



A Comparative Study of English and Chinese Discourse Aesthetic Choice and Its Translation

—Taking the Introduction of Chinese and American National Libraries as an Example

Mei Dong, Yuan Gao

College of Foreign Languages, Xi'an Shiyu University, Xi'an, China

Email: 2386976702@qq.com

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Abstract

The combination of aesthetic linguistics theory and translation practice is an effective way to cultivate the aesthetic sense of translation. The integration of aesthetic linguistics theory research and translation practice makes translation practice a process of language activity with more practical and aesthetic value, which can enhance people's consciousness, creativity and appreciation of language beauty and linguistic beauty. With the guidance of aesthetic linguistics and the use of comparative research methods, this paper analyzes the descriptive texts of the introduction to the Chinese and American National Libraries, and starts with the four aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence and discourse of the English and Chinese texts, and experiences the linguistic beauty of the two texts from an aesthetic perspective, so as to provide guidance for translation.

Subject Areas

Linguistics

Keywords

Aesthetic Linguistics, Translation

1. Contrastive Study of English and Chinese

English and Chinese are two completely different languages. There are various differences in history, geography, culture, way of thinking, customs and ways of life. Translation is not only a simple translation between English words and Chinese characters, but also a process of interlingual conversion. In the actual

translation work, it is necessary to confirm whether the expressions of the two languages correspond to each other, and whether they meet the customary requirements of the writing and expression of the target language, so as to achieve the core meaning of the original text, and at the same time, the expression is accurate and the language is aesthetic. The comparison between English and Chinese can better dig out the root of cultural charm [1].

The task of aesthetic choice is to build the language system according to the law of beauty in the whole sense and to build their own language according to the law of beauty. The attributes of aesthetic requirements are multifaceted and multi-level, including the form of things, beauty and content beauty. The formal beauty of language is the inherent aesthetic attribute of phonetic beauty. The producer and creator of the speaker's language aesthetics should add human feelings to the translation to produce the beauty of the general need for the beauty of spoken words, combined with the author's aesthetic ideal view. Emotion is what makes the reader feel the meaning of the source language.

In this conversion process, the bilingual comparison is carried out consciously or unconsciously. By comparing and mastering the differences and rules of English and Chinese discourse conversion, we can fully convey the meaning of the original text at multiple levels in the translation process. In order to make the comparative analysis more illustrative, the language materials selected must be representative. It is necessary not only to ensure the internal consistency of the language materials, but also to ensure the comparability between the two languages, but also to pay attention to the language style, genre, age, style and other aspects of the language.

The subject of this paper is the introduction of National libraries in China and the United States, and the introduction of the National Library of China and the National Library of the United States are selected as comparative materials. Both libraries are national-level buildings, and their introductions are written narrative texts and introductory texts, both of which can attract the audience. Therefore, the aesthetic choice of language entities is very comparable.

2. Aesthetic Linguistics

In ancient Greece, Plato raised the question of "beauty itself", that is, the question of the essence of beauty. Guanlian Qian (1999) put forward the concept of aesthetic linguistics. He believes that the research object of aesthetic linguistics is the aesthetic attribute of language, as well as the nature and law of daily speech events and speech acts, which are both communicative activities and aesthetic objects. Aesthetics, which includes aesthetic relations and aesthetic consciousness, is a science that constantly creates, develops and changes [2]. Aesthetic linguistics should study the beauty in speech, the characteristics and rules of people's creation and appreciation of the beauty of speech, and the ugliness of speech, in the final analysis, in order to study the characteristics and rules of turning ugliness into beauty under certain conditions. Aesthetic linguistics studies problems in language with

reference to aesthetic methods, and studies the characteristics and rules of daily speech activities and speech acts as communicative activities and aesthetic activities. Guanlian Qian (2006) also proposed that the form of speech beauty means that the speaker chooses the right words in the right context, that is, the arrangement of the words, which is suitable for both the social background and the textual background. The form of speech beauty is manifested in the speaker's choice of beautiful rhyme and appropriate rhythm in the language form, and the choice of speech expression entity in line with the rule of formal beauty [3]. In other words, the object of language expression is selected for aesthetic purposes, and the selection of linguistic entity has three levels of content: the linguistic level of contrast, the linguistic unit of contrast and the linguistic content of contrast. Specifically, the aesthetic choice is made from the four aspects of phonology, vocabulary, syntax and text aesthetics.

3. The Definition and application of Aesthetic Choice

The aesthetic choice of language means that in the initial speech activity and speech act, people always have to choose the discourse form which can meet the needs of the dynamic balance of their life and cause the pleasant and pleasant aesthetic feeling [4]. That is to say, the choice of a certain language expression entity starts from the aesthetic purpose. All the structural levels of language are built by man according to the laws and intentions of beauty.

