An Analysis Into *Ba* Sentences Under Image Schema Theory

—A Case Study of *Words of Fire—Poems by Jidi Majia*

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The *Ba* sentence is unique existence in Chinese. There is no corresponding sentence pattern in English. Thus, the translation of *Ba* sentences is a challenge for translators. Even with the myriad analyses on the translation of *Ba* sentences, small quantity of them demonstrates the correctness and the reading effect of the translation by using a specific theory. And the image schema theory reflects the projects between the source domain and the target domain, while in the translation analysis there are schemata in the source language and the target language. So the paper does comparisons of schemata between the source text and the target text of *Ba* sentences, which are chosen from the English translation of *Words of Fire—Poems by Jidi Majia* translated by Denis Mair. After the demonstration, the following conclusions are found: First, the schema of the sentence is decided by verbs of the *Ba* sentences, rather than by the sentence structures; second, the image schema is a feasible tool to check correctness of *Ba* sentences translation.

Keywords: image schema theory, *Ba* sentences, case study

Introduction

Due to differences in syntax and semantics, there are a large quantity of words and sentences which are difficult to be translated suitably. The typical one is the *Ba* construction, a normal sentence structure in Chinese. The normal form of it is $NP_1 + Ba + NP_2 + VP + CP$. No syntax structure in English equates it. Thus, even the construction is widely used in many Chinese sentences, the translation is still so challenging.

Although many researchers have had studied on the translations of *Ba* construction in myriad aspects, the writer finds that among these theses, some list choose to analyze correctness by using translation methods while few of them by analyzing the readers' mind and resonance. Thus, for it can be the linkage between the source text, the target text, and the reader, the image schema theory, which reflects the human mind, will be the main theory of the paper. At the same time, *Words of Fire—Poems by Jidi Majia*, which was translated by Denis Mair, will be the corpus of the paper.

Words of Fire—Poems by Jidi Majia is a collection of poems written by Jidi Majia, a Nuosu poet. His poets

are full of imagination and nationality consciousness. And he uses Chinese as his writing language. Thus, in the Chinese version of the poem, the original meaning of sentences will not be changed or transformed by other translators. It makes a convenience to understand it directly. This paper will focus on the image schemata transformation of the *Ba* sentences between Chinese and English version of the anthology.

The whole paper will be divided into the following parts: the definition of image schema theory, the main image schemata in *Ba* construction, the analysis on the translation of the chosen examples from *Words of Fire—Poems by Jidi Majia*, and the conclusion.

The Definition of Image Schema Theory

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the definition of schema is "*a conception of what is common to all members of a class; a general or essential type or form*". About the schema theory, it is presented by Immanuel Kant in his work, *Critique of Practical Reason* very firstly. Kant explained that "*schema was the connection between category and appearance*" (Kant & Wei, 2000, p. 161). It means that schema can be deemed as a bridge which links conception and object. When it shows with the corresponding schema, the images in mind match the corresponding categories. Then the British psychologist Fredrick Bartlett, one of the forerunners of cognitive psychology and cultural psychology as well, set the definition on schema in his work *Remembering*, as "*an active organization of past reactions or of past practice*" (Bartlett, 1932, p. 201). In a word about the aforementioned, schema can be understood as the following: It is what human beings have felt, like objects and experiences, stayed in the mind. When something related has been shown, the corresponding schema will be stimulated in human beings' mind, then have some reactions ultimately. Such reaction, in the translation process, is the transformation of schema from the source language into the target language.

The image schema is a circular structure within our cognitive processes, which establishes the patterns of understanding and reasoning the world. Johnson explained the image schema was "*dynamic embodied patterns—they take place in and through time. Moreover, they are multi-modal patterns of experience, not simply visual*" (Johnson, 1987, pp. 22-23). Oakley defined the image schema is "*a condensed re-description of perceptual experience for the purpose of mapping spatial structure onto conceptual structure*" (Oklay, 2007, p. 215).

