Interaction Between Language and the Mind Through Translation: A perspective from profile/base organization[•]

Qing WU   (PhD Student, Translation Studies)
Department of Chinese, Translation and Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Abstract

Profile/base organization in cognitive linguistics emphasizes a hierarchy of salience imposed on construal by usage events of some concept. Shift in terms of profile/base alignment is highly likely to occur in a cross-linguistic/cultural context. Granted two definitive features of translation, i.e. accountability of a TT to the ST's textually-grounded intention, unless the TT has an otherwise stated intention, and systematicity attained within the TT itself, whether the shift(s) in a translation are explainable and how, fall within our concern. This paper has examined the profile/base organization in two Chinese translations of the opening paragraph of William Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*, and attempted to locate the factors to account for the textual realization in the TTs as such.

1 Introduction

A crucial question to start with

The most prominent is probably "the well-established but by no means flawless models derived from linguistics", which "is now sometimes referred to, pejoratively, as the 'scientistic' approach and generally assumed to be still hung up on naive notions of equivalence and limited to the text as the uppermost unit of analysis" (Baker 1996: 9). In fact, as Hatim (1999: 203) attempts to appeal to the scholarly attention, a simple question like "what kind of linguistics are we talking about on a given occasion?" is crucial before one starts to disagree or agree.

Scope and perspective of study

This article will draw heavily on cognitive linguistics, and apply its notion of profile/base organization to analysis of an original and its translations, the effort being intended to understand the interactions between language and the mind in decision-making and to characterize the possible factors involved.

2 The Profile/Base Organization

2.1 The Notions of Profile and Base in Cognitive Linguistics

Definitions and exemplifications

Langacker 1987 defines 'profile' as a substructure within the base that is designated and achieves a special degree of prominence (186-7; 491) while 'base' as the cognitive structure against which the designatum of a semantic structure is profiled (486). A simple cited example of the concepts CIRCLE and ARC will serve to illustrate such a relation (Langacker 1987: 183-4).

The hierarchical nature in profile/base organization

  (i)   The basic assumption underlying the notions of profile and base claims that a linguistic expression necessarily makes some entities and/or relations within a conceptualization salient while treating others as background;
  (ii) Salience is a matter of degree, i.e. profile/base organization involves structuring elements or relations in a layering fashion with some registering higher salience than others in a conceptual process.

2.2 Mental Representation and Textual Presentation: Understanding Profile/Base Organization in Translating and Translation

The profile-base notion does not only stimulate us to tap the underlying base for a wider view than the mere explicit profile in understanding a text, by which our mind may be set freer to access more richness entailed in the ST, but also direct our attention to the linkage between what to be profiled and what to be left in obscurity of consciousness. It will thereby enable us to seek the possible constraints involved in the writing of a TT, in the course of which the principles of accountability and systematicity, that is TT's accountability to ST and its systematicity within itself, will turn out to be the most essential defining features that make a translation a translation. Last but not least, such analysis of a translation will help provide more convincing and reliable evidence for quality assessment or translation criticism and thereby avoid arbitrary or ad hoc claims.

3 A Case Study of The Profile/Base Organization in Translations: Shift? And Motivation?

3.1 Introduction of the Case

Text Code	ST	LW	LD
The Opening Paragraph	Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass.	透过栅栏，穿过攀绕的花枝的空档，我看见他们在打球。他们朝插着小旗的地方走过来，我顺着栅栏朝前走。勒斯特在那棵开花的树旁草地里找东西。他们把小旗拔出来，打球了。接着他们又把小旗插回去，来到高地上，这人打了一下，另外那人也打了一下。他们接着朝前走，我也顺着栅栏朝前走。勒斯特离开了那棵开花的树，我们沿着栅栏一起走，这时候他们站住了，我们也站住了。我透过栅栏张望，勒斯特在草丛里找东西。	透过篱笆，从苦苓花的空隙，我看得见他们正在打着。他们朝旗帜处走来，我便沿着篱笆走。鲁斯特正在花树边的草地上追寻。他们拿出了旗帜，接着打起来。他们随后把旗子放回，走到桌边，先是他敲开了那棵开花树，我们沿着篱笆走，他们停下来，我们也停下来。鲁斯特在草地里追寻时，我便透过篱笆看过去。

