**海南热带海洋学院**

Hainan Tropical Ocean University

**2021届本科毕业论文**

语义翻译与交际翻译视角下

文言虚词的英译对比研究

—以《聊斋志异》为例

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**日 期： 2021年5月**

**海南热带海洋学院教务处**

**二○二一年五月制**

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**2021**年**5**月

**A Comparative Study of the C-E Translation of Function Words from the Perspective of Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation**

* **A Case Study of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi***

**By Zhang San**

**A thesis**

**Submitted to the School of Foreign Languages of**

**Hainan Tropical Ocean University**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**For the degree of**

**Bachelor of Arts**

**Supervised by**

**Li Si**

**May, 2021**

语义翻译与交际翻译视角下文言虚词的英译对比研究

* 以《聊斋志异》为例

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摘 要

中国古典文言文区别于现代汉语，其特征是注重典故、骈骊对仗、音律工整。因此，其本身的风格形式和文学结构决定了翻译的特殊性。而大部分汉英翻译都局限于现代汉语的英译部分，忽略了文言文的英译研究。此外，大部分学者对于《聊斋志异》的研究都局限于书中的形象等文学性分析。本文将以占据文言文大量篇幅的虚词为切入点，对比分析《聊斋志异》两个英译本中的虚词翻译（翟理斯译本和杨宪益译本），进一步了解如何将虚词在英译的同时而不失汉语**Source text**的特色。主要创新之处在于以当代著名翻译理论家彼得·纽马克翻译思想中的核心理论—语义翻译和交际翻译为指导，通过对比《聊斋志异》两个英译本中的虚词翻译来探析文言虚词的翻译策略，旨在为文言文《聊斋志异》英译的多角度研究和虚词英译做出贡献。

关键词：语义翻译；交际翻译；《聊斋志异》；虚词英译

**A Comparative Study of the C-E Translation of Function Words from the Perspective of Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation**

**—A Case Study of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi***

Author: Zhang San

Supervisor: Li Si

**ABSTRACT**

Distinct from modern Chinese, classical Chinese is featured with the attention of allusions, antithesis of parallel prose and strict meter. Hence, its style and literary structuralism bring about the distinction of translation. However, the great majority of translation studies have concentrated on the English translation of modern Chinese while very few of them put emphasis on the classical Chinese. And many scholars focus on the literary image study of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* rather than on the study of its English translation. This paper, taking function words which hold a large proportion in *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* as examples, will make a comparative study of the translation of function words from Herbert Allen Giles’ and Yang Hsien-yi’s English versions so as to understand how to translate the function words into English without losing the flavor of their original meaning. What is innovative about this study is the application of Peter Newmark’s semantic and communicative translation theories to analyze the translation of function words in this Chinese classic. This paper intends to explore the translation strategy of function words and contribute to the translation study of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*.

**Keywords:** semantic translation; communicative translation; *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*; English translation of function words

**Acknowledgments**

First of all, my greatest and most visceral gratitude and respect should go to my dear supervisor Li Si for his patient guidance, valuable advice and sincere encouragement. Secondly, my heartfelt gratitude should also be extended to all the teachers in Hainan Tropical Ocean University. They have given me great inspiration in the process of thesis writing through their wonderful lectures and insightful instructions. And then, I am grateful to have so many genuine friends and classmates, who always support and encourage me.

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# 1 Introduction

My research background, purposes and structure are included in this chapter.

## **1.1 Research Background**

Profound history and culture have brought up splendid Chinese classics, in which *Liao ZhaiZhi Yi* is the highest achievement of classical Chinese novels. So far, it has been translated into more than 20 foreign languages,including Italian, French, German, English, etc., of which the English version is the most influential.Written in the Qing Dynasty, *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* has typical characteristics of classical Chinese, where function words hold a large proportion. The meaning of function words is abstract and relatively empty. However, collocated with notional words, these function words help to make the emotional expression of language symbols clearer and more accurate, and they can also play a role of cohesion and transition, adding a finishing touch to the full text. Taking two influential English versions–Herbert Allen Giles’ and Yang Hsien-yi’s English versions as a case study, this paper intends to analyze the translation strategy of function words in them.

