

The Choice of Tense in LTTC Chinese into English Translation Proficiency Test

董大暉
長榮大學翻譯學系

Abstract

Point of view in discourse, which consists of spatial, temporal, ideological and psychological point of view (Fowler, 1986), has been extensively studied in linguistics. It is widely accepted that while constructing a discourse, the writer's temporal point of view dominates the choice of tense and influences the discourse coherence.

Although temporal point of view has been found presenting great difficulties for non-native English speakers, including those of advanced English proficiency levels, in English production tasks such as writing and speaking, few studies have looked at the use of temporal point of view by advanced EFL students in translation, a task that has been often used to help students improve English competency.

This study employed Fowler's (1986) viewpoint theory as the research framework to examine the consistency of temporal viewpoint in translation from Chinese into English. A total of 552 Chinese into English test papers were retrieved from LTTC database (Chinese and English Translation and Interpretation Competency Examinations), among which 152 scored 80 and above, 200 scored between 70-79, and 200 scored between 60-69. Statistical analyses were carried out to look at the relationship between the shift of temporal viewpoint and translation test scores. The results indicate: (1) the correlation between tense choices and test scores is not significant. (2) the shift of temporal viewpoint significantly correlates with test scores. The mean frequency of temporal viewpoint shift per 100 sentences is the lowest for test papers scoring 80 and above, in the middle for those scoring between 70-79, and the highest for those scoring between 60-69. It is suggested that native Chinese-speaking translators need to reduce the number of temporal viewpoint shift in translation from Chinese into English in order to improve the coherence and quality of their translation.

Keywords: translation into the second language, Chinese and English Translation and Interpretation Competency Examinations, temporal point of view, coherence