

# Basic Differences Between English and Chinese



# Chinese vs English

- 1.主题显著 vs. 主语显著 topic / subject prominence
- 2.循序渐进 vs. 开门见山 word order / focus
- 3.向左扩展 vs. 向右扩展 left / right extension

## 1. 主题显著 vs. 主语显著

- Chinese: topic-comment (theme-rheme主位和 述位)
- 主位(theme)是话语的出发点,述位(rheme)是话语的核心内容。在语言交际过程中,主位多半是交际双方的已知信息,述位则是发话人要传递的新信息.
- English: subject-predicate
  - 1. 施事主语: We caught a thief.
  - 2. 受事主语: The thief was caught red-handed.
  - 3. 形式主语: It rained heavily last night.
  - 4. 主题主语: The book is very interesting.

- 甲: (你) 今天请客都买了些啥?
- 乙: (我) 买了不少罐头水果。
- 甲:新鲜水果(你)不买,(你)买这么多罐 头的干啥?
- 乙:新鲜的(我)买不到,(我)只好买些听装的充数。

(金积令"英汉语主题结构的对比研究")

### 静夜思

- 床前明月光,
- 疑是地上霜。
- 举头望明月,
- 低头思故乡。

## A Tranquil Night

- Abed, I see a silver light,
- I wonder if it's frost ground.
- Looking up, I find the moon bright;
- Bowing, in homesickness I'm drowned.

# Find the Subjects & translate

- 1. 电视我喜欢看纪录片(documentaries), 电 影我喜欢看故事片。
- 2. 下雨了,刮风了。
- 3. 开汽车没方向盘(steering wheel)不行。
- 4. 这件事我现在脑子里一点印象都没有。
- 5. 考题, 李老师出的最好。

# 2. "讲究对称" vs. "开门见山"

 The standard order of words in an English sentence is subject + verb + object.

- Word order in Chinese: "循序渐进"
- (1) 时序律
- Lexical level: 先后、早晚、古今、取舍、 始终、生死、收支、裁缝
- Phrasal level: 春夏秋冬、前呼后拥穿针引线、一朝一夕一呼百应、七擒七纵一不做,二不休前事不忘,后事之师

- (2) 逻辑-因果律
- Lexical level: 松散、收紧、放大、缩小···
- Phrasal level: 玩物丧志、积劳成疾

物极必反、不进则退…

#### (3) 时空大小律

• Lexical level: 大小、远近、粗细、深浅

岁月、快慢、长短

• Phrasal level: 事无巨细、粗枝大叶

长吁短叹、分秒必争

# 地址的翻译

- 湖北省武汉市洪山区狮子山街特1号华中农业 大学外国语学院英语系113办公室
- Office/Room 113, English Department of Foreign Language School, Huazhong Agricultural University, No.1 Shizishan Street, Hongshan District, Wuhan, Hubei

#### Sentences

● 汉语:叙事在前,表态在后

• 英语:表态在前,叙事在后

- 如蒙早日寄来样品或产品册,将不胜感激。
  - It would be appreciated if samples and brochure could be soon forwarded.

 It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.
(Pride and Prejudice)

- 凡是有钱的单身汉,总想娶位太太,这已经成了一条举世公认的真理。(王科一译)
- 有钱的单身汉总要娶位太太,这是一条举世公认的真理。(孙致礼译)

• 汉语: 先因后果

• 英语: 先说结果, 后说原因

- The prince in rags was thrown out of the palace because the guard couldn't recognize him.
  - 那个卫兵认不出穿着破衣裳的王子,就把他 从王宫里赶了出来。

- 这对新人男才女貌,真称得上是天作之合。
  - It can truly be said of the newlyweds that theirs is a match in heaven, for he is as talented as she is fair.
- 病情应得到及时控制,否则会延误急性感染的治疗,对病人是不利的。
  - Delay in treatment of any acute infection is unfavorable to the patient unless the condition is brought under control in time.

• 汉语: 先背景, 后焦点

• 英语: 先焦点, 后背景

- Stealing happens only in communities where some have got more than they need while other have not enough.
  - 在一个社会里,只有当一些人绰绰有余,而另外一些人物质匮乏时,偷盗才可能发生。
- 1904年11月25日,巴金出生在中国四川 省的一个封建大地主家庭。
  - Ba Jin was born into a big landlord family in Sichuan Province, China on Nov. 25, 1904.

# 3. 向左扩展 vs. 向右扩展

- 坐, 请坐, 请上坐
- 茶,上茶,上好茶

- 花
- 梅花
- 一朵梅花
- 鬓边插着一朵梅花

- 桶
- 粪桶
- 两个粪桶
- 肩上挑着两个粪桶
- 黑脸长工肩上挑着两个粪桶

• 红颜小姐鬘边插着一朵梅花

- Chinese: left-extension
- English: right-extension

- There are various kinds of waves invisible to the naked eye in the space.
  - 太空中有各种各样肉眼看不见的波。

- 汉语的向左扩展也不是无限度的:
  - 带"的"的形容词最好不要超过三个
  - •修饰语太多就化为"流水小句"

- 英语的向右扩展也不是绝对的:
  - 理想结构是"左短右长"
  - 避免"头重脚轻"

- The founder of the study of the origin of human culture
  - 人类文化的来源的研究的创始者
  - 最初开始研究人类文化起源的人
  - 研究人类文化起源的创始人



# Two plants?

 Use two kinds of animals to describe the characteristics of Chinese and English







 英语句子主谓机制突出,提挈全句。 其他成分借用各种形式手段连接在 主轴之上;句子成分随时可加以修 你,而修饰语种的某成分又可被别 的成分修饰,形成"参天大树"。



汉语句子重语感、重变通,组句的自由度很大。句子长长短短,结构 松散。像一根竹子,一节一节地接 下去,按时间等顺序层层递进。

## Translation Strategies

## 汉译英—— 化"竹节式"结构为英语的"树状"结构 关键是找出中文句子间隐含的逻辑关系,增加 英语连接词。

- 我这个样儿,只装出来哄他们,好在外头布散与老爷听,其实是假的。(《红楼梦》第三十四回,贾宝玉挨打之后,林黛玉去探视他时,贾宝玉说的一句话).
- I'm...just putting on an act to fool them so that word of it will get out to my father, all of which is shamming actually. (杨宪益、戴乃迭)

- Both men and women, nine times out of ten, are firmly convinced of the superior excellence of their own sex.
  - 不论男女,十之八九,都深信自己的性别优越无比。
- It is people like this, they believe, who have built up our modern civilization, benefiting not only themselves, but society as a whole.
  - 他们认为,正是这样一些人创建了现代文明,不但给他们自己,而且也给整个社会带来了益处。

- I am heartened by the assurance which your Government has repeatedly given that the arrangements for Hong Kong contained in the Agreement are not measures of expediency.
  - 贵国政府一再表示,协议中有关香港的 安排不是权宜之计,这种保证使我感到 鼓舞。

- 这种鸭,觅食力强,能适应当地湖荡水网的饲养条件,而且生长速度快,产卵能力好,肉白、细嫩、味美,是优良的卵肉兼用鸭。
  - Raised along local rivers and lakes, this kind of ducks can find their own food and grow fast. It is tender and delicious and is used both for meat and eggs.

- 生日蛋糕很重要,可以小一点,粗制一点, 也可以很大,精美,但是要在室内准备一份,在上面点上蜡烛。
  - The birthday cake is very important. It can be simple and small. Or it can be large and highly decorated. But it must always be there in the room with lighted candles on it.

# 参考书目

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