

A Comparison Study of Dynamic State of English and Static State of Chinese and their Conversion in Translation

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Abstract: Generally speaking, one of the significant differences between English and Chinese is that English is static in character and Chinese is dynamic in character. In other words, English usually uses more nouns, prepositions, adjectives, etc., while Chinese, on the contrary, usually uses verbs. Therefore, for translation, when translating from English to Chinese, we should appropriately convert some nouns or prepositions into verbs to make the translation smooth and natural, and more in line with Chinese expression habits; when translating from Chinese to English, we should appropriately convert some verbs into nouns or prepositional phrases to make the translation strict in structure.

Keywords: static state; dynamic state; comparison

1. Introduction

In the long process of social development, it is well known that there are huge differences in the environment and customs of English and Chinese nations, and it is the differences between these two languages that allow the two different nations to form different thinking characteristics and ways of thinking. Language is the carrier for the production and development of thinking, without language, thinking cannot be developed; and the differences in thinking styles are also reflected through language. On the other hand, the huge difference in thinking also reflects the different language psychology formed by the two nations in the long process of social development to some extent.^[1] An important feature of traditional Chinese thinking is imaginative thinking, which is inspired, leaping and creative. Imaginative thinking, that is, with the help of image symbols, reaches beyond the realm of ontology and provides concrete images to express abstract concepts, unifying symbol and meaning, image and ontology. Imaginative thinking is an important feature of traditional Chinese thinking, which has had a great impact on the theory of artistic conception in Chinese aesthetics and the theory of realm in philosophy. Chinese attaches great importance to the internal coherence of semantics, and small sentences, elliptical sentences and non-subject sentences often appear. The sentence pattern is flexible and changeable, and the verb is used with high frequency, showing a dynamic characteristic. Western thinking is characterized by cognitive thinking. Cognitive thinking takes nature as the object, is based on experiments, emphasizes objective facts, distinguishes strictly between the subject and the object of cognition, and explores and explains the characteristics of everything from nature itself and the intrinsic properties of matter. The cognitive subject expresses the cognitive object through language, so English uses abstract nouns, linked verbs, and passive voice to achieve objective and rational expression purposes. As a result, English presents a static feature of balanced and uniform structure.

In the whole wide world, everything exists in two states: one is static and the other is dynamic. R. Based on this, language is no exception. Quirk said, broad speaking, nouns can be characterized naturally as 'stative' in that they refer to entities that are regarded as stable, whether these are concrete like house, table, paper, or abstract (of the mind) like hope, botany, length. At the opposite pole, verbs can be equally naturally characterized as 'dynamic': they are fitted to indicate action, activity and temporary or changing condition.^[2] In language, it is nouns that represent objective matter, and verbs that represent movement. Different languages have different characteristics, and it is these characteristics that create the unique appeal of different languages. Moreover, English and Chinese belong to two completely different language systems, English belongs to the Indo-European language family and Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family. In terms of words, English usually uses nouns, prepositions, adjectives, etc., and the sentences show static characteristics, while Chinese, on the contrary, usually uses verbs and the sentences show dynamic characteristics. In terms of sentences, English is a language of hypotaxis, often using relational words to link the small sentences together,

focusing on explicit coherence, with a compact and logical sentence structure, while Chinese is a language of parataxis, which is the subject-oriented topic, using no or few connecting words, and directly laying out the phrases, especially the four-character phrases and small sentences, showing the characteristics of invisible coherence. Only when we are familiar with the characteristics of the two languages, namely the nominalization of English and the advantages of Chinese verbs, can we make up for the differences in the phenomena and expressions between English and Chinese in the translation process and improve the quality of the translation.

2. Static characteristics of English sentence patterns

English is form-focused and has strict grammatical norms. And English is a inflected language, and the use of its verbs is greatly limited by morphological changes. Due to strict grammatical norms, a sentence structure can usually have only one predicate verb. When a sentence involves multiple actions or events, and they are not in parallel or sequential relationship, only a finite verb can be used to express the main action or event, and other meanings related to the verb can be expressed through non-predicate verbs or through adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc. This reflects the static character of English. The static tendency of English is mainly manifested in the following aspects:

2.1. Nominalization of English

Just as the name implies, nominalization refers to the use of nouns to express the concept that originally belongs to the verb, such as the use of abstract nouns to express the concept of action, behavior, change, state, quality and so on.^[3] This kind of using nouns instead of verbs can make the expression more concise, and thus has the tendency of ‘preponderance of nouns over verbs’ in English. In English, there are a large number of abstract nouns in English, which are often directly derived from verbs with affixes, such as departure, failure, agreement, visibility, evaluation, creation and so on. For example, the following sentence:

Example 1: She succeeded in this game, so she felt encouraged.

Example 2: The doctor arrived extremely quickly and examined the patient uncommonly carefully; the result was that he recovered very speedily.

