



## A Rhetoric Comparison and an Analysis of the Long Sentences in The Great Gatsby Between English and Chinese

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### Abstract

Using long sentences is an important character in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. The long sentences play a leading role in the novel even appear in the dialogue. All this is connected with Fitzgerald's writing style. Although a lot of complex sentences were used in the original works the whole novel was read smoothly. The paper will compare and analyze the narrative long sentences and argumentative long sentences about the rhetoric analysis between English and Chinese so that the readers can glimpse gain and loss of the translator.

**Key words:** Rhetoric comparison; Narrative long sentences; Argumentative long sentences

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### INTRODUCTION

Employing long sentences is one important character in the novel *the Great Gatsby*. Long sentences which contain compound complex sentences play a leading position from the point of the sentence structure system in the whole novel. Even in the dialogues there existed some main and subordinate complex sentences which are not so many in the novel and not so complicated in the structure. All this is connected with Fitzgerald's writing style. Although a lot of complex sentences were used in the original works the whole novel was read smoothly

like flowing cloud. When the long sentences are read they are catchy without unsmooth sense. The readers can not help being surprised about Fitzgerald's superb language ability. In a great many Chinese translation versions the marvelous manipulation of the long sentences in the English original works for the excellent translation also reflects the Chinese translators' quality work to ensure the original style. The following contents will compare and analyze the narrative long sentences and argumentative long sentences about the rhetoric analysis between English and Chinese so that the readers can glimpse gain and loss of the translator.

### 1. THE RHETORIC ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE LONG SENTENCE

It is well known that the long sentence has large capacity which is rich in meaning. The long sentences can provide plenty of information and especially the descriptive long sentences can gather a great deal of information together to convey to the readers in the point of introducing the story background, describing scenery and introducing the characters in order to make the readers get a whole but not a broken impression. The long sentences in the literature works are universal. The scholarly long sentences reflect the writer's ability of mastering languages. The descriptive long sentences can be divided into different types which include introducing characters, describing scenery, narrating scenario and describing a certain situation. About introducing characters for example in the first chapter in the novel when introducing Daisy's husband, Tom, there is a long sentence "Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven—a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterwards savors of anticlimax.

Wu Ningkun's translation: 她的丈夫, 除了擅长各种

活动外，曾经是纽黑文有史以来最伟大的橄榄球运动员之一，也可以说是个全国闻名的人物，这种人在二十一岁就在有限范围内取得登峰造极的成就，从此以后一切都不免有走下坡路的味道了。

Cheng huang's translation: 汤姆在体育方面非常精通，曾经是纽黑文史上最了不起的橄榄球队员之一。甚至可以算得上是国家级球星了，他属于那种在二十一岁之前就会在某个有限范围内达到顶峰的人，此后的一切就应了盛极必衰那句老话，事事都在走下坡路了。

Here the original English sentence is made up of the subordinate compound sentence which contains an appositive composition, two attributive clauses and an adverbial clause for result. In the main sentence the predicative part contains an attributive clause and the coordinate appositive ingredients use an attributive clause and at the same time in the second attributive clause the fixed structure "such...that" was used to lead an adverbial clause for the result. The persons who have some English knowledge base can see the structure of this sentence quite easily.

The character of English sentence is to highlight subject. The biggest character of the sentence question is to pay attention to the one or few central predicate verbs. The other ingredients are linked with all kinds of relations. The character of the Chinese sentence is to emphasize the theme. The biggest character of the sentence question is to employ a lot of verbs. The verb is arranged according to the time order. From the original works the subject of the sentence is "her husband" and the central predicate verb is "had been" while the other ingredients are based on the superposition of generation. From the above two different translation style the readers can see that Wu Ningkun's translation is based on the original works, which belongs to the direct translation. Cheng huang's translation is to separate the original novel apart, which is more about free translation. The common characters of the two translation version are to make use of some verbs with the same subject "Tom or her husband" stating according to the time order. Introducing Tom's past experience can have readers get the general understanding of his background information, which is in accordance with the Chinese expression habit. From the angle of the sentence structure, Wu's translation is word for word and sentence for sentence, who did not separate the original sentence structures and even he did not change the marks. Sentences are hierarchically translated according to the parallel relationship. The subjects of the sentences are changed. Although Chen's translation broke the original sentences' structure and reorganized dealing the appositive in the original sentence which contains an attributive clause into an object, the subject of the sentence is consistent from beginning till ending. "Tom" was always stated as the subjects and Chen described clearly without mess. Before the predicate verb "ever" and "afterwards" were separately used. The translation sentences were more fluent and were in accordance with the Chinese sentence

