



Analysis on Choosing and Determination of Word Meaning in Translation Practice of English for Electric Power

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Supported by “Beijing Higher Education Elite Teacher Project” (YETP 0733); “the Talent Cultivation Project for Colleges and Universities Issued by Beijing” (GJ2015065).

Received 3 August 2016; accepted 8 October 2016

Published online 26 October 2016

Abstract

English for Electric Power with its characteristics of flexibility, brevity, correctness and standard bears specialized features on its own. In the translation practice of English for Electric Power, the appropriate choosing and determination of word meaning should be attached great importance. Translators can make the best choice of word meaning according to different word class, study field, appropriate expression as well as simple or plural form of Electric Power lexis.

Key words: English for electric power; Choosing of word meaning; Determination of word meaning

Jiang, X. (2016). Analysis on Choosing and Determination of Word Meaning in Translation Practice of English for Electric Power. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 13(4), 52-55. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/8925> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/8925>

INTRODUCTION

With the increasingly development of high technology, proper and precise translation for science and technology materials has become a critical way in the exchange of technological information. English for Electric power, as one of the branch of English for Science and Technology (EST) has played a significant role in the process of teaching and research. It is convenient for the electric

technicians to understand and grasp the more advanced techniques with the frequent communication of nations in the global village and the vast amount of electric power reading materials pouring into China. It is the truth that text of Electric Power English bears the characteristics of more formal, specialized and concise and the vocabulary is prominent with the conversion features. The correct and proper translation of electric power English lies in the appropriate choosing and determination of word meaning in translation practice, which makes it possible for the translators to provide the valuable first-hand reading material for the concerned researchers and translators.

1. TEXTUAL AND LEXICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGLISH FOR ELECTRIC POWER

As one of the branch of EST, English for Electric Power bears the textual and lexical features of its own. It is commonly believed that the expression of Electric Power English is precise, brief and accurate with the specialized lexis and normative description.

1.1 Specialized Lexis

Many electric terms have one common meaning in daily use while bear more specialized meaning in electric field, such as “exciting” and “brush”. In everyday English, “exciting” means “creating or arousing excitement” in English interpretation and 兴奋的 in Chinese, while in electric power English, the meaning of the word has been changed with a more specialized connotation and “励磁的” is the Chinese version of “exciting”. Therefore, it is more appropriate and correct to translate “exciting current” as 励磁电流 in Chinese. Another typical example of this kind is “brush”. In daily English, “brush” simply means 刷子, while 电刷 is a more professional word in English for Electric Power.

1.2 Formal and Written Form

Just as what has been mentioned above, there is no major difference in terms of the nature of both daily English expression and more specialized English for Electric Power, because both of them belong to the linguistic category of English. It is obvious that electric power English borrows a lot of ordinary English and bears its professional connotations with the change of their original meaning in daily use. It is commonly seen that there are more formal and written form of electric usage in electric reading materials. For example, “accomplishment”, “demonstrate” and “numerous” are usually more often applied in specialized electric English than “do”, “show” and “many”, which demonstrates the professional and normalized characteristics of English for Electric Power. Therefore, it is necessary for the translators to take the specialized features of it and exert great effort to make it loyal to the original version both in form and in meaning (Zhao & Lü, 2012).

1.3 Conversion of Lexis

In English for Electric power, it is not uncommon to see the conversion of the specialized lexis, which needs the attentively attention of the translators.

1.3.1 Conversion of Noun Form to Verb

As far as the linguistic features of English and Chinese are concerned, there are more verbs used in Chinese. In the translation practice, the translators are required to pay more attention to the linguistic characteristics and convert the words of noun form to verb form in order to make them loyal to the original materials. For example, the original part of the word “study” is a noun, while in the sentence “Electronics is the *study* of the flow of electrons and the application of such knowledge to practical problems in communication and controls”, it is more proper to convert it to the part speech of verb, thus “研究” is the Chinese translation of it.

1.3.2 Conversion of Adjective to Verb

In English for Electric Power some lexis showing some psychological conditions are normally expressed in verb form occasionally in the process of translation from English to Chinese. For instance, in the sentence “It is *desirable* to transform high voltage into low voltage by means of transformer in an AC system” the part of speech of “desirable” is adjective and it is considered to be more appropriate to translate it with the verb form as “希望” in Chinese.

