

Study on the Application of Communicative Translation Approach to Sentence Analysis in IELTS Reading

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Abstract

According to Peter Newmark's translation theories, IELTS academic reading can be classified as informative text, which could thereby apply the communicative translation method while analyzing complex sentences in the test. Based on the theoretical paradigm of communicative translation method, this study attempts to translate some long sentences in IELTS reading into Chinese so as to remove barriers in reading comprehension for IELTS test takers.

Keywords

Communicative Translation Method; IELTS Reading; Sentence Analysis.

1. Introduction

Communicative translation is one of the significant translation theories proposed by Peter Newmark. He claims that all the text could be divided into three types: expressive text, informative text and vocative text. IELTS academic reading articles are mostly adapted from journals and research papers. Due to its highly academic nature, IELTS academic reading belongs to informative text and thereby test takers could better comprehend complex sentences from the perspective of communicative translation method. This study uses examples taken from IELTS examination papers to discuss the application of communicative translation approach to sentence analysis in IELTS reading.

2. Peter Newmark's Translation Theories

2.1. Semantic Translation Theory and Communicative Translation Theory

Peter Newmark's translation theories have been widely used in the sphere of linguistics and language translation. In his noted works, *Approaches to Translation* and *A Text Book of Translation*, Newmark proposes that communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original whereas semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original [1].

Semantic translation refers to reproducing the form and context of the source text as accurately as possible under the premise of the semantic and syntactic structure of the target language. Comparing with communicative translation, semantic translation focuses more on the author of the source text. The translator must retain fidelity to the original author, conform to the culture of the original language, and strive to communicate all the nuances of the source language and all the characteristics of the author's style. In terms of language expression, the translated text should convey both form and spirit of the original text.

Communicative translation theory, on the other hand, is more receptor-oriented. Information accuracy is vital to this theory. It attaches great importance to the effect produced by the target language on target readership. Therefore, under the guidance of communicative translation theory, the translator can appropriately adjust the original sentence structure, use common

collocation in target language, and add supplementary information to make the translated text more acceptable for target readers. However, this does not indicate disrespect to the source language author. Instead, the translator should endeavor to convey the original information as precisely as possible. [2]

2.2. Text Typology

In the light of previous research, Newmark claims that all the texts could be divided into three categories: expressive text, informative text and vocative text. Translators should adopt different translation methods according to the text type.

Expressive texts mainly include literary works, political literature, speeches, autobiography and so on. The style of the original author and the content of the source language are both crucial to the quality of the translated text. Hence, the translation should apply semantic translation method which gives priority to the source language, and tries to retain fidelity to the original author.

Informative texts mainly encompass non-literary works, textbooks, academic papers, conference articles and other texts that emphasize content over form. The information in the source language should be translated accurately to target readers. Meanwhile, the acceptance among target readers should not be ignored, that is, the translated text in the target language should conform to the language cognitive system of the readership. Therefore, the translation of informative text should focus on communicative translation technique.

Vocative texts are mostly found in advertisements, brochures, debates, notices and other texts which aim at persuading or guiding readers. The purpose of the language is to call on readers to act, think and feel, in an attempt to arouse readers' emotional resonance. [3] Therefore, communicative translation method is often used in vocative texts.

3. Application of Communicative Translation Theory to IELTS Reading Comprehension

3.1. Reading Materials in IELTS Reading Test

Cambridge IELTS is a worldwide language proficiency testing system developed by the British Council, which comprehensively measures the language ability of English non-native speakers, who have plans to study or work in English-speaking countries. The test covers four sections, including listening, reading, writing and speaking. The reading test discussed in the present study refers specifically to the IELTS Academic reading test.