Cross-cultural communication between English and Chinese. To ensure the aesthetic choice of translation requires not only literal accuracy, but more importantly, accurate communication on the cultural level [5]. Cultural context and the intertextuality of translation play a key role. When translating aesthetic choices, translators need to think strategically according to the cultural background and expected response of the target audience, which may involve appropriate modifications or additions to the original text to ensure the cultural adaptability of the translation. Such translation can truly realize the accurate transmission of culture and become an effective bridge for cross-cultural communication.

4. Comparison and Translation of Narrative Texts between English and Chinese from an Aesthetic Perspective

4.1. Aesthetic Choice and Contrast of Speech

A comparative analysis of the differences between English and Chinese pronunciation shows that intonation and rhythm are the two most obvious ways to convey beauty [6]. English is an intonation language that does not change with the way the tone of the original syllable rises or falls, nor does its meaning change. Chinese is a tonal language. When the tone of Chinese characters changes, the meaning of Chinese characters will also change [7].

The proportion of the number of syllables in a vocabulary is illustrated by **Table 1**. In the introduction of the National Library of China, there are 5 monosyllables, accounting for 0.12% of the total, 130 double-syllables, accounting for 15.13% of

the total, 16 three-syllables, accounting for 3.1% of the total, and 66 four-syllables, accounting for 16.87% of the total. As can be seen from the data, monosyllabic and trisyllabic are relatively few, and double syllables account for the largest proportion. Disyllization is the main rhythmic tendency of modern Chinese. Disyllization plays an important role in the history of Chinese. It makes words clear in the semantically and clearly in the parts of speech. The written language emphasizes elegance and rhythm. A single syllable cannot form a foot and therefore cannot express a sense of rhythm, so it has to be matched with another syllable to express a sense of rhythm. In the introduction of the Library of Congress, there are 121 monosyllables, accounting for 13.87% of the total, 213 disyllables, accounting for 24.14% of the total, 147 trisyllables, accounting for 14.98% of the total, and 65 tetrasyllables, accounting for 4.23% of the total. From the data, we can see that the proportion of four syllables is relatively small, which is the same as the introduction of the National Library of China, and the proportion of two syllables is relatively large. Syllables are generally regarded as the phonological "building blocks" of words, influencing the rhythm, rhyme, rhyme, and tone patterns of the language. The collocation of various syllables enhances the readability of the article. Unlike Chinese, monosyllabic words are also used more frequently in English. And the Chinese expression is more catchy.

Table 1. The proportion of the number of syllables in vocabulary.

Number/Proportion	Monosyllable	Disyllabic	Trisyllabic
Library of Congress1342	121/13.87%	213/24.14%	147/14.98%
National Library of China1768	5/0.12%	130/15.13%	16/3.1%

As can be seen from the above table, both Chinese and English texts use disyllabic words at a high frequency. The biggest difference between English texts and Chinese texts is that English texts use monosyllabic words at a high frequency, while Chinese texts use monosyllabic words at a very low frequency, which is caused by language differences between Chinese and English. Therefore, in translation, it is necessary to improve the translation according to the characteristics of the respective languages. On the basis of the expression of meaning, the translation should be combined with the rhythm, rhyme and syllable of Chinese expression habits. When translating from Chinese to English, the hidden laws in the text are revealed, and readers can experience different aesthetic feelings when reading.

4.2. The Aesthetic Choice and Contrast of Words

4.2.1. Word Frequency

Word frequency refers to the total number of a word in the corpus. Word frequency statistics can provide important reference information for stylistic features. This study takes nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and personal pronouns as the objects of study, and discusses their aesthetic choices at the lexical level through comparative analysis.

Table 2. The proportion of vocabulary types.

Number/Proportion	National Library of China	Library of Congress
Noun	272/69.7%	289/73.2%
Verb	94/24.1%	63/15.9%
Adjective	14/3.6%	19/4.8%
Adverb	9/2.3%	6/1.5%
Personal Pronoun	1/0.3%	18/6.1%

As can be seen from **Table 2**, among the descriptive texts, the frequency of nouns used in Chinese and English texts is the highest, accounting for 69.7% and 73.2% respectively. In the descriptive text, the extensive use of nouns can help readers clarify the text content, clear the logical relationship, and obtain the text information directly and clearly.

The second most frequently used verb is 24.1% and 15.9% respectively. The use of verbs is equally important in both Chinese and English texts, and a large number of verbs can make readers feel the functions and effects of libraries more directly.

The biggest difference between Chinese text and English text in word frequency is the use of pronouns, which accounts for 6.1% in English text and only 0.3% in Chinese text. This shows that there are differences in sentence patterns between Chinese text and English text, which is the result of the differences in the internal logical relations between Chinese and English sentence patterns.

