

Features of French Language in Its Usages from the Perspective of Korean-French Translation Teaching

Kyong-Ra Kim*, Hye-Sun Kim

Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, Kim Il Sung University, Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Email address:

ryongnam21@yahoo.com (Kyong-Ra K.)

*Corresponding author

To cite this article:

Kyong-Ra Kim, Hye-Sun Kim. Features of French Language in its Usages from the Perspective of Korean-French Translation Teaching. *Higher Education Research*. Vol. 2, No. 1, 2017, pp. 6-9. doi: 10.11648/j.her.20170201.12

Received: September 23, 2016; **Accepted:** November 23, 2016; **Published:** January 4, 2017

Abstract: There are many cases in Korean-French translation when the equivalents are not available in French and even when there are, the mechanical translation is not possible because of the difference in their usages. This paper aims to analyse the features of French language in its usages from the perspective of word combination and composition of statements.

Keywords: Korean-French Translation Lessons, Foreign Language Study, Comparison of Both Languages, Teaching Korean-French Translation

1. Introduction

As a lecturer of French language, the author takes it as the topic of research mainly for Korean students of *French as foreign language* and other foreign learners interested in Korean language. This research is designed to give a fresh light to particularities of French as a target language through its comparison with Korean. The formulation of utterance in any language tends to reflect the structure and usage of the language in question. The language beginners would benefit enormously from the bilingual comparisons between languages. The author in this paper presents some effective methods for better acquiring Korean-French translation skills through clarifying several features in utterances and language usage of French as compared with Korean.

2. Literature Review

Translation is an essential subject for foreign language majors and one of the special subjects which is taught at a high level after acquiring the knowledge of the basic subjects such as intensive reading, grammar and speaking. Translation is one of the means of learning a foreign language and constitutes a mode, way and contents of foreign language study.

“Translation is not the transcoding of words or sentences

from one language to another, but a complex form of action, whereby someone provides information on a source language text in a new situation and under changed functional, cultural, and linguistic conditions, preserving formal aspects as closely as possible.” (Snell-Hornby, 1989, p. 152)

Translation, which is a process of transferring the thinking based on a certain language into that based on another language, is a high-rank mental work and translation skill is comparatively difficult to acquire and is formed after other skills. It is because there are many cases in Korean-French translation when the equivalents are not available in French and even when there are, the mechanical translation is not possible because of the difference in their usages.

For example, French has a tendency of preferring the analytic forms to perform the same syntactical function and unlike Korean it uses the structure of perceptive verb sentence which describes the linguistic scene from the perspective of a third person as well as the personal subject sentence structure.

Of course the same sentence can be translated in many ways and it is impossible to systemize and teach them all. However, in my experience, the high-level translation requires a lot of practice; however, more effectively the theoretical acquisition of the fundamental knowledge and

knacks based on comparison of both languages.

Therefore it is important in teaching translation to make sure that students have a theoretical understanding of the word combination and features of its statement formation in French so that they may get used to translating always keeping in mind the norms of the usages of French.

As can be seen in practice, it is impossible to translate to suit the feelings of the people of the target country without getting the fundamental principles of translation as well as the linguistic features and usages peculiar in its language.

Learning a foreign language is conducted in close relationship with grasping its features and it can be done more effectively by comparing them with those of your mother tongue.

In order to present the same content using different linguistic material and forms, we should fully understand the features of the target language and teach the knacks of its acquisition in translation lessons.

3. Discussion

— First of all it should be remembered that the French language is generally characterized by transitivity in its utterance.

In case of our students, they tend to translate word-for-word following the sentence structure of Korean text.

For example, when the sentence “대학생들은 키가 크다” (The students are tall.) presented, most students translated it as “Les étudiants sont grands.” or “La taille des étudiants est grande.” These sentences are not incorrect. However, from the point of view of coherence and communication, optimal translation for that sentence is “*Ils ont une grande taille*”. The Korean version of “*La taille des étudiants est grande*” is “They are tall.”, where “*La taille des étudiants*” is not a theme but a rheme. It is due to the fact that the French intransitive-transitive shift serves as a medium to change the aim of predication as nominative particles “은, 는” provide clue to subject whereas “가, 이” have a reference for coherent communicative theme.

그의 동생이 없어졌다 (His younger brother is gone.) → *Son frère a disparu.* → *Il a perdu son frère.*

In the example above the transitive verb “*perdre*” was used instead of the intransitive verb “*disparaître*” to emphasize that it is none other than his brother that disappeared.

언니가 그의 뒤에서 간다. (Her sister is going behind her.) → *Sa soeur marche derrière elle.* → *Elle précède sa soeur.*

The reconstructed sentence by changing its communicative motive is “*Sa soeur la suit.*” “*soeur*” here is a given subject and “*la suit*” represents predication of statement’s intention.