However, from the rhetorical effect of English, it is more often expressed in the structure of a simple sentence: Her success in this game made her encouraged. And the doctor’s extremely quick arrival and uncommonly careful examination of the patient brought about his very speedy recovery. This phenomenon is very common in English, and it is also in line with the thinking habits and cultural background of Westerners. Because Western philosophy emphasizes logic, the completeness and order of sentence structure is emphasized in the language, and nominalization can make the language more concise.

Chinese people tend to think figuratively, with few abstract nouns and more concrete words. The abstract nouns formed by verbs with affixes in English often cannot find corresponding expressions in Chinese, so such abstract nouns in English, which are fudged by affixes, are generally expressed by verbs in Chinese. O. Jespersen pointed out: It seems possible to express idea with greater precision and adequacy by means of nouns than by means of the more pictorial verbs,... When we express by means of nouns what is generally expressed by finite verbs, our language becomes not only more abstract, but more abstruse, owing among other thing to the fact that in the verbal substantive some of the life-giving elements of the verbs(time, mood, person) disappear. While the nominal style may therefore serve the purposes of philosophy, where, however, it now and then does nothing but disguise simple thoughts in the garb of profound wisdom, it does not lend itself so well to the purpose of everyday life.^[4]

2.2. The prepositional advantage of English

Prepositions in English are mostly used in front of nouns or noun phrases. Since English uses more nouns, it must also use more prepositions, thus creating a prepositional advantage. With the massive abandonment of morphological changes of nouns and adjectives in English, prepositions take their place and play the role of certain morphological changes, making the static character of English more obvious, making the static character of English more obvious. English prepositions are so common that some scholars refer to English as the “language of prepositions”, for example, the following sentence is prepositionitis.

Example 3: Adequate clearance between the rear face of the last stack in the load and inside surface of the rear doors was provided to enable the refrigerated air flowing from the front to the rear of the trailer to enter the longitudinal air channels through the load which opened on the rear of the load at this point.

In English, it is common to replace verbs with prepositions, thus weakening the meaning of verbs, adjectives, and other parts of speech and enhancing the tendency of English to be static in expression. Although prepositions are function words, they have a rich lexical meaning and are used with great frequency and flexibility.

Example 4: The doctor gave her some medicine for her cold.

Example 5: My family are on vacation in Thailand.

As can be seen from the above examples, there are many places in English where prepositions are used, and English prepositions contain the meaning of actions. The preposition 'for' no longer has the basic meaning in the dictionary, but means 'to treat'. The preposition 'on' no longer has the basic meaning in the dictionary, meaning 'travel' in Chinese. From this, we can see the advantages of prepositions in the application of English, reflecting the static characteristics of English expression. In addition, we often use prepositional phrases instead of verb phrases.

Example 6: Someone supports him.

Example 7: After saying these, she went away.

For these two examples, we tend to use the following expressions: One is he has someone behind him. Another is with these words she went away.

2.3. Adjectives and adverbs replace verbs

Adjectives and adverbs have a wide range of functions in English and can be used in a variety of components, such as predicate, attribute, object complements, etc. Adjectives are often combined with be verbs or other weak verbs such as feel, seem, look, grow, get to express dynamic features. In short, non-predicative verb forms in English are often used to replace verbs to express and thus forming the static characteristics of English sentences.

Example 8: We are not happy about this film.

Example 9: He was unaware of my presence.

As can be seen from the above examples, in English sentences, the adjectives that express psychology or sensation often form the structure of 'VP' with a verb to express the meaning equivalent to the verb. English often uses non-verb forms (such as nouns, prepositions, descriptions, etc.) to express the meaning of verbs, so that their expression shows a tendency to be static.

3. The dynamic characteristics of Chinese sentence patterns

Chinese is different from English in that there is no inflection of words in Chinese, and it cannot have the full meaning as a word, and cannot act as a root plus affix to form a derivative word, like some words in English. However, it is precisely because Chinese verbs are not constrained by morphological changes, so they are very free and simple to use. In Chinese, there is no form of predicate verb and non-predicate verb, and the primitive verb can be used as various components of the sentence, and can be used repeatedly in the sentence, even overlapping, and combined. In Chinese, there are fewer prepositions and no participles. In English, where prepositions and participles are used, verbs are often used instead. The advantage of verbs in making Chinese sentences makes Chinese dynamic. The advantages of verbs in Chinese are reflected in the following aspects:

3.1. Continuous use of verbs

Many sentences in Chinese use two or more verbs as predicates, and no linking words are used between verbs. The sentence structure of verb conjunctions is mainly divided into two types: gearing sentence and pivotal sentence.

Example 10: He is ill and can't come to school.

Example 11: He managed to get out of trouble.

Two or more verbs in the conjugate form are related to the subject, and the verb indicates that the action is arranged in a chronological and logical order.

Example 12: I thank you for telling me the good news.

Example 13: We asked her to sing.

In the pivotal sentence, the object of the first verb is the subject of the second verb.

Example 14: Let me go and ask them to send an account here to help you with your account.

This sentence is a combination of the gearing sentence and pivotal sentence.

