

## A Contrastive Analysis Between French and Chinese Substitution Types Within the Framework of Functional Systemic Grammar

ZHOU Weihong<sup>[a],\*</sup>; WANG Wei<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup> Department of College English Education, Beijing City University  
Beijing, China

<sup>[b]</sup> School of Interpreting and Translation, Beijing International Studies  
University, Beijing, China

\*Corresponding author

Received 8 December 2018; accepted 26 February 2019

Published online 26 March 2019

### Abstract

This paper compares the three major types of substitution in French and Chinese discourses and finds that substitution is a necessary cohesive device to achieve text coherence in both languages, implicating some applicable enlightenment for translation between French and Chinese.

**Key words:** Contrastive analysis; French; Chinese; Substitution

Zhou, W. H., & Wang, W. (2019). A Contrastive Analysis Between French and Chinese Substitution Types Within the Framework of Functional Systemic Grammar. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 16(1), 22-25. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/11026>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/11026>

### INTRODUCTION

The functional tradition of London School has encouraged scholars (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Winter, 1982; Hoey, 1983; Martin, 1992) to probe into the issues about discourse and textuality. In recent years, Chinese linguists (Xu, 2002; Jia, 2003) have compared and analyzed the textual and syntactical features of the English, French and Chinese languages. According to the classification of Halliday (1994, pp.312-334), there are altogether five cohesive devices which could be found in English discourse, i.e., reference (personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative

reference), ellipsis (nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, and clausal ellipsis), substitution (nominal substitution, verbal substitution, and clausal substitution), conjunction (additive, adversative, temporal, and causal), and lexical cohesion (repetition and synonymy). Although French and English belong to different language branches (Latin vs. Germanic, so to speak), they both adopt similar cohesive devices in organizing discourses. In Liao's opinion (1992, p.45), unlike English or French, there are three basic anaphoric types in Modern Chinese, including repetition/full repetition, partial repetition, and different forms (including synonym, general word, pronoun, and zero anaphora [ZA]). Therefore, repetition, synonym, and pronoun are applied as anaphoric means in both French and Chinese discourses. Zero anaphora (ZA) is a typical phenomenon in Chinese, but it's rarely used in the French language. However, Hu's (1994, pp.70-75) research indicates that there are substitution types in the Chinese discourse, which can be illustrated in the following table.

**Table 1**  
**Contrast of Substitution Words in English and Chinese**

	English	Chinese
Nominal	one	de/ zhe
Verbal	do	zhe me zhe / lai / gan
Clausal	so	zhe yang / na yang / ran

The current study attempts to contrast the cohesive devices of French and Chinese languages by adopting documentary and inductive methods so as to provide implications for French teaching, Chinese teaching, as well as the translation between French and Chinese.

### WHAT IS SUBSTITUTION?

Substitution can be regarded as a wording relation instead of a semantic relation (cf. Halliday & Hasan 1976, p.88). It has been defined as "a relation between linguistic items, such as words or phrases" and "a relation on the lexicogrammatical level, the level of grammar and vocabulary, or linguistic 'form'" (Halliday and Hasan,

1976, p.89). Hence substitution is different from reference because the former is a kind of grammatical relation while the latter belongs to the semantic level. Although there is a complicated and sophisticated pronoun system in the modern French language, the pronouns could not be defined as a kind of substitution. Instead, French pronouns can be labeled as reference (Example 1).

#### Example 1

Passepartout avait une physionomie aimable avec une de ces bonnes têtes rondes qu'on aime à voir sur les épaules d'un ami. Il avait aussi une musculature vigoureuse et des cheveux bruns rebelles. (Le tour du monde en 80 jours) (Passepartout had a kind face, a friendly round head on his shoulders. He also had vigorous manhood with furious brown hair.) (Translated by the authors, Around the World in 80 Days)

In this case, the pronoun *il* (*he*) is used to replace *Passepartout* in the previous sentence. However, it belongs to reference instead of substitution. On the grammatical level, the modern French discourse is much similar to English, featuring nominal, verbal and clausal substitution types. As for the modern Chinese language, the term substitution (*ti dai* in Chinese) has a slightly different denotation compared with its English and French counterparts. Wang (1944) ever classified it into personal substitution, nominal substitution, predicate substitution, and adjective substitution. The current research plans to discuss the substitution phenomena in French and Chinese discourses on the grammatical level within the theoretical framework of Halliday & Hasan (1976, p.91), including nominal substitution (*one, ones; same*), verbal substitution (*do*), and clausal substitution (*so, not*).

