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The Comparative Analysis of *The Sight of Father's Back* Two English Versions from the Perspective of Grammatical Metaphor

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Abstract: Based on the grammatical metaphor theory of systemic functional grammar, this paper will analyze the conceptual metaphor of two English versions of Zhu Ziqing's *The Sight of Father's Back*. The purpose is to reveal the effect of artistic conception translation in the process of code switching. The research shows that using incongruent language form can transfer the artistic conception effect of the original text more effectively in the code switching from Chinese.

Key words: Conceptual Grammatical Metaphor, Incongruent Form, Code Switching, *The Sight of Father's Back*

I.   Introduction

The theory of systemic functional linguistics is very suitable for the discourse analysis from various perspectives, including pronunciation, vocabulary, semantics and discourse. Huang Guowen, Xu Jun and Zhang Xiaochun have carried out discourse analysis in different aspects, of which ancient Chinese poetry takes a large scale. In addition, some scholars have explored the feasibility and applicability of systemic functional linguistics for scientific discourse, novel, news discourse and so on. Based on Halliday's grammatical metaphor theory, this paper analyzes the two translations of Zhu Ziqing's *The Sight of Father's Back* which is high praised by many people (taking the fifth paragraph as an example), and tries to make a comparative analysis of the two translations from the perspective of grammatical metaphor to explore the artistic conception transmission effect of different translation strategies.

II.   Grammatical metaphor

Systemic functional linguists believe that language is a hierarchical system of meaning symbols. There are two ways of expression between the lexical grammatical level and the semantic level: congruent form and incongruent form. The former refers to the universal way of expressing a certain meaning, while the latter is an unconventional form, that is, the form of grammatical metaphor. Halliday's grammatical metaphor theory is divided into conceptual grammatical metaphor and interpersonal grammatical metaphor. Conceptual grammatical metaphor is mainly divided into transitivity and nominalization, while interpersonal grammatical metaphor is divided into metaphors of mood and metaphors of modality. This paper only investigates transitivity and nominalization in conceptual grammatical metaphor.

1.1 Transitivity

Halliday divides the transitivity system into six processes: material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process and existential process. Transitivity refers to the transformation between various processes. For example:

The floods considerably eroded the land．

This sentence is a material process, but it can also be expressed as:

There was considerable erosion of the land from the floods．

The latter sentence expresses basically the same meaning as the previous sentence, but it chooses existential process. The former is congruent form and the latter is metaphorical form. The change of process leads to the change of other components. The change of process leads to the change of other components. In the former, the body of making movements "floods" and the target "land" are converted into environmental components and modifying components in the latter sentence.

1.2 Nominalization

In addition to the transitivity mentioned above, conceptual grammatical metaphor also involves nominalization. Nominalization is to regard a process or feature as something, which is reflected in the level of vocabulary and grammar, that is, the convert of word formation (Zhu Yongsheng, 2). In other words, the clause process originally expressed by verbs and adjectives is packaged and compressed into noun phrases through rank-shift. Nominalization is the most powerful means to create grammatical metaphors. Through nominalization, a large amount of information is concentrated in nouns or noun phrases, which increases the amount of information and vocabulary density of clauses and makes the text more concise and formal. At the same time, nominalization also plays an important role in text cohesion. For example:

The publishers had praised his novel pretty highly．

His novel had won high praise from the publishers．

The verb "praise" and the adverb "high" are converted into nouns and adjectives respectively, packaged into noun phrases and used as the scope of the material process of the sentence, which weakens the emergence of the body of making movements "publishers" and becomes more objective.

2. Excerpt from *The Sight of Father's Back*

The Sight of Father's Back is a popular prose of Zhu Ziqing in his early years, which is full of 1500 words and is divided into six paragraphs. The fifth paragraph is detailed description. It mainly describes the back of Zhu Ziqing's father when his father sent him to the train station. Zhu Ziqing vividly shows his father's love to him through the description of his father's action. Although this short essay did not depict the emotion overflowing from his father, the author completely relied on plain words, like telling a family affair and truthfully recorded every picture and emotional disclosure. Many readers was overwhelmed and moved after reading the short essay. But how could such plain language and love be combined with words and context? Can such writing achieve the same effect through another code-switching, and truthfully convey the rich emotions with such simple words?

