

Study on the Textual Coherence Function of Conjunctions in Political Texts and Their Translation Reconstruction

Goya Guli Kader^{1*}, Jingwen Qiao², Aixia Yang¹

¹Xinjiang University, The Belt and Road Initiative National Regional Center of State Ethnic Affairs Commission – “Center for Five Central Asian Countries and Russian Studies,” Urumqi 830046, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China

²College of Foreign Languages, Xinjiang University, Urumqi 830046, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China

*Corresponding author: Goya Guli Kader, 307074017@qq.com

Copyright: © 2024 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: The assessment of translation quality in political texts is primarily based on achieving effective communication. Throughout the translation process, it is essential to not only accurately convey the original content but also effectively transform the structural mechanisms of the source language. In the translation reconstruction of political texts, various textual cohesion methods are often employed, with conjunctions serving as a primary means for semantic coherence within text units.

Keywords: Political texts; Conjunctions; Textual cohesion; Chinese to Russian translation

Online publication: January 18, 2024

1. Introduction

Contemporary Chinese political texts possess a distinctive discourse system and stylistic features. They typically exhibit clear themes, rigorous logic, precise language, and diverse sentence structures. When translating such texts, the paramount goal is to convey the original political intent faithfully, accurately articulate the nation’s governing principles and policy directives, and maximize communicative effectiveness.

The process of text translation involves understanding the source language and reconstructing the translated text. Understanding source language encompasses deconstructing the original text and comprehending its semantics. Translated text reconstruction involves reproducing the translated language expression and content from the original text. Within the deconstruction and reconstruction process, cohesion and coherence are pivotal factors, serving as both cognitive points for understanding the source language text and as primary avenues for translation and creating a new text. Texts establish semantic coherence within the context through cohesion mechanisms, which is not merely a formal concept but a semantic one, representing various meaningful relationships within the text ^[1]. Halliday and Hasan categorize various cohesion devices into two types: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. The former includes reference, ellipsis, substitution,

and conjunction, while the latter comprises lexical repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, and collocation. These cohesion devices constitute explicit linguistic forms of cohesion, exhibiting distinct cohesion markers, and belong to explicit cohesion modes. Chinese emphasizes the unity of meaning, lacking morphological changes in syntactic structures. The interconnection between text units is often expressed through their logical relationships or sequences, wherein the linking elements tend to be implicit rather than explicit. In contrast, Russian focuses on form and structure; constructing texts typically involves appropriate conjunctions or various language-linking devices, explicitly manifesting structural relationships between text units, thereby clarifying cohesive relationships.

Compared to other linguistic styles, political discourse demands greater precision, rigor, and logical clarity in text expression. Such texts often employ longer sentences and diverse sentence structures. Therefore, apart from relying on internal semantic coherence, constructing these texts leans toward selecting explicit cohesive devices. Simultaneously, political texts necessitate extensive logical argumentation, largely reliant on conjunctions within grammatical cohesion. Hence, analyzing the semantic characteristics and cohesive significance of conjunctions in political texts holds considerable significance for translation studies.

2. Significance of conjunctions in coherence

Conjunctions serve as explicit cohesive markers that facilitate coherence within a text, constituting one of the lexical cohesive devices. As early as 1928, Russian linguist Shcherba (Щерба ЛВ) ^[2] highlighted the cohesive function of conjunctions: “They can combine several words or groups of words to form a unity—a discourse segment or even higher-level syntactic entities.” The higher-level syntactic entities refer to textual components beyond sentences, encompassing supra-sentential units, sentence segments, and even the text itself. Li Wang ^[3] defined conjunctions as: “Words and phrases can be connected; sentences can also be linked. Some function words reside between words or sentences, serving the purpose of connection. We call these function words conjunctions.” These concepts not only affirm the linking role of conjunctions between words but also reveal their textual cohesion function among higher linguistic units.