1.3.3 Conversion From Verb to Noun

In English for electric power materials, the nominalization of verb form is a common linguistic phenomenon. For instance, the original part of speech of the word “flow” is a noun with the meaning of “流动”, while it gets a specialized connotation of “流量” in English for electric power and the part of speech of it is converted from verb to noun. The same situation happens with the word “stand”

with its part of speech being converted from verb to noun and its meaning changed from “站立” to “支架”.

2. TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES FOR ENGLISH FOR ELECTRIC POWER

English for Electric Power with its characteristics of flexibility, brevity, correctness and standard bears specialized features on its own. Under such circumstances, it is of paramount significance for the translators to adhere to the translation principle of precise and standard in word choosing as well as fluent and smooth in expression.

2.1 Accurate and Precise in Word Choosing

There are a large amount of electric terms in English for Electric power, which requires the translators to familiar with the terms and translates them into Chinese concisely with standard expression (Zhao & Zheng, 2006).

Let us take “generator” and “parallel” as examples in the following two sentences.

Sentence 1: Each one of these prime movers has the ability to convert energy in the form of heat, falling water, or fuel into rotation of a shaft, which in turn will drive the *generator*.

In this sentence, “generator” bears its specialized meaning in English for Electric power and should be translated as 发电机.

Sentence 2: Although the voltage drops to zero for 1 msec to 4 msec before the fuse element melts, the time is not long enough to affect equipment on *parallel feeders*.

“Parallel” gets its professional meaning with 并联的 instead of 平行的 in general English expression, therefore “parallel feeders” in the above sentence means 并联馈线.

2.2 Fluent and Smooth in Expression

It is wildly accepted that fluent and natural expressions makes the related translation edition concise, brief as well as readable and understandable rather than rigid, complicated thus hard to comprehend by the Chinese readers.

There are two translated editions to the English sentence: “Direct-current generators are not as common as they used to be, because direct current, when required, is mainly produced by electronic rectifiers.”

Edition 1: 直流发电机与过去相比不普通了, 因为直流, 当需要的时候, 主要是由电子整流器产生的.

Edition 2: 直流发电机用的不如过去那么多了, 这是因为需要的时候直流主要是由电子整流器产生.

Compared with the first edition with rigid and stiff expressions and does not conform to the Chinese ways of usage and translation principles, the second edition is logic in meaning and natural in expression with achieving the aim of being loyal to the original meaning of the sentence, thus considered as a successful and appropriate version of translation.

3. THE PROPER CHOOSING OF WORD MEANING

In translation practice, most of the translators may have the same experience that they would feel confused and baffled by the failure in finding a more proper way of translation even a single word, while be excited and relieved happily after picking up an appropriate edition. There is one critical thing needs to be considered attentively by the translators especially for those who translate the specialized English for Electric power, that is, there are a large amount of general English vocabulary and semi-technical lexis in Electric terms which required to identify and confirm their specialized connotation in the filed of electric power. As far as the flexible lexis characteristic of English for Electric power, the following five principles of determination of word meaning according to the word class, subject field, expression habits and simple or plural form of words respectively should be obeyed in the process of translation.

3.1 Determination of Lexis Meaning in Terms of Word Class

The language phenomenon of words with more than one part of speech exists both in Chinese and English. It is not uncommon to see that even a same word may belong to different word class and bear different meanings. Therefore, the primary task for the translators is to identify the word class of certain terms and make the precise determination of their meanings accurately. For example the word “terminal” in the sentence “Protection of *terminal* distribution lines in tall buildings” is an adjective with specialized Chinese meaning of 末端的, while the part of speech of “terminal” is a noun in the sentence “The current flows out of the output *terminal*” and it is translated as 电极, 接头. Another good example to illustrate that is “constant”, it contains different connotations with different part of speech. In this sentence “how do you demonstrate that the pressure remains *constant*”, “constant” used as an adjective with the meaning of 固定的、不变的, while in the sentence “The speed of light is an important *constant*”, “constant” applied as a noun with the connotation of 常数、衡量. The same case lies in “lead” with different part of speech of noun and verb with different meanings of 导线 and 连接、通向 respectively. In the sentence “shown at the figure is the electrical *lead* for the detector which *leads* to the electronics in the missile”, “lead” means 导线.

3.2 Determination of Word Meaning in Terms of Subject Field

Usually the same word contains different meanings in different subject field. It is of significance for the translators to affirm the content of the materials and its subject in order to make appropriate identification of the lexis and accomplish the translation task smoothly and successfully.

