Application of Free Translation Method in Lexical and Syntactic Level of Translation of *Investigating Classroom Discourse*

Huaying Ni

Hainan Technology and Business College, Haikou, 570203, China

Abstract: Based on practical experience translating Steve Walsh's Investigating Classroom Discourse, this paper explores the application of free translation in academic contexts. Despite high scholarly regard for classroom discourse analysis, this study delves into the role of free translation in this field, highlighting its theoretical and practical feasibility. This approach aims to make such analysis more accessible to Chinese educators, enhancing domestic teaching practices and deepening insights into bilingual education.

Keywords: Academic translation; Free translation; Classroom discourse

1. Study Objective

This paper explores the application of free translation in classroom discourse to enhance domestic pedagogy and deepen insights into translation studies. Despite increasing studies on classroom discourse, systematic research, especially on free translation in this context, remains insufficient. This paper aims to demonstrate how free translation aids in classroom discourse analysis, filling a gap in current research that often overlooks language's role in teaching.

2. Background

Discourse Analysis, introduced by American linguist Harris ZS in 1952, has gained prominence for its analysis beyond the sentence level. In China, discourse analysis was introduced by foreign language scholars in the 1980s, blending Western theories with foreign language teaching. Chapter five of Walsh's book discusses the SETT (Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk) framework, exemplifying its application in various classroom contexts. This paper explores the use of free translation in classroom discourses, focusing on technical terms and diverse dialogues found in the text.

3. The application of free Translation in classroom discourse study

Free translation prioritizes clarity and coherence over strict adherence to the original form or word order, especially when significant differences exist between English and Chinese in vocabulary sequence, grammatical structure, and artistic devices. This approach is widely favored in academic translation to ensure the overall coherence of the translated text.

3.1 Free translation in lexical level

3.1.1 Extension

As for the lexical level, free translation is adopted in case that the content and style of source language cannot be expressed directly. Free translation is realized by the adoption of extension. Take the following as an example from the selective translation passage:

Example 1: Extended turns and **"pushed output",** as termed by Swain (1995, 2005), allow learners to provide longer, fuller, or more precise responses.

Version 1: 注意这里还有一些延长的话轮的情况，和 Swain (1995, 2005) 所说的 "推动性输出" 的情况，即学习者做出的更完整的回答。

Version 2: 注意这里还有一些延长的话轮的情况，和 Swain (1995, 2005) 所说的 "强制性输出" 的情况，即学习者做出的更完整的回答。

In this case, "强制性输出", captures the intended meaning more effectively and is preferred by readers due to its clarity and fidelity.

3.1.2 Abstraction

Using abstraction in free translation can enhance the power and fidelity of the intended meaning conveyed by the writer. When faced

with situations where the content and style of the source language cannot be directly expressed, abstraction becomes instrumental in effectively delivering the original meaning.

Example 2: In order to evaluate the framework's **capabilities** to characterize and account for the structure of classroom discourse, Chapter 5 will present other contexts.

Version 1：为了评估这个框架在描述课堂话语结构方面的<u>有效性</u>，第五章将其引入其它课堂语境。

Version 2：为了评价该框架在描述课堂话语结构方面的<u>解释力</u>，第五章将其引入其它课堂语境。

Version 2, a form of free translation, ensures greater readability in academic texts. In contrast, version 1 appears inadequate in its translation effort.

3.1.3 Concretion

In translation, concretion is utilized to convey the concrete meaning effectively, aligning with the original purpose of the discourse. Given the distinct characteristics and linguistic rules of each language, concretion ensures the full expression of the original meaning.

Example 3: **minimal repair**

Version 1: 小纠正

Version 2: 尽可能少的纠错

Version 2 translations in the examples are evidently more comprehensive in conveying the original meaning of the discourse, enabling readers to better grasp the detailed feedback from the teacher within the context.

3.1.4 Conversion

The technical terms in the SETT table are precise. However, translation must consider both languages, requiring the translator to balance these strategies to ensure clarity and coherence in the target language.

Example 4: the use of transitional markers

Translation version: 使用过渡标记语

The translated words from SETT, mostly nouns, adhere to academic principles of brevity and precision.

3.2 Free Translation in Syntactic Level

3.2.1 Inversion translation

English and Chinese sentences differ significantly in structure and order, requiring adjustments for readability in Chinese. Inversion is a prominent, frequently used method, determined by target language structure and meaning.

Example 5: In the primary classroom, the SETT framework can account for and characterize the discourse, as seen in Extract 5.1 from a primary science class.

