

## An Empirical Study of Contrastive Cognition and Interpretation Ability in English and Chinese Texts from the Perspective of Cultural Context

Zhang Jie

College of English Language and Culture, Xi'an Fanyi University Xi'an, Shaanxi Province 710105, China

**Keywords:** Cultural context; English and Chinese articles; comparative cognition; interpretation

**Abstract:** Cultural context belongs to the category of non-linguistic context, which refers to the specific social norms and customs of a certain speech community. Language is the carrier of culture, and the meaning of language varies with different cultures. Human language communication is a process in which context, language, cognition and social and cultural factors interact with each other, while verbal communication is a process in which language choices are constantly made based on internal and external factors of language under different levels of consciousness. English and Chinese peoples have different thinking modes, which are reflected in different sentence structures. Discourse analysis is an analysis of the forms and processes of language use and is a form of interaction between two parties. The coherence of discourse arises from the seeking of the hearer's dialogue and is related to the perception of the recipient of the discourse. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, a comparative study of English and Chinese on the discourse coherence mechanism is expected to deepen and break through the coherent research. This is a new perspective of coherent research and a new field of discourse research that deserves in-depth study.

### 1. Introduction

Today's linguistic research is turning to multi-angle, multi-faceted, multidisciplinary research on language systems and their laws [1]. With the rise and development of the two disciplines of comparative linguistics and discourse research, comparative research at the discourse level has become a matter of course [2]. Discourse comparison is an important part of comparative linguistics. The history of thousands of chapters in our country shows that our ancestors have long understood the relationship between sentences and chapters, and also noticed the overall concept of the chapter conveying thoughts [3]. These "article study" research results are exactly what we must draw lessons from and inherit in today's construction of modern Chinese textual linguistics [4]. In recent years, many Chinese scholars have paid attention to breaking through the barriers of sentence level research in Chinese grammar and started to study Chinese text grammar from the perspective of linguistics. The study of linguistics cannot stop at the level of words and expressions. It should take full account of the dynamic use of language while studying words and expressions, and pay close attention to the study of chapters from the reality of people's expression and meaning [5].

Discourse analysis is an analysis of the forms and processes of language use, and coherence as a term in the field of discourse analysis is an important feature of discourse [6]. The cohesion and coherence of discourse is the core of discourse research. Both English and Chinese have differences in internal thinking and external connections and coherence. The understanding of the coherence and cohesive means of the source language and the efforts to achieve the coherence of the translated text are two important links in the interpreting work [7]. Interpretation is a kind of verbal communication activity that achieves the purpose of transmitting information by listening to and analyzing the information expressed in the source language and then translating it into the language symbols of the target language [8]. One of its remarkable characteristics is its strong extemporaneousness and timeliness [9]. To explore the cognitive motivation of the coherence mechanism of English and Chinese texts from an all-round and multi-dimensional perspective. Paying attention to the influence of discourse and cultural, social, thinking, cognitive, psychological and other related factors on discourse will be helpful to interpretation [10]. Even to improve people's thinking ability, has very important theoretical significance and application value.

## **2. The Concept of Discourse and Theoretical Development of Research**

### **2.1. The Concept of Discourse**

First, it is a semantic unit. As long as this semantic unit can express a relatively complete meaning and is a coherent entity in communication, it can be called a text. Text can be oral or written, long or short. It can be monologues or dialogues, or people talking. Just as Guo-Wen Huang defines a text as follows: "Text usually refers to a whole language composed of a series of consecutive paragraphs or sentences, which can be written signs (such as traffic signs), poems and novels." Second, most discourses are a coherent language consisting of a series of discourses, clauses, or sentences, or a relatively independent function. But the length of the discourse is not necessarily greater than the sentence, and sometimes it can be smaller than the sentence. Discourse is a form of interaction between two parties. That is to say, when someone speaks, they must not only say a few sentences with certain meaning, but also have a certain influence on the other party. More precisely, they must make the two parties through the use of language. interaction.

