# Translation of Verbal Anaphora in *The Art of War*

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*Abstract*—As a key focus of modern linguistic and systematic functional research, discourse anaphora is one of the most important ways of textual cohesion which stresses the interaction between sentences in the text. Verbs are a key issue worth studying as Chinese is a verb-prominent language. One of the three books on the wars, *the Art of War* is a gem in the Chinese military heritage with profound ideas and meticulous logic. The verbal anaphora in the book is striking and unique besides the philosophical ideas and military strategy. Focusing on the verbal anaphora, this paper has a comparison and descriptive study on six authoritative versions of *The Art of War* through the analysis verbs in the book to summarize the translation strategies of verbal anaphora in classical Chinese.

*Index Terms*—verbal anaphora, repetition, zero anaphora, synonym anaphora, cohesion

## I. INTRODUCTION

*The Art of War*, an ancient Chinese military treatise is impressive and influential with its profound ideas and brief language. Besides the superb military strategy and profound philosophical ideas, the verbal anaphora in the book is striking, which is an issue worth researching to convey the charm of the language to the western readers. Also known as reference or cataphora, anaphora focuses on the referring and the repetition of the antecedent. It has the cohesive function through which the clauses, sentences and paragraphs are interacted.

## II. ANAPHOR AND VERBAL ANAPHORA

The term "anaphora" is derived from the Greek word ἀναφορά which means "carrying back". In contemporary linguistics, it is commonly used to refer to a relation between two linguistic elements, wherein the interpretation of one (called an anaphora) is in some way determined by the interpretation of the other (called an antecedent). (Lust, 1986; Wasow, 1986) Anaphora is at the center of research on the interface between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in linguistic theory (Huang Yan, 2004).

As a common linguistic phenomenon and an important way of textual coherence, anaphora is the co-reference of one expression with its antecedent such as a person, a thing, an action or feature. Each language has a complete and complex anaphora system to meet the need of communication. The study of anaphora in the discourse and the distribution is the kernel issue in linguistics.

Anaphora has long been regarded as one of the few "extremely good probes" (Chomsky,1982, p. 23) in furthering our understanding of the nature of the human mind, and thus in facilitating an answer to what Chomsky (1981, 1995) considers to be the fundamental problem of linguistics. In his "Binding Theory", Chomsky (1981) has emphasized the difference in syntactic distribution among three classes of expressions, which he calls "anaphors", "pronominals", and "R-expressions" ("referential expressions") and proposes the government-binding theory. Horn (1985) and Levinson (1987) simplify the GB theory and proposes the Neo-Gricean theory which stresses the principle of economy in language. Levinson elaborates the concept of deixis and further categorizes them into person, time, place, discourse and social deixis. The non-deictic usage of the deictics is further subdivided by Levinson (1983) into anaphoric usage and non-anaphoric usage. Ariel (1990) suggests that zero anaphora and pronouns co-occurred with high accessibility of referents, whereas full lexical nouns signaled low accessibility of referents. Givón (1983) discusses the difference in referential forms and the distance of the anaphora and its antecedent from the accessibility of referent and divide different degrees of accessibility. Hoey (1991) replaces the anaphora with repetition which he terms as cohesive relation links and defines repetition into nine types varying from simple lexical repetition to omission with different weight. Halliday (1994) stresses the lexical cohesion of reference from the viewpoint of text and system function and states that the reference can be in a sentence or beyond the sentence and the passages. The study of anaphora is of great importance to the study of the intentionality, acceptability, situationality, informativity, cohesion, coherence and intertextuality of the textuality.

At present, many linguists have focused on zero anaphora, nominal anaphora and pronominal anaphora whereas the research on verbal anaphor has been rare. Chinese words can be divided into two kinds of notional words and the function ones with a purely grammatical purpose. As a key part of notional words, verbs in Chinese have stronger function of sentence-making and higher frequency than those in English which is a static language with more nouns and prepositions. They express an action, a behavior, a state of being or positive thought. The study on verbs has been a hot issue both in ancient and modern Chinese grammar as it is a verby or verb-prominent language Liu Danqing, 2010). From classic Chinese to modern Chinese, many idioms and poems use verb anaphora to stress the connotation and

convey a rhythmic effect. For example, in The Analects, Confucius wrote "食不厌精，脍不厌细", which means "He did not **dislike to have** his rice finely cleaned, **nor to have** his mince meat cut quite small". (translated by Roger Ames）Sometimes, three verb anaphora can be found in a sentence, for example, a very famous sentence in Social Wisdom: "画人画虎难画骨，知人知面不知心." **Painting** a tiger's fur is easy, While **painting** its bones is hard. **Knowing** a person's face is easy, while **knowing** his ideas is hard. (translated by Hu Xiaoyang)