This question is worth discussing, and different translation texts should be carefully considered in translation studies to explore the methods and effects of translation, so as to improve the quality of translation. The fifth paragraph of *The Sight of Father's Back* in the original text is a detailed description, which expresses the father's love to his son when the father sees his son off, and reflects the son's overflowing love to his father when the son sees his father off.   The paper will choose two translation texts to do a comparative study. The first translation text is by Mr. Zhang Peiji, and the second one is from the volumes of *Chinese Literature: Modern Prose* by Yang Xianyi. Both of them almost faithfully convey the meaning and effect of the original text, but they are slightly different in the expression of artistic conception. This paper makes a textual analysis of

these two translation texts from the perspective of conceptual grammatical metaphor to explore the applicability and feasibility of conceptual grammatical metaphor theory in translation.

III.   The Comparative analysis of the translations for The Sight of Father's Back

The fifth paragraph of the essay *The Sight of Father's Back* is a detailed description of a father who sent his so to train station. The language is plain but full of the father's care to his son. The two translation texts skillfully express the love between the son and his father. As we all know, Chinese emphasizes parataxis, highlighting the status of verbs, however, English emphasizes hypotaxis. So the translator needs to reduce the frequency of verbs, but still achieve smooth and natural sentence patterns and the artistic effect of equivalence with the original sentence. By comparison, it is found that the two translation text chooses different translation strategies, mainly because of the different application of conceptual metaphor theory, which makes the translation effect different.

4.1 Transitivity

In this essay, there are many metaphors of transitivity in the translation texts, which are mostly transformed from material process to relational process or mental process. Because in this way will reduce the use of verbs and the number of clauses. For example:

(1)我看那边月台的栅栏外有几个卖东西的等着顾客。

I caught sight of several vendors waiting for customers outside the railings beyond a platform. (The first translation version)

Just outside the station were some vendors．(The second translation version)

In this sentence, the translation of the original sentence will be the process of existence. There is the object form of the metaphor "caught sight of" for a mental process. The second translation text is reserved as a relational process.

(2)我本来要去的，他不肯，只好让他去。

1wanted to do that myself, but he stopped me，so I could do nothing but let him go．(The first translation version)

But when I volunteered to go instead he would not hear of it. (The second translation version)

Although the meaning of the material process is clear, its structure is complex and not natural enough. But the metaphor of the material process as the action process 'is very effective, showing the situation of the father walking straight away.

(3)我赶紧拭干了泪，怕他看见，也怕别人看见。

I quietly wiped them away lest he or others should catch me. (The first translation version)

but I wiped them hastily so that neither he nor anyone else might see them．(The second translation version)

The first translation transform the behavioral process of the original sentence as "看见(see)" as a material process of "catching me", while the second translation   version does not carry out any conversion. Therefore, the first translation version not only reflects the action "see", but also shows the unexpected situation that others saw my tears and my worries. Therefore, it is vivid enough to convey the author's mood at this time.

(4)我再向外看时，他已抱了朱红的橘子往回走了。过铁道时，他先将橘子散放在地上，自己慢慢爬下，再抱起橘子走。

The next moment when I looked out of the window again，father was already on the way back，holding bright red tangerines in both hands．In crossing the railway track，he first put the tangerines on the ground，climbed down slowly and then picked them up again. (The first translation version)

When next I looked out he was on his way back with some ruddy tangerines．He put these on the platform

before climbing slowly down to cross the lines，which he did after picking the fruit up. (The second translation version)

Both translation versions convert the material process "往回走(going back)" in the original sentence into the relational process "father was already on the way back". Such translations weaken the action, but accurately express the position of the father and the state in the eyes of the author

(5)到这边时，我赶紧去搀他。

When he came near the train，I hurried out to help him by the hand．(The first translation version)

When he reached my side 1 was there to help him up．(The second translation version)

The translation text metaphorically transfer the material process "赶紧去（hurried to）" in the original text as a relational process "I was there". In this way can weaken the appearance of action and emphasize the results, but it also achieves the result of verb expression due to the less use of verbs in English. And the first translation is still translated as "hurried to" which belongs to the material process and it is consistent with the verb "help" of the following sentence. So the number of the verbs is too much and the translation effect is not as good as translation.

(6)他和我走到车上，将橘子一股脑儿放在我的皮大衣上。于是扑扑衣上的泥土，心里很轻松似的，过一会说："我走了，到那边来信!"

