

# *A Comparative Analysis of Hypotaxis and Parataxis between Chinese and English: a Case Study of Zhang Peiji's Translation of Ba Jin's Sunrise on the Sea*

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**Abstract:** Hypotaxis and parataxis are two important concepts in language syntax and one of the important differences between English and Chinese. Sunrise on the Sea, as a representative lyrical prose of Ba Jin, a famous modern Chinese essayist, has been translated into English by many translators. This paper selects Mr. Zhang Peiji's translation and illustrates it with specific examples from three aspects: the use of subject, preposition, conjunctions and voice. This paper aims to make a comparative analysis of the characteristics of Hypotaxis and parataxis between English and Chinese, and to explore the translation skills of hypotaxis and parataxis at the level of sentence and discourse, so as to provide a theoretical basis for English-Chinese translation.

## **1. Introduction**

The difference between Chinese and English has always been the focus of language research. From the perspective of language division, Chinese belongs to Sino-Tibetan language system, while English belongs to Indo-European language system. There are obvious differences between the language systems of these two languages. Hypotaxis and parataxis, as the basic modes of sentence structure and writing in Chinese and English, are also two important concepts in language syntax. They not only reveal a linguistic phenomenon, but also imply the different modes of thinking and behavior in Chinese and English. Scholars have many definitions of hypotaxis and parataxis, but the differences between them are more comprehensive in terms of morphology, syntax, tense, voice and mood. Chinese emphasizes parataxis while English emphasizes hypotaxis. Liu Miqing, a well-known scholar and translator, pointed out: "Hypotaxis is to express syntactic relations and realize the connection between words and sentences through the formal means of language, including lexical means and morphological means. Parataxis is connected by the meaning and logical relation of the sentence. (liu, 1991, 24)

Hypotaxis and parataxis were first proposed by professor Wang Li, a well-known linguist. In his book *The Theory of Chinese Grammar*, he pointed out that hypotaxis and parataxis are two basic ways of organizing language. (Wang, 2015) The word "he" in hypotaxis and parataxis means permutation and combination, and it also represents the specific form of organizing each component in language expression. In addition, lianshu Neng pointed out in the *Comparative Study of English and Chinese* (1993) that hypotaxis refers to words or clauses in sentences that are connected in

linguistic forms to express grammatical meaning and logical relations. Parataxis means that words are not related by linguistic means, and the grammatical meaning and logical relations in a sentence are expressed by the meaning of words or clauses. (Lian,1993) it can be seen that previous studies on hypotaxis and paratactic are inseparable from the study of words and short sentences in English and Chinese texts.

The basic connotation of hypotaxis and parataxis should be analyzed from the general and special levels respectively. In a broad sense, hypotaxis mainly represents the combination of appearance and form of sentences, which can be realized by using certain markers. Hypotaxis in a specific sense relies on the arrangement of words. In addition, the basic form of sentence components is to use some related words to implement the connection process and then construct the whole sentence, so as to achieve the overall grammatical meaning and logical meaning. Hypotaxis emphasizes the transformation and combination in the form of composition, focuses on the integrity and rigor of the external form of the sentence, and relies on the external structural form to show the meaning expressed in the sentence. Meaning for one word, said by general implication, it should be generally does not rely on any kind of appearance of form words or application appearance form to a form of language expression, focus on internal system expression and meaning of the sentence, contained in the parts of the sentence and clause is the connection between does not rely on any fixed form and special means. In terms of specific definitions, parataxis itself focuses on the logical relevance between the upper and lower sentences, and also covers the meanings expressed between the earlier and later sentences. It relies on the meaning content between multiple clauses to construct the overall meaning of the sentence, so as to make the internal semantics of the sentence coherent. The basic feature of parataxis is that it focuses on implicit cohesion between sentence structures, strengthens the internal connection of semantics and pragmatic efficiency, and strictly observes the dominant form of meaning.

In general, hypotaxis itself focuses on the composition, structure and expressive function of grammatical components, strengthening the external morphological connection between sentences, while parataxis focuses on invisible semantic expression, appropriately displaying the internal connection among the components of sentences, and strengthening the essential meaning expressed by sentences. This paper will select specific examples from the text to explain the differences between English and Chinese thinking. Through a comparative analysis of The phenomenon of Parataxis between English and Chinese, it aims to reduce the negative transfer effect of mother tongue culture in foreign language learning, provide a basis for readers and translators in translation, and further promote cultural exchange.

