

On Omission in C-E Translation: From the Principle of Condensation

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ABSTRACT

With the implementation of China's "going-out" cultural strategy, the English translation of Chinese voice and relevant methods have attracted increasing attention. The omission is one of the common techniques of C-E translation, which is applied to achieve the conciseness and fluency of the translation. However, omission leads to different understandings and practices in C-E translation. To explore whether omission refers to the deletion of both forms of the original text and its meaning, this paper carries out a study based on the principle of condensation in C-E translation brought forward by Wang Jianguo. Through the case analysis of omission, this paper finds that in some cases, the meaning of the original text is thought to be deleted in the translation, the content is actually condensed and thus implied in the translation. And by analyzing cases from the perspective of the principle of condensation in C-E translation, this paper elaborates on the discrepancy of the consciousness of boundary between English and Chinese, which also serve as the foundation of the principle of condensation. Therefore, compared with omission, the principle of condensation possesses specific methods that can be applied on different levels of word, sentence, and text, and thus can guide the C-E translation practice more sufficiently. Moreover, through the exploratory study of the differences between English and Chinese, this principle of condensation can help C-E translation be well-received by target readers.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research purpose

With the urgent need to disseminate Chinese voices overseas, the C-E translation has drawn growing attention. In consideration of different mindsets and characteristics of Chinese and English, omission or ellipsis is regarded as a common technique applied in C-E translation. In some practices of C-E translation, the omission is equated with the deletion of the content of the original text, which is accounted as an indispensable way to achieve the fluency of the translation.

However, the information of the original text is not deleted in some cases but implies in the translated text by taking some approaches. Based on the principle of condensation in C-E translation advanced by Wang Jianguo (2019), this paper attempts to discuss the traditional translation technique of omission through case analysis to see if this technique leads to the deletion of the original text and whether it is sufficient enough to be applied in C-E translation.

1.2 Theoretical framework

According to Wang Jianguo, the application of the principle of condensation in C-E translation is related to the boundary consciousness of Chinese and English. English has stronger consciousness of boundaries than Chinese. Therefore, translators with different native languages will apply different mindsets in their translations from Chinese to English: English-speaking translators have stronger consciousness of boundary than Chinese-speaking translators.

The principle of condensation in C-E translation refers to the condensation of content rather than form. And the specific process is to emphasize focal information and condense boundary information precisely to make the focus clearer in the translation, thus reducing the possibility of misunderstanding of readers. In the majority of instances, with the condensation of the content, the form of translated text will also become more concise. Usually, the principle of condensation will be used in the selection of words, sentence structure, and even textual structure. When applied to the selection of the word, the principle of condensation often demonstrates as the implication of modifier, the use of the result-oriented verb, adjective, and noun, and the use of the abstract noun. And when the principle of condensation applies to the sentence, it turns out to be the reconstruction of the subject-predicate structure in the original text to condense the expression of process in Chinese and show the result-oriented characteristic of English.

Implication, deletion, and addition are the main approaches of condensation, and they all have the function of defining the boundary, which conforms to the characteristic of English above. The case analysis of this paper will mainly focus on the condensation approach of implication. Implication includes the complete implication and partial implication. Complete implication means that all the meaning of the original text is restated and implied in the translation with totally different form, including the use of grammatical marks, the English word that contains the meanings of more than one Chinese words, the general view (which implies the personal perspective) and the result-oriented expression to emphasize the focal information. Partial implication means that part of the original text's meaning is implied and lacks the corresponding form in the translation, while some other parts have. And the main methods of partial implication embrace abstraction, nominalization, and passivization.

According to the principle of condensation, subjective meaning and objective meaning can both be condensed in C-E translation, and often manifest as the condensation of the perception process. This is also relevant to the difference of mindsets between English and Chinese.

Therefore, Wang Jianguo advocates that in C-E translation, the translator should first understand the content of the original text precisely and then prescript a clear limit to it, so as to observe the aesthetic and pragmatic principles of English, and thus provide the target readers with a well-received translation.

1.3 Methodology

Theoretically, based on the principle of condensation in C-E translation put forward by Wang Jianguo, this paper will discuss the deficiency of the traditional translation technique of omission, which mostly leads to the deletion of part of the original text. Through the analysis of cases from different types of materials, this paper will also explore the application of condensation in C-E translation, elaborate on different ways of condensing, and thus illustrate different aesthetic and pragmatic characteristics of English and Chinese. In the meantime, the case analysis may provide some suggestions to the practice of the principle of condensation in C-E translation, so as to help it be well-received by target readers.

