A Study on the Chinese Translation of English Existential Sentences

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Abstract—Based on a statistical analysis of the Chinese translation of English existential sentences in E-C parallel corpus concordance, it is found that there are mainly eight corresponding forms in the Chinese translation of English existential sentences, i.e. "You" sentence, "Shi" sentence, fugitive sentence, "Zhe" sentence, "Le" sentence, "Mei/Meiyou" sentence, "Bu/Wu" sentence, and "Haowu/Wufa" sentence, accounting for 79.9% of the total. The first five corresponding forms are Chinese existential sentences, accounting for 52.7%, while the other corresponding forms are not Chinese existential sentences.

Keywords—English existential sentence; Chinese translation; corresponding form

I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars have been paying close attention to the Chinese translation of English existential sentences, but there are not many achievements. Based on the analysis of English existential sentences and their variants, Zhang Yunqing (2003) enumerates some translation techniques in English-Chinese translation. The basis of comparing the existential sentences between English and Chinese, Deng Wei (2006) summarizes a number of principles of English-Chinese translation. Fan Xing (2012) discusses several kinds of lower class translation mode of English existential sentences. Zhang Zongjie (2014) believes that non-existential sentences are chosen in the translation of existential sentence between English and Chinese due to the context. There are few studies on the Chinese translation of English existential sentences based on the statistical analysis of quantitative corpus, so this paper makes a statistical analysis of the usage of the corresponding forms in the Chinese translation of English existential sentences in the English-Chinese parallel corpus 1 (hereinafter referred to as E-C corpus for short) with 332,000 English words, and then sums up the corresponding forms and distribution of English translation of each type of English existential sentences.

1 The corpus used in this paper contains 332,000 words (number of original words) and includes Great Gatsby, Thorn Bird, Camellia Girl and Gone with the Wind (Chapters 1 to 4).

II. TYPES OF ENGLISH EXISTENTIAL SENTENCES

According to Zhang Jin and Zhang Keding’s (1998) criteria, the typical form of English existential sentences is: there + V + NP + LP. According to this, we select five common forms as follows: (ET stands for sentence; NP stands for word/phrase of existential subject, LP stands for word/phrase of existential place):

- ET 1 There+be+Np+(LP)
- ET 2 There+be+Np+relative word (or elliptic relative word)+clause
- ET 3 There+be+Np+infinitive structure
- ET 4 There+be+Np+past participle
- ET 5 There+be+Np+V-ing

III. A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH EXISTENTIAL SENTENCES

We have retrieved 483 English existential sentences from E-C corpus and the distribution of the five common forms is shown in "Table I":

| TABLE I. DISTRIBUTION OF FIVE FORMS OF ENGLISH EXISTENTIAL SENTENCES |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                  | ET1  | ET2  | ET3  | ET4  | ET5  |
| number of examples | 300  | 100  | 53   | 9    | 21   |
| percentage        | 62.1%| 20.7%| 11.0%| 1.9% | 4.3% |

*Note: The percentage is the percentage of the number of examples in this form to the total number of English existential sentences.

From the above data, it can be found that the proportion of T1, T2, and T3 is largest, accounting for 93.8%. It can be seen that English existential sentences are distributed in these three forms, i.e. There+be+Np+(LP), There+be+Np+relative word (or elliptic relative word) +clause, There+be+Np+infinitive structure. The corresponding situations of five forms of Chinese translation of English existential sentences are discussed below.

A. The Chinese Translation of “There+be+Np+(LP)”

“There+be+Np+(LP)” is the most common and typical form in English existential sentences, which is translated as "某地有某物/某人” in Chinese. There are 300 sentences with the
The statistics show that 85% of "There + Be + N + Lp" sentences are translated into the above five corresponding forms in Chinese, i.e. "You" sentence, "Shi" sentence, fugitive sentence, "Zhe" sentence, and "Le" sentence, as exemplified in (1)-(5). Among them, "You" sentence is the most commonly used corresponding form. Let's look at the negative forms:

