

# Translation of *British Relations with China* from an Explicitation Perspective (II)

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**Abstract:** *British Relations with China* delves into the political and commercial interactions between Britain and China in the mid-19th century, addressing issues such as the Arrow Incident, British colony at Hong Kong and the Second Opium War. The study analyzes the English-to-Chinese translation of *British Relations with China* from the perspective of the Explication of Interpersonal Metafunction. Restitution, Substitution, addition and conversion are employed to clarify the information of interpersonal metafunction implicitly conveyed in the source text.

**Keywords:** Explication of Interpersonal Metafunction; *British Relations with China*; Translation Strategies

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This essay conducts an analysis of *British Relations with China* with a primary focus on the application of explicitation of interpersonal metafunction, including three sections: explicitation of character's relationships, explicitation of modality, and explicitation of appraisal (Hu Kaibao & Zhu Yifan, 2008). The typical examples involve monarch-subject relationship, author's emotion, and character's mood. From these three perspectives, a targeted analysis of explicitation of ideational metafunction has been conducted.

## 1. Explication of Character's Relationships: Monarch-subject Relationship

Explicitation of character's relationships refers to clarifying the relationships between characters through appellation, modal verbs, or certain sentence structures (Hu Kaibao & Zhu Yifan, 2008). The character relationships involved mainly refer to the relationship between monarch and subject. Both restitution and substitution were employed to make the personalities and motivations clearer.

### 1.1 Restitution

Restitution refers to downplaying cultural information, imagery, and allusions that cannot be directly translated (Liu Miqing, 2019). Restitution here is applied to clear the relationship between monarch and subject to highlight China's historical and cultural heritage.

#### Example 1:

ST: The great men of the province **have applied to** me, and **I** must repress this disorder.

TT: 该省官员已就此事**递上奏折**, **朕**必得镇压暴乱。

"Apply to" means "to submit an application", and "I" means "我". But here is a conversation between Emperor Yongzheng and three missionaries. So not only should the identity of the Qing Emperor be restituted, but also the meaning of "apply to" should be noted. Officials are required to submit memorials to the emperor when they have affairs to discuss. Memorial system marked a significant change in ancient China (Ren Qing, 1996). During the Yongzheng period, memorials were the most important tool for discussing state affairs between monarch and subjects (Fu Libai, 2002). Translating "apply to" as "submit a memorial" can enhance the literary and historical qualities of the translation.

#### Example 2:

ST: It is said that this potentate, for the first time **since he mounted the throne**, has given indication desire to maintain friendly relations, and to afford redress.

TT: 据说, **咸丰皇帝自继位来**, 首次表示希望与我们保持友好关系, 并给予赔偿。

*British Relations with China* was published during the sixth year under the reign of Emperor Xianfeng. In Chinese history, the son succeeded to the throne after his father's death. Hence the translation chose to use "succession" instead of "ascend the throne", thereby highlighting the hereditary system in China and enriching the translation with historical details.

### 1.2 Substitution

Without altering the original concept, a few words are changed to present a coherent translation. Lexical substitution is a highly effective

method for improving readability and is also an important means of functional compensation (Liu Miqing, 2019).

**Example 3:**

ST: But what in that case would become of us? – The **SUBJECTS OF YOUR KINGS**.

TT: 但我们又该何去何从? 你们国王的**臣民**又当如何?

“Subjects” refers to the people who live in or belong to a particular country ruled by a monarch. The dialogue involves Emperor Yongzheng and foreign missionaries. To ensure that the communication aligns with the historical background and the identity of Yongzheng, substitution was employed to translate “subjects” as “the king’s subordinates and people”. Then the translation can better fit the historical setting and cultural context, providing a clearer indication of the monarch-subject relationship between the King and his people in this particular instance.

**Example 4:**

ST: Emperor. You are a **bannerman**, one born and brought up in the capital, and must know the common saying of the old women. A thousand schemes, ten thousand schemes [of man] are not worth one scheme of Old Heaven.”