## **1.2 Research Purposes**

At present, many Chinese-English translation studies focus on modern Chinese books. On the contrary, the study of English translation of classical Chinese is almost left to moulder. An excellent study of the English translation of classical Chinese is favorable to the global dissemination of Chinese traditional culture and the enhancement of communication and exchanges between China and foreign countries.*Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*, which has the most foreign language versions, is one of the most representative works in the English translation of classical Chinese. So far, many linguists have made a detailed study of the translation of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* from its own style, cultural image, allusions, notional words and other aspects, but few scholars have studied the translation strategies of its function words in depth. In classical Chinese, the importance of function words is not less than that of notional words, so we should pay more attention to the translation of function words. In addition, few scholars analyze the translation of classical function words based on semantic translation and communicative translation theory. Therefore, based on Peter Newmark’s core translation theory, this paper studies the translation strategies of function words in *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* through the comparison of two selected versions, aiming to reveal the role of semantic translation and communicative translation theory in guiding the translation of function words in classical Chinese, and shed light on the English translation of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* from multiple angles and yield a few basic findings in the translation of function words.

## **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

This paper could be separated into four main parts. Chapter One states research background, objective and structure of the thesis. Chapter Two presents an overall view of domestic research on the English translation of function words in classical Chinese.In addition, it states some research on English translation of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*, and presents Newmark’s semantic translation and communicative translation theories. Chapter Three, the crucial part of the thesis, uses semantic translation and communicative translation theories to analyze the translation of function words in *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* done by a Chinese scholar and a foreign scholar. It makes a detailed analysis of the translation of modality particles, prepositions and conjunctions.Chapter Four is summary, generalizing the main results, limitations and suggestions of this study.

# 2 Literature Review

This chapter will deliver an overview of domestic studies on function words in classical Chinese, the present research on translation of *Liao ZhaiZhi Yi*, and Newmark’s semantic translation and communicative translation theories.

## **2.1 Previous Studies on C-E Translation of Function Words**

Chinese function words are mainly pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary words (including modality particles), etc. Inmost of the works about function words, pronouns and verbs are included in function words. Up to now, the number of function words in classical Chinese has no accurate authoritative statistics. It is really tough to understand and translate such complex words into English. For a long time, there has been more research on notional words but less on function words. Liu & Cheng, as Chinese scholars, have systematically studied the translation strategies of function words in classical Chinese and published 《虚不失其重–论古汉语虚词英译理解的几个关键》(2005). Since then, more and more scholars have begun to give heed to the translation of function words in classical Chinese. In recent years, six scholars including Sun (2012) have jointly studied the English translation of function words in *Huangdi’s Inner Classic·Plain Questions* which is the classical literature of traditional Chinese medicine.

## **2.2 Previous Studies on Translation of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi***

*Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* is a collection of classical Chinese short stories written by Pu Songling, a novelist of the Qing Dynasty. 491 short stories are gathered in the book. Hitherto, it has been translated into more than 20 foreign languages, including Italian, French, German, English, etc., of which the English version is the most influential one, such as the one by Yang and the one by Giles, etc. Many domestic scholars mainly focus on the cultural images, allusion, notional words and other aspects of the English translation of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*. For example, Han (2018) studies the fox and its cultural implication in the novel, and Shu (2016)makes a comparative study of the translation of the allusion in two English versions of the novel. However, few scholars have studied the translation strategies of function words in this novel, and even less research based on the semantic translation and communicative translation theories. This paper will work as a try in exploring this area.

## **2.3 Definition of Semantic Theory**

The concepts of semantic translation and communicative translation were proposed by an English translation theorist, Newmark (2001), who has been engaged in translating English into French and German for many years.

Semantic translation is one of the two translation modes proposed by Newmark. In Newmark's view, its purpose is to “accurately represent the author’s meaning expressed in the original text within the scope of the target language structure and semantic permission” (2001:42). Semantic translation attaches importance to the original meaning and the form of the original text, not to the context of the target language and its expression, let alone to change the translation for integrating into the cultural context of the target language. It focuses on content rather than effect, emphasizing that the translation should be faithful to the original author and work. It requires the translation to be close to the form of the original text, conveying the semantic content of the original text, retaining the original linguistic features and the special expression with the author’s personal mark, striving to be close to the original sentence structure.Only when the connotation of the original text greatly hinders readers’ understanding can it be interpreted.