2. Literature review and research questions

2.1 Literature review

In the beginning, ellipsis embodies a fundamental relation between parts of the English text. M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hason, in *Cohesion in English* (2001), bring forward five kinds of cohesive devices in English, including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. According to Halliday and Hason (2001: 142), the ellipsis is simply "substitution by zero", and it can be classified into nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, and clausal ellipsis. In addition, they clarify that ellipsis implies something left unsaid but understood nevertheless. In the great majority of instances, an elliptical item is one that leaves specific structural slots to be filled by some presupposition in the preceding text.

Then, in the translation practice, a string of scholars believe that the translator should take omission or ellipsis as a translation technique to cohere context more fluently and concisely. Some scholars explore the technique of omission from the perspective of contrastive studies of English and Chinese. Shao Zhihong and Yue Jun (2005) analyze the C-E translation in the TEM8 examination in 2004 by comparing students' translations and the reference version. They mention that different languages have different cohesive devices. Based on five cohesive devices advanced in *Cohesion in English*, Shao and Yue find that Chinese tends to use repetition for textual cohesion while English is more likely to use substitution. Lian Shuneng (1998: 184) also puts forward that in coordinate structure, English usually omits the words that have been seen in the preceding part of the text, while Chinese is used to repeating these words. Therefore, through case analysis, Shao and Yue present that in C-E translation, repetitive verbs and category words can be omitted in order to confirm the syntactic and grammatical rules of English. Bao Caixia (2003) mentions the omission of the verb in C-E translation, which is attributed to the different characteristics of English and Chinese. English tends to be stative and uses more nouns while Chinese is more likely to be dynamic and use more verbs.

In addition, as defined by some scholars, this common translation technique of omission is only the omission of words rather than the actual meaning of the original text. Xu Yuanhong (1990), when discusses literary translation, proposes a math formula of omission: $2-1=2$, which means the omission only applies to the word but not the meaning. Zhang Jinghao (1996) also emphasizes that the omission of words does not mean to delete the meaning of the original text, so this translation technique still obeys the principle of "faithfulness". And in his *On Translation*, Zhang Jinghao categorizes "omission" into "ideographic omission", "structural omission", "logical omission", and "rhetorical omission". Guo Zhuzhang (1998) likewise defines the translation technique of omission in *A Practical Course in Translation Between English and Chinese*. He suggests that some words in the original text seem not to be translated, but the translation has already implied their meanings. In other words, omission tends to omit those unnecessary words, but not the original text's content and thought.

Apart from the definition of omission, there are other scholars who focus on omission from the perspective of redundancy. Wen Jun (1990) pays attention to the omission of redundant information in the translation. He believes that the application of omission is possible because of redundant information in the original text. By taking advantage of redundancy theory, the translator can analyze the original text efficiently and apply omission appropriately. Tian Yan (2001) discusses different types of redundancy, especially the various manifestations of semantic redundancy. Her study also shows how redundancy can be used in amplification and omission. Wang Jinbo and Wang Yan (2002) divide redundant information into category word, pompous word, explicit repetition and implicit repetition, where they believe should apply the translation technique of omission. Pan Mingwei (2010), based on this categorization, conducts a corpus-based study on the use of omission by English major students.

Moreover, some studies pay more attention to the use of omission in various types of translation. Han Jianghong and Xing Wenyan (2018) launch corpus-based research on the omission of similes of Chinese literature works (1951-1966). Zhang Jipei (2001) carries out an analysis of C-E translation for external publicity. He advances that when the word-for-word translation of excessive modifiers, tautology, and flowery expressions might result in overloaded or distorted communication of the original intentions, some original message should be altered or deleted in order to improve the dissemination of Chinese culture. And this translation technique emerges because of different mindsets between Chinese and English. Based on Skopostheorie, Li Bo, and Hu Ran (2011), in the same way, study some typical examples of omission in different fields. They present that omission is a common technique used in translation, but being restricted by the traditional standard of equivalency, it is often undervalued in C-E translation. In order to meet the interests of target readers and realize expected effects, the omission should be brought into full play. However, they also mention the deletion of the content of the original text. For example, unrelated background information, high-sounding words, and four-character idioms can be deleted in the translation of publicity materials. Jiang Xiaohua and Ren Dongsheng (2019), when to compare the translation strategy of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* and *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, also analyze the application of omission. From their point of view, the omission applied in C-E translation tends to omit some less important contents in the original text, so as to achieve more fluency of the translation.

