

A Contrastive Analysis of the Chinese and English Version of *Rush* from the Perspective of Hypotaxis and Parataxis

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ABSTRACT. English and Chinese belong to two different language families. The study of hypotaxis and parataxis indicates that there is a major discrepancy in organizing languages between English and Chinese. The paper is focused on the hypotaxis-prominence in English and the parataxis-prominence in Chinese. English puts stress on overt formal cohesion which is indicated by the strict Subject-Predicate structure, the indispensable connectives and relative words, and other cohesive ties like morphological changes and the frequent use of personal reference. And there are rigorous express of tense through inflectional changes in English to clarify the semantic of sentences. Chinese, on the contrary, lays emphasis on covert semantic coherence, which is manifested in the much more flexible Topic-Comment structure and some other cohesive ties like the word order. And logical relationship between Chinese clauses or sentences always hides in their semantic relevance. Sentence coherence is displayed by a logical order or temporal sequence. From the perspective of hypotaxis and parataxis, the paper is aimed at making a contrastive analysis between the original text and the target text of *Rush* and indicting the differences between English and Chinese in hypotaxis and parataxis based on two major aspects of sentence structure and logical cohesive ties.

KEYWORDS: Hypotaxis, Parataxis, *Rush*

1. Introduction

Rush, a well-known prose of Zhu Ziqing, is aimed at depicting the traces of the passage of time, and expressing the author's helplessness and regret for the passage of time. *Rush* is translated by many excellent translators, the English version of Zhu Chunshen is applied to analyze in this paper.

The study on hypotaxis and parataxis is one of the most important research subjects for English and Chinese contrastive study and translation theory. Hypotaxis and parataxis are two different primary ties, which help the linguistic elements or units realize their linear organization in languages. Though both hypotaxis and

parataxis exist in English and Chinese, as the famous American translation theorist Eugene Nida points out in *Translating Meaning* that “one of the most important linguistic differences between Chinese and English is the contrast between hypotaxis and parataxis.”^[1] In other words, what should be paid enough attention to is that hypotaxis or parataxis does not exist only in one language. They both exist in a language and complement each other. Based on many studies, it is generally agreed that there is a hypotaxis-prominence in English while a parataxis-prominence in Chinese. Therefore, the study on hypotaxis and parataxis is of great importance to the development of general linguistics, the second language teaching and translation theory and practice.

2. Contrastive Analysis of Hypotaxis and Parataxis in Chinese and English Version of Rush

2.1 The Differences of Subject-Predicate Relationship

Both English and Chinese sentences contain subject-predicate relationship, but the subject-predicate relationship is different between the two languages. English subjects usually have pronouns and nouns, which are divided into singular and plural. Predicate verbs are also divided into singular and plural in accordance with the subjects. In Chinese, personal pronouns can also be plural, the Chinese character “们” can be added after singular personal pronouns to indicate plurality, such as the plurality of “我”, “你” and “他” are “我们”, “你们” and “他们”. However, there are seldom such plurals in Chinese. Chinese usually uses quantifiers to express plural concepts. For example, the plural of an apple can be some apples, a basket of apples or a bag of apples. As a parataxis-prominence language, Chinese has no formal changes in terms of predicate verbs whether the subject is singular or plural, it is only required to make the meaning of the sentence clear and coherent. Another important rule of sentence composition in English is subject-predicate consistency. As such, the predicate in a sentence must respond to the person and number of the subject, which is also an important means of maintaining cohesion of sentences. The concept of subject-predicate consistency does not exist in Chinese. In Professor Zhu Chunshen's English translation, each sentence follows the principle of subject-predicate consistency. However, there is no concept of subject-predicate consistency in the original text. Here is the analysis of typical example in Rush.

Example 1:

ST: 燕子去了...;杨柳枯了...;桃花谢了...

TT: Swallows may have gone...; willow trees may have died back...peach blossoms may have fallen....

In the original text, “燕子”, “杨柳” and “桃花” do not indicate that the subject is the singular or plural. When reading this passage, Chinese readers will not deliberately think about how many swallows, willow trees and peach blossoms were there. They only got the information of “swallow, willow tree and peach blossom”.

However, it can be seen that these words are translated into plural forms in English version because only plural forms can convey the original meaning. If there is only “one swallow”, “one willow tree” and “one peach blossom”, the target readers will find that the translation is too strange to be understood because of the feature of hypotaxis in English. Due to the subjects are plural in English version, the predicate verb should correspondingly be the plural form “have”.

2.2 The Differences of Cohesive Ties

Connective devices can be found everywhere in English. Words and words, main clauses and subordinate clause, sentences and sentences are all connected by connectives or relative words. Without the strict tree structure, the semantics in English will be misunderstood. Chinese emphasizes the logical relevance is within the text. Even if there is no cohesive tie in a sentence, the reader can understand the logical relationship among the components of the sentence.