## **2.4 Definition of Communicative Theory**

Communicative translation is the other mode, which means that the effect of the translation on the target readers should be the same as that on the original readers. Hence, communicative translation emphasizes effect over content. Reader-centered communicative translation is more subjective.It emphasizes that the translation should be faithful to the reader and responsible for readers’ acceptability. Therefore, the translator can be more flexible in translation, giving priority to the reader's understanding and response, so that the target readers can make roughly the same response as the original readers and notice the effect of information transmission.

## **2.5 Differences between Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation**

The differences between semantic translation and communicative translation can be divided into the following two categories.

### 2.5.1 General Difference

Paying more attention to faithfulness, semantic translation conveys the semantic content of the original text and preserves the culture of the original text. On the other hand, communicative translation focuses on the acceptability of the target readers, which means the understanding and response of the target audience are crucial. Communicative translation will integrate features of foreign language into the target culture.

### 2.5.2 Specific Differences

Semantic translation and communicative translation are applicable to different texts. Newmark (2001) summed up three corresponding text types, which are information text, expression text and vocative text. According to Newmark, almost no text is purely informative, expressive or vocative. Most of the texts contain the above three functions simultaneously, and only lay emphasis on one of them. Therefore, in *Approaches to Translations*, Newmark also gives his own opinions on what kind of translation strategy to adopt, “most non-literary works, magazines, books, textbooks, news reports, scientific and technological articles, announcements, political propaganda materials and popular fictions are more suitable for communication translation. On the other side, if the form of expression of the speaker or the author is as important as the content, semantic translation should be used in all these non-literary work” (Newmark, 2001: 44). Thus, conclusion can be made that semantic translation focuses on the thinking process of the original author to keep the uniqueness of the original text, while communicative translation is more suitable for informative text and vocative text. As mentioned above, most texts include these three functions, so when adopting translation strategies, we often combine semantic translation and communicative translation with different emphasis.

# 3 A Comparative Study of Translation Strategies of Function Words from the Perspective of Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation

## **3.1 A Contrast of Translation of Modality Particles**

In Chinese function words, modal particle is a typical type. In the interest of expressing the author's purpose, emotion or attitude, Chinese always makes use of modality particles, while English tends to change sentence structures and verb forms. Hence, it is tough to find their counterparts in English. In this case, communicative translation could be adhibited. Similarly, there are several modal particles in English as well. However, English modal particle can only be used as an independent element under two situations: one is auxiliaries expressing attitude, such as *hum, well, uh,* etc., which are used by the speaker to fill in his statement blanks; the other is auxiliaries expressing politeness and emotion, such as *wow, ouch, right* etc., which the speaker employs to present politeness, attitude and emotion. Hence, when there are modality particles in Chinese expressing attitude, politeness and emotion in the original text, modality particles in English are indispensable in the process of Chinese-English translation. On this occasion, semantic translation method should be employed. Therefore, it is inevitable to study the translation strategies of function words in classical Chinese.

### 3.1.1 A Contrast of Translation of “耳”

**Example 1:**

**Source text：**“弟日居衡茅，故不知仕途之关窍耳。”（选自《梦狼》）

**Zhai’s version：**"My brother,"replied Chia, "your life has been passed in an obscure village. You know nothing of our official routine."

**Yang’s version：**"You come from the county."scoffed the magistrate, "What do you know of official life?"

In classical Chinese, “耳” is used as a modal particle at the end of the sentence to express limited tone, which can be translated into “而已”、“罢了”or to express the affirmative tone or the pause and end among sentences. This sentence’s meaning in Mandarin Chinese is“弟弟你自小居住在乡间土墙茅屋中，所以不了解官场的诀窍罢了”. “耳”is located at the end of the sentence, where the speaker explains it to the interlocutor in a dismissive tone. In Giles’ translation, he did not change the original sentence pattern , omitting “耳” meaning “罢了”. According to the source text, he translated into“you know nothing” to express dismissive tone, which is in line with the semantic translation theory. In contrast, Yang, under the guidance of communicative translation, changed the negative status of the original sentence and used the interrogative word “what” to ask. Compared with the negative statement, such a rhetorical question better reflected the speaker’s contempt to the interlocutor who knew nothing about a perilous official life at that time and the hidden dismissive tone in the original sentence. Therefore, by comparison, it is more appropriate to use the communicative translation method in this sentence.

