

The Application of Chinese-English Translation Skills in English Writing

Li Feifei

College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Liaoning Communication University, Shenyang, 110036, China

Keywords: Translation skills; English output; Vocabulary; Sentence patterns. Mistakes; Cultural image; Diversity

Abstract: English learners' English ability mainly includes four aspects: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In daily use, speaking and writing can best reflect the English skills of English users. With the development and progress of the era, more and more attention has been paid to English output ability. However, in the primary stage of education, excessive attention is paid to exams, while the improvement and perfection of English ability is neglected. As a result, many obstacles are found in English output and the progress is slow. Therefore, the teaching of English listening, speaking, reading and writing can be conducted from a new perspective, and the improvement of Chinese-English translation skills is more effective than mechanically reciting words and systematically imitating given writing structures.

When Chinese native speakers write in English, they are more like translators to convert under certain specified contents with English as the target language. However, this process is ostensibly English writing, but in fact the author is translating Chinese into English. Three times of creation are included in this process: the formation of Chinese thoughts; the translation from Chinese into English; reconstruction based on English writing requirements. Translators often quote Perry's famous line "dancing in chains" to explain the difficulties of translation. And in English writing, such "shackles" have increased a lot. It is not only necessary to translate the source language into the target language, but also to meet the writing requirements. How to "dance well" is the key to an excellent article. Therefore, certain translation skills must be applied in English writing in order to meet the basic requirements of writing. In addition, writers should study the choice of words and sentence patterns to improve the quality of the composition, and consider the cultural concept and the era trend to improve the composition.

1. The application of Chinese-English translation skills in English writing.

Any type of composition is required, whether proposition composition, or practical writing, not only to meet the requirements of the proposition, but also to achieve the purpose of the application. A qualified English composition should be featured by following characteristics: the clear main idea, concise and fluent language, and cohesive whole. According to William Zinsser who wrote *On Writing Well*, elaborates on the principles, such as simplicity, which make writing effective. For example, "It's a question of using the English language in a way that will achieve the greatest clarity and strength." Besides, personal transactions should also be paid attention to." This is the personal transaction that's at the heart of good non-fiction writing."

Although William Zinsser's target audience is native English writers, these principles also apply to non-native English writers writing in English. While Chinese writing English compositions need to realize that when they convert Chinese information into English information, they are carrying out bilingual information transmission, that is, Chinese - English translation. Eugene. A Nida, the contemporary American translation theorist, defines translation as follows:

"Translation refers to reproducing the source language information with the closest and most natural equivalent in the target language from semantic to stylistic." This requires the author to first apply the Chinese-English translation skills and follow the principle of bilingual information transmission. This will lay a foundation for improving English writing.

1.1 Application of semantic transforming techniques in English writing

Speaking of "semantics", it is necessary to mention "semantics", which is the main study of the meaning of linguistic signs. In Qu Zongde's *Linguistics in Translation*, he explains "semantics" in this way: the so-called semantics is the meaning of language and the content expressed by language forms. Semantic meaning is the reflection of objective things in people's mind and people's understanding of objective things, which is expressed in the form of language.

Semantic covers many aspects, such as meaning, semantic field, hyponymy, synonymy, semantic change, and ambiguity. Among them, hyponymy and semantic change are more prominent in English writing, which are very common in the process of bilingual conversion.

1.1.1 Hyponymy

According to *Linguistics in Translation*, hyponymy is defined as follows: in a language, some words mean the concept of genus, while others mean the concept of species. And genus includes species. Flower, for example, is said of the concept of genus, while words such as tulip, rose, peony, lily, belong to species. The terms representing the genus concept are semantically called "superordinate" (superordinate terms); The words representing species were called "hyponym," (subordinate terms). The semantic relationship between superordinate words and subordinate words is called "hyponymy".