A wide range of transformative devices are used to constitute variety of statements in the Korean-French translating practice despite the availability of its lexical and grammatical equivalents for the Korean words.

The choice of different sentential structures for the identical

idea is to modify the aim of statement for the sake of logical communication. For this purpose French uses transitive verbs, for the sentence structure with transitive verb which describes the agent’s action can be the linguistic means to realize a certain logical and communicative purpose.

Whereas in Korean the position of logical stress is not fixed in a sentence because of its flexible word order, the communicative stress is always placed at the end of a sentence in French because of its rhythmical characteristics, and it is necessary to choose the different sentential structure so that the target word for communication can be placed in that position.

Thus in French sentences which usually begins with a subject and ends with an object the focus word or parts of sentence are placed in the position of an object, that is at the end of the statement.

That is why while teaching translation, it is important to given them a theoretical explanation of the features of usages of French language from the perspective of the logical communication so that students may get used to translating the sentences always keeping those features in mind.

As mentioned above, the transitive verb sentence structure has the secondary function of being used as the linguistic means to carry out the purpose of logical communication. Because of this in many French sentences the grammatical subjects are not the real agents but the inactive elements such as place, reason, time, or object.

자료실에는 가치있는 자료들이 많다. (There are a lot of data of value in the data room.) → *Il y a beaucoup des archives de valeur dans le médiathèque.* → *Le médiathèque abrite un grand nombre des archives de valeur.*

화학화가 실현되면 농사일이 쉬워진다. (We can do the farming easily by introducing chemicals in agriculture.) → *S’il réalise la chimisation les travaux agricoles deviennent faciles.* → *La chimisation facilite les travaux agricoles.*

책을 읽을 때에는 졸음이 오지 않는다. (I don’t feel sleepy when I’m reading.) → *Quand on lit le livre on ne somnole pas.* → *La lecture chasse le sommeil.*

As seen above, French has a tendency to actively use the transitive verb compared to Korean; it often causes disagreement of grammatical structure and semantical structure in Korean-French translation. Thus in teaching translation it is necessary to emphasize this dominant usages of transitive verbs in the steps of presentation of new material and consolidation.

— Another important thing in teaching Korean-French translation is to teach the features of French which uses the sentential structure of verbs of perception or personal subject structure to describe the scene from the perspective of the third person.

Generally, the linguistic scene which is reflected in a sentence is that observed from a certain visual point of the speaker.

In Korean the verbs of action have two alternatives to be chosen according to the position of the speaker.

교실에 들어간다 (He goes into the classroom.)- The speaker is outside.

교실에 들어온다 (He comes into the classroom.)- The speaker is inside.

In the French version “*entrer dans*” the position of the speaker does not add any meaning to the statement. Thus, French has a tendency of frequently using the perceptive verb sentence or impersonal sentence which describes the action from the third person.

On entre dans la salle. → On le voit entrer dans la salle.

Il vient. → On le voit venir. → Le voilà qui vient.

Il n'y a pas de nuages dans le ciel. → On ne voit point de nuage au ciel.

Deux hommes entrent. → Il est entré deux hommes.

Des balles tombent. → Il pleut des balles.

— Next, it is necessary in teaching translation to give a particular emphasis to the linguistic feature of using nouns or nominal words quite a lot in making statements.

While talking about special character of a certain language, we often categorize it as either a language of verbal character or a language of nominal character. It is because that particular part of speech is comparatively predominant in usages as well as having the principal and important function in a sentence.

Nominalization of parts of sentence in French is substituting nouns for verbs, adverbs or adjectives in a certain context and nouns accounts for relatively big proportion in composition of parts of sentence.

Then, why is statement made using a noun while you can make the same statement using verbs, adverbs and adjectives? It is because the syntactical function of French nouns is more diverse compared to that of other parts of speech, therefore substituting nouns for verbs, adjectives and adverbs, you can make a sentence more compact quite easily.

That is why it is necessary in teaching translation to explain a variety of sentence patterns with nouns accounting holding a considerable proportion as well as methods of nominalization so that students can acquire the techniques of substituting nouns for verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Il sortit brusquement; cela donna un malaise aux visiteurs. → Sa sortie brusque donna un malaise. → La brusquerie de sa sortie donna un malaise.

Voilà une nuit obscure; j'en ai peur. → J'ai peur de l'obscurité de la nuit.

Vous fumez trop, cela nuit à votre santé. → L'excès du tabac nuira à votre santé.

Je ne doute pas que vous ne soyez sincère. → Je ne doute pas de votre sincérité.

Il est élu quoiqu'il ne soit pas ici. → Il est élu malgré son absence.