The Main Image Schemata in *Ba* Construction

From the study on the *Ba* sentences (Zhao, 2018, p. 83; Yuan, 2015, p. 63), image schema can be sorted as the following different kinds:

Spatial Displacement Schema

In this schema, it can contain changes of patterns of moving; it also can be the space changing in mind and time. Because how human beings understand the changing of psychology and the change of time are based on the change of space. Such comprehensions are based on the metaphor of objects' moving in the space.

State Changing Schema

Different from the first kind of schema, state changing schema shows the change of state in the object inside by the agent. The *Ba* sentence in this schema highlights the influence of the action onto the object.

Universal Schema

The schema is different with the two schemata mentioned above. In *Ba* construction, except for those sentences which present the aforementioned schemata, still some sentences do not show or cannot be understood in those schemata. However, the action neither displaces the object nor changes the state of it. Such *Ba* sentences whose objects have spatial displacement or state changing could also indicate the feature of the prominent, because in those sentences or constructions, their schemata do not prime the action but the process or the result of the action by agent.

Nevertheless, the schemata in the *Ba* sentences can be divided into what is said above. Thus, the proper schema of one sentence should be judged by the key verb, especially for those which complements are eliminated.

Case Study of *Words of Fire—Poems by Jidi Majia*

In this part, the number of *Ba* construction and their corresponding English version has been surveyed, which provides the way for the subsequent analysis on the translation. After the strict sifting in *Words of Fire—Poems by Jidi Majia*, the writer has confirmed 40 *Ba* sentences in the whole poetry anthology. General statistics of image schemata and the sentence structures of the chosen *Ba* construction are shown in the Table 1:

Table 1: *general statistics of image schema*

sentence pattern / type of image schema	general structure $NP_1+ Ba+NP_2+V+CP$	sentences with no complement $NP_1+$the word $Ba+NP_2+V$
spatial displacement schema	20	7
status changing schema	4	6
universal schema	0	3
Total	**24**	**16**

From the table above it can be inferred that, in the corpus, 27 sentences of it can be understood in the spatial displacement schema, 10 of it in state changing schema and three, having no complement after verb, in universal schema. And the writer randomly chose them to analyze.

Analysis on the *Ba* Sentences in Spatial Displacement Schema

Analysis on *Ba* sentence with complement.

战栗的是土地，高举着变了形的太阳　　　　They set the land a-tremble as it raises a deformed sun
把警告和死亡，送到苦难生灵的梦魂里　　　Sending alarms and deaths into the dreams of suffering souls
　　　　　—《火神》　　　　　　　　　　　　　*—God of Fire*

The *Ba* sentence follows the typical forming style. From the given sentence, the *Ba* sentence is: 土地把警告和死亡，送到苦难生灵的梦魂里, which can be understood as "*The land sends alarms and deaths into the dreams of suffering souls*". Grammatically, the complete structure of *Ba* construction is complete. The analysis can be seen as the follow:

NP₁　　the word *Ba*　　NP₂　　VP　　CP
↓　　　　↓　　　　　↓　　　↓　　　↓
土地　　　把　　　警告和死亡，　送　　到苦难生灵的梦魂里

From the sentence above, the verb of sentence is "送", which means send in English. In the general schema, this verb indicates two participants: the send and the receiver. During the action there must be something moving towards a certain direction in track. In this example, the movement "送" does not have a certain and clear ending point. However, what can be inferred is that the action makes the object displaced. Thus, the verb "送" can bring the object spatial displacement. So the source language in this example can be understood in a spatial displacement schema like this:

土地 (the land) $\xrightarrow{\text{送(send)}}$ 警告和死亡 (alarms and deaths) $\xrightarrow{\text{到(into)}}$ 苦难生灵的梦魂(the dreams of suffering souls)

About the English translation, the translator chose the verb "*send*" to be the translation of "送". Usually, "*send*" is the first verb to express the meaning of giving something to somebody. In English, the verb "*send*" is also a polysemic word. However, to take a comprehensive perspective angle, what can be seen is that, every meaning of the verb "*send*" indicates the spatial displacement. So the schema of the translation tallies with the source language.