### **2.2. Theoretical development of discourse coherence research**

The cohesion and coherence of discourse is one of the hot issues in discourse analysis. In recent years, people's research on them has been full of enthusiasm. Scholars of various schools have a lot of arguments about them. The most influential in this regard is the British linguist Halliday and Hassan's book "Connectivity in English", whose cohesion theory is widely circulated in the linguistic community. Views with anthropological tendencies emerged in the 18th century, and in the first half of the 20th century, this view continued to develop smoothly in Europe. Such as the emergence of the school of pragmatics (Copenhagen school, Prague school and London school). In the United States, there are theories of Sawanger, Boaz and others. In the history of western linguistics, two opposing views have long been formed: one is represented by protogoras and Plato, and the other is represented by Aristotle. These two viewpoints have been close to each other and deviated from each other in the long river of history, but Aristotle's viewpoint is in the mainstream most of the time.

From the perspective of cognitive science, relevance theory believes that the coherence of discourse arises from the seeking of the hearers' dialogue. According to the principle of association, each communication behavior has its own best relevance. Relevance theory holds that coherence is the result of reasoning, and the coherence of discourse is related to the cognition of the recipient of the discourse. A coherent discourse usually derives the relationship between the discourses by the listener, and derives the relationship between the individual discourses and the various sub-goals in the speaker's plan. It can effectively explain the original intention of the speaker, thus enabling the original intention of the speaker. reconstruction. When dealing with information, the hearer has many contextual assumptions, including not only the contextual context, but also his own knowledge about the world, beliefs, and mutual understanding between the communicators, etc. Understanding is to use reasoning to find the correlation between the proposition of the input sentence and the contextual assumption. Psychologists emphasize the role of people's stored background knowledge in understanding language input, meaning "the common function of language input and knowledge activated by these inputs".

## **3. The Target of Contrastive Cognition in English and Chinese Texts**

### **3.1. An all-round investigation of the coherence mechanism of English and Chinese texts and its cognitive motivation**

At present, most English-Chinese contrastive articles and treatises mainly focus on the contrastive study of cohesive devices. Perhaps many people think that coherent contrast is difficult to grasp and even harder to study. Admittedly, coherence is more complicated than cohesion, but we think it is completely comparable. Redefining coherence and putting forward a reasonable working hypothesis. Text coherence, the unity of internal mechanism and external mechanism. We will

redefine coherence on the basis of previous studies and propose our new understanding of coherence. Strive to make a breakthrough on the basis of predecessors. A new model of coherence between English and Chinese is proposed, which enriches the content of coherent research to a certain extent and expands the scope of coherent research. On the basis of previous studies, combined with the theory of composite space, metaphor theory and relevance theory in the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Explain how the communicative process of speech communication and coherence in the process of discourse interpretation are constructed, and provide a theoretical basis for the dynamic study of discourse coherence.

### **3.2. Introducing the theory of cognitive linguistics to explain the similarities and differences between English and Chinese coherence**

Although people have noticed that textual coherence includes not only formal factors but also pragmatic, cognitive, psychological and other factors outside the language. At present, some research results are not systematic enough, and they are not deep enough. For example, in the end, cognitive psychology factors restrict the generation and understanding of discourse. Discourse coherence is regarded as a dynamic process. This process is not only to judge textual coherence from the linguistic form of cohesiveness, but more importantly, to regard discourse coherence as a kind of mental coherence. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the construction of any discourse meaning reflects the discourse constructors' understanding of the world, and the discourse constructors must follow the general cognitive laws of human beings in the process of understanding the world. Cognitive linguists believe that textual coherence is not only achieved by cohesive devices and textual structures, but mainly by human mental coherence. The application of relevant theories in cognitive linguistics to discourse analysis or discourse analysis is of great help to improve the cognitive study of discourse coherence.