Writing English essays, students are often weak in accurate expressions of nouns. To express a Chinese word "汽车", most students use "car". The English expression of "car" is a "subordinate word", but "superordinate words" and many other "subordinate words" can express this concept more specific and accurate. "Trucks" for different types of cars, "auto" for the overall concept of cars, "sedan" for luxury cars, and so on. On this point, the book explains: in translation, attention should be paid to the different speaking habits of hyponymy used in different languages. For example, English tends to use different words to say the same thing, while Chinese tends to repeat the same words. That is also stated in *CE Translation: Techniques, Teaching and Theoretical Analyses*, "Repetition is a major feature of Chinese."

1.1.2 Semantic changes

First of all, as semantics are constantly changing, the words in writing should not only meet the requirements of the era and apply new semantic content, but also discard the outdated and unused ones. Affected by linguistic, historical, social, psychological and foreign cultural factors, semantic meaning is constantly changing. This requires the correct use of English words in writing and choosing felicitous words. For example, Salesman and Saleswoman are words representing "men sales" and "women sales". With the progress of the era and society, the idea of equality between men and women has been deeply rooted in people's minds. People intentionally weaken the words representing men and women, and therefore nowadays most people use "Salesperson" that no longer reminds the difference between "men and women" in terms of vocabulary.

Secondly, words in any language have changes in meaning range and emotional color, and even temporary semantic changes in use, namely temporary meaning generated in a specific language environment and specific usage, which can be called "accidental meaning". (Qu Zongde, *Linguistics in Translation*)

Therefore, the choice of words should be made according to the requirements and semantic changes of words in English writing, so as to meet the general standards of writing and achieve the purpose of properly expressing information.

1.2 Application of contextual skills in English writing

Pragmatics is a new field in linguistics, and an extremely important branch. It studies specific utterances in specific contexts, especially how to understand and use language in different linguistic communication contexts. (Qu Zongde, *Linguistics in Translation*)

Pragmatics consists of many aspects, such as context and deixis, which are often encountered in composition writing. Among them, context has the greatest influence on culture for English writers,

because non-native English writers are also carrying out bilingual information transmission when they are creating articles, so they can never do direct mechanical transmission between two languages without any skills. Good English writing is closely related to the way information is conveyed in the English context. For example, in writing English, it is common to introduce Chinese idioms, colloquial sayings or allusions. "Like Chiang Tai Kung fishing, they have cast the line for the fish who want to be caught." The Chinese historical figure "Zhu Gelang" was a representative of wisdom, so it can be translated into "Zhu Gelang the master mind"..

In addition, "instruction" is often misused in English writing, which often leads to errors and confusion in understanding. In particular, the bilingual conversion of personal pronouns. "Indicative information in discourse is the key to understanding and expressing meaning." Qu zongde, *linguistics in translation*. In topic compositions, "I" is often used to express the author's own point of view. At the same time, other "deixis" will be involved in the process of narration and demonstration, so there will be confusion in the use of "I".

2. When choosing words and sentence patterns, avoid mistakes in language use.

The English teaching and learning involve both the teacher and the learner. First of all, limitations exist in part of English teaching conducted in school, and are often trapped in the pressure of examination. Secondly, a considerable part of English teaching is market-oriented, which is more affected by the competition in the education training market. Some propagandas are neither practical nor conforming to the law of learning. To a large extent, English learners are misled into thinking that English can be mastered quickly once and for all. To improve the output ability of English, especially in the aspect of writing, both teachers and learners should be aware of the misunderstandings in this process. With mistakes corrected and fewer made, English teaching and learning will be more effective.

2.1 Misunderstandings of vocabulary choice

When writing English sentences, the choice of an English word is extremely important! The author needs to be extremely cautious, and must have a certain judgment! Just like Chinese, English words have a certain emotional color, suitable for the background and occasion. However, there are many errors in the choice of words and sentence patterns in writing practice.

2.1.1 One misunderstanding: Low-frequency words are not advanced words.

Some English words are peculiar and often used to cater to readers or judges. Actually, real study of vocabulary should be made and be very careful and rigorous about word choice. This can be seen in the use of "embolden", a very formal word with a low word frequency (a one-star word in Collins word list), and its application situation is limited to formal style, and replacing common words with such formal ones in writing can easily lead to style incompatibility.