Cornish (1986) proposes verbal anaphora and Chu (1998) suggests the co-reference relationship among verbs, adverbs, nouns and sentences. Huang Yan (2000) elaborates verb anaphora and categorizes verb anaphora into VP ellipsis, sluicing and stripping. The verbal anaphora in Chinese stresses the same verb, which is a reflection of the consistency, continuity and cohesion of the text. The information is intensified by the repetitious verbs in the gradation structure of the oriental spiral thinking. Taking *The Art of War* as the corpus, this paper focuses on the verbal anaphora to have an analysis and research of linguistic phenomenon.

## III. THE ENGLISH VERSIONS OF *THE ART OF WAR*

Written by Sun Wu, a high-ranking military strategist, general and tactician in Pre-Qin dynasty, *The Art of war* lists the top among the seven military classics of China. Also known as *Military Science of Sun Wu* and *Military Science of Sun Tzu of Nation Wu*, it is labeled as one of the three military books in the world besides *On War* and *The Book of Five Rings*. It is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest classical books, which deals with warfare and has a profound influence upon the military education of American officers. Besides military fields, the book can provide wisdom and reference in many fields outside military such as diplomatic mediation, business management, medical treatment, sports and games and even office politics and corporate strategy. Therefore, it enjoys great reputation and has over 30 versions in English, Japanese, Russian and Finish etc.

The introduction of *The Art of War* in the western world began in 1772 by Jean Joseph Marie Amiot and its translation can be divided into three phases. In 1905, E. F. Calthrop first translated the book on the basis of *Thirteen Chapters* from Japanese into English. As the version is based on Japanese, there are lots of omission, blunders and translation mistakes. Lionel Giles re-translated the book in 1910 with faithful translation and detailed annotation. As a result, the Giles ground-breaking version is the most wildly spread version even after over 100 years.

During and after World War II, the editions by E. Machell-Cox and A. L. Sadler were not so satisfactory due to the limited conditions in war. In 1963, Dr. Samuel B. Griffith, an officer and commander translated the book into *Sun Tzu: The Art of War* on the basis of *The Collection of Ten Annotations of Sun Tzu* and the title has been spread from then on. As Griffith has a deep understanding of the military systems and weapons of ancient China, the version is accurate in military terms and has been reprinted many a time as another authoritative version.

In 1972, the bamboo slips of *The Art of War* were unearthed in Yinque Mountain, Linyi, Shandong province. More scholars participated in the translation of the classic, such as Yuan Shibin (1987), Lin Wusun(1999), and Gary Gagliardi(2003). Moreover, the versions of Thomas Cleary (1988) and Roger Ames (1993) focus on the Taoism and Confucian ideology and that of Ralph D. Sawyer (2005) has a detailed explanation of military strategy.

Many scholars have carried out a research on these English versions of *The Art of War*. Eric Colwell (2005) analyzes Dao, the critical Chinese concept in the book and compares the Chinese understanding of opposites or antonyms and how they interchange with one another. Chen Hong (2009) has an investigation into the lexicon of different English versions. He Jizong (2007) probes into the influences of Sunzi's strategies over western culture through views from translation effectism. However, the research on the sentence structure of the book has been rare. This paper collects six versions of different ages such as Lionel Giles, Samuel B. Griffith, Yuan Shibin, Roger Ames, Thomas Cleary and Ralph D. Sawyer to study the verbal anaphora in classic Chinese by the comparative reading and quantitative analysis.

