Review Article

A Research Overview and Cause Analysis of Parataxis and Hypotaxis

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Abstract

As different connecting means in Chinese and English, parataxis and hypotaxis have always been the focus of discussion and research by Chinese and foreign scholars. This pair of concepts has been studied for a long time, and after years of supplement and improvement, the concepts of parataxis and hypotaxis have been very mature and widely used in the translation practice of various styles. Therefore, the authors give an overview of the research on parataxis and hypotaxis from the aspects of the proposal, development and application of the concepts. Apart from that, the authors also analyze the reasons of parataxis and hypotaxis from the following two perspectives: (1) grammar and syntax, (2) culture and thinking modes. Through this study, the authors hope to further improve the accuracy and fluency of translation between Chinese and English based on theories of parataxis and hypotaxis, and also hope to find some reasonable explanations to the Chinese and Western cultural conflicts.

Keywords: Research overview; parataxis; hypotaxis; cause analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, parataxis and hypotaxis have been the focus of many experts and scholars, such as Nida, Wang Li, and Lian Shuneng, etc. in the field of linguistics and translation. Parataxis and hypotaxis are important concepts in linguistics, which are also used by many scholars to distinguish the significant differences between Chinese and English. When describing the significant differences between Chinese and English, researchers often sum up that Chinese language attaches importance to parataxis, while English attaches importance to hypotaxis. Through the study of the concepts of parataxis and hypotaxis, we can reveal the inherent characteristics of the languages studied, and the unique language using habits of the language users, as well as the different cultural ideas and ways of thinking hidden in the depth of the language. Based on a large number of literature on parataxis and hypotaxis, this thesis reviews the study on parataxis and hypotaxis, briefly introduces the study process of parataxis and hypotaxis, and finally improves the understanding of parataxis and hypotaxis. What is more important is to sort out the reasons why Chinese attaches importance to parataxis while English attaches importance to hypotaxis.

2. The Overview of Parataxis and Hypotaxis
2.1 The Proposal of the Concepts

In China, the study of parataxis can be traced back to Liu Xie in the Northern and Southern Dynasties at least. In *Wen Xin Diao Long*, Liu Xie said that the speech is based on characters; the sentence is formed by the accumulation of characters; the chapter is formed by the accumulation of sentences; and the discourse is formed by the accumulation of chapters. This explains the organization principle of the Chinese characters and sentences, and reflects the parataxis feature of Chinese with the character order as the most important.

In 1920s, Li Jinxi involved the parataxis of Chinese in his new book *New Chinese Grammar* (1924). As early as 1936, Wang Li, a famous grammarian, began to pay attention to the parataxis phenomenon in Chinese in his *A Preliminary Study of Chinese Literary Science*. Later, in his book *Chinese Grammar Theory* (1951), Wang Li put forward: Chinese compound sentences often suggest parataxis phenomenon. Parataxis is a perversion in the western language, but normality in the Chinese language. He also pointed out: Most of the conjunctions in western languages are equivalent to Chinese connective elements.

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In Chinese, parataxis phenomenon often appears and the connective elements are not necessary. However, in western languages, the form is more important and the connective elements (conjunctions) are indispensable in most cases. And then, he mentioned in *the Outline of Chinese Grammar* (1957): There are more than two sentence forms in a compound sentence, and sometimes the logical connection between them is reflected in the meaning, which is called parataxis. For example, "你死了，我做和尚。" From the above discussion, we can see that Wang Li mainly analyzes parataxis and hypotaxis from the differences between Chinese compound sentences and English compound sentences, which is convenient for readers to understand the differences between Chinese and English.