3.2 Detailed analysis of the profile/base organization in the texts

3.2.1 Simulation of a reading process: progressive mental representations of [HIT]

[HIT] designates a process in which a trajector moves through space, makes forceful contact with the landmark, and then probably departs from it (see Langacker 1987: 317-20 for discussions of one type of use of *hit*).
The first use of [HIT] comes about at the end of the first sentence, up to where a reader has tied to the conceptualization of [HIT] some details. Compared with the schematic conceptualization of [HIT], the profile/base organization achieves a higher degree of salience:
  1) [HIT] takes place outdoors (due to the cognitive frame evoked by *fence*): base
  2) The trajector of [HIT] is elaborated by *them*, a construal of more than one as an undifferentiated whole: profile
Up to the second use of [HIT], schematicity lowers further and more indeterminacies come to a resolution, albeit not a full one. The profile/base organization continues to be brought into sharper focus:
  3) *They*, the elaborated trajector, moves around when not hitting: profile
  4) [FLAG] is evoked as part of the scene where hitting happens: base
Up to the third use of [HIT], the profile/base organization becomes finer-grained:
  5) [TABLE] is evoked as part of the scene where hitting happens: base
  6) Hitting is done individually (due to the suggestion by the singular subject): profile
Up to the fourth use of [HIT], the profile/base organization now specifies:
  7) *They* are two individuals (due to the implication by *he* and *the other*): profile
  8) Hitting involves turn-taking (due to the recognition of the hitting act as individually done in contrast to the first and second uses of [HIT] collectively perceived): base

3.2.2 Profile/base organizations of [HIT] in the ST and its TTs: Factors Identified for 'Shift'

hit	TEXT CODE	PROFILE		BASE
		overt trajector elaboration / salience degree	overt landmark elaboration / salience degree	
[HIT]$_1$	ST	*them* / M⁻	Φ / L	outdoor jesting fights or game
[打]$_1$	LW	他们 / M⁺	球 / H	outdoor ball game
[打]$_1$	LD	他们 / M⁺	Φ / L	outdoor jesting fights or game
[HIT]$_6$	ST	*they* / M⁻	Φ / L	outdoor jesting fights or game with a flag/[FLAG]^H
[打]$_6$	LW	elliptic Φ / L⁺	球 / H	outdoor ball game with a flag/[FLAG]$^{H+}$
[打]$_6$	LD	elliptic Φ / L⁺	Φ / L	outdoor jesting fights or game with a flag/[FLAG]$^{H+}$
[HIT]$_9$	ST	*he* / M	Φ / L	outdoor jesting fights or game with a flag/[FLAG]^H and a table/[TABLE]^H
[打]$_9$	LW	这人 / H⁺	Φ / L	outdoor ball game in a terrace/[TERRACE]^H with a flag/[FLAG]$^{H+}$
[敲]$_9$	LD	他 / M⁺	Φ / L	outdoor jesting fights or game with a flag/[FLAG]^H and a table/[TABLE]^H
[HIT]$_{10}$	ST	*the other* / M	Φ / L	turn-taking outdoor game with a flag/[FLAG]^H and a table/[TABLE]^H
[打]$_{10}$	LW	另外那人 / M⁺	Φ / L	turn-taking outdoor ball game in a terrace/[TERRACE]^H with a flag/[FLAG]$^{H+}$
[敲]$_{10}$	LD	另一个 / M⁺	Φ / L	turn-taking outdoor game with a flag/[FLAG]$^{H+}$ and a table/[TABLE]^H