Faced with the new surge of "outward" spread of Chinese culture, the English translation of Chinese voice abroad and relevant methods have attracted more attention. As a common technique applied in C-E translation, omission actually leads to different understandings and practices. Some scholars believe that omission only applies to words instead of contents, while some others claim that those less important contents should also be deleted in the translation. However, notwithstanding those efforts, insufficient attention has been devoted to specific methods of omission. And the proper usage of omission, in other words, where to use this technique is rarely involved in case studies. Moreover, previous researches fail to explore the aesthetic and pragmatic differences between Chinese and English, which may influence the application of omission.

2.2 Research questions

The research aims to answer the following two main questions:

- Are there any shortcomings of the common translation technique of omission?
- If the omission of contents in the original text leads to the deletion of meaning in the translation? If the consequence will be different when analyzing cases from the perspective of the principle of condensation in C-E translation?

3. Case analysis

Omission in C-E translation may lead to different understandings and practices. According to some scholars, omission refers to the deletion of some less important or unnecessary contents in the original text. However, if omission under that circumstance means the deletion of the content or actually the condensation of meaning? Based on the principle of condensation in C-E translation, this paper will analyze specific cases of omission, and thus explore the difference between the boundary consciousness of English and Chinese.

- (1) 抓作风建设要返璞归真、固本培元，在加强党性修养的同时，弘扬中华优秀传统文化。（习近平，2017:165）
In enhancing Party conduct, we should strengthen our Party spirit and carry on the best traditions of the Chinese culture. (Xi, 2017: 180)

Case (1) is taken from *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China and Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. Jiang Xiaohua and Ren Dongsheng (2019: 22-23) present in their analysis that, the substance of “返璞归真” is “弘扬中华优秀传统文化” and the substance of “固本培元” is “加强党性修养”. Therefore, “返璞归真” and “固本培元” are written to draw forth the main content of this sentence, so they are less important and can be omitted to achieve the conciseness of the translation.

According to the principle of condensation in C-E translation, the meaning of “返璞归真” and “固本培元” are not deleted in the translation. “返璞归真” means to remove the decoration and restore the original and unvarnished condition, which actually points to “carry on the best traditions of the Chinese culture”; “固本培元” means to consolidate the foundation, which corresponds with “strengthen our Party spirit” in the translation, as the “Party spirit” is the fundamental part of the Party. And because of the strong boundary consciousness of English, the translation aims to emphasize the focal information and provide more precise content. Therefore, the meanings of “返璞归真” and “固本培元” are actually condensed in the translation to make the translation more specific and clearer.

- (2) 夺取全面建成小康社会决胜阶段的伟大胜利，关键在党。……党中央坚定不移反对腐败的决心没有变。（习近平，2017:161）
Our Party has a pivotal task in the final phase of *completing* the building of a moderately prosperous society in all aspects. ... The *resolve* of the CPC to fight corruption has not wavered. (Xi, 2017: 175)

In case (2), Jiang Xiaohua and Ren Dongsheng (2019: 23) hold that the adverb “坚定不移” and the adjective “伟大” are omitted in the translation totally with the expression pattern of English.

However, the translation of “夺取...伟大胜利” actually employs the principle of condensation. The translation implies the verb “夺取” that contains the meaning of dynamic process and the modifier “伟大胜利” by using the verb “completing” directly, which presents the meaning of consequence and condense the process of “夺取伟大胜利”。According to the principle of condensation, in the C-E translation, the translator should use those result-oriented verbs that contain the meaning of process and consequence in Chinese, such as satisfy, find, and convince. This approach is related to the pragmatic differences between Chinese and English. Chinese is a pragmatically process-oriented language while English is a result-oriented one.

The translation of “坚定不移反对” also presents the application of the principle of condensation. “坚定不移反对” seems to be a hyponymic repetition. And “坚定不移” in the original text is a modifier that possesses subjective meaning. Therefore, the translation implies the meaning of “坚定不移”, which also presents as the condensation of subjective sensation.

