

# Use of Translation Corpora as a New Method in Chinese Language Research and Its Pedagogical Implications: The Case of Viewpoint in Narratives\*

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## Annotation

This article is a preliminary attempt to apply the use of translation corpora as a new method in Chinese language research. We look into how the use of a Chinese literary masterpiece and its English translation can help us identify interesting differences between the two languages. The discussion is focused on how the author and the translator present viewpoint structure in the narrative. Use of deictic verbs and stylistic strategies such as zero-anaphora and (free) indirect speech are discussed. At the end of the article we propose a pedagogical implication.

**Keywords:** cognitive linguistics, deixis, stylistics, translation, viewpoint

## 1. Parallel Texts, Linguistics Research and Teaching

Language corpora have been a useful resource extensively used in research in general linguistics and language teaching.<sup>1</sup> Various studies have shown the usefulness of language corpora in the above fields. However, the use of translation corpora is a practice that has not yet been systematically adopted in the field of Chinese Linguistics and teaching Chinese as a second language.<sup>2</sup> The current paper intends to occupy the niche by presenting a case study and will discuss the pedagogical implications of the use of translation corpora in Chinese Linguistics and teaching.

Parallel texts, as a type of corpora, are a collection of texts put alongside their translations. For the interest of our current readers, researchers of the Chinese language may put together a collection of world masterpieces written in Chinese (e.g. *A True Story of Ah-Q*, *Dreams of Red Chamber*, etc.) and find their translations in English, Japanese, Czech, German, etc. which will form a set of parallel texts available for the purpose of language research and teaching. Parallel texts are usually aligned sentence by sentence.

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<sup>1</sup> Typical examples include Chen (2010); Chung and Huang (2010); Lu and Su (2009); Lu (Accepted).

<sup>2</sup> A couple of nice exceptions are Xiao and Wei (2014); Xu and Li (2014).

We argue that such methodology has a great advantage, as aligning the texts sentence by sentence allows one to see how the same situation is coded in different languages, and a comparison between the source language and the target language(s) may reveal the distinctiveness of the source language. In our current case, comparing Chinese with the other languages (i.e. English, Japanese, Czech, German, etc.) will reveal how exactly Chinese is different from the other languages.

Furthermore, we propose that such comparison may have important pedagogical implications. It has been extensively reported that second language learners are constantly bothered by the inconsistencies between their first language and the second language that they are trying to acquire, and that such inconsistencies are an important cause of learner's erroneous production patterns. Therefore, we believe not only that parallel texts may be used as an important research material for linguistics research, but also that distinctive patterns of Chinese identified by a parallel-text-based study may serve as an important basis for the design of teaching materials. Below, we present a case study of deictic verbs in Chinese-English parallel texts and will discuss the pedagogical implication of the research.

## 2. Material Choice, Corpus Design and Scope

The material chosen for the present study is a famous novel written by Mo Yan, the Nobel Laureate in 2012, entitled 酒国 *Jiu Guo (The Republic of Wine)*.<sup>3</sup> The novel is chosen for the fame of its author and we believe the work will become increasingly important given Mo Yan's role in the field of contemporary Chinese literature.<sup>4</sup> Only the first chapter of both the Chinese original and the English translation is included in the scope of study as a sample.

We focus on deictic verbs in both the Chinese original and the English translation, as deictic verbs are probably one of the most fundamental words in language. Their semantics is rather basic and frequency is relatively high, so they are suitable candidates for linguistics research. Learners of a second language may also find deictic verbs among the first words that they need to know. We will focus on how deictic verbs and their interactions with other figures of speech allow the speaker to express viewpoint in authentic written discourse.

Deictic verbs are motion verbs that denote the direction of motion with reference to the speaker's position (the so-called *origo*). Motion towards the speaker in Chinese is coded by *lai*, whereas away from the speaker by *qu*. In English motion towards the speaker is coded by *come* (or its variants *comes*, *came*, *coming*), whereas away from the speaker by *go* (or its variants *goes*, *went*, *going*, *gone*). When we did a corpus search, we included all variants of the lexemes.

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<sup>3</sup> Mo (2012).

<sup>4</sup> The English translation is done by Prof. Howard Goldblatt, a Sinologist based in the United States. He is famous for having translated several important contemporary Chinese classics, including *The Taste of Apples* by Huang Chunming and *The Execution of Mayor Yin* by Chen Ruoxi. Therefore, given the translator's extensive experience, we believe that the quality of the translation is more than acceptable so is suitable for the purpose of linguistics research.