---

## NOMINAL SUBSTITUTION IN FRENCH AND CHINESE

---

The typical French items occurring as substitutes are *un/une, le/la même* and *même* (Example 2). Unlike the sophisticated gender and number system of the French grammar, the nominal substitution words in Chinese *de* and *zhe* are characterized by a lack of morphological complexity (Example 2).

#### Example 2

Otre Honneur cherche **un bateau?** lui dit le marin.  
Vous en avez **un** ?  
Oui, Votre Honneur, un bateau-pilote, le meilleur. (*Le tour du monde en 80 jours*)

In this context, the substitute word *un* (*one*) replaces *un bateau* (a ship) in the previous sentence. In the next conversation among speaker A, speaker B and speaker C, the phrase *le même* refers to the nominal phrase *un paquet de thé* in the previous sentence.

#### Example 3

A : Que désirez-vous, Messieurs?  
B : Je voudrais *un paquet de thé*.  
C : *Le même*, s'il vous plaît.

Hu (1994, p.71) has observed that there is no exact counterpart for the substitutes of either *one* or *un/une* in the modern Chinese language. Compared with substitution, repetition (Example 4) is a more common cohesive means.

#### Example 4

Zai wo de hou yuan, ke yi kan jian qiang wai you liang zhu shu,  
yi zhu shi zao shu, hai you yi zhu ye shi zao shu.

While Hu (Ibid, p.72) has also noted that the Chinese character *de* is the closed equivalent to the English word *one* which can be used as a substitute. "Very often, a polysyllabic verbal expression V can stand for 'one who V's, thus making zero an agent suffix. One can of course form agent nouns with the suffixes *-jee* and *de*, as in *mayganjee* L 'tangerine vendor', or *kanmende* 'watch door -er, -- doorman' (Chao, 1968, p.228). The application of *de* can be applied in almost all context-free situations, and it can be regarded as a suffix like "*-er*" in English (drive – driver; speak – speaker). This usage of *de* is also named "Europeanized marker" by Wang (1944) in *Modern Chinese Grammar*. Zhu's (1961, 1966) study reveals the similarities between the Chinese pattern of "adjective + *de*" and the English construction of "adjective + *one*," and its application is context-dependent in certain discourses. Lv (1979) also points out that the nominal phrases composed by *de* could be used to substitute nouns in Modern Chinese. In practical usage, the character *de* has already been grammaticalized into a grammatical marker or suffix (Example 5).

#### Example 5

Ma ma: Wo mai le hen duo ping guo, you hong *de*, huang *de*,  
qing *de*, ni yao na yi zhong?  
Hai zi: Wo yao hong *de*.

In this discourse, the nominal groups *hong de, huang de, qing de* (said by the Mum) and *hong de* (said by the child) are all substitutes of the word *ping guo* in the first clause. Wang (1944) and Chao (1968) also discussed the substitute word *zhe* (Example 5).

#### Example 5

Xiang ling qing wen bao chai san ren jie yu ta tong geng, dai yu  
yu ta tong chen, zhi wu tong xing *zhe*. (Hong lou meng)

---

## VERBAL SUBSTITUTION IN FRENCH AND CHINESE

---

The typical verbal substitute in French is *faire* and its conjugations (*fais, fait, faisons, faites, font, faisais, fis, ferai, ferais*). As for the Chinese language, candidates for verbal substitution are rather complicated, including *zhe me zhe* (Wang, 1944), *lai* (Chao, 1968; Shi and Xuan 2002), *gan* (Hu, 1994), and *zuo*. The verb *faire* could be used to replace almost all verbs in French texts (Example 6 and 7).

### Example 6

Il bien *revise* ses leçons. *Faites* comme lui!

In the sample sentences listed above, *faites* is used in the second sentence to substitute *revise* in the previous sentence.