Therefore, in Chinese-English translation, we should pay attention to the conversion and addition of pronouns to make the sentence complete expression, and reduce some adjectives that do not affect the meaning. Add adjectives to enrich the expression of emotion and content.

4.2.2. Word Length and Text Difficulty

To some extent, word length reflects the size of the words used in the text and the difficulty of the words. If the sentence is long and there are many syllables in the sentence, it is generally difficult [5]. Conversely, if the sentence is short and there are few syllables in the sentence, it is not so difficult. Danielson & Bryan also proposed that the difficulty of English text can be explained by the average number of words per unit space and the average number of words per sentence, and the difficulty of text is closely related to the word length. In general, the higher the average word length in the text, the more words used, the longer the more difficult.

According to the calculation, the average word length of the Library of Congress introduction is 5.72, which indicates that the text is easy to understand the public text, which also reflects the characteristics of the narrative text.

In addition to the choice of words, the differences in grammatical structure and rhetorical devices should also be considered in translation. For example, in Western culture, there may be emphasis on formal vividness and lyricism, while in Chinese culture, there is more emphasis on reserve and elegance [8]. Translators

need to flexibly use different language expressions according to different cultural backgrounds to ensure that the translation conforms to the target audience's aesthetic habits and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the transformation of cultural metaphors and symbols should be taken into account in the process of translation.

4.3. Aesthetic Choice and Contrast of Syntax

4.3.1. Sentence Length

The difficulty of Chinese and English texts mainly depends on the length of the sentences. To some extent, the length of the sentence can reflect the content of information in the text.

By calculation, the Chinese text has 32 sentences with an average sentence length of 55.25, and the English text has 58 sentences with an average sentence length of 27.96. In this comparison, the number of words in Chinese sentences is more than the average number of words in English sentences, which indicates that the information content in a single sentence of Chinese text is larger than that of English text. But English text has more sentences.

4.3.2. Tense

It can be seen from **Table 3** that the frequency of using passive sentences in Chinese text is much lower than that in English text. English texts use more passive sentences, while Chinese is more inclined to use active sentences. This is mainly due to the cultural differences between China and Britain. Passive sentences in Chinese are mainly divided into two types. One is passive sentences with explicit marks, in which the word “bei” appears. Usually, the sentences with explicit marks describe negative colors and are not often used in Chinese. The other is implicit passive sentences, that is, there is no explicit mark “bei” in the sentences, but the passive meaning is expressed by the active structure on the surface. In Chinese, this type of passive sentences with implicit marks are more common than those with explicit marks. Therefore, in translation, attention should be paid to finding invisible passive sentences, translating them passively, considering the reading habits of the information receiver, and ensuring the fluency and natural translation.

Table 3. Part of speech color proportion.

Number/Proportion	Passive Sentence	Active Sentence
National Library of China	0/0% ^a	32/100%
Library of Congress	26/46%	32/54%

4.4. The Aesthetic Choice and Contrast of the Text

Textual coherence focuses on the semantic logic relations between various concepts and propositions expressed in texts. In the two aspects of coherence and coherence of a text, the cohesiveness of a text is represented by the connection between the sentences in the text in terms of surface grammatical structure and vocabulary.

Table 4. The frequency of use of indicative words.

	Usage Times
That/This	4
It/Its	14
这/那	0
它/他的	0

As can be seen from **Table 4**, English text uses pronouns much more frequently than Chinese text. This is because English sentence structure is heavy, long sentences, Chinese sentence structure is heavy meaning, more short sentences. English texts use pronouns to improve the fluency of the text, Chinese texts use context to improve the readability of the text, and use their respective writing strategies to improve the fluency of the text and increase the beauty of the text.

Therefore, when dealing with translation problems, translators should optimize the expression of key words and phrases as much as possible on the premise of accurately conveying the information and language style of the original text, so as to ensure the maximum aesthetic quality of the translation. In order to convey the semantic information of the original text as much as possible, the translator adopts the strategy of segmentation and reconfiguration of the sentence structure of the original text.

5. Conclusion

Aesthetic linguistics has great significance in text contrast and provides new theoretical guidance for it. Based on aesthetic linguistics, this paper makes a comparative analysis of English and Chinese phonetics, vocabulary, syntax and text levels, and summarizes corresponding translation strategies. The effective way to cultivate the aesthetic sense of translation is to enhance the translator's consciousness, creativity and appreciation of the beauty of speech, and to promote the translator's pursuit of the beauty of speech and language. As translators, we should feel and create beauty, take the reader's perspective as the main reference, choose the words that best meet the target context according to the aesthetic choice of words, and apply aesthetics to our daily translation work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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