However, note that deictic verbs, given their basic status in language use and their high frequency, also show a tendency of being involved in idioms and appearing in grammaticized forms, where the four lexemes may lose their physical and directional nature. Typical examples in Chinese include *guan-qilai* ‘close-QILAI’, *kan-qilai* ‘see-QILAI’, where *lai* cannot be replaced with *qu*, and *ting-xiaqu* ‘listen-XIAQU’, *du-xiaqu* ‘read-XIAQU’, where *qu* cannot be replaced with *lai*. Typical English examples include the progressive aspectual expression *be going to*, where *go* cannot be replaced with *come* to express a different viewpoint and *come down to earth* ‘be realistic’, where *come* cannot be replaced with *go*. We exclude such idiomatic expressions from our scope, since our focus is viewpoint expression in discourse.

### 3. Representative Cases Identified in the Parallel Texts

Below are some representative examples that we find in the first chapter of the Chinese and English versions of *The Republic of Wine*. We discuss the examples in two groups: Section 3.1 introduces examples where only the Chinese version uses a deictic verb to express the narrator’s viewpoint but such a stylistic effect is entirely absent in the English version. Section 3.2 includes examples where the Chinese version uses a deictic verb for the viewpointing effect (Dancygier 2012) while the English version does not. But not only that, the examples also involve another stylistic means to achieve the effect.

#### 3.1 Viewpoint expressed only in the Chinese original

In this category, we introduce examples where only the Chinese version expresses the viewpoint of the narrator with a deictic verb while the English version does not. Example (1) and (2), both taken from the narration of the novel, are typical.<sup>5</sup>

(1a)	看门人	把	手	拿下来，	放	在
	kanmen-ren	ba	shou	na-xia-lai	fang	zai
	gate keeper	PRT	hand	take-down-come	put	LOC
	面前	看。				
	mian-qian	kan				
	face-front	see				

<sup>5</sup> Examples marked with (a) are all passages from the Chinese original. The first line presents the passage in Chinese characters, and the second line is the transliteration of the passage, and the third line is the word-by-word translation of the original text. For the glosses of grammatical markers, we follow the convention in linguistic typology, The Leipzig Glossing Rules developed by the Max Plank Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology. Examples marked with (b) are passages from the English translation. Examples marked with (c) are constructed for the purpose of explaining the viewpointing effect in the original (a) or (b) passages.

	“The gatekeeper put his hands down (in the direction of the speaker) and looked at them in front of his face.”
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(1b) The gatekeeper lowered his hands and examined them.

(1c)	看门人	把	手	拿下去，	放	在
	kanmen-ren	ba	shou	na-xia-qu	fang	zai
	gate keeper	PRT	hand	take-down-go	put	LOC
	面前	看。				
	mian-qian	kan				
	face-front	see				
	“The gatekeeper put his hands down (away from the speaker) and looked at them in front of his face.” (constructed)					

Example (1a) is a typical example of the narrator’s language that uses *lai* to construct a viewpoint that is identical to the protagonist’s (Ding Gou’er’s). This point becomes straightforward when we compare (1a) with its constructed counterpart (1c), which is created by replacing *lai* with *qu*. The viewpoint of the speaker in (1c) is identical probably to the gatekeeper’s. On the other hand, we cannot find a similar viewpoint expressed in its English translation, with no deictic verb found in (1b), which is a mere description from the perspective of a neutral and objective observer. The English version therefore shows much less involvement of the narrator in the scene than the Chinese original.

(2a)	丁钩儿		接过		酒瓶子，	晃晃，	
	dinggouer		jie-guo		jiuping-zi	huang-huang	
	Ding Gou’er		take-over		wine bottle	shake-RED	
	蝎子	在	参须		间	游泳，	怪
	xiezi	zai	sen-xu		jian	youyong	guai
	scorpion	LOC	ginseng root		LOC	swim	strange
	从	瓶口		冲出来。			
	cong	ping-kou		chong-chu-lai			
	LOC	bottle mouth		rush-out-come			
	“Ding Gou’er took over the bottle, shook it, (and found) the scorpions swimming among the ginseng roots, with a strange odor coming (towards the speaker) out from the mouth of the bottle.”						

(2b) He shook the bottle, and the scorpions swam in the ginseng-enhanced liquid. A strange odor emanated from the bottle.

