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

Qing Wu  (Ph.D. Student, Translation Studies)
Department of Chinese, Translation and Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Abstract

Profile/base organization in cognitive linguistics provides a hierarchy of salience imposed on conceptual space by events of some concept. Shift in terms of profile/base alignment is highly likely to occur in a cross-linguistic/intercultural context. Given these two definutive features of translators, i.e. accountability of a TT to the ST’s textually-grounded intention, the TT has an otherwise stated intention, and consciousness retained 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 ways to account for the textual realization in the TTs in each.

1. Introduction

A crucial question to start with

The most prominent is probably "the well-established but by no means flawless model derived from linguistics", which "is now sometimes referred to, predominantly, as the 'scientistic' approach and generally assumed to be still being an innovation of the discipline of translation studies" (Shaker 1998: 9). In fact, as Harris (1998-2000) 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 diagnose or argue.

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 discourse-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 designed and achieves a special degree of prominence (156-7, 490) while "base" as the cognitive structure against which the designations of a semantic structure is profiled (468). A simple, cited example of the concepts (Con and Con') will serve to illustrate such a relation (Langacker 1987: 153-6).

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 stressing elements or relations in a layering fashion with some regarding higher salience than others in a conceptual process.

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

The profile-base notion does not only stipulate the underlying base for a wider view than the mere explicit profile in understanding a text, by which our mind may be set to or access numerous items contained in the ST, but also direct our attention to the linkage between what is to be profiled and what is to be left in obscurity of consciousness. It will thereby enable us to such the possible consequences 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 in systematicity within itself, will turn out to be the most essential defining features that make a translation is translation. Last but not least, such an 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


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>ST / CHS</th>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out of a zone when the flag was down.</td>
<td>[HIT]0 ST</td>
<td>[HIT]0 profile</td>
<td>[HIT]0 base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were coming toward where the flag was up and went along the flag.</td>
<td>[HIT]1 ST</td>
<td>[HIT]1 profile</td>
<td>[HIT]1 base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They took the flag in their hand and went toward it.</td>
<td>[HIT]2 ST</td>
<td>[HIT]2 profile</td>
<td>[HIT]2 base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last came away from the flower tree and went along the fence.</td>
<td>[HIT]3 ST</td>
<td>[HIT]3 profile</td>
<td>[HIT]3 base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They repeated and we stopped and I looked through the fance when the flag was up.</td>
<td>[HIT]4 ST</td>
<td>[HIT]4 profile</td>
<td>[HIT]4 base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

(iii) When shift is not observed, other factors within one language should also be taken into account, e.g. markedness, which fall beyond the focus of the present article.

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

3.2.3 Other Textual Manifestations of Shift in Profile/base Organization

Other Textual Manifestations of Shift in Profile/Base Organization

In conclusion 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 accountability and systematicity, that is TT’s accountability to ST and in systematicity within itself, but it will turn out to be the most essential defining features that make a translation is translation. Last but not least, such an 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.

4 Concluding without conclusion

We have seen that 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 accountability and systematicity, that is TT’s accountability to ST and in systematicity within itself, but it will turn out to be the most essential defining features that make a translation is translation. Last but not least, such an 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.

Sources of the Case


Luster was hunting in the grass.

They were coming toward where the flag was up and went along the flag. Then they put the flag back and went toward the gate, and he and I, and the other kid. Then they went on, and we went along the fence. Last came away from the flower tree and went along the fence when the flag was up.

They repeated and we stopped and I looked through the fance when the flag was up.

They repeated and we stopped and I looked through the fance when the flag was up.