Version 1：在小学课堂中，SETT模式更能说明片段5.1里小学科学课堂的话语特征。

Version 2：如以下小学科学课堂片段5.1所示，SETT模式在解释学课堂话语方面很有潜力。

Compared to the original, version 2 is more readable and better structured for Chinese. Unlike version 1, the translation order is reversed. This adjustment clarifies the structure and preserves the artistic quality of Chinese.

3.2.2 Voice transition

To maintain the characteristics of academic discourse, which emphasize objectivity and rigor, English often employs passive voice in long sentences. However, in English to Chinese translation, it's preferable to convert passive voice to active voice to align with Chinese reading habits and achieve optimal communicative effectiveness.

Example 6: In a higher education setting, classroom context mode <u>will be found</u> in any teaching and learning context where students <u>are afforded</u> space and an opportunity to interact on a more or less even footing.

Version: 在高等教育的环境，<u>我们将发现</u>课堂语境模式出现在教与学的环境中，<u>学生们有</u>一定的空间和并有或多或少的基础上进行互动的机会。

Translating into passive voice would lead to loss of fluency, imbalance in sentence structure, and decreased readability. Moreover, it would obscure the original meaning, particularly for educational teachers. Therefore, prioritizing free translation is essential.

3.2.3 Split translation

In academic texts, long and complex sentences often intertwine, making free translation a priority. This approach emphasizes the relative independence of the target language cultural system from the original language culture system. According to Zhang (2002), "The optimal translation technology frequently involves using short sentences and avoiding or minimizing long sentences."

Example 7: The final response in this section demonstrates quite clearly the value of a well-managed question and answer routine in

which learner responses are shaped by the teacher and where learners are encouraged to produce fuller or more careful responses using appropriate terminology.

Version 1: 在这部分，学生的最后回答证明了建立默契的师生问答程序是重要且教师鼓励学生使用恰当的专业术语来做出更完整的回答。

Version 2: 在这部分，学生的最后回答充分证明了建立运用自如的师生问答常规很重要。在这个常规中，教师塑造学习者的回答并鼓励他们恰如其分的使用专业术语给出更完整的回答。

Version 1 follows a rigid order and may be less engaging to read, but version 2 addresses this deficiency.

3.3 Omission

In academic translation, it's crucial to convey all available information to readers, supported by abundant data. However, translating these dialogues literally can obscure their original meaning and confuse readers. Retaining the translation of certain parts, like Extract 5.1, ensures clearer argumentation and facilitates better understanding of the original language phenomenon.

Example 8: Extract 5.7

1	S	You mentioned process drama. Could you explain what you mean by that?
2	T	Yeah aam well there has been this there has been a massive dichotomy in drama education over the last forty fifty years where aam I suppose traditionalists process drama is by its nature.

The discourse on "Vague Language" serves the "Politeness Principle" in conversations, maintaining a fair image of teachers and enhancing students' discourse time for genuine communication(Walsh, 2006, p.117). The underlined words, such as "you know," and "do you know what I mean?" function as discourse markers. Translating these words may undermine the function of vague language and fail to achieve the original goal of the "Politeness Principle" proposed by Geoffrey N. Leech in 1980. This principle can reduce learners' anxiety, foster a harmonious classroom atmosphere, and enhance learners' motivation and confidence(Liu Yuhui et al., 2010, p.97).

4. Conclusion

This paper explores the application of free translation in academic texts. Academic works are characterized by rigid principles, abstract technical terms, and complex sentences, posing challenges for translation. Free translation offers a promising approach for academic genres, considering the differences in morphology, syntax, formation, and culture of languages.

While this paper only scratches the surface of academic genre translation, further scholarly contributions are needed for its development. Despite its initial stage, formalized conversational data and constructive criticism will provide deeper insights. With ambition, effort, and patience, more fruitful results are anticipated in the future.

References

[1]   Amy, B.M.Tsui. (1994). *English Conversation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[2]   Nida Eugene A. (2004)*The Theory and Practice of Translation,* Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

[3]   Psathas G., & Anderson T. (1990). *The Practice of Transcription in Conversation Analysis* [J]. Semiotica.

[4]   Susan, B., & Andre, L. (2010). *Constructing Cultures Essays on Literary Translation* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

[5]   Susan, G.(Ame), & Lary, S.(Bri). (2011). *Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction Course* (3rd Edition). Peking: Peking University Press.

[6]   Walsh, S. (2006). *Investigating classroom discourse*. New York: Routledge.

[7]   Fang,M.Z.[方梦之].(2002). 翻译新论与实践. 青岛：青岛出版社.

[8]   Feng,Q. H. [冯庆华].(2008).实用翻译教程.上海：上海外语教育出版社.

[9]   Guo,Z.Z.[郭著章].(2010). 英汉互译实用教程.武汉：武汉大学出版社.