The phenomenon of parataxis and hypotaxis is also concerned by foreign scholars. Like other western languages, English is an inflectional language. Therefore, the phenomenon of hypotaxis is an important feature of it. From the "subject-predicate" framework proposed by ancient Greek philosophers such as Aristotle (384—322BC), to the establishment of the grammatical category and the proposition of case names by Stoic, scholars have not left the study of English hypotactic characteristics (Feng Zhiwei, 1999). In particular, German linguist and philosopher Karl Wilhelm von Humboldt (1820) made a special study of Chinese and European classical languages. Although he did not use the term "parataxis and hypotaxis" directly, he pointed out that Chinese grammar is completely different from classical European grammar. In his opinion, the grammar of any language is always explicit in part, which is revealed with the help of markers and grammatical rules; while the other part is hidden, which can be imagined without the help of markers and grammatical rules. In Chinese, the proportion of explicit grammar is very small compared with hidden grammar. However, in European classical languages, the proportion of explicit grammar is very large.

In the early studies, scholars generally agreed that parataxis was the main feature in Chinese and hypotaxis was the most important feature in English. However, the concept of parataxis and hypotaxis mentioned by most scholars was still a little vague and has not been clearly defined. In addition, scholars lacked more in-depth thinking and ignored many further issues, such as how the status of parataxis in Chinese and hypotaxis in English is, in what levels of language do parataxis and hypotaxis apply, and whether the relationship between parataxis and hypotaxis is absolute, etc.

2.2 The Development of the Concepts

The concept of parataxis and hypotaxis mentioned by later scholars has gradually become clearer, and more specific definitions appear in linguistic dictionaries. The definition of hypotaxis in *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1982) is to use conjunctions to express the attachment or subordination structure and relationship between clauses. In *The World Book Dictionary* (1981), the definition of parataxis is that the relation between clauses is expressed by the order of clauses instead of conjunctions.

On the basis of Wang Li's discussion on the concept of parataxis and hypotaxis, later domestic scholars have put forward their views on the concept of parataxis and hypotaxis according to their own understanding and thinking. Among these views, the main difference between them lies in the answer to the question "What levels of language do parataxis and hypotaxis apply in?".

According to this standard, Wang Juquan (2007) summarized these related discussions into two views: one is that parataxis and hypotaxis are regarded as sentence making methods, and the main difference between them lies in the different ways of connection between words or clauses, so they are mainly syntactic phenomena. Lian Shuneng (1993) is the main representative of this view. He put forward that hypotaxis refers to the connection of words or clauses in a sentence by means of linguistic forms (such as connectives) to express grammatical meaning and logical relations. Parataxis means that words or clauses are connected without linguistic forms, and the grammatical meaning and logical relations in sentences are expressed by the meaning of words and clauses.

The second point of view summarized by Wang Juquan is to analyze parataxis and hypotaxis at the lexical and textual levels. Different from the previous point of view, this point of view holds that parataxis and hypotaxis are regarded as ways of linguistic expression and discourse organization, that is, parataxis and hypotaxis not only occur at the syntactic level, but also at other linguistic levels (such as lexical and textual levels). They are systematic and are the basic means of expression and organization of language. Many scholars hold this view, such as Liu Miqing (1992) and Pan Wenguo (1997). Liu Miqing once defined hypotaxis and parataxis in his *Contrast and Translation between Chinese and English* as follows: here, hypotaxis refers to the connection of words or sentences by means of linguistic forms (including lexical means and morphological means); parataxis refers to the connection of words or sentences by means of their meaning and logical connection without the help of linguistic forms. The former pays attention to cohesion in the form of sentences, while the latter pays attention to coherence of the meaning of the text. Hypotaxis and parataxis belong to expressionism.

Gao Weidong (2005) analyzed "what parataxis is" from the perspective of symbol and communication, and pointed out that the characteristics of parataxis in

Chinese are exaggerated. He further pointed out that the judgment of Chinese as a parataxis language needs to be treated carefully. He also said that from the existing research on the characteristics of parataxis in Chinese, the study on complex sentences is more sufficient, while the study on other levels of sentences is less. In fact, the so-called "parataxis" is mainly manifested in the fact that the connectives are seldom used when the clauses of Chinese complex sentences are connected with each other. It is doubtful whether the "parataxis" in Chinese has universal significance and whether it has penetrated into all levels of Chinese structure.

