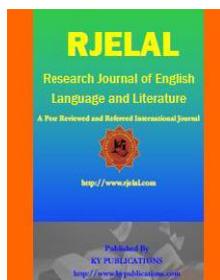




## COMPARISON OF APPOSITION IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper compares the appositive pattern in Chinese and English following the sequence and collocation of anchor and apposition which are unfolded in a series of sections including noun-noun pattern, pronoun-noun pattern and so on. This paper further proposes prominent features of English apposition which distinguish themselves from Chinese apposition, based on which suggestions for translation of appositive patterns between Chinese and English are put forward.

**Key words:** apposition, Chinese, English, comparison

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

There has been little study on comparison of apposition involved in English and Chinese clauses which usually fall within the field of attributive or modifying structures. The definition of apposition varies from time to time, both in English and Chinese. English and Chinese appositive clauses share a number of similarities, although they also distinguish from each other in many aspects. Generally speaking, an apposition refers to a pattern involving an anchor which is followed by an appositive element which is co-referential with the anchor in a definitive or explanative manner. In Chinese, anchor tends to appear prior to the apposition while these two elements are tightly bound without intervening comma or pause. However, only if the anchor appears first or the apposition is too long, there could be a mark between them, as exemplified below:

1) Ta ba yi ge meihao de ci, ai, zhong zai xin li.

3SG BA one CL beautiful DE word love plant at heart inside 'He planted a beautiful word, love, in his heart.'

In English, anchor could not necessarily directly follow the anchor while being separated by other words in contrast with Chinese. For instance:

2) Leon appeared out of the room, a thin man with the big box

Anchor comprises of nouns or pronouns and apposition could be noun or nominal phrases which apply to both English and Chinese. The word class is usually the same in the position of anchor and apposition; however, there are exceptions as well. We shall specifically compare the collocations of anchor and apposition in English and Chinese according to the word class in the sequence of apposition and anchor in the following sections.

### 2. COLLOCATION OF APPOSITION

#### 2.1. NOUN-NOUN PATTERN

3) Ta de diyi pian xiaoshuo——Yun——zhongyu zhengshi chuban le.

3SG DE first CL novel Cloud eventually publish publish ASP

'His first novel, namely *Cloud*, eventually published formally.'

As indicated above, anchor and apposition occurs as a head with modifying element

respectively. Apart from the logical relationship underlying two nouns, expressions such as *zhe-ge* ('this') and *na-ge* ('that') are very commonly used:

- 4) Zhongnan Shan zhe bu dianshiju cengjing hen huo.

NAME mountain DEM CL drama used to very popular

'The drama of Mountain Zhongnan used to be very popular.'

Nominal apposition in English often comprises of nominal phrases which could occur in the position before or after the anchor.

- 5) Killers in the sea, sharks are born with sharp teeth.

Modifiers seldom occur in English anchor while apposition could be attached with modifiers. It is noted that some modifiers made of adverbial and prepositional elements do not modify the nominal head but the entire appositional nominal phrase.

- 6) Dick, generally a handsome young man, escaped from the building and ran into his car.

- 7) Mary, once before a gifted violinist, became homeless just now.

English nominal apposition follows some words to convey special meanings, such as namely, in other words, for instance, including, particularly.

## 2.2. NOUN-PRONOUN PATTERN

- 8) Gege ta you dang die you dang ma, hao xinku.

Brother 3SG while be father while be mother very busy

'Brother himself was father and mother, being very busy.'

This kind of sentences is rarely used only in the context of spoken languages. Attention should be paid to the point that *ni* ('you') cannot be used in this structure because *ni* refers directly to the object for discussion without any logical pause with the preceding noun so that appositive pattern cannot come into being. However, pronouns in English can serve as apposition.

- 9) Happiness, love, and joy—these are essence of life.

## 2.3. PRONOUN-NOUN PATTERN

- 10) Ta laorenjia suiran kanqilai taoyan laoban, dan qishi hen ai ta.

3SG old man although seemingly dislike wife but actually very love 3SG

'He an old man seemingly dislikes his wife, he actually loves her very much.'

## 2.4. PRONOUN-PRONOUN PATTERN

- 11) Ta ziji zou hui xuexiao.

3SG himself walk back school

He himself walked back to school.'

Under these circumstances, Chinese apposition is limited to a range of words such as *ziji* ('oneself') and *dajia* ('all') with a emphatic effect. There are not much differences in English instead.

