by an enemy or opponent)	proof	Against ...	bulletproof (that can stop bullets from passing through it)
anti	Reverse; resist	antiwar (against war)	wise	In the direction of …	lengthwise (in relation to something's length from end to end)

Derivative words are not used frequently in this book, and the few typical derivative words appear less frequently. However, with the continuous development of military English, derivative words, as an important branch of military English and one of the important characteristics of military English vocabulary, still make an important contribution to the increase of vocabulary and the expansion of the corpus of military English. Therefore, translators should pay more attention to this part and lay a good foundation for our military English translation.

3. Strategies for Translating Military English Vocabulary

3.1. Accurate understanding of the meaning of words

Firstly, military English translators should learn about the relevant professional knowledge before the official start of translation. Mistranslations due to the lack of military knowledge are not uncommon. Secondly, military English, as a branch of scientific and technical English, involves many subjects, so the translator should have a wide range of knowledge to ensure the quality of translation. To this end, translators should study hard, diligently seek knowledge in various subjects from books, the Internet, and professionals, and actively check and verify to ensure the accuracy of translation, rather than pretending to understand or translating directly according to their personal subjectivity without checking.

The first and foremost standard of translation is "faith", that is, to achieve faithful translation, and the basis of faithful translation lies in the accurate understanding of vocabulary, so the good or bad translation of vocabulary has a direct impact on the quality of the translation. It is important to pay attention to the specific meanings of those generic words in specific disciplines, analyze and judge them in combination with the context, and cannot substitute the specific meaning with the common meaning. When it comes to the translation of military war history, it often has a certain degree of era, background, and regional restrictions, so the translator should not only focus on the work itself, but also expand our reading scope, understand the background of the era, and avoid mistranslation and omission of translation in culture and other aspects due to insufficient background knowledge. At the same time, we should also be diligent in using our hands and brains, so that we can accurately understand and reproduce the meaning of military vocabulary.

3.2. Terminology retrieval

The characteristics of military English vocabulary translation are mainly reflected in "professionalism", "standardization", "scientificity", "accuracy" and "rapidity" [3]. Most of the translators adopt the direct translation method, i.e., "translating into the corresponding Chinese terminology according to the actual meaning of the original word". Due to the wide variety of professional vocabulary in military English and the flexible word formation method, the translator often must verify the translation of professional vocabulary with the help of military professional English dictionaries to realize the accuracy, conciseness, and standardization of military vocabulary translation [4].

The common military English dictionaries that the translator thinks can be referred to when translating are mainly the following:

(1) English-Chinese Military Dictionary (In Chinese, edited by Li Gongzhao, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2006);

(2) English-Chinese Dictionary of Military Terms (In Chinese, edited by Pan Yongliang, Foreign Languages Press, 2007);

(3) English-Chinese Dictionary of Military Abbreviations (In Chinese, edited by the Compilation Committee of English-Chinese Dictionary of Military Abbreviations, PLA Press, 2008);

(4) New Dictionary of American Military Terms (In Chinese, edited by Cheng Yong and Cheng Shi, National Defense Industry Press, 2008).

4. Translation treatments in other military English works

4.1. Contextual limitations

The most basic one is the translation of England and France. There is no problem in translating "England, France" as "英国, 法国" in the general text, but in this text, according to the historical background information, there was no such expression at that time, so it should be translated as "英格兰，法兰西" according to the actual background.

4.2. Textual research on names

Firstly, a single name may be translated in many ways because of various factors such as region and era. As translators, what we need to do is to determine the most accurate translation of names and place names with reference to authoritative and professional books, such as *World Dictionary of Translations of Personal Names* and *World Dictionary of Translations of Geographical Names*, to avoid misleading the readers with translation errors.

In the case of the Agincourt War, for example, the character "John of Gaunt" appears in the book, and the name "Lancaster" appears later in the text. By looking it up we can see that the two names refer to the same person. Therefore, we cannot just simply translate the two names separately, but must explain them appropriately so that the readers can understand that they are the same person (in a footnote). Only in this way can readers understand the development of the characters in the story more accurately, to avoid misunderstandings and doubts about the plot.

Another similar example is "the Black Prince", who is also "the Prince of Wales" and "Edward of Woodstock", so the translator should make a brief note of the Black Prince when he first appears, and footnote the Prince of Wales and Edward of Woodstock when they appear to indicate that they and the Black Prince are the same one, so that the reader can accurately understand the character relationships.

Secondly, the translation of individual names in different regions, different identities also have different translation methods. The name "Charles" is normally translated as "查尔斯" in Chinese, but when referring to members of the royal family, for example, "Charles III" should be translated as "查理三世".

The translation of "Bertrand" varies from region to region, and according to the authoritative *World Dictionary of Translations of Personal Names*, the name "Bertrand" should be translated as "伯特兰" if he were an Englishman and "贝特朗" in France. This is also a problem that we need to pay careful attention to in the translation process. Different translation methods may cause the readers of the

translated text to have a wrong understanding of the character, thus affecting the understanding of the whole storyline, so when the translator encounters the translation of a character, we must understand the background of the character as accurately as possible, and then determine the appropriate way of translation by checking the specialized terminology database.

4.3. Translation of military ranks

As the most basic and indispensable part of military English, military rank is the basic knowledge that translators must accurately grasp in translating military English works. In addition to the restrictions of some countries' special military service, the translation of general military ranks also has a standardized nature, and the translation of common military ranks is as in Table 5:

Table 5: Translation of military ranks

Army and Air Force	Navy
General	Admiral
Lieutenant General	Vice-Admiral
Major General	Rear Admiral
Senior Colonel	Senior Captain
Colonel	Captain
Lieutenant Colonel	Commander
Major	Lieutenant Commander
Captain	Lieutenant
Lieutenant	Lieutenant Junior Grade
Second Lieutenant	Ensign

It should be noted that the names of military ranks in English-speaking countries show the characteristics of "general equivalence, different details", and the specific writing of certain ranks may be different [5]. Therefore, when we translate, we should also consult authoritative information in various aspects to ensure the accuracy of the basic translation.

5. Conclusion

Military English translation has its own special seriousness [6], which focuses on military terminology, yet goes beyond merely accurately translating specialized terms. This paper starts with the translation practice of The Agincourt War, and introduces the translation strategies of military war works in terms of lexical features and translation strategies of military English in terms of word meaning expansion, specialized vocabulary, personal name reference, and military rank, making certain contributions for translators to introduce excellent English military works to the world and effectively convey military text information. At the same time, it provides useful experience for translators in related professional fields.

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