



Lecture 15

Figures of Speech and Translation

Introductory words

- If you are asked to describe love (your girlfriend or boyfriend), how will you describe her/him?
- Robert Burns: My love is like *a red red rose* that's newly sprung in June...
- Figures of speech: simile and repetition; effects; translation.
- Are you familiar with figures of speech? Do you like to read them? Do you like to make use of them while writing something? What about their translation? All such questions will be answered today.

Contents of this lecture

- **Part I Review**
- So far we have finished the discussion of the translating techniques. Today let's deal with the translation of figures of speech
- **Part I New Content**
- Today we are to deal with the translation of figures of speech, which is composed of the following parts:
- 1. Theoretical explanation
- 2. Classification of rhetorical devices/figures of speech
- 2.1 Phonological rhetorical devices
- 2.2 Semantic rhetorical devices
- 2.3 Syntactic rhetorical devices
- 3. Methods of rhetorical translation
- 3.1 Literal translation
- 3.2 Free translation
- 3.3 Prothetik
- 3.4 Domestication
- 3.5 Combination of methods
- 4. Assignment

1. Theoretical explanation

- Language can be used in two different ways: literally and figuratively. When used literally, it expresses natural meaning; when used figuratively, it expresses non-literal and suggestive meaning.
- Figures of speech are widely used in language, especially in literature. So in doing translation, we will naturally meet with the problem of translating figures of speech. Figures of speech serve as important ornamental devices to language expression.
- Consider the following examples:
 - My love is a red red rose. my love is beautiful.
 - Spring awakened, and all nature smiled. Spring was coming.
 - 我们的生活象蜜一样甜。 我们的生活很幸福。
 - 逝者如斯夫，不舍昼夜。 时间过得很快。

- Thus we can say that rhetorical devices/figures of speech appeal to imagination, serving for clearness and ornament.
- As the use of figures of speech is rooted in cultural tradition, there are both similarities and dissimilarities across languages. Thus, it is necessary for us to pay attention to the similarities and differences between English and Chinese while doing translation.
- Figures of speech commonly used in English:
- Simile, metaphor, personification, metonymy, irony, transferred epithet, onomatopoeia, parallelism, anastrophe, antithesis, zeugma, ellipsis, rhetorical question, repetition, palindrome, pun, euphemism, etc.

□ Figures of speech commonly used in Chinese

□ 比喻（明喻、暗喻）、拟人、借代、夸张、反语、移就、拟声、排比、倒装、对偶、精连、省略、设问、反复、回文、顶真、双关、委婉语（隽语）等

□ We can see that between the figures of speech in English and Chinese, some are the same or similar in name or meaning while others are different. In addition, there is such a case where a figure exists in language A but not in language B.

- For example,
- Alliteration in English:
- Next to health, heart, home, happiness for mobile Americans depends upon automobiles.
- 对于好动的美国人来说，幸福不仅仅取决于健康、爱情和舒适温暖的家庭，他还取决于汽车。
- Dumb dogs are dangerous.
- 蠢狗更危险。
- "Bye-bye, Balanced Budget!"
- 永别了，平衡的预算！
- 歇后语 in Chinese:
- 外甥打灯笼——照（舅）舅。
- 和尚打伞——无法（法）无天。

2. Classification of rhetorical devices/figures of speech

- Rhetorical devices can be classified into the following types: phonological devices, semantic devices and syntactic devices in light of linguistic levels.
- 2.1 Phonological rhetorical devices (音韵修辞格)
- Phonological rhetorical devices are the rhetorical devices created by making use of the phonological features of words, including figures such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, consonance and assonance.