- 12) You and I are both good guys.

## 2.5. NOUN-NUMERAL (QUANTIFIER) PATTERN

Quantifiers are special in Chinese and thus numeral-quantifier apposition is unique in Chinese.

- 13) Wo de gege Damao zhi you yi-ge erzi.

1SG DE brother NAME only have one-CL son

'My brother Damao only has one son.'

By comparison, there are no quantifiers in English but numerals could still occur with pronouns which result in appositive structure in English.

- 14) How many books are you going to give us four?

## 2.6. PRONOUN-DE PATTERN

- 15) Wulun ta kaidian de ruhe jiaohua, women zong you banfa.

No matter how 3SG merchant DE how tricky we always have strategy

'No matter how tricky he as a merchant is, we always have strategies.'

The structure involving DE could exclusively used as an anchor and cannot be used in front of another word as apposition which tend to be pronouns instead of other word class. There is apparently no DE structure in English; not to mention it as apposition.

## 2.7. VERBAL-OBJECT-NOUN PATTERN

- 16) Meiyou pengyou zhe ge quedian shi ta hen tongku

Not have friend DEM CL deficiency make 3SG very painful

'Not having any friend, the deficiency of which made him very painful.'

The phrase of verb-object serves as the apposition in the above sentence, with the anchor which is restricted by the determiner of *zhe*. English -ing clause could be solely used but cannot be used with nominal apposition.

### 2.8. ATTENTION FOR TRANSLATION OF APPOSITION

Besides, English feature the following properties which provide hints for translation. First, preposition *of* could be used to mark the appositional relationship. For example, *the month of January* is equivalent to *the month, January*. Second, there are a couple of special categories of apposition in English such as adjectives and non-finite clauses:

17) He watched a lot of movies, eastern and western.

Third, appositive clauses are often used in English particularly following the head of words including *idea, thought, opinion, hope, and possibility* etc.

18) The idea came to him that he could get there on foot.

One might take the following points into consideration while doing translation between English and Chinese:

First, the principle of adding and deleting might be used in the appositive structure involving modifiers in order to achieve the mapping of meaning. Second, the entire appositional structure of Noun-Noun pattern tends to be preserved in the process of translation:

19) Wo dao le zijia de men wai, wo de haizi Yuan bian fenben chulai le.

*Translation:* When I got out of the door, my child, Yuan fled out.

Third, getting the Chinese appositive structure melt in its English translation. On some occasions, there is only a mapping on the surface but actually the apposition has disappeared in the deep.

20) wo ziji jieshi shuo: shenghuo benying ruci.

*Translation:* I persuaded to myself: Life is meant to be like this.

Here, *ziji* is no longer the apposition of *wo* as in the Chinese text but the complement to *to*, which has changed the deep structure of original sentence. In some other cases, Chinese apposition

plays the role of explaining and emphasizing which adds the expressive emotion. However, English pursue the least repetition which forms a sharp contrast with Chinese. For example, *fuzi lia* in Chinese could be directly translated into 'the two of father and son'; instead there is only *father and son* in English. One should try to avoid such kind of repetition for the appositive pattern in translation of English and Chinese.

Finally, some appositive patterns hidden in Chinese could be dug out and apparently translated into English, for the reason that English prefers nouns while Chinese prefers verbs. Once the head in Chinese clauses turns to be the anchor, the appositive clauses come into shape in English translation.

21) Zhang xiansheng rang wo gaosu ni ta mingtian youshiqing.

SURNAME Mr. let 1SG tell 2SG 3SG tomorrow be busy

'Mr Zhang let me tell you that he will be busy tomorrow.'

### 3. CONCLUSION

English and Chinese appositive clauses share a number of similarities, although they also distinguish from each other in many aspects. Generally speaking, an apposition refers to a pattern involving an anchor which is followed by an appositive element which is co-referential with the anchor in a definitive or explanative manner. In Chinese, anchor tends to appear prior to the apposition while these two elements are tightly bound without intervening comma or pause. This paper compares the appositive pattern in Chinese and English following the sequence and collocation of anchor and apposition which are unfolded in a series of sections including noun-noun pattern, pronoun-noun pattern and so on. This paper further proposes prominent features of English apposition which distinguish themselves from Chinese apposition, based on which suggestions for translation of appositive patterns between Chinese and English are put forward.

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