Foreign linguists have not stopped discussing parataxis and hypotaxis, and Pearsall (2001) discusses parataxis and hypotaxis from the perspective of subordination relationship. According to *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* edited by Pearsall, parataxis refers to the coordinate or subordination relationship expressed by the specific position before and after a clause or phrase rather than by vocabulary, such as "Tell me, how are you?" in spoken English. "How are you" is put after "Tell me", which indicates that "How are you" is subordinated to "Tell me". Just by the order of language, we can know the meaning of this sentence. That is to say, the speaker wants to find out the present situation of the hearer. It is opposite to hypotaxis. Hypotaxis refers to the subordination relationship between one clause and another, opposite to parataxis. Parataxis emphasizes the order of language and hypotaxis emphasizes the use of related words.

Halliday (1994) discusses parataxis and hypotaxis from the perspective of the function of clauses. He holds that hypotaxis belongs to the subordination relationship in compound sentences, that is, the relationship between subordinate clauses. In other words, hypotaxis is to put two components with different functions together. Parataxis, on the other hand, is the relationship between two elements of equal status. One of the two elements is in the front and the other is in the back.

To sum up, later scholars have given a clearer and more specific definition of parataxis and hypotaxis, and also understand and interpret parataxis and hypotaxis in a wider range, not only at the sentence level, but also involving words and paragraphs. Although the study of parataxis and hypotaxis has different emphases in different stages, scholars' understanding of them has been deepening, and their definitions have been constantly revised and improved.

2.3 The Application of the Concepts

In recent years, more and more scholars have applied the concepts of parataxis and hypotaxis to specific translation, using the theories of parataxis and hypotaxis to guide English-Chinese translation and Chinese-English translation. At the same time, specific text translation has confirmed and enriched the theories of parataxis and hypotaxis again and again. Making use of the difference between Chinese emphasizing parataxis and English emphasizing hypotaxis, Jiang Yifei (2022) discusses how to use the translation methods of word addition and free translation to solve the problem of translating Chinese idioms with complex semantics into English, and effectively solves the difficulties of ambiguous meaning and semantic loss in Chinese-English translation of idioms. Mai Jiaqi and Guo Suihong (2021), based on the characteristics of Chinese and English languages, taking the two schools of Song Ci (the bold school and the graceful school) as the object, introduce the development background of Song Ci and the writing characteristics of the poets of the two schools. They explore and analyze parataxis of Chinese and hypotaxis of English in Chinese-English translation of ancient poetry by analyzing the word selection, rhythm, coherence and rhetorical devices of the two schools' poetry. Xu Lin (2021) uses *Ya She* and its two translating versions as the corpus to study the dialectical relationship between parataxis and hypotaxis. She advocates that Chinese attaches importance to parataxis and English attaches importance to hypotaxis. Therefore, in the process of Chinese-English translation, it is necessary to add subjects and conjunctions, use prepositions and manifest tenses. Tang Yufeng and Zeng Xiangfa (2021) put forward strategies to improve the translation ability of non-English majors from the perspective of different expressions in Chinese and English, that is, Chinese attaches importance to parataxis and English attaches importance to hypotaxis, so as to reduce the problems of non-English majors' word-by-word translation, unconsciousness or inability to analyze sentence structure, lack of consideration of vocabulary selection and so on. Based on the difference theory between English and Chinese, Fan Siyong (2021) takes the Chinese translating version of the scientific and technological text *History of Science and Technology in China* as the corpus to reveal the representation of hypotaxis in English and the parataxis characteristics of the Chinese translating version. He adopts the translation strategy of "shifting the focus from grape sentences to flowing sentences" to reveal the transformation law between the two languages. Deng Gaosheng and Lv Shisheng (2020) take the *Handbook of COVID-19 Prevention and Treatment* as the research object to explore how to translate Chinese subjectless sentences in the medical text into English. Using the theory of parataxis and hypotaxis, they put forward some strategies and methods for medical Chinese-English translation researchers to translate subjectless sentences. Similarly, in terms of medical translation, Li Lin, Liang Shupei, Cen Siyuan, Jiang Jichang and Wen Juan (2020) use examples to explore three strategies for Chinese-English translation of manual medicine, so as to realize the transformation from parataxis to hypotaxis, make the translation more in line with English expression. Therefore, the accuracy of translation and acceptance of readers could be improved

and translation of manual medicine could be promoted. In addition, Li Chengji (2020) takes the product manual as an example to explain the characteristics of parataxis in Chinese and hypotaxis in English in business translation and the corresponding translation skills. The author puts forward his own views on the problems faced in the process of business text translation, such as the diversity, the preciseness and the brevity of language.