### 3.1.2 A Contrast of Translation of “也”

**Example 2:**

**Source text：**上台喜，便是好官；爱百姓，何术能令上台喜也？（选自《梦狼》）

**Zhai’s version：**He, therefore, who gratifies his superiors is marked out for success; whereas who consults the wishes of the people is unable to gratify his superiors as well.

**Yang’s version：**If your superiors approve of you, you are a good official; but if you love the people, how can you please those above you?

In the original sentence, “也”combines with “何”to form a rhetorical question (何......也) to express the helpless feeling of the speaker. Through comparative analysis, it is found that the translation strategies of the two versions are not the same. Giles adopts the declarative tone“whereas who consults the wishes of the people is unable to gratify his superiors as well”. He transforms the rhetorical question of the original sentence into a declarative sentence directly based on the communicative translation method, which is easier for the acceptance of English audience. On the other hand, Yang, based on semantic translation, imitated the original rhetorical question with the sentence pattern “how can you...”, which expresses the helpless feelings more directly. Overall, the translation of Yang keeps the original language features and unique ways of expression to fully achieve the effect of language and also conforms to the language habits of English readers.

### 3.1.3 A Contrast of Translation of “者”

**Example 3:**

**Source text：**羁旅之人，谁作曹丘者？（选自《娇娜》）

**Zhai’s version：**Who will play the Maecenas to a distressed wayfarer like myself?

**Yang's version：**Being a wanderer,I have no one to recommend me.

The word “者” can be used as a pronoun as well as a modality particle. Consequently, identifying the part of speech of “者”is the first step in translation. As a modality particle,“者”must mingle with other interrogative words to convey doubt or a rhetorical question. On this occasion,“者”does not have to be translated or translated into other interrogative words. Therefore, the study of translation strategies of “者”is quite worthy of analysis.

In the original sentence, “者”combines with the interrogative word “谁”to forma rhetorical tone. This sentence’s meaning in Mandarin Chinese is“我寄居在这里，又没有熟人，谁肯来推荐我呢？”Both of the two versions identify“者” as the modality particle which is relatively empty in meaning itself. They both choose the method of omission, but their sentence structures are quite different. Giles used the interrogative word “who”, which is faithful to the original sentence pattern and forms an interrogative sentence. However, such sentence pattern does not directly reflect the sadness of a wanderer. In contrast, Yang used the negative sentence pattern “I have no...” to vividly convey the meaning of this sentence to the targetlanguage readers based on communicative translation. Compared with the semantic translation method chosen by Giles, Yang’s version can make the target readers realize the sentimental feeling of a rare horse without Bole(a good judge of talent). As a result, the translation strategy of emphasizing effect rather than content is better.

## **3.2 A Contrast of Translation of Conjunction“以”**

**Example 4:**

**Source text：**下焉者,亦邀贵人宠,故得鼎烹以养妻子。(选自《罗刹海市》)

**Zhai’s version**：The third class in looks are hired in the palace of the king. Thus, these are enabled out of their pay to provide for their wives and families.

**Yang’s version：**while the third class have royal patrons and obtain handsome pensions for the support of their families.

As a conjunction,“以”connects two or more verbs or verb phrases, which indicates that the behavior behind it is the purpose or result of that before it. When expressing the purpose, “以” is a bit like the word “来” in modern Chinese which is relatively empty in meaning itself. When expressing result, it corresponds to“以至”. In this sentence,“养”is used right after the verb“以” to express the purpose, so“以” here is a kind of conjunction as a function word. In this case, “以” can easily find the counterpart in English. Therefore, semantic translation is more properly employed when translating “以”. In this sentence, Giles and Yang both translate “以” into the simple preposition “for” in English.