It may be thought that choosing a noun, an adjective or an adverb to describe an object, a phenomenon or a process is only a matter of style or the intention of the writer or the translator which is not related to the linguistic structure and its features. However, in Korean-French translation, it is dependent not only the individual style of the writer or the translator but also the characteristics of the language to diversify its expressive effect. In other words, as can be seen in the practice of translation and literature works, French does not allow the frequent repetition of a word unless it has a

particular stylistic function.

— Next important thing in teaching Korean-French translation is to teach the characteristics of French in its usages which requires the grammatical completion compulsorily by comparing them with those of Korean and using a variety of practice patterns.

Except in case of an imperative sentence, abbreviated sentence and incomplete sentence, French sentence should have all the essential parts of sentence such as subject, predicate and object. By contrast, Korean does not have this requirement and it has comparatively more impersonal sentences. In particular, subjects and personal pronouns used as objects are usually omitted in conversation and it is often difficult to be sure about the agent and the object, or the time and place apart from the context.

돌려주었어. (I gave it back to him.) → *Je le lui ai rendu.*

Thus it is important to make sure that students get accustomed to guessing from the context and inserting into the sentence the agent, direct object, indirect object etc. when translating Korean sentences into French. Unlike Korean, French does not have the case to identify the part of speech but the sentence order has that function and the position of parts of sentence are relatively fixed. Therefore, even when the direct object is placed before a predicate for the purpose of expressive effect, it should be repeated using a certain pronoun.

루이즈는 편지를 뽐에게 주었다.- *Louise a donné cette lettre à Paul.*

→ *Cette lettre, elle la lui a donné, Louise à Paul.*

→ *A Paul, cette lettre, elle la lui a donné, Louise.*

→ *Louise, à Paul, cette lettre, elle la lui a donnée.*

— In teaching translation it is also necessary to emphasize the characteristics of French which requires the agent of speech, act or perception in statement formation. It is because when the translated versions are compared with the original version, it is often the case that two versions are not syntactically identical and the meaning and form are not symmetrical to each other, causing confusion in translation.

C'est le dimanche. → Nous sommes aujourd'hui le dimanche.

A mon côté est assis ma mère. → A mon côté j'ai ma mère.

Une balle me frappe au front. → J'ai reçu une balle au front.

Le héros est né dans cette ville. → Cette ville naquit ce héros.

→ *Cette ville vit naître ce héros*

A 10 heures on a la réunion. → Nous avons la réunion à 10 heures.

→ *J'ai la réunion à 10 heures.*

As can be seen from the examples above, the French version for “10 시에 회의가 있다” (We have a meeting at 10 o'clock.) can be either “*La réunion se tient à 10 heures*” or when translated from the perspective of the third person, “*A 10 heures on a la réunion.*”

However, the agent can be mentioned like “*Nous avons la réunion à 10 heures*”, and the better version is made by using the first person to stress the direct subject of the act. “*J'ai la*

réunion à 10 heures.”

Like in all other subjects, in translation lesson it is important to exclude the jug-filling method of education which focuses on giving the model translation prepared by the teacher and teach them the skill of translation through the practice. Teacher should not demand the students learn the model by heart or only correcting the mistakes but make it the heuristic process of education by explaining the process of translation from the point of the learner. Of course, it does not mean that we should completely exclude the way of training the translation skill by memorizing texts which can serve as models. It is also an effective way in language learning because students can get used to those models by listening and speaking at the same time.

4. Conclusion

In this paper some problems have been observed arising in teaching the features of French language in its usages compared with Korean language in Korean-French translation lessons.

In teaching Korean-French translation skill it is important to teach the structure, means of expression and modes of the target language, French, on the basis of systemization and the correct methodology so that students could understand the principles of the linguistic usages and the formation of statements.

References

- [1] Jean-Louis Auduc. (2012). *Le système éducatif français. Nathan, 75013 Paris.*
- [2] Baker, M. (2000). In *Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.*
- [3] Shirley Taylor. (2007). *Document et modèles de lettres pour les affaires. (bilingue français et anglais). Edition First.*
- [4] Snell-Hornby, M. (1989). *Translation and Lexicography. Philadelphia: J. Benjamins.*
- [5] Petit Robert de Paul Robert: Josette Rey-Debove et Alain Rey. (2010). *Le nouveau Petit Robert. LeRobert 75013 Paris.*
- [6] Jean Duverger. (2000). *Le français dans le monde (Actualité de l'enseignement bilingue. Numéro spécial.). Hachette Edicef.*
- [7] Patrick Charaudeau. (1992). *Grammaire du sens et de l'expression. Hachette Education.*
- [8] Pierre, Le Goffic. (1993). *Grammaire de la Phrase Française. Hachette Supérieur*
- [9] Hermans, T. (1991). *Translational Norms and Correct Translations. London: Croom Helm.*
- [10] Гак, В. Г. (1966). *Беседы о французском слове. Международные отношения.*