TT: 皇上, 您是**八旗子弟**, 自幼在京长大, 想必听过京中老妇常言: 千算万算不如天算。

To consolidate the unity of Qing Dynasty, Beijing was designated as the headquarters for the Manchu people, implementing a strategy of segregating the bannermen in different districts (Kong Zhen, 2013). During the Qing Dynasty, the majority of bannermen resided in Beijing rather than the Northeast China (Kong Zhen, 2013). All of these explain why the minister said that a “bannerman” might hear the common saying of the old women in Beijing. As a subordinate, it is crucial to constantly bear in mind the hierarchical relationship when talking with the emperor to show reverence and respect. Translating “bannerman” as “noble children of eight banners” can seamlessly integrate the translation into Chinese culture, creating more vivid characters.

## 2. Explicitation of Modality: Translation of Author’s Emotion

The main form of modal meaning is modal auxiliary verb (Li Ji’an, 1999). This section primarily involves replacing words expressing modal meaning in the source text with other modal verbs (Liu Miqing, 2019), aiming to better convey the emotion and attitude.

### 2.1 Substitution

Liu Miqing (2019) pointed out that substitution mainly comprises two types: lexical substitution and syntactical substitution. This section primarily involves replacing words expressing modal meaning in the source text with other modal verbs (Liu Miqing, 2019), aiming to better convey the original attitude.

**Example 5:**

ST: What I am told by them I remember only as something that has been told me, **always** waiting for corroboration of some kind before giving credence to their tale; and a little acquaintance with the Chinese is sufficient to make most people act thus.

TT: 我从中国人口中得知的事, 就只当他们告诉过我, **必须**在证实之后才会相信; 大部分人只要对中国人略知一二, 就都会这样做。

“Always” means “all the time”. Mr. Meadow wishes to show that the Chinese are highly hypocritical so he won’t trust what they say. “Must” can reflect Mr. Meadow’s determination and firmness, emphasizing his demand for verification before trusting the Chinese. Explicitly expressing the author’s attitude can underscore the British attitude to the Chinese and help maintaining the original tone and aid target readers better understanding historical Sino-British relations and recognizing the British perception of Chinese dishonesty.

**Example 6:**

ST: **Must we not confess** that this, upon the whole, was a very natural, and not an irrational view, for the despotic head of a great pagan empire to hold?

TT: 我们**难道不该承认**, 一个专制帝国统治的皇帝持有这种观点非常自然合理吗?

“Must” conveys necessity or importance, implying a certain degree of obligation, compulsion or command. It is employed in the present tense to assert that something is necessary or should be done. The rhetorical question itself emphasizes the author’s attitude and viewpoint. Substitute “must” to “should” underscores the significance of the mentioned information. Simultaneously, it shows that the author believes the British should understand the Qing Emperor’s resistance to religious beliefs.

### 2.2 Addition

As mentioned above, the types of addition primarily include conceptual addition, structural addition, logical addition, rhetorical addition, and contextual addition (Liu Miqing, 2019). In this context, the addition of modal verbs constitutes structural addition, aiming to enhance communicative effectiveness.

**Example 7:**

ST: Emperor. In all affairs prosperity **is followed by** decay! What avails the power of man!

TT: “皇上, 万物盛极**必**衰, 天命有常!”

There were no modal verbs in the English sentence, and “must” itself carries a strong statement. Adding the “must” in the targeted text can make the tone of the translation more definite and firm, emphasizing the inevitability of the situation. It reflects the confidence and certainty of the ministers when describing the current state of Britain, thereby showcasing the self-assuredness of Qing Dynasty officials. This strong expression can make the translation more lively and powerful.

**Example 8:**

ST: In this last sentence lies, we conceive, **the true principle of all rational policy** in the dealings of foreign Powers with the Chinese—a policy founded on a large and accurate knowledge of the intellectual and moral development of the people to be dealt with, and the right employment of those agencies of civilisation which are fitted to be most effectue.

TT: 我们认为, 最后一句话表明, 外国列强处理中国关系时, **应该遵循合理原则**——广泛准确地了解中国人民智力与道德发展, 并正确运用有效的文明理念, 以此为基础来制定双方相处政策。

“Should” is a modal verb used for giving or asking for advice, saying that something is the best thing or the right thing to do. Adding “should” can make the advice or guidance in the translation more explicit and specific. It conveys an expectation or responsibility towards the foreign powers in handling the relationship with China, serving as an appeal or call to action. By showcasing the implicit meaning, it helps the target readers better understand the author’s intention.

