

Study on Addition and Omission in Translation

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Abstract

This essay refers to the basic introduction of two important translation skills: addition and omission. Firstly, a brief introduction to addition and omission is given. Then, the necessity, the definition of them and the relationship of them are introduced briefly. Furthermore, in part 3 and part 4, many practical examples about the addition and the omission are excited respectively according to the classification of words, and some analysis of translation skills and ways are followed behind the translation sentences in the brackets or in the form of a single paragraph. Finally, in part 5 the conclusion is drawn: the target language would be faithful and fluent by proper use of addition and omission in translation. The essay's purpose is to provide reference for translation skills improvement.

Keywords

Addition; Omission; Faithful; Fluent.

1. Introduction

As a part of culture, languages are handed down from generation to generation. There are many differences between English and Chinese in word usages, sentence structures and expression ways. It is necessary to add some words or background information that don't appear in the source language, or delete some words that need not to be translated in the target language. In these ways, the target language will be more fluent and the target meaning will be more faithful to the source language.

2. A Brief Introduction of Addition and Omission in Translation

2.1. The Necessity of Addition and Omission in Translation

English syntactic structure is close and concentrate on form, while Chinese syntactic structure is precise and specific and concentrate on meaning. In other words, hypotaxis is used in English sentence-making, however, paratactic in Chinese sentence-making [1]. Therefore, generally speaking, when Chinese is to be translated into English, whether it is necessary to add some words or delete ones or not, which mostly depends on that the syntactic structure of the translation is conformed to English expressions. On the other hand, Chinese doesn't have the changes of word form and the marks of word form are not so much, so with the word form and syntactic structure in English, the word form in Chinese is not so obvious. Therefore, when English is to be translated into Chinese, whether it is necessary to add words or delete ones or not, which mostly depends on that to make sure the Chinese meaning is accurate and whole.

2.2. The Definition of Addition and Omission in Translation

Addition translation refers to the means of translation by adding some necessary words, phrases, subsidiary sentence or whole sentences on the basis of the source passage to make sure that the translation conformed to target language expression and cultural background in grammar and language form, and is accordance with the word imagination of the source passage. After making the efforts mentioned above, the target language expression and the

source language should be equivalent to each other in content, form, spirit and so on [2]. Omission refers to the means of translation by omitting unnecessary words and phrases, etc. in target language though they are necessary in source language in the course of translating. This kind of translation means that it is generally in the need of the grammar and expressions of target language.

2.3. The Relations of Addition and Omission in Translation

Generally speaking, the principle of addition is the opposite side of omission, and vice versa. This can be concluded easily according to the definition of addition and omission.

3. Practical Use of Addition

Conjunctions and pronouns appear widely in English. Articles, functional words "it" connecting verb "be" can not be deleted easily in English, however, they don't often appear or can be omitted in Chinese. Therefore, it is necessary to add these words according to the language surroundings in the course of Chinese-English translation and English-Chinese translation.

3.1. The Addition of Conjunctions

Generally speaking, it is necessary to add to conjunctions when Chinese is translated into English, which will help us to organize the translation. Examples are as follows:

(1) 人生自古谁无死，留取丹心照汗青。

As death befalls all men alike, I'll keep a loyal heart to make a name in history. (the addition of "as")

(2) 中国将努力促进国内粮食增产，在正常情况下，粮食自给率不低于95%，净进口量不超过国内消费量的5%。

China endeavors to increase its grain production so that its self-sufficiency rate of grain under normal conditions will be above 95 percent and the net import rate 5 percent, or even less, of the total consumption quantity. (the addition of "so that")

3.2. The Addition of Pronouns

(1) 我上周给他写去一封信，但不知收到没有。

I wrote a letter to him last week, but I wonder if he has received it. (the addition of "it")

(2) 原子虽小，但具有很大的能量。

Small as atoms are, they contain vast amounts of energy. (the addition of two "they")

3.3. The Addition of Verbs

Many nouns and prepositions are used in English, however, more verbs are used in Chinese. Therefore, when verbs don't appear in English, verbs are usually added to in English-Chinese translation [3]. Examples are as follows:

(1) "Truly Allah has blessed us," Ahmed exclaimed piously. "Soil, water, sun--we can grow anything!"

"真主可真是保佑我们啊，"阿赫迈德虔诚地说道。"我们有土地，有水，有阳光——一种什么都行啊！" (the three verbs "有" are added before the three corresponding nouns)

(2) Geologists, scientists who study rocks, indicate the likely places to the oil drillers.

地质学家是研究岩石的科学家，他们可以为钻探石油的人指明哪些地方可能有油。 ("Likely places" is usually translated into "可能的地方". A good translation is "可能有油的地方", and a better translation is "哪些地方可能有油".)

3.4. The Addition of Numeral Words

(1) We can use “one” to express “a” or “an” in English, however, we can use appropriate numeral words to decorate different nouns. e.g: a novel 一部小说; a film 一部电影

(2) Some verbs and verbal nouns are needed to add some numeral words that indicate movement and behaviors in English when they are translated into Chinese verbs. e.g.: have a look 看了一眼; have a rest 休息一下

3.5. The Addition of Words that Indicate Noun Plural

Because there is no plural form in Chinese nouns, it is necessary to add some words that indicate plurals according to the language surroundings when English plural nouns are translated into Chinese. Examples are as follows:

(1) The Bakers are from New York City.

贝克一家是纽约人。

(2) The first electronic computers came into use in 1958.