feature. However, it is necessary to improve the pausing sentences. For example: It is better to change the position of the period mark of "one of the team members" and the comma "after the football star". For one thing it is appropriate for the level relationship of English original works. For the second thing the translation sentences comply with the logic thinking of Chinese coherent in meaning. The long sentences to describe the scene are a great many in the text. The example sentence like "Myrtle Wilson's body, wrapped in a blanket, and then in another blanket, as though she suffered from a chill in the hot night, lay on a work-table by the wall, and Tom, with his back to us, was bending over it, motionless."

Wu's translation: 茉特尔·威尔逊的尸体裹在一条毯子里，外面又包了一条毯子，仿佛在这炎热的夜晚她还怕冷似的。尸体放在墙边一张工作台上，汤姆背对着我们正低头看，一动也不动。

Cheng's translation: 茉特尔·威尔逊的尸体用一张毯子包裹着，放在一张靠墙的工作台上，后来又给她包了张毯子，仿佛在这炎热的夏天，她依然感觉寒冷。汤姆背对着我们弯下腰一动不动看着她。

The English sentence structure here is not so complicated, which is made up of the two compound sentences. The first compound sentence is more complicated, which contains a non-restricted attributive clause acted by the past participle and an adverbial clause led by "as though". In the second compound sentence an adjective "motionless" was used as the subject complement. The choice of the subjects in the two compound sentences forms a strong contrast, one being "Myrtle Wilson's body" the other being the living man "Tom". Wu's translation belongs to the direct translation who did not adjust to the original sentence structure and translated according to the original sentence order. It is messy in the narrating level, which gets people fell wordy. The reason is that the translator did not deal with the stated objects centrally. The same thing was stated in twice and the function of the central predicate verb in the original sentence was ignored. In the original sentence the main predicate verb is "lay" and the ingredient after it describes the position of the dead body directly. In Wu's translation it was mentioned in the end. It seems to add some details and it is easy for people to ask the question where the dead body was laid. Was it on the ground or on the working desk or somewhere else? In fact the original works is very clear and the dead body was put on the working desk wrapped from the start. Compared with Chen's translation, Chen's is clear in the aspect of the hierarchies, who divided this long sentence into two parts, the first sentence talking about the dead body's situation and the position of its laying. It was finished speaking at a time and the sequence of action is clear. The latter sentence narrates Tom's action after he saw it. Another example "The prolonged and tumultuous argument that ended by herding us into that room eludes me, though I have a sharp physical memory that, in the course of it, my underwear kept climbing like a damp snake around my legs

and intermittent beads of sweat raced cool across my back.”

Wu's translation: 那场长时间的, 吵吵嚷嚷的争论, 以把我们赶进那间屋子而告终。我现在也弄不清是怎么回事了, 虽然我清清楚楚地记得, 在这个过程中, 我的内衣像一条湿流流的蛇一样顺着我的腿往上爬, 同时一阵阵冷汗珠横流决背。

Cheng's translation: 接着大家就激烈地争吵起来, 究竟是为了什么, 我已经记不清了, 不过最后以我走进屋子而结束。我当时身体很不舒服, 整个过程中, 我的内衣像条粘糊糊的蛇, 顺着双腿往上爬, 汗水就顺着脊背往下淌。