## **3.3 A Contrast of Translation of Preposition“以”**

In classical Chinese, prepositions refer to a part of speech that introduces a noun or other component andforms a prepositional phrase. Their main function is to introduce the way, precondition, cause, time, object, place, purpose, etc.,which relates to actions. According to *Notes of Classical Chinese Function Words* (He & Fang, etc., 1985:7), there are 77 prepositions in classical Chinese, while English possesses more than 286 prepositions and prepositional phrases. In addition, prepositions in classical Chinese are mostly simple monosyllabic preposition, such as “为”，“于”，“以”,etc.However, English prepositions can be divided into simple prepositions, complex prepositions, two-word prepositions and parasail preposition, etc.

In spite of their great differences, English prepositions and those in classical Chinese also share similarities. The most obvious point is that prepositions in both languages have the character of verbs. Although prepositions belong to function words, they have their own independent meanings in many cases. For classical Chinese, scholars hold the view that the formation of function words is actually from notional words. Many grammarians even name prepositions as co-verbs.

Due to the features of prepositions in classical Chinese and the discrepancies between classical Chinese and English, the translation of prepositions in *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* calls for a careful consideration.

**Example 5:**

**Source text：**俄一客曰:“蒙赐月明之照,乃尔寂饮,何不呼嫦娥来?”乃以箸掷月中。（选自《劳山道士》）

**Zhai’s version：**when suddenly one of the strangers said, "You have given us a bright moon; but it's dull work drinking by ourselves. Why not call Ch'ang-ngo to join us？" He then seized a chop-stick and threw it into the moon.

**Yang’s version：**A moment later one guest said, “Thank you for giving us the moonlight, but it's rather dull drinking quietly like this. Why not invite the moon goddess to join us?" Then he threw a chopstick at the moon.

Taking“以”as preposition is the most common usage, while the circumstance is also complicated. When it is used as a tool to introduce actions and behaviors, it can be equal to“用”，“拿”，“根据” in modern Chinese; when the reasons of actions or behaviors are introduced, it can be equal to “因为”，“由于” in modern Chinese; when the objects involved in actions or behaviors are introduced, it is equal to “把” in modern Chinese. In this sentence,“以” introduces the noun “箸”, which is equivalent to“把” in modern Chinese, that is to say, the preposition “以” here becomes colloquial. Giles and Yang both use the verb “seized” and “threw” to translate the preposition“以”, while Yang's version adjusts the structure of “verb + noun” of “throwing the moon” to “preposition + noun” (at + the moon) as the form of the sentence. Such alternative is obviously a communicative translation method, which is more in line with the western language habits than the semantic translation method that imitates the original sentence structure or translates“以” into “with”.

注：本文第三章内容有些删减，一般正文4000字的论文，主体章第三章不能少于2600字。一般引言500字，文献综述部分700-900字，结论200-300字。

# 4 Conclusion

## **4.1 Findings of the Study**

From the perspective of function words in classical Chinese, this paper makes a comparative analysis of translation strategies of function words in two English versions of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* (Giles’ and Yang’s versions) based on Newmark’s semantic translation and communicative translation theories. The comparative study of those examples shows that the function of modality particles should be paid attention to in English translation. One important way is to see whether they are located at the end of sentences to convey rhetorical questions or to express doubts and exclamations. In English, the translation of function words which are easy to find counterparts usually adopts semantic translation. When it is difficult to find equivalent words in meaning, communicative translation should take precedence over semantic translation. At the same time, through comparison, it can be found that both versions adopt the method of combining semantic translation and communicative translation, rather than a single translation mode. To sum up, although the translation of classical Chinese function words is complicated, there are still some rules to follow. For any function word, we should first identify its position and situation under the context, and then use appropriate translation methods.

## **4.2 Limitations and Suggestions**

This paper is only a tentative analysis of the English translation of several function words in *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*. There are still many more function words that have not been discussed. In addition, this paper only compares two English versions, which is not enough to be a full study. Hence, a richer analysis and exploration of translation examples are integral, and more colleagues are expected to study this topic together.

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