## **4. Research Methods of Contrastive Cognition in English and Chinese Texts**

### **4.1. Combination of Description and Interpretation and Comparative Analysis**

Starting from the functionalist theory, this paper tries to make a qualitative explanation on the basis of description so as to pay equal attention to description and explanation, form and meaning. The purpose of description is to explain. Only a full description of language forms can give a more adequate and appropriate explanation. We try our best to draw some new language theories from contemporary linguistics on the basis of describing language forms. Such as iconicity of cognitive linguistics, cognitive pragmatic inference, thinking psychology and other theories to describe and explain textual coherence. Mr. Lu Shuxiang said: "The characteristics of a thing must be compared with other things, and the language is the same. To fully understand the characteristics of Chinese, we must compare it with non-Chinese. To understand the characteristics of many Chinese, we must follow Comparison of ancient Chinese. To understand the characteristics of Mandarin, we must compare it with dialects. The method of comparative analysis can make us deepen the understanding of the coherence of English and Chinese. From the internal language to describe the language to the outside of the language to explain the language, from multiple angles Discourse and its laws are studied.

### **4.2. Interdisciplinary approach combining qualitative and quantitative**

On the basis of formal description and theoretical explanation, we conduct a qualitative study on the coherent mode of English and Chinese. At the same time, quantitative analysis is appropriately carried out to support our theoretical assumptions and theoretical models. Another general trend in current language research is cross-disciplinary research. Cognitive linguistics is a new hotspot in the study of linguistics today. Cognitive linguistics not only describes language facts. Moreover, he is committed to moving toward the direction of theoretical interpretation and revealing the cognitive laws behind the linguistic facts. In the past, the research on coherence was mainly confined to the scope of discourse analysis and functional linguistics, and there were few works and articles on

coherence from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. In fact, discourse coherence is a linguistic phenomenon involving semantic, pragmatic and cognitive knowledge. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, this paper makes a comparative study of the coherence mechanism between English and Chinese in order to deepen and break through the study of coherence. This is a new perspective of coherence research and a brand-new field of discourse research, which deserves in-depth study.

## **5. Grasping the contrastive cognition of texts is helpful to improve the interpreting ability**

### **5.1. Characteristics of English-Chinese Interpretation**

Interpretation ability is an advanced ability that foreign language learners hope to possess. However, there is a wrong view on how to acquire interpretation ability, that is, to equate language ability with interpretation ability. I believe that as long as I have a high level of bilingualism, I will definitely be qualified for interpretation. However, the fact is contrary to our wishes. The follow-up survey found that more than 60% of the candidates who have obtained the qualification certificate for advanced interpretation are still not qualified for advanced translation, and there are still many difficulties in translation, especially in high-level translation such as simultaneous interpretation. Language ability is not equivalent to interpretation ability. A high level of language does not necessarily mean a high level of translation. The latter depends on vocational skills training and improvement. There are great differences between English and Chinese in many aspects. First of all, English and Chinese peoples have different thinking modes, which are reflected in different sentence structures. The logical mode of thinking in Chinese is “inductive” while that in English is “deductive”, and the two modes of thinking must be effectively integrated.

### **5.2. Research and Design of Contrastive Cognition and Interpretation Ability in English and Chinese Texts**

Our experiment was conducted in class 2, class 4 and class 6 of grade 2018 in an English college of Zhejiang university. For the convenience of observation and statistics, we targeted at 10 students randomly selected from each class, and selected three short stories in narrative style and two short stories in introductory style as investigation tools. Since the 30 students were chosen arbitrarily, their interpreting ability was representative. We used the research method of Cai Xiaohong (2001) to observe the variables of the number of pauses and the amount of information transferred in the process of interpretation. The experimental results show that there is a correlation between students' interpreting ability and discourse comparison cognition knowledge. The lack of contrast between English and Chinese cognition hinders students' output of the translated language according to the language system and rules of the translated language, which affects the quality of the information transmitted. The improvement of discourse comparison cognitive knowledge is conducive to the development of students' interpreting ability. The experimental results of the three classes are very similar. We averaged the experimental results of two single students in two classes. For statistical convenience, we use rounding to retain only integers. The specific statistics are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Cultural context belongs to the category of non-linguistic context, which refers to the specific social norms and customs of a certain speech community. In recent years, with the continuous deepening of the study of pragmatics, the scope of cultural context has been further broadened. The cultures of all ethnic groups have both commonality and individuality. The rich diversity of cultures indicates that different groups have different cultures. Language is the carrier of culture, and the meaning of language varies from culture to culture. Differences in different languages in terms of historical traditions, values, ways of thinking, religious beliefs, customs, and geographical environment can cause the same words to produce different metaphors in different cultural contexts, and the resulting emotions are often different in culture. Translation is not only a process of language transformation, but also a process of cultural transplantation. The translator should communicate with the original author as a reader, and the success of this process depends on