**Analysis on *Ba* sentences without complement.**

你还能在瞬间	For a few short moments
把这个失去公正的世界	You can let yourself forget
短暂地遗忘	This world so lacking in justice

In the example, the *Ba* construction is: 你把这个世界遗忘, which can be understood as "*You forget this world*". The sentence analysis is like this:

NP₁	the word *Ba*	NP₂	VP	CP
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
你	把	这个世界	遗忘	*e*

From the analysis above, what can be seen is that the sentence does not have the complement after the verb. But, the schema of this sentence is psychologically spatial displacement schema. As for the verb "遗忘" in Chinese, it means "forget". The process of forgetting can be understood as something fading and getting far away from human being's mind.

Table 2: *spatial displacement track*

The Track of Forgetting   The Track of Memorizing
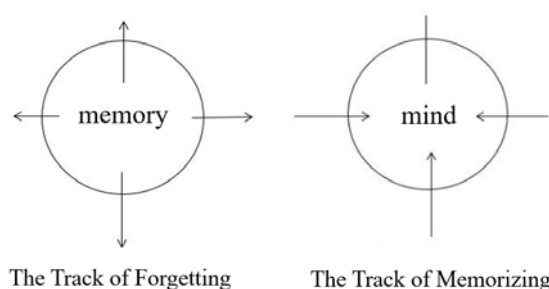
The Table 2 shows the spatial displacement track in human beings' mind. The circles are people's mind. Things that people remember are staying in their mind. The track of memorizing indicates that the memory is entering the mind. And the process of forgetting indicates that the memory is getting out of mind gradually, even

totally. Thus, such process is a spatial displacement occurring in the mind. When readers are reading the sentences with this verb, the schema in the readers' mind is "这个世界" , what can be understood as "*this world*", getting out of the mind of "你", what can be understood as "*you*".

As for the English translation, the translator does not follow the sequence as source language. But the adjustment does not affect the total comprehension to the sentence itself. And in the English version, the translation still formed as an active sentence. At the same time, the subject of the sentence is still "*You*", in Chinese "你". Such arrangement of the subject ensures the consensus of the agent in the schema. For the translation of the verb, the translator chooses "*forget*" as the translation of "遗忘". According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the meaning of "*forget*" is "*fail to remember*", which is the same meaning with Chinese. In the minds of both Chinese and English readers, the process of forgetting is the fading of memory. Thus, the translation is appropriate in the expression of the schema.

Ba Sentence in State Changing Schema

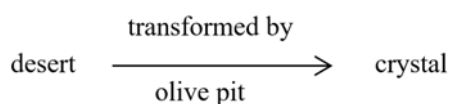**Analysis on *Ba* sentences with complement.**

被神箭击中的橄榄核	The divine arrow struck an olive pit dead on
把沙漠变成透明的水晶	Transforming a desert to transparent crystal
—《朱塞培·翁加雷蒂的诗》	—*The Poems of Giuseppe Ungaretti*

The *Ba* sentence is 橄榄核把沙漠变成水晶, what can be understood as "*An olive transforms a desert to crystal*". The analysis of the sentence is:

NP₁	the word *Ba*	NP₂	VP	CP
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
橄榄核	把	沙漠	变成	水晶
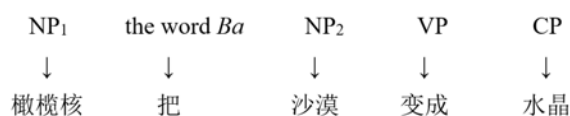
The translation of the verb "变成" is "*transform*". According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the meaning of this verb is "*Make a marked change in the form, nature, or appearance of*". In accordance with the meaning of the word it can be inferred that the word indicates the schema of state changing as well, for the deep meaning of this word is changing forms of something. The meaning of the translation is consistent with the source language. For in the English version, the whole schema is like the following:

$$\text{desert} \xrightarrow[\text{olive pit}]{\text{transformed by}} \text{crystal}$$

Thus, at the angle of schema explanation, the English version is corresponding with the source one.