Generally speaking, in recent years, the concepts and theories of parataxis and hypotaxis have been very mature and recognized by the public. Compared with the conceptual innovation of parataxis and hypotaxis, most scholars tend to use the concepts and theories of parataxis and hypotaxis to guide specific translation practice. The concepts of parataxis and hypotaxis are widely used in the translation of Chinese idioms, Chinese poetry, literary works, scientific and technological texts, medical texts and economic and political texts, which effectively improve the accuracy and fluency of translation between the two languages.

3. The Reasons of Parataxis and Hypotaxis
3.1 Reasons of Grammar and Syntax
One of the reasons why Chinese language attaches importance to parataxis is that Chinese language is isolated, and there are no strict morphological changes, so there is no strict boundary between the parts of speech of Chinese words. We can only judge the parts of speech of Chinese words by their grammatical functions and meanings in sentences. The freedom and flexibility of Chinese words and the richness of word meanings make the syntactic structure of Chinese complex and changeable, which is one of the reasons for the characteristics of Chinese parataxis. Therefore, many scholars say that "there is no grammar in Chinese".

In addition, according to Greenberg's linguistic typology theory, Li & Thompson (1976) proposed the concepts of "topic prominent" and "subject prominent". Thompson believed that Chinese belongs to topic prominent language, while English belongs to subject prominent language. In most cases, Chinese sentence groups are developed around a topic layer by layer. There is no obvious formal connection between each clause, while the whole sentence group is a whole by the semantic relationship between sentences. Different from Chinese, English sentences follow the "subject-predicate-object" structure, so English language pays more attention to the consistency of form than Chinese, which is hypotaxis. According to Partridge Eric (1954), most English sentences are arranged according to "subject-predicate" structure or "subject-predicate-object" structure. This shows that English language is highly formal and logical.

Most other scholars share similar ideas and understandings with them. To sum up, Chinese is a "from meaning to structure" language. Compared with English, Chinese grammar is not "developed" and many rules are not complete. The components of Chinese sentences are lack of explicit formal marks, so the understanding of sentence meaning mainly starts from the character meaning, and the sentence is understood as a whole through logical relations. To some extent, the structure of Chinese sentences is the result of semantic analysis. At the same time, English is a "from structure to meaning" language. According to the sequence of grammatical understanding, the analysis of English is a process of grammatical understanding from structure to meaning. That is to say, first clarifying the basic framework of the sentence, and then highlighting the internal meaning according to the "subject-predicate" and branch relationship. Therefore, Chinese pays more attention to parataxis, while English pays more attention to hypotaxis.

3.2 Reasons of Culture and Thinking Modes
Deep reasons of Chinese's emphasis on parataxis and English's emphasis on hypotaxis lie in the different cultural concepts and modes of thinking held by the two nations. In other words, the differences between Chinese and western language structures are caused by the differences in values and language coding processes. The above view is basically agreed by most scholars. Based on the views of scholars at home and abroad, the reasons why Chinese focuses on parataxis and English on hypotaxis can be summarized from the following three aspects of cultural thinking.

First, Chinese culture focuses on "inaction", while western culture focuses on "action". The language view of Chinese Taoism shows a distinctive feature of super linguistics. It is often arbitrary in the choice of characters and sentences. It is very common to use grammar flexibly and break the rules. This kind of feature is the embodiment of Chinese's emphasis on parataxis rather than hypotaxis. In western culture, Aristotle's conventionalism holds that language is conventional. He summed up the grammatical rules with "subject-predicate" structure as the core of sentences, and defined the important parts of speech in western languages: nouns and verbs. Since Aristotle, the focus of western language research has been more on language form, reflecting the hypotaxis of English.