## 2. Methodology

On research methods, this article adopts the method of comparative analysis, concrete example analysis for Mr Zhang Peiji translation with Mr Ba jin's the difference between the original, reflected in the process of two kinds of language transformation, as the translator need to fully consider the difference between hypotaxis and parataxis, firmly grasp the characteristics of the means of hypotaxis and parataxis, to achieve the accurate expression in line , with the habits and characteristics of the target language. Zhang Peiji's clever translation makes it easier for readers to understand and accept, and this translation also provides some new ideas for the development and integration of the two languages.

**3. For a language, its development is in a very complex environment, and there are many related factors. Both Chinese and English have their own characteristics, including different cultural origins, ways of thinking, social customs and so on.**

### 3.1 In Terms of the Difference of Cultural Attributes

Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have the greatest influence on the Han nationality. All of these emphasize human understanding. And in the Chinese philosophical tradition, it has always advocated “the unity of nature and man”, which laid the foundation for the Chinese language of parataxis. On the contrary, under the influence of the logic system invented by Greek philosophers, the West advocates the separation of subject and object, advocates the opposition between things and spirit, society and nature, essence and phenomenon, pursues individual thinking and advocates logic and rationality.

### 3.2 Analysis from the Starting Point of Thinking Mode

China and western countries have different living environment and social customs and habits, so in all aspects of the check, people's thinking mode is also very different. The Chinese way of thinking emphasizes wholeness and comprehensiveness, induction and intuition. The western way of thinking is generally manifested in logical thinking, focusing on the individual, rationality and form.

### 3.3 From the Perspective of the Composition of Chinese and English

Chinese sentences are connected as a whole through semantics, mainly by the series of clauses, coherence of meaning, etc. However, English sentences are connected by grammar, mainly through prepositional phrases, participle phrases, relative pronouns, conjunctions and so on.

In a word, Chinese and Western cultures are different, and national thinking is also different. Both languages have their own characteristics. Translator Liu Miqing also pointed out that “many formal problems of language are actually external manifestation phenomena based on its internal mechanism.” It is precisely because of these differences that a series of research on Chinese and English has been initiated.

## 4. Results and Discussion of Hypotaxis and Parataxis:

From the three aspects of subject, omission of conjunctions and prepositions and voice, this paper analyzes the differences between the target text and the original text, as well as the skills needed to pay attention to in translation, so as to reflect the differences between hypotaxis and parataxis in English and Chinese.

### 4.1 In terms of the use of subject, English emphasizes hypotaxis and the relationship between sentence elements is clear. Chinese emphasizes parataxis. The subject can be a noun, a verb or even a number or phrase.

As a hypotactic language, English subject can determine the form of predicate verb and the basic pattern of the whole sentence. On the contrary, with Chinese as a paratactic language, the subject can be the relationship to be stated, not necessarily the agent or the sufferer. There are also many Chinese sentences with “zero” subject, that is, no subject. Sometimes in Chinese, the repetition of a word is necessary to strengthen the language momentum, and sentences often omit the subject. For the reader, these omissions do not affect their understanding of the text, and the general idea can be inferred from the context. But in formal English sentences without a subject or object would not be grammatical, or even wrong.

E.g. 1:”At the end, finally broke through the sky, completely out of the sea, the red color is very

lovely.”

“It completely emerged from the sea again with a lovely red.”(Zhang,2007)

In Mr. Ba Jin's original text, this sentence is still the description of the sun, but did not repeat the “sun” subject, but omitted. But when translated into English, an “it” must be added to make it a complete sentence. It can also be seen that in English compound sentences, the sentence explaining the result usually comes before the clause explaining the cause, that is, the weight of the sentence is placed at the beginning. In Chinese sentences, the main part of the sentence is usually placed at the logical or sequential end.

#### **4.2 In terms of the use of conjunctions and prepositions, Chinese semantics is rarely or never expressed by conjunctions, but are closely related to word order. However, in English, prepositions are an important bridge for conjunctions, phrases or clauses. In Chinese, prepositions are often omitted or omitted.**

Only one predicate verb is the core of an English sentence. Because predicate verbs are limited by verb forms, their meanings are mostly expressed by nouns, which are connected by prepositions and conjunctions. Therefore, conjunctions and prepositions are used more frequently in English. But in Chinese, the form of the verb is invariable, so in Chinese sentences, verbs and short sentences are often used.