- (3) 他的武断是他多年来不动脑筋思考问题的结果。（刘宓庆，1999: 68）
His arbitrariness and obstinacy are the results of years of not *thinking*. (Liu, 1999: 68)

In case (3), Liu Miqing (1999: 68) comments that the Chinese tend to express in the way of stacking and thus advancing. Therefore, “动脑筋” in the original text is omitted in the translation, for “动脑筋” is equal to the verb “思考”.

According to the principle of condensation, “思考” is the focal information in “动脑筋思考”, and “动脑筋” expresses the dynamic process of “思考”. Hence, the translation condenses the process but directly presents as the resulting state — “思考”, which actually implies the meaning of “动脑筋”. This case also reflects that English is pragmatically a result-oriented language while Chinese is a process-oriented one. When confronted with the expression of process in C-E translation, the translator should tally with the pragmatic characteristic of English, condense the process and apply a result-oriented translation approach.

- (4) 城市，让生活更美好。（2010年上海世博会宣传语）
Better City, *Better* Life.

case (4) is the slogan of the Shanghai Expo in 2010. In the original text, “让...更美好” presents a dynamic process. But in the translation, “让...更美好” is restated as an adjective “better”, which shifts the dynamic process into a static result. And this reflects the application of the principle of condensation in C-E translation.

Moreover, According to Lian Shuneng (1993: 104), English tends to be static while Chinese is more likely to be dynamic. And English may use adjectives or adverbs to express the meaning of the verb, so as to show a relatively static expression.

- (5) 预售合同签订生效后, 房屋购买人应向市房地产登记处办理登记手续。(陈中绳, 1995: 17)

The vendee shall, after the contract of forwarding sale has been concluded and come into effect, *register* with the Shanghai Real Estate Registry. (Chen, 1995: 16-17)

case (5) is excerpted from a legal text, which contains a great number of terminologies. In case (5), “处” and “办理...手续” in the underlined parts are omitted. Li Bo and Hu Ran (2011: 102) consider that “处” in “登记处” belongs to the category word in Chinese and does not have the substantive meaning, thus should be omitted in the translation. According to the principle of condensation, the translation of category words reveals the difference of the consciousness of boundary between English and Chinese. English has stronger consciousness of boundary, so lots of words in English show strong professional boundaries, especially those abstract nouns. However, some words in Chinese have a lower degree of lexicalization than English, and thus lack abstract nouns that exist in English. Therefore, the Chinese have to add explicit marks to define the category of some notions. In case (5), “处” is an explicit mark in the original text, which means the unit in an administrative organization that is allocated by its function. But in the translation, “Registry” has already contained the meaning of “登记” and “处”, so “处” is actually condensed and implied in the translation.

“办理登记手续” is also condensed as “register” in the translation. First, the verb “办理” presents the process of “登记”. According to the pragmatic characteristic of English, the dynamic process should be condensed, and “register” has already implied the meaning of “办理”. Second, “手续” in the original text also serves as an explicit mark of professional meaning, which is implied in the verb “register”. Therefore, the translation of “办理登记手续” also reveal the employment of the principle of condensation in C-E translation.

- (6) a. 人际关系 *问题* interpersonal relationship (*problem*)
b. 饥饿 *状态* in (*a state of*) hunger
c. 新鲜 *感* freshness (*feeling*) (邵志洪、岳俊, 2005: 72)

Case (6) includes three examples of category words discussed by Shao Zhihong and Yue Jun (2005: 72). In their opinion, the category word is a common method of reference in Chinese, which is used to present the categories that behavior, phenomenon, attribute, and other notions belong to. In case (6), “问题”, “状态” and “感” are all category words, which define the categories that “人际关系”, “饥饿” and “新鲜” belong to explicitly. But in the translation, “interpersonal relationship” implies that it is a topic that may be discussed, “in hunger” is exactly a physiological state of humans, and “freshness” itself also contains a subjective feeling. Hence, “problem”, “a state of” and “feeling” is actually implied in the translation, which shows the application of the principle of condensation on the word.

- (7) 不料, 被胜利和酒共同陶醉的石东根, 正是屁股悬空在马背上, 跑得风驰电掣十分快意的时候, 恰巧给军长沈振新看到... (吴强《红日》, 第31节)

And now Shin Tung-ken, intoxicated by the combined effects of victory and wine, his backside poised in the air above the horses back as *whirled along like the wind*, happy and carefree, had had the unexpected misfortune to be spotted by the army commander Shen Chen-hsin... (Red Sun, 北京外文出版社1961年版)

In case (7), “风驰电掣” has rhetorical meaning, which is used to describe the high speed. The rhetorical meaning actually reveals the subjective color, which tends to have an unclear boundary and requires the subjective understanding of target readers. Therefore, in order to the expression in the original text that contains rhetorical meaning may be condensed in English.

