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

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, a 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 explanatory 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.

‘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-PRONOUN PATTERN

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

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

2.4. PRONOUN-PRONOUN PATTERN

11) Ta ziji zou hui xuebao.

35G himself walk back school

‘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.

12) You and I are both good guys.

2.5. NOUN-NUMERAL (QUANTIFIER) PATTERN

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 flied 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 zijji jieshi shuo: shenghuo benying ruci.

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

Here, zijji 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, fuzzi 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 explanatory 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.

REFERENCES