(2c)	丁钩儿		接过		酒瓶子，	晃晃，	
	dinggouer		jie-guo		jiuping-zi	huang-huang	
	Ding Gou'er		take-over		wine bottle	shake-RED	
	蝎子	在	参须		间	游泳，	怪
	xiezi	zai	sen-xu		jian	youyong	guai
	scorpion	LOC	ginseng root		LOC	swim	strange
	从	瓶口		冲出去。			
	cong	ping-kou		chong-chu-qu			
	LOC	bottle-mouth		rush-out-go			
	“Ding Gou'er took over the bottle, shook it, (and found) the scorpions swimming among the ginseng roots, with a strange odor going (away from the speaker) out from the mouth of the bottle.” (constructed)						

Example (2) is rather similar to (1) in terms of the viewpoint alignment in the Chinese original and the English translation. In (2a), the viewpoint of the narrator is with the protagonist, which is outside of the bottle. But if we replace *lai* with *qu*, as is shown in the constructed (2c), the viewpoint of the speaker is no longer outside of the bottle with the protagonist but instead inside of the bottle. On the other hand, the English translation does not show such viewpoint management by use of a deictic verb. Rather like (1b), (2b) is also an objective description of the source of the odor using a viewpoint-neutral motion verb *emanated*, which only means ‘to exit’.

### 3.2 Interaction of deictic verbs and other figures of speech

The phenomena that we show below are more complicated than what we have seen in the previous section. Here we will discuss the interaction of a deictic verb and other figures of speech in the same passage. (3) is an interesting case where the deictic verb *lai* creates a special literary effect with zero anaphora.

(3a)	他	感到	乏味、		无趣，	便	把	她
	ta	gan-dao	fawei		wuqu	bian	ba	ta
	he	feel-PFV	bland		uninteresting	then	PRT	she

	推开。	她	却	像	一只		凶猛的
	tui-kai	ta	que	xiang	yi-zhi		xiongmeng-de
	push-aside	she	nevertheless	like	one-CL		fierce-LINK
	小豹子	一样，		不断地			扑上来...
	xiao baozi	yi-yang		buduandi			pu-shang-lai
	leopard cub	same		relentlessly			spring-up-come
	“He felt uninterested and then pushed her away. But she was like a fierce leopard cub and kept coming up (against the speaker) relentlessly.”						

(3b) But, like a plucky fighting cock, she sprang back at him hard, catching him off guard and making resistance all but impossible.

In (3a), the viewpoint of the narrator is obviously with the protagonist, which is shown by the use of *lai*. Note also that zero-anaphora is at play, with the goal of the female character's motion, which is the protagonist, left unspecified. This naturally gives the association of the narrator's viewpoint with the protagonist's. But on the other hand, the viewpoint of the narration in (3b) is more neutral. In the English text, there is no use of a deictic verb, and the goal of the female character's motion is specified by a pronoun *him*, which objectively refers to the protagonist from outside of the scene. Here we see clearly that the narrator's viewpoint is not with the protagonist (deeply involved in the scene) but instead adopts a distal perspective.

Excerpts (4) are a similar set of instances that involves the interplay of deixis and zero-anaphora.

(4a)	检察长		拉开		抽屉，	把	一封信	
	jiancha-zhang		la-kai		chouti	ba	yi-feng-xin	
	Head of Inspectors		pull-open		drawer	PRT	one-CL-letter	
	拿出来，	先	瞄了两眼，				才	
	na-chu-lai	xian	miao-le-liangyan				cai	
	take-out-come	first	glance-PFV-a couple of times				PRT	
	递给	丁钩儿。						
	di-gei	dinggouer						
	hand-to	Ding Gou'er						
	“The Head of Inspectors pulled the drawer open, took out (towards the speaker) a letter, first glanced it and handed it to Ding Gou'er.”							

(4b) He opened a drawer and took out a letter, glanced at it, then handed it over.

In (4a), the viewpoint of the narrator is with the protagonist. This is evidenced by the use of *lai* in the narrative. However, what is interesting is that Ding Gou'er is explicitly mentioned in a later part of the narrative so is an objective part of the scene. Note that the explicit mention of Ding Gou'er is important in understanding the viewpoint structure in this chunk of narrative. In the first part of the narrative, the narrator's viewpoint coincides with the protagonist's (i.e. outside of the drawer and away from the Head of Inspectors), whereas in the second half where Ding Gou'er is explicitly mentioned, the viewpoint is no longer with the protagonist, as the protagonist is explicitly mentioned as an object of conception. This stretch of discourse thus presents a mixture of narrative viewpoints, commonly known as free indirect discourse.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, the English translation (4b) does not exhibit such a mixture of viewpoints like its Chinese counterpart does. In (4b), only zero-anaphora is used as a stylistic strategy that induces the reader to identify the viewpoint of the narrator with the protagonist's. Consider a constructed example (4c), where the goal of the motion of the letter, Ding Gou'er, is explicitly mentioned.