3.2. Repeated or overlapping use of verbs

There are a large number of verbs that are repeated or overlapped in Chinese. The repetition or overlap of verbs also makes Chinese sentences more colorful. In contrast, verbs in English are rarely used repeatedly. In short, Chinese sentences emphasize behavior in expression, while English rarely uses verbs.

Example 15: I talked and talked, but it was of no use.

4. The Conversion of translation

When translating between English and Chinese, it is necessary to consider the transition between static and dynamic. In English, there are more static sentences, while in Chinese, on the contrary, dynamic sentences are more frequent. Therefore, when translating from English to Chinese, static sentences should be converted into dynamic sentences, i.e. some nouns, adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases should be converted to verbs; when translating from Chinese to English, dynamic sentences should be converted into static sentences, and some Chinese verbs should be converted to English nouns, adjectives, adverbs or prepositional phrases.

4.1. From English to Chinese

The first thing is to translate nouns in English into verbs in Chinese. Many nouns in English are derived from verbs, so they have a dynamic meaning, and their morphological changes are relatively simple. Therefore, English nouns, especially abstract nouns, are often converted into Chinese verbs when we translate them into Chinese.

Example 16: He was a nonsmoker.

In Chinese, we will express like this :He didn't smoke. It can be seen from this example that some nouns in English should be translated into verbs when translated, so that the translation is more consistent with the expression of Chinese language and more fluent.

The second is the conversion of English prepositions into Chinese verbs. Due to the widespread use of nouns in English, the number of prepositions continues to increase, resulting in 'the preponderance of nouns over verbs'. English often uses prepositional phrases to replace phrasal verbs. English prepositions should be converted into Chinese verbs when English is translated into Chinese.

Example 17: be+ prepositional phrase: Are you for or against the idea?

In Chinese, we will express like this : Do you approve or disapprove the idea?

Finally, adjective and adverbs in English are transformed into Chinese verbs. English often uses the combination of cognate adjectives and weakening verbs to express the meaning of verbs. For example, doubtful-doubtful. Adjectives and other adjectives that express mental or physical feelings in English are also frequently attached to weak verbs to express the meaning of the verb.

Example 18: I am doubtful whether she is still alive.

In Chinese, we will express like this : I doubt whether she is still alive.

Example 19: You have to be cautious for traffic.

In Chinese, we will express like this : You have to watch out for traffic.

4.2. From Chinese to English

The first is the translation of single verbs in Chinese sentences. We should convert Chinese verbs into English nouns, prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, etc.

Example 20: He kills his boss.

Example 21: He insisted that he was not guilty, which caught the attention of some journalists.

In English, we will express like this: He is the murdered of his boss. His insistence on his innocence arouses some reporters' attention. We use the noun 'killer' and 'insistence' to express it more in line with English expression habits.

Example 22: I do not like to be interrupted when I am doing an important job.

Example 23: The show has already begun.

In English, we will express like this: I do not like to be interrupted when I am about an important piece of work. The show is on. During the translation process, we translate verbs in Chinese into preposition in English.

The second is the translation of multiple verbs in Chinese sentences. Chinese pays attention to dynamic description, and the overall rhetorical effect is dynamic. Among them, gearing sentence and pivotal sentence, and 'Ba' sentence are often used to form different multi-verb predicate sentences. Therefore, in this kind of translation, there can only be one finite verb, and the rest must be expressed by nouns, prepositions, adjectives or non-finite verbs, so as to reflect the static characteristics of English.

Example 24: Due to carelessness, he failed in English examination.

In English, we will express like this: Carelessness caused his failure in the English examination. When translating these sentences, the translator needs to judge the relationship between the Chinese verbs from the time and logical order, to see whether the verbs in the original text are predicate verbs in the translation of English, if they are, they should be translated into parallel predicates.

5. Conclusion

Because of their different cultural backgrounds and different language family, there are many differences between English and Chinese. Linguist Wang Huan said: "For people learning foreign languages, the easiest and most natural thing to do is to get used to putting their mother tongue on the foreign language. Sometimes it's right, sometimes it's wrong, and where the native language is different from the foreign language, it's bound to be wrong."^[5] The reason why translation is difficult is ultimately due to language and cultural differences, which lead to the complexity of cross-cultural communication activities and also reflect the particularity of the conversion between English and Chinese languages. Through comparative analysis, we can further understand the characteristics of foreign languages and mother tongues, we can further understand the characteristics of foreign languages and native languages, which is conducive to our understanding of the cultural connotations carried by different languages and more conducive to our translation of better works. Translation is not a simple transformation between two languages. Translators should respect the linguistic habits and characteristics of the target language, and strive to achieve fluency and authenticity in the translation. English and Chinese have different emphasis on static and dynamic. Since English has abstract thinking and is a hypotactic language, it tends to use nouns and prepositions. Chinese has imaginal thinking and tends to use verbs. Therefore, in the translation process, the translator must pay attention to the conversion between static and dynamic of the two languages, so as to make the translation more consistent with the target language.

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