whether the translator's own world knowledge and experience about the target culture can reach the level of the original author's ideal readers to the greatest extent.

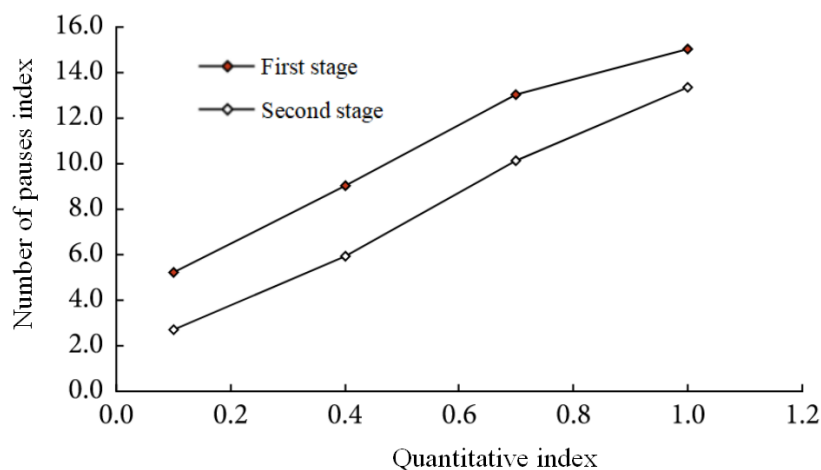


Fig.1. Comparison of pauses

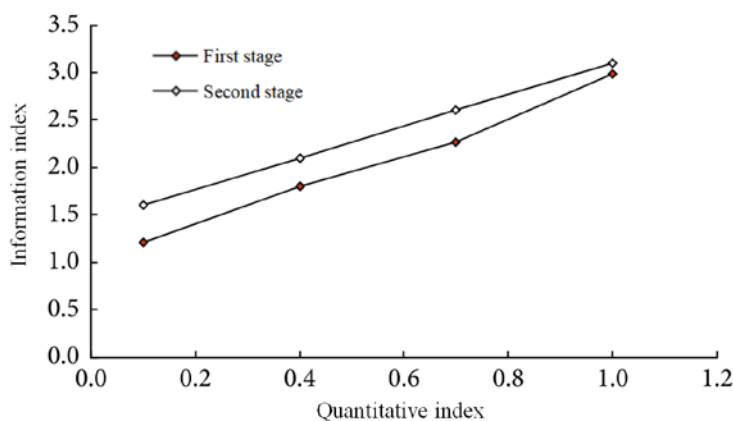


Fig.2. Comparison of the amount of information transmitted

## 6. Conclusion

Human language communication is a process in which context, language, cognition and social and cultural factors interact. Language communication is a process of making language choices based on internal and external factors at different levels of consciousness. Cognitive linguistics believes that language is embedded in all human cognitive abilities, so we can explore the deep cognitive mechanism of discourse coherence from the outside of language. The differences in language between Chinese and Western people lead to different ways of coherence between English and Chinese. The differences between Chinese and western cultures and thinking patterns are the main reasons for the differences in coherence between English and Chinese texts. The obvious morphological marks, strict syntactic rules and the linear and rational coherence of texts in western languages are closely related to the meticulous formal logical thinking of western nations. However, the flexibility and variability of Chinese syntax and the circular and perceptive coherence of discourse are closely related to the integrity and dialectic of Chinese national thinking. Thinking and cognitive patterns, cultural features and language features influence each other, which determines the intertextuality and similarities and differences between English and Chinese texts.

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