The main part of this English sentence is “The argument eludes me”. An attributive clause was followed after the word “argument”. The adverbial of the sentence is led by though for concession. In the clause there is an appositive led by that to state the exact content of memory. About the translation of this sentence Wu's translation is typically direct translation. It is almost translated according to the word order without adjusting the order of the adverbial clause. Meanwhile it is reluctant to translate “though” into “虽然”. Because there is no corresponding conjunction “但是”. Readers feel empty in the reading habit. If it was changed to translate it into “不过”, it would be proper, because the article itself implies the contrast relationship here. Of course Wu's translation considered the factor of the tense. “have” is used in the present tense. So in translation the translator added “现在” this time adverb to make the translation article vivid, which was like talking with readers reflecting the translator's originality. In Chen's translation he considered the connection of the context, who rearranged and adjusted the sentence order, deleting the word “though” and transforming the adverbial clause. He changed it into a narrative layer which expresses the total and divided relationship just to describe his own feelings but with blunt language lacking rich and bright colors.

From the above examples readers can see that in English these types of long sentences can express rich meaning and contain a lot of semantic information mainly by means of superposition of clauses, the non-finite verbs, nominal phrases and the prepositional phrases. In Cheng's translation he adopted the Chinese readers' thinking habit to recombine and reinvent sentences, which is convenient for the Chinese readers to enjoy the classic works. While in Wu's translation he translated sentences directly retaining the features of the translation sentences. Although the translation is word after word, phrase after phrase, sentence after sentence, it is an excellent sample for the readers to learn about the characteristics of foreign culture and to study English and Chinese comparatively. Reading the English original works and learning about the English structure system can experience that the author is making full use of the characteristics of the English sentence patterns and the writing logic habits to express his thought to his heart's content.

## 2. THE RHETORIC ANALYSIS OF ARGUMENTATIVE LONG SENTENCE

Besides the descriptive long sentences there are a great number of argumentative long sentences in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. These long sentences are used to comment the characters, events, or the writer's immediate feelings, which are of great importance to guide the readers' feeling judgment. They reflected the writer's emotional attitude and value orientation. It is of great significance to understand the novel theme. About the long sentence of commenting the character there is one example in the last chapter of the novel. “They were careless people, Tom and Daisy---- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made .....”

Wu's translation: 汤姆和黛西, 他们是粗心大意的人---- 他们砸碎了东西, 毁灭了人, 然后就退缩到自己的金钱或者麻木不仁或者不管什么使他们留在在一起的东西之中, 让别人去收拾他们的烂摊子.....

Cheng's translation: 汤姆和黛西都是粗心大意的人, 他们把事情搞得一团糟, 让别人来承担后果。而他们自己呢, 他们会缩回自己的世界里, 那个金钱, 麻木不仁混杂在一起的世界。别人却要替他们收拾残局。

This is the writer's conclusion about the conducting attitude of the coupe of Daisy throughout the mouth of the narrator Callaway to deeply expose the couple's cold, selfish and indifferent nature under the shell of money worship showing the writer's obvious tendency of love and hatred. Wu's translation is loyal to the original works, fluent and natural, retaining the style of the original works better. In Wu's translation he directly substitutes the appositive “Tom and Daisy” with “they” which was regarded as the subject. In this way it is helpful to make the statement object very clear. Then Wu translated the three coordinating predicate verbs according to the original text with the clear skeleton. In Chen's translation he adopted the free translation and transformed the original text, who spoke the result first and let others take the consequences. Contrasting with the deeds of the couple of Daisy, it is acceptable for this kind of adjustment but in the end he added a sentence “别人却要替他们收拾残局” which broke the contrasting relationship with the original sentence and seemed that the meaning was repeated. Meanwhile in Chen's translation he deals with this part “Whatever it was that kept them together” roughly and there is some mistake about the reference of “them” which should refer to “Tom and Daisy” but not “money and carelessness”. Generally speaking Wu's translation is superior to Chen's. About commenting events the writer often makes use of the long sentences which is convenient to express the rich ideas. There is one example in the first chapter “The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I



was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret Briefs of wild, unknown men.”