- For example,
- Presently there came the *click* of high heeled shoe. (onomatopoeia)
- 高跟鞋声闷闷地传了过来。
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper. (alliteration)
- 皮特·派特啣下了一口腌菜用的胡椒粉。
- With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. (half assonance)
- 怀着这个信念，我们能把绝望的大山凿成希望的磐石。
- What would houses and horses be to me without him? (consonance)
- 他这个人都没了，我要马和财产又有什么用！

2.2 Semantic rhetorical devices (语义修辞格)

- Semantic rhetorical devices refer to the rhetorical devices formed by turning to semantic association, including figures such as simile, metaphor, allusion, metonymy, transferred epithet, personification, hyperbole, irony, euphemism, pun, oxymoron, zeugma, contrast for example.
- An individual human existence should be like a river—small at first, narrowly contained within its banks, and rushing passionately past boulders and over waterfalls. (simile)
- 一个人的一生可以比作一条河流，开始身躯很小，两岸之间非常狭窄，水流湍急，冲过礁石，飞下悬崖。
- Experience is the mother of wisdom. (metaphor)
- 经验为智慧之母。
- She opened the door and her heart to the homeless boy. (zeugma)
- 她对这个无家可归的孩子打开了自己的大门，也打开了自己的心扉。
- Great minds think alike. (metonymy)
- 英雄所见略同。

2.3 Syntactic rhetorical device (句法修辞格)

- Syntactic rhetorical devices refer to the rhetorical devices that are created by arranging sentences into balanced structures or for emphasis on something, including such figures as repetition, rhetorical question, antithesis, apostrophe, which are roughly equal to 反复, 设问, 对偶, 倒装 in Chinese. For example,
- I have written in bed and written out of it, written day and night. (repetition)
我卧床写, 起床写, 白天写, 晚上也写。
- Man proposes, God disposes. (antithesis)
谋事在人, 成事在天。

3. Methods of rhetorical translation

- 胡曙中在《英汉修辞比较研究》(Comparative Studies in English & Chinese Rhetoric) 书中指出, 英汉常用修辞手段虽然有许多不谋而合的现象, 但就在这些相似现象之中又表现出各自的特点。
- 因此, 我们在翻译过程中就应高度重视修辞格的翻译(尤其是对文学翻译而言)。如何将原文中音、形、意的修辞效果尽可能完美地传达到译文中去是一项难度较大的任务。
- The translation of figures of speech is a difficult task for figures of speech are rooted in cultures while different cultures are of different national features.
- Due to the subtle differences between English and Chinese in rhetoric, we should translate the figurative sentences cautiously in order to maintain the original *verve* (神韵) of the source language.

3.1 Literal translation (直译法)

- For those figures which are the same or similar between the two languages, we had better adopt the method of literal translation in order to maintain the style and flavor of the source language.

□ 3.1.1 Simile (明喻)

- As busy as a bee 像蜜蜂一样勤劳
- As cold as ice 冰冷
- As bold as a lion 像狮子一样勇猛

□ So compared with any ordinary beam of light, the laser is a very orderly affair indeed. It is like a military march — every one in step. In an ordinary beam, the waves are like the people in a crowd going to a football game, jostling and bumping into one another. (By Albert Einstein)

□ 相其普通光束比起來，激光就象軍隊的齊步走。每個人都步調一致，而在普通的光束中，光波就象走在一起去看足球賽的人群中一樣，你擠着我，我擠着你。

□ Attention: For those English similes which make use of semantic puns, the translator cannot render them literally:

□ as cold as cucumber 非常冷靜

□ as sharp as a needle 十分精明

□ as tight as a drum 手不抖

□ as sure as a gun 點不錯（很確切）

□ In such cases, the metaphorical meanings (i.e. the ground) should be conveyed instead of the literal meanings.

□ 3.1.2 Metaphor (隱喻)

□ Three years' jungle life had turned him into a wild beast.

□ 三年的丛林生活把他变成了野兽。

□ *The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is natural manure.* (By Thomas Jefferson)

□ 自由之树需要爱国者和暴君的鲜血来浇灌。殷红的鲜血是养育自由之树的天然肥料。

3.1.3 Personification (拟人)

□ The long flames sang their drumming chorus in voices of the heaviest bass. (By Stephen Crane)

□ 长长的火舌呼呼地用低沉的声音唱出悲壮的歌。

□ And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtseys.

□ 这倒是真的，风一吹，芦苇就行着最动人的屈膝礼。

□ 群山肃立，江河呜咽，辽阔的祖国大地沉浸在巨大的悲痛之中。
(《破晓的拂晓来总理永垂不朽》电影解说词)

□ The mountains are standing in solemn silence; the rivers are shedding bitter tears; our vast motherland is soaked in enormous grief.