Although many words in English have similar or identical meanings, very few of them are truly equivalent (some would even argue that there are no equivalent words in English at all). Strictly speaking, many synonyms have only roughly the same meaning, but each word itself has a meaning that one or several other words do not have, or has meanings that can be applied to different contexts.

For example, "begin" and "start" are a set of synonyms that can be used interchangeably in most situations. However, certain collocations can only be fixed. For example, "start a car" should be used instead of "begin a car", and "begin a course of study" should be used instead of "start a course of study". In addition, "spread" and "disseminate" both mean "传播" in Chinese, but the applicable styles in writing are different. "Spread" can be used in both spoken and written language, while disseminate can only be applied in written language.

2.1.2 Another misunderstanding: only focus on the commonness of word meaning, but ignore the difference

Some synonyms are featured by different emotional colors, depending on the speaker's position

and attitude, or the context itself. For example, to convey the meaning "宣传" in Chinese, some students might think of propaganda, but the word has a strong negative connotation and generally means "hostile political propaganda" in the English context. Actually, the common "promotion" is a better choice. (Wei Jianfeng *To Analyze a Common Writing Problem* 2020.11.06)

2.2 Misunderstandings in sentence pattern selection

The sentence structure to use in English writing is also a big problem to perplex English learners. In a great amount of composition modification work, long sentences difficult to understand are found in 90% of the compositions. What's worse, such sentences are mistakenly considered as the most effective expressions. In addition, some compositions are very Chinese, completely ignoring the characteristics of English sentence patterns and culture. Then incoherent and fragmented sentences are formed, which makes it hard for native speakers to understand. For example, During World War II, a subordinate of President Franklin D. Roosevelt had to inform his night-shift workers that lights in federal buildings had to be turned off or prevented from leaking out during an air raid. The subordinate wrote this notice:

Such preparations shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination.

Roosevelt read it and changed it:

Tell them that in buildings where they have to keep the work going to put something across the windows.

Through the comparison of the two sentences, it is clear that the first sentence obviously adds too much information, which affects the transmission of the main information.

According to one of Wei Jianfeng's article, "Some foreign language scholars have done such research: when the number of words in a sentence is less than 14 words, readers can understand more than 90% of the sentence content; When the sentence length grows to 43 words, the reader understands less than 10 percent of the content. At the same time, the longer the sentence is, the less patient the reader will be, which is also not good for conveying the message. That's why some foreign governments require that sentences should not exceed 25 words in official documents."

3. The consideration of aesthetic perception

3.1 The layout of parts and the whole

Any type of writing creation, the formation of the article, must take into account the "aesthetic perception". While writing, the relationship between "part" and "whole" should be fully considered, which has a deep theoretical origin and basis from the theoretical angle of "aesthetics".

First of all, a good composition must be a coherent and harmonious work. The Pythagorean view of beauty is that beauty is harmony. Secondly, a good composition, in addition to the proportion, should also consider the "difference". Heraclitus also believed that "nature tends to differences and opposites, and harmony is generated from differences and opposites rather than from similar things", and "combination is formed by the factors of completeness and incompleteness, identical and different, harmonious and inharmonious".

Finally, it is the arrangement of writing order. Aristotle also discussed beauty in his *Poetics*. The passage on beauty is Chapter 7: A living thing, or any whole made up of its parts, must, if it is to be beautiful, show not only an order in the arrangement of its parts, but also a certain volume; for beauty consists in volume and order. As for the methods and techniques of composition, Longinus believes that "one of the five sources of sublime style is layout, and layout is particularly important because it organizes the other four sources into a whole."

In the thoughts and theories of the aesthetics, it is not difficult to see the importance of the part, the whole and their layout relations. Similarly, in the composition layout, it is important to consider the proportion, difference, local and overall optimization relations in the composition layout, so that the composition can not only meet the basic goal of information transmission, but also achieve the

realm of "beauty".