Moreover, “风驰” and “电掣” are synonyms with different forms. Therefore, according to the principle of condensation in the C-E translation, the translation “whirled along like the wind” implies the meaning of “电掣”, which means the horse runs fast.

- (8) 历史 *再次重演* (张基佩, 2001: 22)
History *repeats* itself.

In case (8), “重” in the original text means over again or once again, which is the same as the meaning of “再次”. Therefore, “重” and “再次” are synonyms with different forms. According to the principle of condensation, repetitive meaning presents a low degree of subjective intention and should be implied or deleted in C-E translation. Hence, “再次” and “重” are condensed in the translation as the verb “repeats”.

- (9) 广大教职工 (张基佩, 2001: 22)
faculties and staffs

In case (9), “广大” in the original text seems to be omitted in the translation. However, according to the principle of condensation, this appears to be an implication of the meaning of the word. Because the meaning of “广大” is actually condensed by using the noun’s plural mark of “-s” in the translation. The grammatical marks are commonly used as an approach of condensation in C-E translation, such as plural marks, tense, and aspect marks. For example, when there is an expression “过去” for the last time in the original text, the translation will condense it by using the past tense of the predicate verb, instead of adding a repetitive phrase of “in the past time”.

4. Findings

This paper finds that omission, as a common technique in C-E translation, is applied to cohere the translation more fluently and concisely. However, in the translation practice, the translation technique of omission actually leads to different understandings and practices. Some researchers believe that the omission of words or content does not signify the deletion of the meaning of the original text, while some other scholars hold that less important information in the original text can be omitted in the translation, so as to achieve a natural representation in the target language. Despite a great number of researches on the application of omission, insufficient attention has been paid to the specific methods of omission that can employ on the levels of word, sentence, and text. Furthermore, the differences between characteristics of English and Chinese that are reflected in the application of omission are rarely involved in pertinent studies.

Then, this paper conducts a case analysis of those typical examples of omission in C-E translation from the perspective of the principle of condensation in C-E translation brought forward by Wang Jianguo. Through case analysis, this paper finds that in some cases that the meaning of part of the original text is thought to be deleted in the translation. The content is actually condensed and thus implied in the translation. Therefore, in the translation practice, the translation technique of omission is sometimes insufficient to be used to explain the lack of the corresponding form of the original text in the translated text. However, from the perspective of the principle of condensation, the meaning of the original text is not totally deleted but condensed in the translation, so as to emphasize the focal information. And the condensation is employed based on discrepancies between English and Chinese. Generally, English has stronger consciousness of boundaries than Chinese. Hence, in C-E translation, the translation tends to highlight the focal information and condense boundary information, such as the content of the process, category word, subjective meaning, and repetitive expression.

5. Conclusion

In translation practices, the technique of omission is commonly used but vaguely defined. The specific method of omission also receives insufficient research. Some scholars believe that omission refers to the deletion of both form and meaning of the original text. Based on the principle of condensation in C-E translation advanced by Wang Jianguo, this thesis aims to analyze cases of omission and find if the original text’s meaning is deleted or implied in the translated text actually.

Through the case analysis, this thesis finds that in some cases where the original text is thought to be omitted, the form is deleted while the meaning is implied in the translation. From the perspective of the principle of condensation, the meaning of the original text is actually condensed in the C-E translation to emphasize the focal information, which owing to two languages’ different consciousnesses of the boundary.

This thesis provides a new perspective to rediscuss the traditional translation technique of omission. Meanwhile, compared with omission, the principle of condensation possesses specific methods that can be applied on different levels of word, sentence, and text, and thus can guide the C-E translation practice and help the dissemination of Chinese voice. By exploring the discrepancies between English and Chinese, the C-E translation can comply with the characteristics of English and be well-received by target readers.

However, this thesis does not offer an insight into specific methods of condensation to help translators further in C-E translation practices. Follow-up studies may investigate more cases of omission on the levels of sentence and text from the perspective of the principle of condensation in C-E translation, to probe into the application of this principle and complement the translation technique of omission.

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