After boarding the train with life，he laid all the tangerines on my overcoat，and patting the dirt off his clothes，he looked somewhat relieved and said after a while, I　must be going now．Don't forget to write me from Beijing. (The first translation version)

We boarded the train together and he plumped the tangerines down on my coat．Then he brushed the dust from his clothes，as if that was a weigh off his mind．"I'll be going now, son."he said presently．"Write to me once you get there." (The second translation version)

There is one mental process "心里很轻松似的 someone feels relieved" in the original text. The first translation version directly translates it "relieved" to express the psychological state, while the other translation version transforms the mental process to relational text, "as if that was a weight off his mind". It is more vivid to show the father's relaxed mood than the first translation version.

4.2Nominalization

(7)他用两手攀着上面，两脚再向上缩；他肥胖的身子向左微倾，显出努力的样子。

His hands held onto the upper part of the platform，his legs huddled up and his corpulent body tipped slightly towards the left，obviously making an enormous exertion. (The first translation version)

He clutched the platform with both hands and tried to heave his legs up, straining to the left. (The second translation version)

The word "努力" in the original text is a verb, but the first translation text nominalize it to　the noun "exertion". It vividly shows his father's laborious behavior, and the whole image seems to emerge in front of readers. The second translation text uses gerund "training" to express the appearance of laborious action, make the original action become a metaphor through an adverbial component. It weakens the action, highlight the image and state, and enables people to feel like they see the father's action process.

(8)这时我看见他的背影，我的眼泪很快地流下来了。

While was watching him from behind, tears gushed from my eyes．(The first translation version)

At the sight of his burly back tears started to my eyes. (The second translation version)

The action "see" in the original language is nominalized as "sight" in the second translation text. It skillfully uses the preposition structure to blur the appearance of the action sender "I', highlight the existence of tears and emphasize the theme. The first translation text still adopts the action of "watching", and the effect of expression is not as vivid as the second translation. However, there is another metaphor,the first translation is

more vivid than the second one. The father's "back" in the original sentence appears as the object of "seeing", while the first translation metaphors the "back" of the participant as the environmental component "from behind", which echoes the emergence of the previous subject "I" and emphasizes the real feelings of the author at that time.

After comparing the two translations, it found that the two translation texts have different translation strategies. Moreover, the second translation text can flexibly adopt conceptual metaphor to transform many parts of the original text or the environmental components of the sentence in the process of translation, vividly reproducing the artistic conception and effect of the original text. Therefore, the application of conceptual metaphor to Chinese-English translation can improve the expression effect of the translation and highlight the artistic conception of the Chinese original text and the emotional meaning behind the text.

It is not easy to achieve equivalence between meaning and context in translation, and how to express the meaning accurately. Properly transmitting the artistic conception of the original text is the key to code switching. The analysis of this paper shows that the proper use of conceptual metaphor can effectively carry out Chinese-English code conversion, convey the meaning of the text, effectively convey the artistic conception of the original text and express the emotional meaning behind the text. In contrast, the form of conceptual metaphor in translation 1 is single. In addition to the individual use of relational process instead of material process, it basically follows the expression form of the original text, while translation 2 appropriately performs functional transformation according to the artistic conception of the original text, and flexibly uses the form of conceptual metaphor to each clause.

Almost all of them have been properly transformed in function, which confirms Mr. Huang Guowen's view: "as the form chosen by the translator, we must convey the semantics and artistic conception of the original text to the greatest extent." (Huang Guo Wen 15) Conceptual grammatical metaphor, a special form, not only conveys the meaning of the original text, but also reproduces the artistic conception of the original text. Therefore, conceptual grammatical metaphor just makes up for the distance between parataxis and hypotaxis in the process of code switching between Chinese and English. Therefore, the author thinks that the second version can reproduce the artistic conception of the original text and the author's inner feelings more vividly, which is a little better than the first version. So the conception of the original text can be more vividly reproduced by means of conceptual grammatical metaphor in the process of conversion from Chinese to English.

IV.   Conclusion

This paper is based on Halliday's conceptual grammatical metaphor. It examines the operability and explanatory power of conceptual grammatical metaphor theory in translation by analyzing two English translations of *The Sight of Father's Back* from two aspects of transitivity process and nominalization. The author thinks that the proper use of conceptual grammatical metaphor can effectively convey the artistic conception and emotion of the original text, achieve the perfect combination of semantic and situational context, and play an important role in the process of Chinese-English code-switching. However, due to the combination of emotional transmission and plain language structure, the essay *The Sight of Father's Back* can only be regarded as a special discourse, which does not have the representative role of detecting conceptual metaphor in translation. Therefore, more texts need to be analyzed and verified. In addition, the author also hopes to bring some enlightenment to translation from the perspective of grammatical metaphor.

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