### Example 7

“Beaucoup de Parisiens ne peuvent pas rentrer à la maison pour déjeuner. Par conséquent, ils fréquentent les restaurants, les cafés ou les self-services près de leur bureau. Il y a aussi Paris Mac, la chaîne française de McDonald’s. On y trouve des hamburgers, des frites et du Coca-Cola comme aux Etats-Unis.” Catherine demande s’il y a des différences entre les chaînes françaises et américaine.

“Une très petite différence, répond M. Michaud. On peut choisir du vin à Paris Mac !”

“Bien entendu ! Les Français aiment bien le vin ! Et les ouvriers. Que *font*-ils ?”

“Beaucoup d’ouvriers apportent un déjeuner que leur femme prépare à la maison. C’est plus économique mais c’est toujours de la bonne cuisine française !

(*La cuisine française*)

In practical usage, the French verb which is substituted in a discourse may be in a null position, i.e., it could be hidden in the text. Hence the context is a crucial criterion locking down the exact verb being substituted. In Example 7, it could be inferred from the context that the speakers are talking about lunch. In this case *font* has replaced the verb *mangent*. Compared with French, linguists have ever discussed several possible substitutes which can be used to replace verbs in Chinese because these words are still on a diachronic cline of grammaticalization. Wang (1944) proposes the concept of “predicate substitution”:

### Example 8

Dai yu... bian shuo dao: “ni ji zhe me shuo, wei shen me wo qu le ni bu jiao ya tou kai men ne?”

Bao yu jing cha dao: “zhe hua cong na li shuo qi? Wo yao shi zhe me zhe, li ke jiu si le?”

(*Hong lou meng*)

Chao (1968, p.660) classifies the pro-verbs such as *lai*, *nong*, *gao*, and *jeeng* as substitutes. He believes that the most general pro-verb is *lai*, as in “Ni huah de bu shiang, deeng woo *lai*!” “The use of *lai* is so generalized that it can be used to substitute for any verb, even with a direct object after it, as in *lai pair*” (Ibid). In Chao’s (Ibid) opinion, *lai* is a pro-verb equating a pro-verb which means “do it.” In this case, *lai* is more like a function word and substitute. Shi & Xuan (2002) have also discussed the issue of the grammaticalization of *lai* and *qu*. As a function word, *lai* could be used to mean willingness (Example 9) and imperative (Example 10). In this case, *lai* can be identified as a substitute.

### Example 9

Waiter: Qing wen shei *fu zhang*?

Speaker A: Wo *lai*.

Speaker B: Hai shi wo *lai* ba.

### Example 10

Speaker A: Zhe jian shi ni men *lai* (*yan jiu yan jiu*).

Speaker B: Hao, wo men *lai*.

In Example 9, *lai* is used to substitute the verb *fu zhang*, implicating that both the two speakers are willing to pay the bill. In Example 10, *lai* is used to replace the verb *yan jiu yan jiu* in the conversation. When the word *lai* is used in this way, it could be regarded as a modal verb, sharing similarities with the word *will* in English and *vouloir* in French.

Hu (1994, p.74) points out that the word *gan* (Example 11) could also be used as a substitute in Modern Chinese. Besides, the word *zuo* (Example 12) can be used to replace many verbs in Chinese texts.

### Example 11

Speaker A: Ni neng xia ban qian jiu ba zi liao *zhun bei* hao ma?

Speaker B: Wo ke bu *gan*!

### Example 12

Xiao li mei tian dou *you yong*, *da lan qiu*, *pao bu*. Ta zhe yang *zuo* de mu di shi wei le ti gao mian yi li.

In Example 11, the word *gan* substitutes the verb *zhun bei*. In Example 12, the word *zuo* substitutes the verbs *you yong*, *da lan qiu*, and *pao bu* in the previous sentence.

---

## CLAUSAL SUBSTITUTION

---

“There is one further type of substitution in which what is presupposed is not an element within the clause but an entire clause. The words used as substitutes are *so* and *not*” (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p.130). Correspondingly, their French counterparts are *ainsi*, *aussi*, and *non*-Examples 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

### Example 13

Depuis trois jours, simplement, *il sèche l’école*. Il en est *ainsi*.

