



A Predictive Model on Level of Difficulty in English-Chinese Translation

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Abstract

The paper seeks to propose a predictive model on level of difficulty in English (L2)- Mandarin (L1) translation. Among the three non-Verbial functions (i.e., nominal, adjectival, and adverbial) and five different structures (i.e., infinitives, gerunds, participles, clauses, and phrases) in English, there exists a general contingent relationship in the course of translating each of the structures into Mandarin in coordination of the functions each structure serves. This predictive model can be most useful when dealing with recursive and mixed structures, and thus offers a general guideline for English-Mandarin translators. In this paper a brief deduction of sentential structures of L2 will be introduced first with mathematic interpretations, followed by presenting the cognitive steps involved in English-Mandarin translation (i.e., chunking the structures, identifying their functions, and arranging the structure order), and drawing the predictions of levels of difficulty on each structure in terms of the cognitive steps involved. The validity of such a tentative prediction model requires further examination and elaboration.

Keywords: English-Chinese translation, cognitive steps, syntactic differences, recursive structures