Note: H(high), M(medium), L(low) hereinafter denote the relative degree of salience, and each further distinguishes finer differences of salience degree, using symbol plus, bare symbol, and symbol minus for these sub-rankings in a degrading order, i.e. H+, H, H−, M+, M, M−, L+, L, and L−, nine levels of salience degree in all. Yet the notations in the tables should not be understood as absolute ranking but just rankings based on comparison among the three texts in question. The numbers in subscript correspond to those in the Listings and the Appendix.
TABLE 1. profile/base organization in construal of [HIT]/*hit*

The factors that may have led to motivated displacement of profile/base organization in the translators' textualization can be identified:
The first type is comprehensive information obtained of the *entire* work: **(F1) overall mental representation;**
The second type is linguistic convention, which further divides into two sub-factors: **(F2) optional but preferred linguistic conventions**; **(F3) obligatory linguistic conventions**.

3.2.3 Other Textual Manifestations of Shift in Profile/base Organization
  - verbs: *be, take,* put;   - prepositions: *along*;   - nominals: *the flower tree*;   - connectives: *and*

3.2.4 Summary of Text Analysis

Close study of the profile/base organizations in the sample texts may be summarized as follows:
  (i)   Shift occurs absolutely but differs in degree in translations from the perspective of profile/base organization;
  (ii) When shift occurs, it is either motivated or unmotivated;
     (ii-1) Unmotivated translations result from ad hoc decision-making, or unawareness of language management;
     (ii-2) Motivated translations may be driven by factors (a) the overall mental representation of the entire work in question; and (b) linguistic convention: (b1) optional but preferred linguistic conventions, and (b2) obligatory linguistic conventions;
  (iii) When shift is not observed, other factors within one language should also be taken into account, e.g. markedness, which falls beyond the focus of the present article.

4 Concluding without conclusion

Our investigation into the profile/base organization in a text, i.e. the ST and its TTs, has not been targeted at seeking some set of guiding principles or technical solutions for translating practitioners. It intends to incorporate cognitive facets in linguistic-analysis-based studies of translation and to explore what factors from language and the mind may have interacted in the course of textualization. The theory of profile/base distinction has not only become the tool in analyzing texts but also served to understand translation in general and to explain what information has become at a translator's disposal and how, and why a TT has come out of a translator's mental representation as such. The ultimate goal is to emphasize that a sensitivity to language management in reading a source text and an awareness of the management of language in writing out a target text are important to a translation task.

SOURCES OF THE CASE

Faulkner, William. 1931/1978. *The Sound and The Fury*. London: Chatto & Windus.
Li, Dengxin. tr. 1979/1987. *Shengyin yu Fennu (6th edition)*. Taibei: Yuanjing Chubanshe. (黎登鑫译《声音与愤怒》，1987年第6版，台北：远景出版社)
Li, Wenjun. tr. 1984. *Xuanhua yu Saodong*. Shanghai: Shanghai Yiwen Chubanshe. (李文俊译《喧哗与骚动》，1984年，上海：上海译文出版社)

KEY REFERENCES

Baker, Mona (1996): "Linguistics and Cultural Studies: Complementary or Competing Paradigms in Translation Studies?", Angelika Lauer et al. (Eds.), *Übersetzungswissenschaft im Umbruch: Festschrift für Wolfram Wilss*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, pp. 9-19.
Beaugrande, Robert de (1978): *Factors in a Theory of Poetic Translating*, The Netherlands, Van Gorcum, Assen.
Fowler, Roger (1986/1996): *Linguistic Criticism* (2nd Edition), Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Hatim, Basil (1999): "Implications of Research into Translator Invisibility", *Target*, 11-2, pp. 201-222.
Iser, Wolfgang (1980): "Interaction between Text and Reader", Andrew Bennett (Ed.), *Readers and Reading*, London & New York, Longman (1995), pp. 20-31.
Langacker, Ronald W. (1987): *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar Vol.I: Theoretical Prerequisites*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
Langacker, Ronald W. (1991): *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar Vol.II: Descriptive Application*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

[•] This article is forthcoming in *META*.