Analyze on the *Ba* sentences without complement.

我就会感到土地—这彝人的父亲	We feel this land—father of the Nuosu
在把一个沉重的摇篮轻轻地摇晃	Lightly rocking us in its heavy cradle
—《土地》	—*Land*

The main structure of the *Ba* sentence is "土地把摇篮摇晃", what can be understood as "*The land rocks cradle*". What can be read is that the action "摇晃", what can be understood as "*rock*", does not make its object "摇篮", which means "*cradle*", being changed in its state or spatial displacement. In Chinese, the verb "摇晃" means shake. The lightly shake does not make the cradle moved to some fixed points spatially. But, the whole

process of "shake" changes the status of the cradle, making it from the static one into the dynamic one. Thus, in this *Ba* construction, its schema can be understood as a status changing schema.

In the English translation, the translator made the image of the sentence much more concrete. From the translation what can be seen is that the translator made the sentence as two clauses and one main sentence. The *Ba* construction is disposed as an attribute, to describe the land, "*father of Nuosu*". Denis chooses the verb "*rock*" to translate the corresponding Chinese "摇晃". According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb "*rock*" means "*Move gently to and fro or from side to side*". When people are doing this motion, the object does not be moved towards a fixed point in single-track, but moved in the track backwards and forwards gently and swiftly sometimes. The action highlights the status of the things, which is also from a static thing into a dynamic thing. Thus, the translation of this *Ba* construction can be understood in the status changing schema as the source text shows.

Analysis on the *Ba* sentence with universal schema.

猎人们都去把他寻找	Hunters go to look for him
可谁也没把他找到	But cannot find him
—《最后的传说》	—*The Final Legend*

Jidi Majia uses two *Ba* sentences to describe the whole process of the searching. Because the later one does not contain a complement, the former will be analyzed.

On the first *Ba* construction, the verb is "寻找", which means "look for". In Chinese, the meaning of this verb is to seek something. The verb describes an action that people have a willing to find something out. But whether it is found or not at last does not included in the meaning of the word itself. And the whole process of seeking, in the general schemata in minds of people, does not involved to change the object directly. So, the verb does not show its influence onto the object, but builds a connection between the subject and it. Also, the process of search does not displace the object physically. Therefore, the schema of this *Ba* sentence can be understood as the universal schema as the following:

猎人 (hunters) .... 寻找 (look for) .... 他 (him)

In the English version of this sentence, the translator uses an adverb to transform the *Ba* construction. For the translation of the Chinese verb "寻找", the translator uses "*look for*", the synonym of seek, to be the corresponding English expression. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary*, "*look for*" means "*an expect something*". It is the same meaning with "寻找" in Chinese. The linkage between "*look for*" and "*him*" is the same with the source language. So, when target language readers are reading the sentence, the picture shown in their minds is the same with the source language readers. Thus, such translation can activate the same schema in both sides of readers.

Conclusion

Based on the aforementioned, some conclusions come here:

First, the schema of *Ba* sentence is decided by the character of verb rather than the sentence structure. In Chinese, the inner structure of verb includes a verb plus a complement sometimes. Such construction makes verbs constituted by the same core verb but different complement a varying schema. As for the sentence structure

of *Ba* sentences, some of those eliminate the complement part. In this condition, what should be realized is the relationship among the NP$_1$, VP, and NP$_2$. Because the characters of the verb decide the schema of the whole *Ba* sentence, the noun phrases before and after the verb, show the complete starting point and ending point of the schema. Even though in some sentences, the subject or the NP$_1$ is omitted, it is still available for people to judge at the kind of schema, for the verb is the key in the sentence.

Besides, using image schema theory as the tool to check the correctness of the translation of *Ba* sentences in the corpus is available. In this way, it can check whether the schema of the sentence can be comprehended correctly or not. When the comprehensions of schemata in both target language and source language correspond well, the translations of the poem will make progress. It will be an advance towards the communication between readers in the SL and the TL.

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