### Example 14

Est-ce que *vous mesuriez la pression dans cette chaudière*? Vous auriez tort d’agir *ainsi* !

### Example 15

A : Avec ce passeport vous pouvez voyager en Angleterre.

B : S’il en est *ainsi*, je veux le obtenir.

### Example 16

A : Puis-je vous être utile, Messieurs?

B : Je voudrais encore un peu de vin.

C : Moi *aussi*.

### Example 17

A : Est-ce qu’il sait que la réunion aura lieu aujourd’hui ?

B : Peut-être *non*.

In the sample sentences listed above, the substitute word *ainsi* has replaced the clauses *il sèche l’école*, *vous mesuriez la pression dans cette chaudière*, and *avec ce passeport vous pouvez voyager en Angleterre*. *Aussi* is

used to replace the clause *Je voudrais encore un peu de vin*, and *non* is adopted to substitute *il sait que la réunion aura lieu aujourd'hui* in the previous sentence.

Hu (1994, p.75) suggests that *zhe yang* (Example 18) /*zhe me* (Example 19) and *na yang/na me* could be used to realize clausal substitution. In Example 18, *zhe yang* substitutes the clause *jin tian zhen de shi hen mang* in the previous sentence. Similarly, *zhe me* replaces the entire previous sentence in Example 19.

#### Example 18

A: Bu shi wo bu yuan yi, wo *jin tian zhen de shi hen mang*.  
B: Ji ran *zhe yang*, wo zi ji qu hao le.

#### Example 19

“*Lao shang ke bu shi duo tou a! Zhe me xin li you yi wen.*”  
(*Zi ye*)

Wang (1944) classifies the word *ran* as verbal substitution. However, Hu (1994, p.75) thinks that the character *ran* (Example 20) in the phrases *bu ran*, *yao bu ran* and *bu ran de hua* is actually used as a clausal substitute (NEGATION + CLAUSE).

#### Example 20

A: Ni xue xi zhen yong gong!  
B: Ye bu *jin ran*.

Besides *zhe me/zhe yang*, *na yang/na me*, and *ran*, we have noticed that (*ji ran*) *ru ci/ru ci (shuo lai)* (Example 21) could also be used as clausal substitutes.

#### Example 21

A: Wo bi ni ge ge da liang sui.  
B: *Ru ci shuo lai* wo dei jiao ni ge ge le.

## CONCLUSION

By contrasting the typical substitution types in French and Chinese, the current study finds that both French and Chinese adopt cohesive devices to realize discourse coherence. The French substitutes are highly grammaticalized function words. While some of the Chinese substitutes are still on their cline of

grammaticalization. Their differences in respective texts also confirm that French shows the feature of hypotaxis (grammar) and Chinese prefers parataxis (semantics), which may provide empirical implications for French teaching and Chinese learning, as well as the translation between French and Chinese.

## REFERENCES

- Chao, Y. R. (1968). *A grammar of spoken Chinese*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1976.
- Hoey, M. (1983). *On the surface of discourse*. London: George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd.
- Hu, Z. L. (1994). *Cohesion and coherence in text*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Jia, X. Y. (2003). *A contrastive study between Chinese and French*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Liao, Q. Z. (1992). *A collection of Liao Qiuzhong's linguistic papers*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press.
- Lü, S. X. (1979). *Grammatical analysis of Chinese*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Marin, J. R. (1992). *English text: System and structure*. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Shi, D. X., & Xuan, L. (1944). On the grammaticalization of *Lai* and *Qu*. *Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> Chinese Modern Linguistics Symposium*. Beijing: Beijing Foreign Studies University.
- Wang, L. (1944). *Modern Chinese grammar*. Shanghai: The Commercial Press.
- Winter, E. O. (1982). *Towards a contextual grammar of English: The clause and its place in the definition of sentence*. London: George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd.
- Xu, Y. L. (2002). *Contrastive linguistics*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Zhu, D. X. (1961). On De. *Zhongguo Yuwen*, (12).
- Zhu, D. X. (1966). A further research on De. *Zhongguo Yuwen*, (1), 1966.