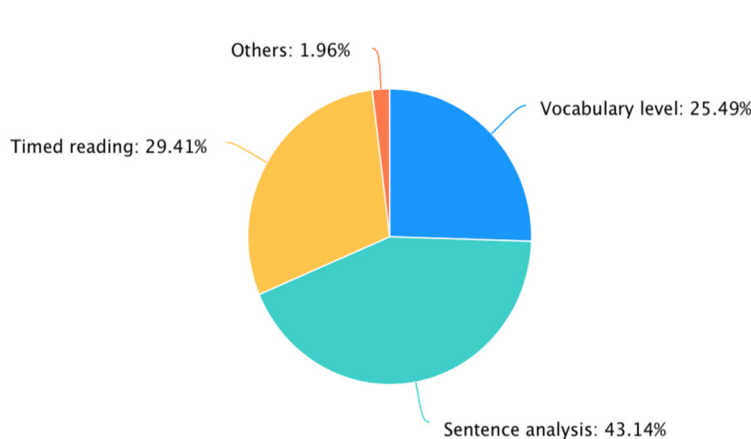


Fig 1. Survey result on learning barriers in IELTS reading test

The IELTS academic reading test consists of three long passages which are normally adapted from current books, journals, magazines and newspapers. [4] The text often includes compound sentences and clauses which become a barrier for test takers to understand the whole article. In a survey conducted by the author of present paper, among 72 students who are currently studying for IELTS, 43.14% of them suggest that understanding complex sentence structure in IELTS reading passage is the biggest obstacle for them, see Figure 1. According to the text classification proposed by Newmark, the reading materials in IELTS academic reading test belong to informative text. Therefore, it would be more desirable to adopt communicative translation approach so as to better comprehend long sentences in IELTS academic reading test.

3.2. Cases of English to Chinese Translation: Examples from IELTS Reading Examination Paper

On the basis of Newmark's translation theory and the features of IELTS academic reading, this paper analyzes and discusses the application of communicative translation approach to sentence analysis in IELTS reading. The following text will use two examples taken from IELTS examination papers to elaborate on the issue.

Example 1: Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of this idea is malaria-prone areas, which are usually tropical regions that foster a warm and damp environment in which the mosquitos that can give people this disease can grow. [5]

Translation: 也许针对这一观点最显而易见的例子就是疟疾多发区。这些地方通常是热带地区，它们营造了温暖潮湿的环境，使得传染这种疾病的蚊子可以在那里生长。

Analysis: There are many long sentences in IELTS reading text, which usually contain several clauses and modifiers. In the case of example 1, the sentence has four attributive clauses. Under the guidance of communicative translation technique, the translated text divides the original sentence into three short sentences, which flexibly deals with the four consecutive attributive clauses, so that the logical relationship is clearer and the language expression conforms to the Chinese language norms.

Example 2: The company received a commercial boost from the Empress Eugenie of France, when she decided the new colour flattered her. Very soon, mauve was the necessary shade for all the fashionable ladies in that country. [6]

Translation 1: 该公司销量大涨，当法国皇后欧仁妮觉得新颜色使她更美了。很快，淡紫色就成为那个国家所有时髦女士的必备颜色。

Translation 2: 自从法国皇后也钟情于淡紫色，该公司的销量大涨。很快，淡紫色就成为了法国所有时髦女士的必备颜色。

Translation 1 adopts the semantic translation method, which strictly follows the structure and form of the original sentence. It seems to be respectful to the original sentence, but the translation makes the whole text abrupt for readers. The second translation applies communicative translation approach, which places the adverbial clause of time "when she decided the new colour flattered her" at the beginning in an attempt to make the flow of the sentence more fluent. The word "flatter" is translated as "钟情于", which realizes the equivalence-expected effect in the target language. In addition, it should be noted that in order to avoid repetition, the original sentence uses several expressions to refer to mauve, including the new color, the shade; and it uses the demonstrative pronoun "that country" to refer to France. However, while translating English into Chinese, the translator needs to make the

reference more explicit. In this case, the second translation repeats the word “淡紫色” and “法国” to clarify the reference. The second translation conforms to the communicative translation method and achieves the goal of communicative translation.

4. Conclusion

IELTS reading articles cover a wide range of topics, with a large number of complex sentences, demonstrating the academic nature of the test, which highlights the importance of appropriate translation approach in comprehending difficult sentences. Newmark's translation theories can provide meaningful reference for understanding IELTS reading text. The semantic translation and communicative translation should be flexibly adopted according to the specific situation of the text to achieve the best translation effect. In the case of IELTS reading articles, applying communication translation method is more appropriate. After mastering these translation techniques, test takers can improve their sentence analysis ability and hence achieve higher scores in IELTS academic test.

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