2.2.1 The Use of Relatives and Conjunctions

Set It is mentioned before that the most of the sentences in English have exact connectives or conjunctions, which indicates the logical relationship between each other and a rigorous structure of English. Relatives and conjunctions are used to connect the words, the main clause and subordinate clauses, and the phrases in English, including relative pronouns, relative adverbs, coordinating conjunctions, and subordinating conjunctions. Without these connectives or conjunctions, English sentences are prone to be incorrect sentences. The word “and” is usually used as the conjunction in the parallel structure; “if”, “as long as”, and “until” are the conjunctions to denote the subordinate relationship of a sentence. However, Chinese emphasizes parataxis and seldom uses or even does not use conjunctions. According to statistics, 2/3 of causal sentences in Chinese do not use conjunctions when they are not necessary^[4].

Example 2:

ST: 燕子去了,有再来的时候;杨柳枯了,有再青的时候;桃花谢了,有再开的时候.

TT: Swallows may have gone, but there is a time of return; willow trees may have died back, but there is a time of regreening; peach blossoms may have fallen, but they will bloom again.

It can be seen that there are no such conjunctions as “but” in the original Chinese text, but “but” are used three times in the English translation. Although there is no relatives in the original text, but the reader can still understand the contrasts. In English version, if there is no “but”, it will violate the grammatical rules and the meaning cannot be clearly expressed. Example 3:

ST: 于是--洗手的时候,日子从水盆里过去;吃饭的时候,日子从饭碗里过去;默默时,便从凝然的双眼前过去.

TT: Thus--the day flows away through the sink when I wash my hands,wears off in the bowl when I eat my meal,and passes away before my day - dreaming gaze as reflect in silence.

In this sentence, the original text uses a semicolon to replace the relatives, which forms a kind of parallel structure. “便” is the only conjunction in the original sentence. In English translation, the relative adverb “when” is used twice; the coordinating conjunction “and” is used once; the conjunction “as” is used once; so there are four relative words and conjunctions. “When” and “as” refer to “的时候” of source text. The conjunction “and” connects two clauses in the sentence, which corresponds to the conjunction “便” of the original text. “便” is dispensable even can be omitted in Chinese, because it does not affect the grammar and meaning of the original text. However, when it is translated into English, it will become a grammatically wrong sentence if the conjunction “and” is omitted,.

From the above analysis, we can see that relatives are seldom used or not used in Chinese. Logic and relations in sentences are reflected by the meaning, word order and punctuation marks of the words. In English, the use of conjunctions is much popular than that of Chinese. Adding connectives are one of the main grammatical means for English to organize sentences and form text, and most of them cannot be omitted.

2.2.2 Personal Reference

In Personal reference refers to a kind of reference cohesion. Personal pronouns (he, she, etc.) and their corresponding determiners (his, her, etc) and the reference of nominal possessive pronouns are called personal reference. In English, most personal pronouns should be changed according to the gender, number and case, and their form and pronunciation also change. The change of personal pronouns in English can be divided into nominative, accusative and possessive cases, while Chinese personal pronouns have no nominative or accusative cases. Chinese emphasizes that personal reference can be omitted in many cases according to the context without causing difficulties and ambiguities in understanding. In English, personal reference often occurs before nouns.

There are 13 sentences without personal references in the original text, but they are added in the English version. The following is an example.

Example 4:

ST: 是他们自己逃走了: 现在又到了哪里呢?

TT: If they had made the escape themselves,then where could they stay at the moment?

According to the parataxis of Chinese, the reader of source text clearly know that the subject of that sentence is “他们” in this sentence “现在又到了哪里呢”. The absence of personal reference in the original text will not result in the ambiguous reference or difficulties in understanding. In the translation, the word “they” is used

twice. Because of the hypotaxis of English, the second “they” cannot be omitted for assuring the accuracy of sentence.

Example 5:

ST: 洗手的时候,... 吃饭的时候,...

TT: when I wash my hands,...when I eat my meal,...

It is not difficult to find the lack of subject in the original text. The full passage is narrated in the first person. According to the sentence meaning, even if the subject is omitted, the reader of the source text can know that these actions are all made by “I” which is the embodiment of parataxis of Chinese. In the translation, the executor of the action is added in two places, which is accordance with hypotaxis in English. If these personal references are omitted, the sentence structure is incomplete and the personal reference may be ambiguity.

3. Conclusion

As languages from different language families, there are significant differences in sentence structure, connectives and logical expressions between English and Chinese, which bring different degrees of difficulty to Chinese-English translation. The contrast of hypotaxis and parataxis is the most distinct difference between English and Chinese. There exists a hypotaxis-prominence in English, which lays emphasis on formal cohesion, and a parataxis-prominence in Chinese, which puts stress on covert semantic coherence. In English, sentences are strictly ruled by the Subject-Predicate mechanism that clearly shows the hierarchic relationship between the main clause and the subordinate clauses, which also makes connectives and relative words indispensable to explicitly indicate the logical relations in the sentence. There are precise tenses should be deliberated in Chinese-English translation to assure the accuracy and acceptable of target text. All these are apparent manifestations of the hypotaxis-prominence English. On the contrary, in Chinese, sentences can be organized in a linear order as long as the linguistic units in it can match semantically and logically. The cohesive ties frequently used in English are either absent or much less explored in Chinese. Instead, the grammatical and logical relationship in a sentence is often implied by the word order or parallel structure or the implicit meaning of the words. Translation involves the conversion of two languages. While focusing on foreign language learning, translators need to understand their own languages in depth. By comparing the two different languages and combining translation practice, the learners can finally find solutions to overcome the difficulties in translation.

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