(4c) He opened a drawer and took out a letter, glanced at it, then handed it over to Ding Gou'er. (constructed)

This constructed stretch of discourse looks like an objective neutral description of the scene, with the protagonist mentioned as an object of conceptualization instead of as the origo of the narrative. The viewpoint of the narrator in (4c) is thus clearly not with the protagonist.

Therefore, by comparing the original Chinese text (4a) with its English translation (4b), we show that *lai* is an important lexical means that the narrator uses to create a stylistic effect of mixing the narrator's viewpoint with the protagonist's, which is missing in the English text. By comparing (4b) with its constructed counterpart (4c), we show that zero-anaphora is a stylistic means employed by the English translator to induce the reader to identify the narrator's viewpoint with the protagonist, which is not used in the Chinese text (4a).<sup>7</sup>

Examples (5a) and (5b) are even more complicated, as they involve the interplay of deixis and the protagonist's perceptual content and thought represented by the narrator.

(5a)	丁钩儿		推开		小	门	时，	
	dinggouer		tui-kai		xiao	men	shi	
	Ding Gou'er		push-open		small	door	when	

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of (free) indirect discourse and direct discourse, see Short (1996), 298–307.

<sup>7</sup> Note that zero-anaphora is an important grammatical phenomenon extensively discussed throughout literature (e.g. McEnery 2000; Sanford et.al 1994, among numerous others). The point of the analysis here is simply to show how Chinese and English uses zero-anaphora in very different ways.

	那条狗		猛	扑上来。	狗	的	布满
	na-tiao-gou		meng	pu-shang-lai	gou	de	buman
	that-CL-dog		fierce	spring-up-come	dog	LINK	full of
	汗珠	的	湿	鼻子	几乎	碰到	他
	hanzhu	de	shi	bizi	jihu	peng-dao	ta
	sweat	LINK	wet	nose	almost	touch-PFV	he
	的	手背。		准确地说		触到了	他
	de	shoubei		zhunquedi-shuo		chu-dao-le	ta
	LINK	back of hand		precisely speaking		touch-PFV-PFV	he
	的	手背，		他	感到了	它	的
	de	shoubei		ta	gan-dao-le	ta	de
	LINK	back of hand		he	feel-PFV-PFV	it	LINK
	鼻子	上	的	温度。	狗	鼻子	凉森森的，
	bizi	shang	de	wendu	gou	bizi	liangsensen-de
	nose	on	LINK	temperature	dog	nose	cool-LINK
	使	他	想到了	紫色	的	乌贼鱼	和
	shi	ta	xiang-dao-le	zise	de	wuzeiyu	he
	make	he	think-PFV-PFV	purple	LINK	cuttlefish	CONJ
	荔枝	的	皮肤。				
	lizhi	de	pifu				
	lychee	LINK	skin				
	“When Ding Gou’er pushed the small door open, that dog came (towards him) fiercely. The sweaty wet nose almost touched the back of his hand. More precisely, it did touch his hand, as he felt the temperature of its nose. The dog’s nose is cool, which reminded him of the skin of a purple cuttlefish and a lychee nut.”						

(5b) Ding Gou’er pushed on the small gate, bringing the dog quickly to its feet. Its damp, sweaty nose was but a fraction of an inch from the back of his hand. In fact, it probably touched his hand, since he felt a coolness that reminded him of a purple cuttlefish or a lychee nut.

An immediately noticeable difference between (5a) and (5b) is the absence of a deictic verb in (5b), which again makes use of deictic verbs a distinctive feature of Chinese narratives. However, what is furthermore interesting in the passages is the co-contribution by the deictic verb and the reported perceptual content and thought of the protagonist to the stylistic effect. In



the Chinese text, the stylistic effect of blending the protagonist's viewpoint in the narrator's language is achieved by embedding not only the deictic verb *lai* but also the protagonist's perceptual content in the narration. The direct access of the narrator to the protagonist's feeling and thought, which is impossible in real-life scenarios, creates a mixture of viewpoint representation in this stretch of discourse. However, the mixture is more vivid in the middle of (5a), where Ding Gou'er's feeling is described by the narrator with reference to Ding Gou'er as *ta* '3<sup>rd</sup> person sg', which represents the narrator's perspective. The association of the coolness of the dog's nose and a cuttlefish and lychee nut at the end of the passage is also a thought that only the protagonist, not any observer, would have access to. But now the fact that this is reported by the narrator also proves the mixture of viewpoints that we have argued. The English text employs a similar writing technique but does not use a deictic verb.

