Thematic Progression in Translation
Wei XUE\textsuperscript{1,a} and Wei-na FENG\textsuperscript{2,b}
\textsuperscript{1}School of Foreign Studies, Xi’an University, Xi’an, China
\textsuperscript{2}School of Foreign Languages, Xidian University, Xi’an, China
\textsuperscript{a}xuewei05@163.com, \textsuperscript{b}sherryfengna@sohu.com

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Abstract This paper illustrates a diagram which indicates the relationship between the thematic progressive model and the translation between English and Chinese, and function and advantages of using thematic progressive model in translation.

Introduction

For the last forty years “translation science,” has been trying to establish itself as a new discipline focusing on an undefined and idealized “common core” of general language, but with concepts that in effect apply only to technical terminology. \cite{1} The translation study is rather an attempt to present recently developed concepts and methods, both from translation theory and linguistics, in such a way that they could be usefully employed in the theory, practice and analysis of literary translation. The interaction between theory and practice is essential to the development of translation studies. At present, translation study is both cross-subject study and cross-cultural study. \cite{2} The transformation among different subjects is very popular. Various models on translation studies appear, such as, linguistic model, text-linguistic model, social-cultural model, computational model, sycho-linguistic model, etc. Text-linguistic model is newly developed, which does not study the meaning in lexical level or sentential level, but in text level. As the appearance of theme-rheme patterns or thematic progression, more and more scholars find that it is very beneficial to translation studies. The present paper is discussing translation by applying one of the theories of discourse analysis—Thematic Progression.

What is Theme?

In expression, what a speaker/writer decides to bring to the \textit{front} of the clause is a signal of what is to be understood as the \textit{framework} within which what he/she wants to say is to be understood.\cite{5} The rest of the clause can then be seen as transmitting “what he/she wants to say within this framework”. Items brought to front-place in this way we shall call the theme of the clause. In what has been called the Prague School of linguistics, the relationship of the theme to the rest of the sentence is viewed as part of communicative dynamism, which is the assessment of the communication \cite{3}. Alternatively, the theme can be seen as the “point of departure” of the message. For the moment, we shall take as the theme of a clause the subject noun-phrase. Or, if this is not initial, then we shall include whatever comes before it. It seems that first position in the clause is important in many of the world’ languages and that creating a theme in the clause is a universal feature, though its realizations may vary from language to language.

Here are some examples in English
1) Joyce reads The Guardian.
2) The Guardian, Joyce reads.
3) Sometimes Joyce reads The Guardian.

The theme of the above sentences should be: “Joyce” in sentence 1) “The Guardian” in sentence 2) “Sometimes” in sentence 3). In other word, there are a variety of ways in which subject, object/complement, verb, adverbial, and even subordinated clause can be put at the beginning of a sentence, that is to say, can act as the theme of a sentence.
What is Rheme?

Previously, we discuss “theme”, which is regarded as the focus of a sentence. However, merely the focus could not make a complete sentence. The rest of a sentence is equally important in structure, which is called rheme. If we can identify the theme of a sentence, then the rheme is clear.

Now, let’s look back at the previous examples. We can say that the rheme of them should be like this: the rheme of sentence 1) is “reads The Guardian”; the rheme of sentence 2) is “Joyce reads”; the rheme of sentence 3) is “Joyce reads The Guardian”.

When we divide a sentence into two parts---theme and rheme, we can’t omit either, for rheme in a sentence has its own function. Usually, theme contains given information, which connects back and links in to the previous discourse; rheme contains new information. When they are combined with each other, the meaning is well expressed, especially in a text.

Basic Patterns of Thematic Progression in Textual Level Teaching

Textual progressing is the vein of a text. A discourse, no matter a whole text or a sentence group, is always developed according to a certain mental process. In such case, all the information in a certain discourse could be combined as a whole. Based on the study of natural texts, Daněš created basic patterns of thematic progression.

Basic patterns:
1. Parallel Patterns --- all sentences share the same theme, but have the different rhemes.
   \[
   T_1 \rightarrow R_1 \\
   T_1 \rightarrow R_2 \\
   T_1 \rightarrow R_3
   \]

   We can see this pattern at work in real text:
   
   I was there in the autumn. I wanted quiet, isolation, to do some troublesome writing.
   I wanted mountain air to blow out the malaria from too long a time in the subtropics. I was homesick too, for the flaming of maples in October, and for corn stocks ans pumpkins and black-walnut trees and the lift of hills. I found them all, living in a cabin that belonged to the orphanage, half a mile beyond the orphanage farm.

2. Concentrated Pattern --- all sentences have different themes, but share the same rheme.
   \[
   T_1 \rightarrow R_1 \\
   T_2 \rightarrow R_2 (=R_1) \\
   T_3 \rightarrow R_3 (=R_1)
   \]

   Here is an example:

   England is a country. France is a country. Turkey is a country. Italy is a country. Japan is a country. China is also a country.