From a textual perspective, conjunctions can link clauses within complex sentences, connect independent sentences within a text, and transcend sentence boundaries to establish formal and meaningful connections among larger linguistic units. For instance, they facilitate cohesion between supra-sentential units or sentence segments. The understanding of conjunctions across different textual units plays a crucial role in deconstructing and comprehending the semantic structure of the text.

- (1) 我国科技队伍规模是世界上最大的，这是我们必须引以为豪的。但是，我们在科技队伍上也面对着严峻挑战，就是创新型科技人才结构性不足矛盾突出，世界级科技大师缺乏，领军人才、尖子人才不足，工程技术人才培养同生产和创新实践脱节。

Наша страна обладает крупнейшей в мире армией научно-технических работников. Мы этим гордимся. Однако, передней стоят серьезные вызовы - острая проблема структурного дефицита научно-технических работников инновационного типа, отсутствие наставников мирового класса, нехватка одаренных и способных талантов передового уровня, а также отрыв от производственной и инновационной практики в подготовке инженерно-технических работников. (page 179 ^[4])

The conjunction “但是” in the original text links two independent sentences, establishing a cohesive relationship between inter-sentential units within the text.

- (2) …没有哪一项政策能够单独完全奏效，反恐必须坚持综合施策、标本兼治。

为此，中方将建立中阿改革发展研究中心；在中阿合作论坛框架内召开文明对话与去极端化圆桌会议。…

…Для борьбы с терроризмом необходимо принимать комплексные меры, чтобы ликвидировать не только симптомы, но и корни проблемы.

С этой целью Китай планирует создать Китайско-арабский исследовательский центр по вопросам реформ и развития... (page 665 ^[5])

The cohesion between the two paragraphs is achieved through the conjunction “为此”, ensuring semantic coherence between larger text units—paragraphs.

3. Textual cohesive significance and translation of conjunctions

Conjunctions serve as overt cohesive tools, bearing distinct markers and establishing lucid semantic continuities. They constitute the primary means of constructing compound sentences and larger textual units in Chinese and Russian. Political texts in these languages abound with a plethora of conjunctions, playing a vital role in linking various textual units, bridging concepts, and ensuring the coherence of discourse. Chinese has a rich array of connectives capable of expressing relationships such as coordination, continuation, contrast, causality, and hypothesis. During the translation process, diverse translation methods are employed based on specific contextual demands, aiming to remain true to the original content while adhering to the idiomatic expressions of the target language.

This paper undertakes an analysis of the translation and transformation of conjunction meanings within political texts, summarizing four distinct translation approaches.

3.1. Retention translation

Within Russian and Chinese, numerous corresponding conjunctions allow for direct conversion, preserving both their semantic essence and their cohesive function across textual units. Retaining conjunctions stands as the fundamental approach in their translation, aiming to achieve a complete replication in terms of content, form, and functional equivalence.

- (3) 只有培养出一流人才的高校，才能够成为世界一流大学。

Только вузы, подготавливающие первокурсников специалистов, **могут** входить в ряды вузов мирового уровня. (page 542 ^[5])

The original text employs the conjunction “只有……才……” to form a conditional compound sentence. The preceding clause serves as a sufficient condition for the subsequent clause, linking the two clauses through a condition-result relationship to achieve semantic coherence and completeness. In translation, it is rendered as the corresponding “только... могут...” to retain the subordinate relationship between clauses and maintain the semantic coherence of the conditional result, ensuring semantic and structural equivalence with the original text.

- (4) 1978年，中共十一届三中全会开启了中国改革开放进程，至今已经35年多了，取得了举世瞩目的成就。但是，我们还要继续前进。

Состоявшийся в 1978 году 3-й пленум ЦК КПК 11-го созыва дал старт реформам и открытости в Китае. С тех пор прошло уже более 35 лет. За эти годы о наших достижениях узнал весь мир. И, конечно, нам нужно продолжать идти вперед. (page 142 ^[6])

The conjunction “但是” not only serves to link two independent sentences but also indicates a semantic contrast between them. In translation, using the conjunction “и” preserves the semantic differentiation and contrast between sentences, maintaining the cohesive function across sentence boundaries and their structural coherence.