The last pair of examples, (6a) and (6b), also illustrates the use of deictic verbs as a main feature in the Chinese narrative. However, there is also more to it in this stretch of discourse.

(6a)	守门人	脸	上	干巴巴的，	好像			
	shoumen-ren	lian	shang	ganbaba-de	haoxiang			
	gate keeper	face	on	dry-PRT	like			
	烤焦	的	馒头。	丁钩儿			不	
	kao-jiao	de	mantou	dinggouer			bu	
	bake-burned	LINK	steamed bun	Ding Gou'er			NEG	
	想	继续	吓唬	他，	说	我	不是	什么
	xiang	jixu	xiahu	ta	shuo	wo	bushi	sheme
	want	continue	scare	he	say	I	NEG	what
	矿长，	放开胆子	烤	吧！	我	是	来	
	kuagzhang	fangkaidanzi	kao	ba	wo	shi	lai	
	director	feel free to	heat	PRT	I	PRT	come	
	办事	的。						
	banshi	de						
	work	PRT						
	“The gatekeeper's face was as dry as a burned steamed bun. Ding Gou'er did not want to scare him any more so said I am not the Director, so feel free to enjoy the warmth! I came to work.”							

(6b) The gatekeeper had a dried-out face, like an overcooked bun. Deciding he'd frightened the man enough, Ding Gou'er confessed that he was not the new Director, and

that the man was free to heat the place up as much as he liked, since Ding Gou'er had work to do.

A comparison of (6a) and (6b) also shows the use of a deictic verb to be an exclusive feature of the Chinese narrative, which is absent in the English translation. In addition to the main difference, the passage also shows another striking stylistic diversion. Ding Gou'er's speech is presented in the Chinese original with a first person point of view, indicated by the use of pronoun *wo* 'I', which is typical of direct speech and reflects the protagonist's perspective in the narration. On the other hand, Ding Gou'er's speech in the English translation is not presented in the form of either direct speech or free indirect speech, but rather indirect speech that shows the narrator's distanced viewpoint, evidenced by the use of third person pronoun *he*. This passage thus demonstrates not only the use of deictic verbs as an important feature in Chinese narratives but also a difference in the mode of representing speech in the Chinese passage and its English translation.

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

With the use of a representative Chinese literary piece and its English translation, we have shown the usefulness of translation corpora in Chinese language research, as a comparison of texts between Chinese and another language can show various interesting differences between Chinese and the other language involved. First of all, the examples that we have presented consistently show that the use of deictic verbs seems to be a feature of Chinese narratives, which is absent, at least in all those corresponding English passages. Secondly, the use of a translation corpus allows us to see how the Chinese language uses very different stylistic means from English in creating viewpoint structure in narratives. In addition to the use of deictic verbs, different use of zero-anaphora in (3) and (4), and the different modes of speech representation discussed in (6) are all illustrations of how a typical Chinese narrative is stylistically different from an English one. However, note that the less frequent use of deictic verbs in the English text does not mean that the English language is not equipped with corresponding stylistic strategies for the purpose of viewpoint construction. Zero-anaphora in (4b), for instance, is a strategy that is used only by the English translator but not by the Chinese author in that particular stretch of discourse.

An important generalization that can be made across the examples is the lack of neat correspondences between Chinese and the other language, which is exactly the potential pedagogical value of using a translation corpus for Chinese teaching. I propose that teachers of Chinese should include the use of translation corpora as a small part of their curriculum, with the purpose of showing students the impossibility of trying to find translation equivalents across languages. By pointing out how languages "misbehave", the teacher may emphasize the importance of using original (Chinese) discourse as a study material and the inadequacy of the traditional dictionary-plus-grammar-book model (Taylor 2012:8) of language learning. In other words, the use of translation corpora should not be extensively used as a main part of the

curriculum but as supplementary material that helps motivate students and adjust their learning mode. It is in this sense that the use of translation corpora has important pedagogical implications at least for the material design of teaching Chinese as second language. Furthermore, given the potential of the use of translation corpora in contrastive linguistics research, we believe that differences that are identified in Chinese-English (or even Chinese-Czech, Chinese-Japanese, etc.) translation corpora can be used in teaching material design, which should be brought to the attention of language teachers of Chinese with the students' native language involved as the target language in comparison.

Finally, although we have presented a selection of examples as evidence, we are fully aware that more research needs to be done with the proposed methodology so that a generalization of what is specific to the Chinese language can be made. That said, we believe that such an initiative has shown the potential of using translation corpora in Chinese language research, especially the distinctiveness of the Chinese language from a contrastive linguistic perspective.

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