3. Sequential Pattern ( also called Extended Pattern)
   \[
   T_1 \rightarrow R_1 \\
   \downarrow \\
   T_2 (=R_1) \rightarrow R_2 \\
   \downarrow \\
   T_3 (=R_2) \rightarrow R_3
   \]

   The next extract chooses predominantly this pattern:

   What characterizes almost all Hollywood pictures is their inner emptiness. This is compensated for by an outer impressiveness. Such impressiveness usually takes the form of a
4. Hierarchical Pattern

Here is an example:

*Isabella is one of the most beautiful characters in the pages of history. She was well-formed, of middle size. Her complexion was fair. Her hair was auburn, inclining to red. Her eyes were clear blue.*

**Comparison and Contrast between English Structure and Chinese Structure**

Chinese is a topic-prominent language; English is a subject-prominent language.

The essential difference between the two languages is: English is comparatively distinctive in various levels, for it has the clear-cut tense and aspect; while Chinese emphasizes on semantics and logic in constructing sentences.

The structural similarities and difference between the two languages:

**English:**
- words → phrases → *clauses* → sentence

**Chinese:**
- words → *phrases* → clauses → sentence

The black italicized words show that the structure of English language focuses on clauses, while the structure of Chinese language focuses on phrases.

**Thematic Progression in Translation**

For centuries, translations have been carried out on the basis of essentially stylistic criteria or according to the translation method used (literal or free). Historically, many of the texts on translation have been in the form of commentaries by authors on translations performed by other authors; the debate on the translation method used is a constant, in which the dichotomy between literal translation, on the one hand, and free translation, on the other, is absolutely central.[4] However, nowadays, both literal translation and free translation are objected. In such case, the paper presents the thematic progression in translation.

**Diagram of Using Thematic Progressive Model in Translation**

Based on the studies and research above, the following diagram is formed.

*truly grandiose realism.*
This diagram tells that the thematic progression can be used as a bridge in translating English into Chinese, or translating Chinese into English. When translating English into Chinese, people should firstly find out the subject in English sentences according to the principles and rules in English culture, which is the theme. People can use the same way to get the predicate, and the rhyme. Secondly, people put the theme and rhyme into Chinese culture, try to determine the topic and comment of Chinese sentence. Thirdly, they should arrange the sentence in Chinese way. In another hand, when people translate Chinese into English, they should firstly find out the topic and comment in Chinese sentence, then transfer the topic and the comment into the theme and the rhyme, lastly, by mental process, decide the subject and the predicate correspondently in English way.

Application

Actually, when people apply the thematic progression in translation, they may find that it’s convenient to draw some rules. General approach of English-Chinese translation in structure: Firstly, English phrases and clauses are transformed into Chinese phases. Secondly, Chinese phrases are formed into Chinese sentences in accordance with Chinese regulations (include topic-prominent, parataxis). That’s to say, the process of English-Chinese transformation is from formal syntax into mental syntax.

According to English structure, the subject of sentence 4) is I, so the theme is I. Then the left part is predicate, or the rhyme. From analysis, we have got the meaning of this sentence. Afterwards, by mental process, we can determine the correspondent topic and comment of the Chinese sentence. Lastly, we can arrange the Chinese sentence in Chinese way. This explanation also fits sentence 5).

General approach of Chinese-English translation in structure: Firstly, Chinese phrases are analyzed logically and are transformed into English clauses. Secondly, English clauses are formed into English sentences in accordance with English regulations (include subject-prominent, various parallels, subordinations, coordination), That’s to say, the process of Chinese-English transformation is from mental syntax into formal syntax. Look at the following example:

Huoze suo nenggou kanjian de lian doushi chanimei, qiqiude, kuialde shihou bugan xiao, bu kuialde shihou bugan buxiao, beiqi de shihou bugan ku, bu beiqi de shihou bugan buku de lian.

The only faces I could see would be ingratiating or supplicating---faces that dared not smile to express joy; faces that dared not refrain from a forced smile when there was no joy at all to justify a smile; faces that dared not cry to express sorrow; faces that dared not refrain from a feigned cry when there was no sorrow to justify a cry.

In Chinese, it’s habitual to put the attributives before the modified word, that’s the reason why there is a long and complicated attributive before the core word “faces”. However, in English, it’s habitual to put the long and complicated attributive after the modified word, that’s the reason why several “that” are followed the core word “faces”. Anyway, the topic of the Chinese sentence is, the left could be called the comment. By considering the different rules between Chinese structure and English structure, by applying the bridge---thematic progression into translation, it’s ingenious to transfer the topic-comment structure into the subject-predicate structure, and it’s appropriate to put the long and complicated modifiers after the core word.

Function and Advantages of Using Thematic Progressive Model in Translation

Presenting the thematic progressive model in translation is a newly thought. People may use it as a referent to comprehend a text before translation; use it as a considering factor during translation;
use it as a criteria to revise the text after translation. Applying thematic progression in translation broke the traditional method in translation, which is just focused on the original text; broke the dynamic equivalence theory, which is focused on the source language culture; broke the thought that there is only one and fixed entity in a text that can’t be changed in translation.

**Ending Words**

This research paper may have some limitations. Even so, the author does persist in the priority of applying the thematic progression in translation. The author does hopes for any criticism and comments.

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