□ 3.1.4 Hyperbole

- Hamlet: I love Ophelia, forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum. (By Shakespeare)
- 哈姆雷特说：“我爱奥菲莉亚，我对她的爱超过了百万个兄弟爱她的总和。”
- 我从乡下跑到京城里，一转眼已经六年了。
- Six years has passed by in a twinkling since I came to the capital city from the countryside.
- Literal translation can be employed in translating other figures such as 转喻，省略，反语，移就 and 呼告， which are not to be exemplified one by one here.

3.2 Free translation (意译法)

- For those figures which are different across the languages owing to the differences in sounds, morphology, grammar, and cultural background, it is difficult to translate literally, hence the necessity to adopt the method of free translation.

□ 3.2.1 Metonymy/antonomasia (借代)

- Our village *Hercules* has come.

- 我们村的大力士来了。(Hercules, 海格力斯, 希腊神话中主神宙斯之子, 力大无比, 曾完成十二项英雄事迹。)

- 这对年轻人并不般配, 一个是西施, 一个是张飞。

- This young couple is not well matched, one is a Xi Shi—a famous Chinese beauty, one is Zhang Fei—a well-known ill-tempered Chinese brute.

□ 3.2.2 Onomatopoeia (拟声)

□ As you approach the copper-smith's market, a tinkling and banging and clashing begins to impinge your ears. (from "The Eastern Bazaar")

□ 当你走近铜市，就会听到一片叮叮铛铛、哐哐当当的声响。

□ But as the door *banged*, she seemed to come to life again.

□ 但是当门砰地一声关上时，她好像又清醒过来了。

- Although there are similarity between English and Chinese onomatopoeia, such as
- meow 喵喵
- ding dong 叮当
- hem and haw 哼哼
- most of English and Chinese onomatopoeic words are of their own features, hence the necessity of the translation via counterpart words. For example,
- The dog *barked* in the dark night.
狗在黑夜中“汪汪”叫个不停。
- Their swords *clashed*.
他们的剑在劈锵作响。
- 大车咕辘咕辘开了过去。
- The cart *rumbled* past.

□ 3.2.3 Oxymoron (矛盾修饰法)

□ He was tasting the *delicious pain* after the day's hard work.

□ 结束了 一天的辛苦劳动，他正独自品尝着甜蜜的苦痛。

□ The state of this house is *cheerless welcome*.

□ 这所房子显出令人扫兴的欢迎气氛。

□ He called my conviction a *victorious defeat*.

□ 他说我的败诉是一个胜利的失败。

□ 他说我的败诉取败犹荣。

- Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
- O anything, of nothing first created!
- O heavy lightness! Serious vanity!
- Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
- Feathers of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!
- Still-waking sleep that is not what it is!
- (W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*)
- 吵吵闹闹的相爱，亲亲热热的怨恨！
- 啊，无中生有的东西！
- 啊，沉重的轻浮，严肃的狂妄，
- 整齐的混乱，
- 铅铸的羽毛，光明的烟雾，寒冷的火焰，憔悴的健康，
- 永远觉醒的睡眠，否定的存在！（朱生豪译）

□ 3.2.4 Paradox (似是而非的诡辩)

□ The child is the father of the man.

□ 一罗看人, 七罗看老。

□ 年年难过年年过, 处处无家处处家。

□ Hard up, we manage to get over it each year; homeless, we try to make home every where.

□ 3.2.5 Pun (双关)

□ Seven days without water make one weak (one week).

□ 一周没水喝人会变得虚弱。

□ We must all *hang* together, or we shall *hang* separately. (By Benjamin Franklin)

□ 我们要么紧密团结在一起，要么一个个被消灭掉。

□ I can't be any *graver* until you find me a *grave* man.