- (6) Still there was no sign of Gerald on the quiet winding road.
  - 寂静、蜿蜒的路上还是 没有 嘉乐的身影。
- (7) 无处 都是 多得莫名其妙的灰尘，……
- (8) There was no one there.
  - 她的脸上 出现了 痛苦的细纹，以前他从来没见过。
- (11) There was no indication by a reaction of rage or indignation that she had even heard the last part of what he said.
  - 听了他最后的那句话，她并 没有 流露出恼怒和愤慨。

The statistical data show that 78.2% of the positive forms of "There+be+N+relative word (or elliptic relative word)+clause" are translated into "You" sentence (case 9) and "fugitive sentence" (case 10), while 80.7% of the negative forms are translated into "Bu/Mei/Wu" sentence and "Meiyou" sentence (case 11).

C. The Chinese Version of "There+be+Np+Infinitive Structure"

There are 53 cases of "There+be+Np+infinitive structure" in the English existential sentences, of which 19 cases are positive forms and 34 cases are negative forms "There + be + negative word+ Np + infinitive structure". For example:

- (12) There were the last rites to be administered, in case the soul had not yet left the body; ……
- (13) There's no need to swear, Mary.
  - 这没有起誓的必要,玛丽。
- (14) …… and there was no disgrace for a man of paddy's age to love best the books his children also adored: ……

The statistics show that 78.9% of the positive forms "There+be+Np+infinitive structure" are translated into "You" sentence and "Yao + V" sentence (case 12), while 94.1% of its negative forms are translated into "Meiyou" sentence (case 13) and "Bu/Mei/Wu" sentence (case 14).

D. Chinese Version of "There+be+Np+past participle"

In 483 English existential sentences, 9 are in the form of "There+be+Np+past participle", for example:

- (15) There was a man in Brisbane called Inigo Jones who wasn't bad at long-range weather predictions, ……
- (16) There was another one wasted.
From the statistical data, it is found that 77.8% of the "There+be+Np+past participle" are translated into the above four forms in Chinese, i.e. "You" sentence, "Shi" sentence, "Zhe" sentence and "Le" sentence, respectively, as follows (15)-(18).

E. Chinese Version of "There + be + Np + V-ing"

We retrieve 21 cases of "There + be + Np + V-ing" form, of which 13 cases are positive and 8 cases are negative "There + be + negative word + Np + V-ing" form, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to statistical data, 76.9% of "There+be+Np+V-ing" sentences are translated into "You" sentence (case 19), and 87.5% of its negative forms are translated into "Haowu/Wufa" sentence and "Meiyou" sentence (case 20).

IV. CONCLUSION

Through the statistical analysis of the Chinese translation of English existential sentences in E-C corpus, it is found that the corresponding Chinese forms of each type of English existential sentence are shown in "Table II":

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Existence sentence</th>
<th>Corresponding form of Chinese translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET1</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET2</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the table above, in the 483 corresponding forms of Chinese translation of English existential sentences, "You" sentence and "Mei/Meiyou" sentence are the two most commonly used forms, accounting for 39.3% and 18.2% respectively; Secondly, "Bu/Wu" sentence and "Shi" sentence are also common corresponding forms in Chinese translation of existential sentences, accounting for 8% and 4.1% respectively; The proportion of "Zhe" sentence, "Le" sentence, fugitive sentence and "Haowu/Wufa" sentence is small, accounting for 3.1%, 3.1%, 3.1% and 1% respectively. Therefore, about 79.9% of English existential sentences are translated into the above eight Chinese sentence patterns. About 52.7% of the English existential sentences are translated into Chinese existential sentences, i.e. "You" sentence, "Shi" sentence, fugitive sentence, "Zhe" sentence, and "Le" sentence, while the other forms are not Chinese existential sentences. It can be seen that most English existential sentences are corresponding to Chinese existential form after being translated into Chinese, which shows that the degree of correspondence of English existential sentences after translation is high. In addition to the translator's writing habits and translation methods, the translator often takes into account the syntactic patterns of English in the translation, which makes the Chinese translation more corresponding to the original English sentence form. Therefore, the induction of the corresponding form of English existential sentences after translation in this study has certain reference value for the application fields such as machine translation or second language teaching.

REFERENCES