3.2. Substitution translation

Substitution translation involves replacing the original conjunctions with different ones while maintaining the relational structure of the original sentence. This approach aligns with the linguistic norms and idiomatic expressions of the target language while preserving the inter-sentence relationships of the original text.

- (5) 金砖合作之所以得到快速发展，关键在于找准了合作之道。

Динамичное развитие сотрудничества БРИКС в значительной степени стало возможным **благодаря тому, что** мы нашли для него равильную дорогу. (page 705 ^[5])

The first clause utilizes the conjunction “之所以” to express the result, while the second clause presents the cause, emphasizing the latter. In translation, the causal relationship of the original compound sentence is retained. However, the conjunction “之所以” indicating the result is substituted with the subordinating conjunction “благодаря тому, что...” to introduce the subordinate clause signifying the cause. Semantically, “благодаря тому, что...” conveys “due to..., thanks to...” emphasizing a positive evaluation of the cause, aptly capturing the subjective evaluative tone of the original text. Structurally, the connection between the two clauses achieves coherence, aligning with Russian expression norms.

Another scenario involves translating conjunctions into other word classes, such as:

- (6) 回归以来，澳门特别行政区治理体系和治理能力不断完善和提高。同时，我们也看到，形势发展和民众期待给特别行政区提出了更新更高的要求。

После возвращения в лоно Родины управленческая система САР непрерывно совершенствуется, повышаются компетенции в области управления. **В то же время** развитие ситуации и ожидания населения САР, как мы заметили, предъявляют новые, ещё более высокие требования к управленческой работе. (page 607 ^[5])

The original text establishes both semantic coordination and inter-sentential coherence through the conjunction “同时”. In the translation, the ordinary phrase “в то же время” is employed to convey the meaning of “同时”, maintaining the semantic coherence between the preceding and subsequent sentences.

3.3. Omission translation

The omission of conjunctions in political texts primarily surfaces during the translation of compound sentences. Chinese compound sentences often employ certain conjunctions for clarity between subordinate clauses. However, in translating them into Russian, due to differing expressive methods, some or all of these conjunctions might be omitted.

- (7) 虽然全面小康不是人人同样的小康，但如果现有的 7000 多万农村贫困人口生活水平没有明显提高，全面小康也不能让人信服。

Полное построение среднезажиточного общества, правда, вовсе не означает, что все члены общества должны будут жить в одинаковом достатке, **тем не менее**, если уровень жизни нынешнего более 70-миллионного бедного сельского населения не будет заметно улучшаться, то заявление о достижении среднего достатка окажется неубедительным. (page 106 ^[5])

The conjunction “虽然……但是……” denotes an adversative, expressing both the semantic adversative between the main and subordinate clauses and their grammatical connection. In translation, the concessive conjunction “虽然” from the subordinate clause is omitted, replaced by the connective phrase “тем не менее” (“however”), indicating a contrasting relationship. This expression achieves a “conciseness without loss of meaning” effect, retaining semantic equivalence with the original sentence while maintaining the syntactic connection between the main and subordinate clauses, adhering to the norms of complex sentence structures in Russian.

In certain contexts, based on specific semantics, the omission of conjunctions might be necessary, directly translating the original compound sentence into a simple sentence.

(8) 只要是中国，就应该自觉培育和践行社会主义核心价值观。

(9) Каждый китаец должен сознательно изучать, воспитывать в себе и реализовать концепцию основных ценностей социализма. (page 250 ^[7])

The translation omits the conjunction “只要……就……” and consolidates the conditional relationship of the compound sentence into a cohesive simple sentence, employing the structure “Каждый китаец должен...” (“Every Chinese person should...”), emphasizing the affirmative semantic relationship present in the original sentence.