Wu's translation: 这个特点在正常的人身上出现的时候, 心理不正常的人很快就会察觉并且抓住不放。由于这个缘故, 我上大学的时候就被不公正地指责为小政客, 因为我耳闻一些放荡的不知名的人的秘密的伤心事。

Chen's translation: 我的这种品质表现在一个普通人身上时, 就容易被一些心术不正的人攻击, 所以在我的大学年代, 大家都觉得我像个政客, 因为我了解一些古怪的人心底的秘密。

This long sentence is made up of two compound sentences combined with “and”, the first compound sentence containing a time adverbial clause led by “when”, the latter compound sentence containing an object clause led by “that” and an adverbial clause for reason led by “because”. With this sentence the writer wanted to express the following ideas that when “I” was young “I” was intelligent and good at keeping my own judgment neither following others as blind as a bat nor letting out others' privacy. Therefore a great many people would like to express their thoughts out to me and as a result “I” was dubbed as a politician. On one hand it can turn out that “I” am tolerant, on the other hand it is implied to the readers that what “I” heard of the story of *Gatsby* was not deliberately inquiring about his information but others speak their true feeling so as to let readers know “my” morals and believe the story true and reliable. About the translation of this sentence Wu's translation belongs to the direct translation according to the structure of the original sentence. Cheng's translation belongs to free translation without adjusting the structure of the original sentence deleting some words. When analyzing the structure of this sentence carefully the emphasis of this sentence is to explain why “I” was called politician when I was at university. The adverbial clause for time and the adverbial clause for reason in the original sentence are only the supplementary element which are used to serve the main sentence. English pays more attention to hypotaxis. The outline of a sentence is the subject and predicate verb. Once the establishment of the subject and predicate verb the other ingredients are often combined with the subject and predicate verb by the other means. The semantic component within the sentences is either arranged according to the sequence order or the reversed order. Just like the attributive which can be preposition or postposition. The position of the adverbial phrases or clauses is also very flexible. While Chinese is a language with parataxis and prominent topic. It is harder to identify the subject and predicate verb of the sentence especially in the long sentences. At the same time the combination of the Chinese sentence pays more attention to coherence of the sense presenting a narrative characteristic which is plain and straightforward. The four steps in the composition of an essay, that is to say, opening, developing, changing and concluding are generally hidden between the words and lines.

## CONCLUSION

The logic order is the rule followed by combination of Chinese sentences. Great importance is attached to the sequence order in the aspect of time. Great importance is attached to the relationship of cause and effect in the aspect of logic. Therefore according to the different features translation should be considered. Someone put forward the six-step method and three skills which are Reversing, Inserting and Recasting in the process of translating English into Chinese. This example sentence is just connected with that method. The adverbial clauses for time and reason can be put before the conclusion that “I was called politician.” This is in accordance with the features of Chinese sentences and the writing logic, trying to avoid the English casual inversion. Just because the adverbial clause for reason is too long in the original sentence. If it is dealt with in post processing the feeling is that it is far too cumbersome. While in the original sentence the clause with the large capacity is postposition to keep the sentence balanced and avoid the sentence top—heavy which belongs to the frequently-seen phenomena. Therefore Wu's translation can be considered to adjust like the following: 这个特点在正常的人身上出现的时候, 心理不正常的人很快就会察觉并且抓住不放。因此, 在我上大学的时候由于我耳闻一些狂放无名之辈的不为人知的伤心事, 就被不公正地指责为小政客。

The sentence also can be free translation and is rearranged like: 正常的人身上出现这种品质时, 一些心理不正常的人很快就会发现并且抓住不放; 我在大学时, 就有人忘称我为政客, 我只不过了解了一些狂放之人不为人知的伤心事而已, 他们都是无名之辈。

After rearrangement the adverbial clause for time is gently passed with the preposition phrases. Although the reason is also in postposition through breaking up the adverbial clause for reason is divided into two separate clauses. The subject is also changed successfully to melt the pure explanation function in the original sentence. Clever converting to defend for himself expresses annoyance and dissatisfaction dubbed by politician.

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