The general and common connotation of relay is 传达 in the sentence “electrical wires *relay* commands, replacing the usual cables and linkage controls”, while “relays” refers to 继电器 in electronics in the following sentence “To remove the fault, *relays* detect the short circuit and cause circuit breakers to open at both ends of the line” with the Chinese translation of 为了排除这一故障, 继电器会测出短路电流, 并打开线路两端的断路器. In the subject of physical education, relay indicates with 接力赛跑. In the communication and television field, relay means 转播、传送、传输 (电视或收音机信号) in the following sentence “This system continuously monitors levels of radiation and *relays* the information to a central computer” with the Chinese translation of 这个系统不间断地监控辐射水平, 并将信息传输到中央计算机.

Another typical example of this category is the word “bus”. It is well known that in general English bus refers to 公共汽车, while in English for Electric power, bus indicates with a specialized meaning 母线, thus “bus voltage” is translated as 母线电 in the sentence “A number of intelligent controllers now available for substation applications sense the load on the line, but are limited to adjusting *bus voltage*”, and the sentence is translate into Chinese as 大量的智能控制器现已应用于变电站, 用于反应线路荷载, 但在调整母线电压时还受到限制”. “ring bus” refers to 环型母线 (系统) in the sentence “Several of the substation rebuilds included converting the existing radial feed to a *ring bus* to improve reliability” with the Chinese translation version of 对这几个变电站的改造包括把现有的辐射状的馈电系统改成环型母线系统, 以增加系统的稳定性.

3.3 Conforming to the Chinese Way of Expression

The proper and correct use and expression of Chinese is critical in the process of translation from English and Chinese as far as the electric power bibliography and written materials are concerned. Only in this way can the readers understand the translated content of certain specialized reading materials without much difficulties and avoid the rigid translation version of it.

For example, in the sentence “By *transfer switching* double bus schemes can operate in the manner of single bus, two buses, single bus with two sections” it is better to take the linguistic characteristic of English for Electric power and proper Chinese ways of expression into practice and translate the phrase of “transfer switching” into 倒闸操作. In other words, if it is translated as 转移开闭, it is probable that the readers may feel confused and puzzled.

The same linguistic phenomenon appears in the following sentence: “A series circuit is formed when a number of resistors are connected *end-to-end* so that there is only one path for current to flow”. In this sentence, the term “*end-to-end*” cannot be comprehended and translated

as 尾对尾 as its literal meaning indicates, otherwise it cannot be called as a series circuit. In this way, the more appropriate translation of “end-to-end” in this sentence is 首尾相连.

3.4 Determination of Word Meaning in Terms of Simple Form or Plural Form

It is widely accepted that in English, noun word has simple form and its corresponding plural form. The differences between simple form vocabulary and plural form vocabulary lie not only in number and some noun form lexis with plural form have certain special and specialized connotations. Without any doubt the effective grasp as well as comprehension of lexis of this kind would be of great help in determining the meaning of lexis as well as understanding sentence meaning.

In general English, “department” explained in English: one of the groups of people who work together in a particular part of a large organization such as a hospital, university, company, or government. It is usually translated into Chinese as (行政、企业等的)部; 司; 局; 处; 科; 部门. For example, the sentence “Mary is the head of the personnel *department* in State Grid Corporation of China” should be translated as 玛丽是国家电网公司人事部门的负责人. “Departments” is the plural form of “department” and translated as 学科 just as illustrated in the following example: “In the course of this review of the progress of light we also seek to indicate the general relations of the theory of light to other *departments* of science” with its Chinese version 在这样回顾光学理论进展的过程中, 我们也力求指明光学理论同其他学科的一般联系. “Time” in simple form means 时机、时刻、时候, while its plural form indicates differently with the fixed meaning of 时期 in the following sentence: Favorable electric rates are a compelling factor in the location of an industry, although this factory is much less important in *times* when costs are rising rapidly and rates charged for power are uncertain than in periods of

stable economic conditions. It is more appropriate to be translated as the following Chinese version: 合适的电费是工厂区要考虑的重要因素, 尽管该因素在各种成本快速增长、电价不稳的时候不如在经济条件稳定的时期重要.

CONCLUSION

In translation practice of English for Electric Power, the process of choosing and determination of word meaning is far more complicated and sophisticated, which needs more consideration and effort of the translators not only in grasping the specialized knowledge of Electric power but also familiarity with and application of translation skills and principles effectively and appropriately. Furthermore, the translators are proposed always to adhere to the five principles of determination of word meaning in terms of word class, subject field, expression habits and simple or plural form of words respectively in the practical process of translation, which is considered as being of great significance in specialized English for Electric Power reading materials.

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