Example 2: “In order to see the sunrise, I often get up early, it was not bright, very quiet, only the sound of the machine on the boat.”

“I would often get up early to watch sunrise when it was not yet quite light and all was quite except for the Dorning of The ship engine.”

At the beginning of the article, Mr. Zhang Peiji translated five short sentences in Mr. Ba Jin's original text by using an adverbial clause of time “when” and “and” as a conjunction. We can also see that there are five verbs in the five short sentences in Mr. Ba Jin's original text. This can be seen in the flexible use of verbs in Chinese and the flexible substitution of connectives and prepositions in English. In addition, in this sentence, “I would often get up early to watch sunrise” also reflects the difference of parallel construction between Chinese and English. English follows a logical sequence, from small to large, from simple to complex. In Chinese, the opposite is true.

#### **4.3 In the Use of Voice, the Passive Voice is More Widely Used in English Than in Chinese, and the Chinese Are More Likely to Use the Active Voice.**

In the process of comparing Chinese and English, we can find that in fact, there is basically no morphological change in Chinese, but not in English. There are only changes in gender and number of nouns, and voice differences.

“ Knowing that the sun was about to rise from the horizon, I looked there quietly,”

‘Knowing that the sun was about to rise, I had my eyes fixed on the distant edge of the sea.’

This sentence describes the eyes, in Chinese and English are two voices. We can see that when translated into English, the eyes as the subject, need to use the passive voice, then skillfully translated as “be fixed”. We can see that in terms of voice, passive voice is more widely used in English, especially in English for Science and news reports, while active voice is more commonly used in Chinese. The English passive voice uses the acne form of the verb, that is, “auxiliary verb + past participle”, as well as the auxiliary verb's state of affairs and the time information of the ship's action. English passive sentences can be divided into two categories: the passive form of passive sentences and the active form of passive sentences. However, active voice is often used in Chinese. Chinese passive sentences are expressed by means of lexical devices. The auxiliary verb conveys

the passive meaning by adding other function words with a passive meaning, such as “be, call, make”. Chinese passive sentences can also be divided into passive sentences with “bei” structure and passive sentences with active form.

In short, Chinese is an analytical language, so the grammatical relations between words are mainly reflected in the order of words. English is a comprehensive language and the grammatical relations of words are mainly reflected in the form of words. In terms of voice, passive voice is widely used in English, especially in English for Science and technology and news reports, while passive sentences in Chinese are mostly expressed by means of vocabulary, and some function words with passive meanings are added to express passive meanings. In terms of tenses, the grammatical form of English tenses is reflected by the specificity of predicate verbs, while Chinese tenses are expressed by temporary particles or adverbs.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, by analyzing and comparing subjects, prepositions and voices, we can conclude that English as a hypotaxis language and Chinese as a parataxis language are different in expression, which needs to be appropriately added and deleted in translation. However, neither of them is absolute. Xin Hong points out that the application of hypotaxis and parataxis in English and Chinese contains abundant dialectics.(Xin,2008) In general, hypotaxis and parataxis are opposites in English and Chinese, but their functions may change in certain contexts. Zhu Yongsheng et al also believed that hypotaxis also exists in Chinese, and hypotaxis also exists in English. They differ only in degree.”(Zhu,2001)

This paper expounds the differences between Hypotaxis and parataxis in English and Chinese from three aspects. Through specific analysis, it can be seen that English attaches great importance to hypotaxis and connects words and sentences by means of some linguistic forms. Chinese focuses on parataxis and uses the meanings of words and sentences themselves as well as the inherent logical relations or context to realize the correlation between sentences, and the sentences present a bamboo structure. It can also be said that at the sentence level, Chinese pays more attention to parataxis while English pays more attention to hypotaxis. They reflect not only the differences between Chinese and English, but also the differences between the two ways of thinking. Zhao Yuanren, a famous linguist, also believed that “the so-called linguistic theory is actually a scientific conclusion drawn by comprehensive comparative analysis and research of languages of all nationalities in the world.” The comparative analysis of hypotaxis and parataxis between English and Chinese reflects the differences between English and Chinese language countries and provides a theoretical basis for cultural exchange. By contrastive analysis of parataxis between English and Chinese, this paper aims to reduce the negative transfer effect of mother tongue culture in foreign language learning and make cross-cultural communication more convenient. Effective, for our culture to the world to make a contribution. Therefore, readers and translators are required to appropriately change their thinking in translation and reading so as to better understand the expression of the original text

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