3.4. Addition translation

Chinese emphasizes semantic continuity, whereas Russian prioritizes formal continuity. In the process of translating from Chinese to Russian, the crux lies in comprehending the contextual nuances and the intrinsic meaning within sentences, rather than solely relying on the external structural forms of language. To enhance clarity in the relationship between the two languages, at times, it becomes necessary to introduce conjunctions to supplement omitted formal cohesive markers, thereby elucidating the semantic and logical connections between textual units. For instance:

(10) 做好新形势下统战工作，必须正确处理一致性和多样性关系。

Чтобы надлежащим образом вести работу в области единого фронта в условиях новой обстановки, **необходимо** правильно урегулировать отношения между единством и разнообразием. (page 442 ^[5])

The phrase “为了……必须……” serves as a conjunction denoting a conditional relationship. It not only signifies the conditional result within a sentence but also establishes a cohesive link between two sentences. However, in practical usage, the introductory “为了……” is often omitted without altering the intended meaning. In this instance, the omission of “为了” in the main clause is followed by the subordinate clause introduced by “必须,” indicating a necessary condition. When translated into Russian, to align with Russian expression norms while ensuring clarity in inter-sentential relationships and logical coherence, an additional conjunction “чтобы” is introduced, forming the structure “чтобы... необходимо...,” achieving complete semantic equivalence, and maintaining syntactic integrity and coherence.

Certain Chinese sentences may superficially appear as coordinated compound sentences, but in reality, entail omitted connectives. During translation, it is essential to discern the inter-sentential relationships, delve into their connotations, and judiciously introduce appropriate conjunctions.

(11) 人民有信仰，民族有希望，国家有力量。

Когда у народа есть вера, **тогда** у нации есть будущее, а у государства есть силы. (page 469 ^[5])

The original sentence structure, which lacks conjunctions, might mistakenly appear as a coordinated construction. However, its intrinsic meaning represents a conditional relationship, wherein the first sentence serves as a conditional premise for the subsequent two sentences. To express the logical relation of “if... then...” between the preceding and following sentences accurately, the translation requires the addition of the conjunction “когда... тогда,” establishing the necessary logical connection. Additionally, given the coordinated relationship between the latter two sentences, the translation necessitates the inclusion of conjunctions such as “a” or “и.” By incorporating these conjunctions—когда..., тогда..., а—into the Russian translation, the inter-sentential relations in Chinese are expressed distinctly and comprehensively, aligning with the norms of Russian expression.

4. Conclusion

Conjunctions play a pivotal role in bridging textual units within Chinese and Russian political texts. The Russian translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* ^[4-7] predominantly employs a direct translation approach concerning the grammatical and textual cohesion conveyed by conjunctions, aiming to retain the structural characteristics of the original text to the fullest extent. However, at times, other translation techniques like substitution, omission, or addition need to be employed to maintain semantic integrity. Notably, the method of adding conjunctions is particularly significant, influenced by the inherent linguistic features of Chinese and Russian. Regardless of the chosen translation approach, adherence to the communicative principles of political discourse is paramount. It is crucial to ensure fidelity to the original meaning, accurately convey the ideological nuances of the source text, and simultaneously ensure that the translated text aligns with the grammatical standards and idiomatic expressions of the target language, ultimately ensuring effective communicative impact.

Funding

This article is a phased achievement of the 2020 research project “Research on Chinese-Russian Translation of Political Terminology Based on Corpora” (YB2020005) by CNTERM.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Halliday MAK, Hasan R, 1976, *Cohesion in English*, Longman, London, 4–7.
- [2] Shcherba LV, 1928, About Parts of Speech in Russian, in *Russian Speech*, Academia, Leningrad, 5–27.
- [3] Wang L, 1985, *Modern Chinese Grammar*, The Commercial Press, Beijing.
- [4] Xi J, 2017, *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume 2)*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing.
- [5] Xi J, 2018, *Xi Jinping on Public Administration II*, Publishing House of Literature in Foreign Languages, Beijing.
- [6] Xi J, 2014, *Xi Jinping on Public Administration I*, Publishing House of Literature in Foreign Languages, Beijing.
- [7] Xi J, 2014, *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume 1)*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.