□ 我这辈子到死严肃不起来。

□ 3.2.6 Zeugma (結合 / 軀式搭配)

□ *He picked up his hat and his courage.*

□ 他揀起了帽子，鼓足了勇氣。

□ *He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest street, hearts, vows, and librettos.*

□ 他到了一個山區停下腳步。到晚上，那兒有最明亮的街道，最愉快的心灵，最輕浮的盟誓和最輕鬆的歌曲。

□ *The blood stained her honor and her new brocade.*

□ 血斑弄髒了她的新裝，也玷污了她的名譽。

3.3 Prosthesis (弥补法)

- 有些修辞格在字形、字音、词性、词的结构、词的缩减、词义的更换、字的排列等方面做文章。而这些都是难以传达到译文中去的。对此，翻译时应灵活处理：
- 1) 对那些非译不可、不译就会严重影响原作思想力度或情节发展的修辞格，应尽可能加以补救，如换格、加重语气、加上脚注。
- 2) 对那些对原作思想力度或情节发展的修辞格无重大关系的修辞格，我们可以干脆不译。
- 3) 对诗词对联中不能不译的修辞格，最好能作一个简短的说明，以使人能领悟到原文修辞格的妙处。

□ 3.3.1 Alliteration (头韵法)

□ The /isp of leaves, and the ripple of rain.

□ 树叶簌簌，细雨淋漓。

□ Schultz's first year: some successes, some silence

□ (From *New York Times*, Aug. 3rd 1983)

□ 舒尔茨上任初年：小有成就，低调处理

□ 3.3.2 Assonance (元韵法)

□ Never late, on Father's Day. (Ad.)

□ 父亲节，快快来！

□ Spend a dime, save your time. (Ad.)

□ 花点小钱省您时间。

3.4 Naturalization / Domestication (归化)

- 有些英语的修辞格译成汉语时，可以换用符合汉语习惯的其他修辞格或是改变原文中比喻形象，使译文在思想上忠实于原作，风格和神韵上尽量求得与原文相接近的效果。例如，
- He was so fond of talking that his comrades nicknamed him "magpie"
- 他如此聪明，同伴们给他起了个“麻雀”的外号。
- (汉语中“喜鹊”喻义喜事、吉利、运气，而英语中喻义却是聪明、饶舌，于是取汉语中联想效果对应的比喻)
- "Don't be scared, *chickens!*" came her voice with teasing gaiety.
- “别害怕，你们这些胆小如鼠的东西！”只听得她用戏谑的口气说道。
- (英语中鸡是懦弱、胆怯的代名词，汉语中的鸡却无法引起人们这种联想，于是换成老鼠形象。)

□ It is regrettable that our appeal remained *a dead letter*.

□ 遗憾的是，我们当时的呼吁石沉大海。

□ And I suppose she'll tell all the boys, the *old cat*.

□ 我猜想她会告诉所有的男人，这个长舌的老太婆！

□ （英语中猫常用来比喻恶毒的女人）

□ Up and down he walked, up and down across the library floor

□ 他在书房里走过来又走过去，走过来又走过去。

□ （英语 anastrophe—汉语颠倒结构）

□ In the past 12 months, the world has watched with disbelief and dismay the acceleration of force and violence in the region.

□ 过去的十二个月里，全世界惊愕莫名地难以置信地看到了这个地区正在加快使用武力和暴力。

□ （英语 alliteration—汉语对偶法）

3. 5 Combination of methods

(数种译法并用)

- 有些英语修辞格译成汉语时有时需要数种译法并用才能译成漂亮的汉语。例如:
- ...when I and my sorrows are dust.
- 当我的尸骨化为尘土，我的哀愁化作清风时……
- (英语 zeugma-- 汉译采用分译和归化)
- Civilization is syphilization!
- 世界愈文明，梅毒愈蔓延。
- (英语 pun-- 汉语采用分译和释义)
- from their slopes flow streams feeding the oases strung along the rim of inland deserts.
- 条条溪水，潺潺而下，滋润着镶嵌了内陆沙漠边缘的片片绿洲。
- (英语 alliteration 和 assonance-- 汉语使用叠词、象声词、分译)

4. Assignment

- Translate the following extract paying special attention to the use of figures of speech.
- Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves, who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.
- But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. (from *I Have a Dream* by Martin Luther King)



□ Thank you.