In fact, the western understanding of the nature of language and the relationship between language and world view is similar to that of China. For instance, German linguist Humboldt Wilhelm (1820) put forward that "every language contains a unique world view". On the relationship between language, culture and world view, Chinese scholar Wu Tieping (1984) also believes that people who grow up in different language environments and cultural traditions have different ways of seeing the world. However, the two nations' attitudes towards language are quite different. Western and eastern philosophers regard language as being or

existence. Between "being" and "nothing", western culture chooses "being" and prefers "being" and "action", and thinks that "being" and "action" are higher than "nothing" and "inaction"; ancient Chinese culture chooses "nothing" and prefers "inaction", and pays more attention to a free and unrestrained implication in language application.

Second, Chinese culture focuses on "savvy", while western culture focuses on "rationality". Savvy lies not only in Chinese language, but also in traditional Chinese literature, calligraphy and painting. For example, in the art of painting, the random lines of Chinese painting will leave people a space for imagination. It is the same in Chinese language. Chinese language spreads horizontally and forms the linear flow. Apart from that, Chinese language pursues flowing rhythm, and does not stick to the form. Therefore, as a whole, Chinese language presents the characteristics of parataxis. However, western painting focuses on form and realism, adopts the focus perspective of geometry and pays attention to the reality of details. This can also reflect that the logic of western people is more "rational". This kind of rational thinking emphasizes observation, experiment, illustration, analysis and so on. It advocates the use of inductive and rational methods to sort out perceptual materials, so as to raise individual phenomena to general theories and find universal principles. This can also explain why English pays more attention to hypotaxis. In other words, the hypotaxis of English is closely related to the national thinking habit of attaching importance to formal logic and rationality.

Third, China's culture focuses on "the whole", while the western culture focuses on "the individual". China attaches great importance to the whole and integrity, psychological time and space, especially the principle of time sequence and spatial movement. This kind of culture and thinking habit of Chinese nation has a significant influence on Chinese sentence making methods. The Chinese sentence pattern takes the verb as the center and takes the time logic as the order. In Chinese traditional culture, we often say "the unity of heaven and man", that is to regard heaven, earth and man as a unified whole. Paying attention to the unity of body and mind and the unity of form and spirit is the "holistic view" in traditional Chinese thinking. What we can clearly feel is that there is a sense of "overall situation" and "overall thinking" in the value orientation of Chinese people, which is obviously different from the western countries' attention to individual. Although British and American people also emphasize the integrity, they pay more attention to the individual in the whole. The democratic tradition and scientific spirit in western culture make them pay more attention to individual freedom and individual development, as well as democracy and legal system (Jiang Huan, Xu Muzhu, Li Jing, 2019). Rational value

orientation requires clear "rules" to protect more "freedom", which naturally include language rules.

To sum up, way of thinking and artistic expression in traditional Chinese culture are the reasons of parataxis in Chinese, while the development of hypotaxis in English is a natural choice made in accordance with the philosophy of atomism and the law of formal logic. Because of this, Chinese parataxis emphasizes the whole context. To understand Chinese expressions, context and cultural background should be combined. The same sentence may have different meanings in different situations. However, hypotaxis in English emphasizes more complete regular forms, and grammatical forms play an important role in semantics.

4. CONCLUSION
Parataxis and hypotaxis are respective language features in Chinese and English. This article gives an overview of the previous studies on parataxis and hypotaxis, including the proposal, development, and application of the concepts. In addition, this article also analyzes two aspects of reasons why Chinese attaches importance to parataxis while English attaches importance to hypotaxis. Through this article, we can see that the related concepts of parataxis and hypotaxis are becoming more and more mature, and provide a significant guiding effect for the translation between Chinese and English. At the same time, after understanding the reasons of parataxis and hypotaxis, we can also make some explanations for the problems caused by the communication and collision between Chinese and Western cultures.

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