第一批电子计算机在1958年问世。

3.6. The Addition of Words that Indicate the Voice

Most of the English sentences are passive voice, but most of the Chinese sentences are active voice. It is necessary to add some words that indicate passive voice when English passive sentences are translated into Chinese active ones, such as “被”, “使”, “由”, “受到”, “得到”, “遭到”, etc., or add subjectives, such as “人们”, “我们”, “大家”, “有人”, etc. Examples are as follows:

(1) It is generally considered not advisable to act that way.

大家认为这样做是不妥当的。(the addition of “大家”)

(2) The book has already been translated into many languages.

这本书已被译为好几国语言。(the addition of “被”)

3.7. The Addition of Summary Words

There are summary words in both English and Chinese, however, sometimes there is not a summary word in English sentence, so generally speaking, it is necessary to add summary words, such as “等等”, “两方面”, “诸如此类”, etc. Examples are as follows:

(1) The problem was both psychological and physiological.

这个问题涉及心理和生理两个方面。(the addition of summary words “两个方面”)

(2) The frequency, wave length and speed of sound are closely related.

频率、波长和声速三者是密切相关的。(the addition of summary words “三者”)

3.8. The Addition of Other Kinds of Words

(1) The crowds melted away.

人群渐渐散开了。(the addition of an adverb)

(2) Day after day he came to his work—sweeping, scrubbing and cleaning.

他每天来干活——扫地, 擦地板, 收拾房间。(the addition of three nouns)

3.9. The Addition of Background Information

Both source language of English-Chinese translation and Chinese-English translation include a large number of heavy cultural ingredients. The different culture in source language is sometimes difficult to understand for the readers of target language. Therefore, it is necessary to make up and illustrate the background (or cultural) information that the readers are not familiar with to make the target language more understandable [4]. Such kind of examples are as follows:

(1)玄奘万里取经，带回南亚国家的古老文化。

Eminent Monk Xuan Zang of the Tang Dynasty(618-907) brought back ancient culture after braving long journey to South Asian Countries.

(Background information added:the status of Xuan Zang:eminent monk;the time: the Tang Dynasty(618-907).)

(2)明代郑和“七下西洋”把中华文化传播向远方的国度。

In the Ming Dynasty(1368-1644), Chinese navigator Cheng Ho led a fleet to what the people called the West Sea seven times in the 15th century,spreading the Chinese culture to distant land.

(Background information added:the time of Cheng Ho lived:Ming Dynasty(1368-1644);his status:Chinese navigator;the time of navigation:the 15th century.)

4. Practical Use of Omission in Translation

Some certain words are widely used in Chinese, but they can be omitted or less frequently used in English. Therefore, it is necessary to omit some words appropriately in English-Chinese translation. However, omission doesn't mean to omit the mind of the source language.

4.1. The Omission of Conjunctions

More attention are paid in Chinese to express the meaning, however, more attention are paid in English to express relations by language form. Therefore, it is necessary to omit some conjunctions in the course of English-Chinese translation. Examples are as follows:

(1)If I had known this beforehand, I would not have gone back.

早知如此，我就不回去了。(the omission of "if")

(2)The soft can overcome the hard, and the weak can defeat the strong.

柔能克刚，弱能制强。(the omission of "and")

4.2. The Omission of Pronouns

More pronouns are used in English while less pronouns are used in Chinese. And "it" is used in emphasis sentence and it has grammatical function as form subject and form object. Therefore generally speaking, it is necessary to omit some pronouns in the course of English--Chinese translation. Examples are as follows:

(1)How are you feeling today?

今天感觉怎么样？(the omission of "you")

(2)It will be lovely in the park today.

今天公园一定很好玩。(the omission of "it")

4.3. The Omission of Connecting Verbs

Generally speaking, there is no connecting verb in Chinese descriptive sentence. In other words, this kind of sentences don't use verbs as predicates, but use adjectives, nouns, prepositions, phrases or "subjective+predicate" structure as predicates. Therefore, it is necessary to omit connecting verbs in the course of English--Chinese translation. Examples are as follows:

(1)That sounds quite reasonable.

那很有道理。(the omission of connecting verb "sounds")

(2)Everything is in good order.

一切井井有条。(the omission of connecting verb "is")

4.4. The Omission of Other Kinds of Words

There are many other kinds of omission both in English-Chinese translation and in Chinese-English translation. Some of the examples are as follows:

(1)Smoking is prohibited in public places.

公共场所不准吸烟。(the omission of a preposition “in”, and it means “在……地点” in

(2)总理在出席音乐会之前，还有许多工作要做。

The premier had a lot of work to do before the concert.

(the omission of a verb “出席”， and it means “attending” in English)

It can be seen from the examples above that the omission in translation is in the need of the custom,habit and grammar of the target language in both English-Chinese translation and Chinese-English translation. It will never be pure and specific if the unnecessary words are not omitted.

4.5. The Omission from the Rhetorical Perspective

According to Chinese habit,some dispensable words can be omitted in the English-Chinese translation. Some phrases in English sentences are repeated,and they can be omitted according to the situation when translating from English to Chinese [5]. Examples are as follows:

(1)There was still the faith that ordinary men are greater than the powers of nature or the mechanisms of man’s hands and will master them all in the end.

人们仍然具有这种信念，即普通的人要比自然的力量或人类造出来的机器更伟大，而且最终会控制它们。(the omission of “hands”)

(2)There was no snow,the leaves were gone from the trees,the grass was dead.

天未下雪，但叶落草枯。(The omission of “from the trees” makes the phrase “叶落草枯” in the target language more concise than “树叶从树上落下来，草也枯死了”。)

5. Conclusion

It can be discovered from the practical translation examples that the target language would not be faithful and fluent without using addition and omission in translation.Addition or omission in either English-Chinese translation or in Chinese-English translation is not only permissible, but also is often seen as a translation skill.

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