### 3. Explication of Appraisal: Translation of Character’s Mood

Appraisal refers to individuals using language to express their views and assessments of worldly matters. Similar to modal meaning, evaluative significance is associated with the speaker’s personal judgment or attitude (Zhang Meifang, 2002). The tone of the author and the characters is added here to manifest the evaluative significance.

#### 3.1 Addition

According addition categories mentioned previously, the case analysis here primarily involves the addition of rhetorical words. By adding mood particles or adjectives (such as “罢了”, “而已”, “可惜的是”), the text is modified to reflect the tone of the characters in the source text.

**Example 9:**

ST: A further defence has been set up for the Chinese, that the Emperor and his local officers had not the power to carry out these conditions: but there is, we think, abundant evidence that it was the will **only that was wanting**.

TT: 有人为中国人辩护说, 皇帝与地方官员无权执行这些条款, 但我们认为, 大量证据表明, 并非无权执行, 只是不想执行**罢了**。

Certainly, “we think” here shows the viewpoint. We can still find the author’s evaluative language in response to the defense’s statements, although the original text does not include any appraisal words. The term “罢了” serves to convey the original attitude of mistrust and disdain towards this matter, allowing readers of the translation to discern the underlying skepticism and dismissiveness of the original author.

**Example 10:**

ST: **Not more than two or three thousand**, the greater half of whom are really but nominal.

TT: “**不过**两三千**而已**, 且其中大多有名无实。”

When discussing the number of British troops stationed in Hong Kong, a literal translation would be “less than two or three thousand”. To convey Emperor Daoguang’s arrogance and disdainful attitude towards Britain, the addition of “不过...而已” (meaning “nothing more than” or “just”) serves as an essential part of expressing the original tone and appraisal meaning. It’s crucial in eliciting resonance of target readers.

#### 3.2 Conversion

In general, conversion is an indispensable strategy for achieving semantic correspondence but with the loss of formal correspondence. Nonetheless, conversion remains a very important means of lexical and syntactic variation (Liu Miqing, 2019). The techniques employed here mainly include the conversions of sentence and mood.

**Example 11:**

ST: **Of the effect of these convictions on the policy of the Chinese Government and the minds of the ruling powers**, the following conversation affords a curious example, and there seems no reasonable doubt of its authenticity.

TT: **这些信念如何影响中国政府决策和当权者思想呢?** 以下对话为我们提供了有趣范例, 其真实性不容质疑。

An open-ended question is used to obtain specific partial information about the context, such as the location, reason, purpose, quantity, nature, subject, and other partial details (Ye Qingling, 2007). As mentioned earlier, ancient Chinese philosophical ideas had a significant impact on the decisions of the Chinese government. Converting the declarative sentence into an open-ended question can stimulate readers to contemplate their own thoughts on “the ways that these beliefs influence government decisions”.

**Example 12:**

ST: Emperor. **Exactly so.** What others are employed in the transaction of barbarian affairs ?

TT: **正是如此啊!** 皇上。可有能臣去平蛮夷之乱?

Chinese does not pay attention to form, and the category of mood is implicit in Chinese, but it can also be expressed in the form of words (Liu Miqing, 2019). Here, the declarative sentence is converted into an exclamatory sentence. The unit attached to “ah” in the exclamatory sentence carries a huge emotion of the speaker, so this unit is always easy to become the most concerned information of the listener, objectively giving an emphasis (Zhang Xiaofeng, 2003). The change of this exclamation sentence here can highlight the affirmation and support of the minister to the emperor’s words.

Britain and China are two influential nations in the global, so it is crucial to accurately translate the texts reflecting British political attitude towards China at that time in order to gain a proper understanding of history. Restitution, Substitution, addition and conversion are employed to clarify the information of interpersonal metafunction implicitly conveyed in the source text. By employing these strategies, monarch-subject relationship, author’s emotion, and character’s mood become more clear in target text.

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