3.2 Diverse collocation

In English writing, it is also a stipulation of the writing scoring standard that the diversified expression of vocabulary and sentence structure is required. For English learners, the difficulty lies not only in the lack of vocabulary and sentence expressions, but also in judging the concept of "diversity", which is an "abstract concept" that cannot be unified and quantified. Therefore, it will vary from person to person. Nevertheless, there are still certain rules to follow.

First of all, lexical diversity is related to the part of speech. In English writing, nouns and verbs are used more frequently, while adjectives and adverbs are used less frequently. The main reason is that non-native speakers are not proficient enough in using them. For example, expressing the adjective word "好" in Chinese, most learners can only think of "good". In practice, "good" is a very general word, not specific or explicit. Many Chinese expressions, such as “人品好, 家境好, 能力好” tend to be translated as "beautiful character, better-off family and competent".

Secondly, the diversity of vocabulary is related to the amount of reading. In English writing, there are some so-called "rare words", and these "rare words" in the source language is very common, in line with the development of the era, but also profound and far-reaching in meaning. Wei Jianfeng, a well-known English learning blogger, wrote in his article *Why Do I Recommend You Read Greek and Roman Mythology?* In an example of this, "I applaud you for calling attention to variety as a public health issue. Having reported on variety at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, I am concerned that notifications from exhaustion on one hand with the risks of COVID-19 on the other is a choice between Scylla and Charybdis. The phrase "Charybdis" comes from ancient Greek mythology. In ancient Greek mythology, between Scylla and Charybdis was used to describe a dilemma in which the sibyl Scylla tried to catch and eat sailors passing between her cave and the Charybdis whirlpool. In fact, this usage is very common. Greek and Roman mythology has a profound influence on the humanities in the West, which is often reflected in the daily language expression.

4. Conclusion

English writing is not only a comprehensive use of English, but also a test of thinking and expression ability. First of all, for non-native English learners, there are two steps that needs to consider many factors. The first is to think about how to present opinion on the topic and how to gather and use evidence. After that, skills to translate from Chinese to English are required, during which authors shall consider words and sentences, format layout, embellishment and beautification. There is also a time limit for students to write English essay in the exam. English writing is a huge project of bilingual transmission. To complete this project well, authors must consider whether English words are equivalent to Chinese words, whether they are accurate and whether they are rich. Besides the wrong use of words and sentences should be avoided when choosing English words. In addition, the relationship between the part and the whole should be taken into account as well.

References

- [1] Han Zhonghua Two-track Transmission of Information in Translation Journal of Shanghai Maritime University Mar 1990
- [2] Willian Zinsser On Writing Well – The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction 7th Edition Harper Collins Publishers New York USA 2016; pp5
- [3] Nida. Eugene A LANGUAGE STRUGTURE AND TRANSLATION Stanford University Press, 1975
- [4] Qu Zongde Linguistics in Translation Shanghai 1st Edition Translation Publishing House Shanghai, 2017

- [5] Wei Jianfeng Analysis of A Common Writing Problem November 6, 2020 <http://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309405568219775270919> [weibo.com]
- [6] Wei Jianfeng Why Should Long and Difficult Sentences Be Used Carefully in Examination October 3, 2020 <http://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309405555884301779050> [weibo.com]
- [7] Wei Jianfeng Why Do I Recommend You To Read Greco-Roman Mythology May 13, 2021 <http://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404636348517843130> [weibo.com]
- [8] Wang Dawei; Weiqing Guang GE Translation: Techniques, Teaching and Theoretical Analyses 1st Edition China Foreign Translation and Publishing Corporation Beijing; pp21
- [9] Tatlock, J.M. Greek and Roman Mythology 1st Edition Central Compilation and Translation Press Beijing; 2012 pp85
- [10] Zhu Guangqian History of Western Aesthetics 1st Edition Jiangsu People's Publishing House Nanjing 2015