## IV. THE VERBAL ANAPHORA IN *THE ART OF WAR*

*The Art of War* is composed of 13 chapters, each of which is dedicated to one aspect of warfare. It advocates "not fighting" and holds that the supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting (translated by Lionel Giles). Each chapter is independent yet interacts with the others in the coherent and integral whole. The first six chapters lay particular emphasis on strategies and the later six on tactics of Sun Tzu. The book is impressive with the profound insight, penetrating analysis and rigorous description with many rhetoric devices such as parallelism, antithesis, anadiplosis and metaphor. The sentence structures are varied in form with anaphora in many parts of speech. The high-frequency words and their numbers are as indicated in the following table:

TABLE 1.
HIGH-FREQUENCY WORDS AND THEIR NUMBER IN *THE ART OF WAR*

| Verb | Know(知) | Fight(战) | Win(胜) | Have(有) | Can(能) | Say(曰) | Use(用) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Numbers | 79 | 73 | 52 | 51 | 50 | 50 | 43 |
| Noun | Soldier(兵) | Enemy(敌) | Army(军) | People(人) | General(将) | Land(地) | Victory(胜) |
| Numbers | 69 | 65 | 59 | 46 | 36 | 30 | 29 |
| Adjective | Far(远) | Advantageous (利) | Better(上) | Deep(深) | Few(寡) | Good(善) | Strong(强) |
| Numbers | 12 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 |

From the above statistics, we can find the dominance of verbal anaphora such as know (79), fight (73), win (52) is much higher than the nouns such as soldier(69), army (59) and the adjectives such as far(12) and advantageous (12) etc. The verbal anaphora appears in all the chapters of the book, making the sentences orderly and rhythmic. With certain arrangement of ideas, the sentences structure is enhanced or parallel in the same sentence structure with the coherent information chain and strong rhythm, which increases the readability and expressiveness. The verbs are prominent in Chinese, however, the oriental thinking style is rather rare in English. If the translator copies the original structure, the translation will look wordy and overloaded; should the translator discard the original form, the Chinese feature would disappear in the English version. As a result, the translator takes three approaches in dealing with the verbal anaphora.

*A.  Repetition*

The ancient classic Chinese are brief and concise with parataxis and cohesion by the content and the high-frequency words. Consequently, the verbal anaphora is rather common in Chinese. While the adoption of verbal anaphora in English is mostly for the purpose of rhetoric function and applied in literature, speech and advertisement. Take *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck as an example: "The movement **changed them**; the highways, the camps along the road, the fear of hunger and the hunger itself, **changed them**. The children without dinner **changed them**, the endless moving **changed them**"(1983). It is impressive because the information focus is stressed through the repetition of the verb. In the case of foregrounding, the translator can keep the original structure in the translation to stress the information in the verb. For example, in the seventh chapter--Manoeuvring, there is a sentence with three verbal anaphora:

1. 是故军无辎重则亡，无粮食则亡，无委积则亡。（军争 第七）

Pinyin: Shigu jun wu zizhong **ze wang,** wu liangshi **ze wang**, wu weiji **ze wang**. （Chapter 7 Manoeuvring）

Version (1). An army without its baggage train **is lost**; without provisions it **is lost**; without bases of supply it **is lost**. (L. Giles)

Version (2). For this reason, if an army is without its equipment and stores, **it will perish**; if it is without provisions, **it will perish**; if it is without material support **it will perish**. (Roger Ames)

Version (3). Accordingly, if the army does not have baggage and heavy equipment **it will be lost**; if it does not have provisions **it will be lost**; if it does not have stores **it will be lost**. (Ralph D. Sawyer)

Version (4).We may take it then that an army without its baggage-train **is lost**; without provisions **it is lost**; without bases of supply **it is lost**. (Thomas Cleary)

Version (5). It follows that an army which lacks heavy equipment, fodder, food and stores **will be lost**. (Samuel B. Griffith)

Version (6). It follows that an army which lacks heavy equipment, fodder, food and stores **will be lost**. (Yuan Shibin)

Giles follows the original structure and keeps the rhythm by literal translation. Ralph D. Sawyer and Thomas Cleary translate the sentence in the same way and Roger Ames into "it will perish". They all keep the verbal anaphora in the English version to keep the continuity which is a basic feature of discourse.

2. 以治待乱,以静待哗,此治心者也。以近待远,以逸待劳,以饱待饥,此治力者也。（军争 第七）

Pinyin: Yi zhi dai luan, yi jing dai hua, ci zhixin zhe ye. Yi jin dai yuan, yi yi dai lao, yi bao dai ji, ci zhili zhe ye. (Chapter 7 Manoeuvring)

Version (1). Use your proper order **to await** the enemy's disorder; use our calmness **to await** his clamor. This is the way to manage the heart and mind.

Use your closeness to the battlefield **to await** the far-off enemy; use your well-rested troops **to await** his fatigued; use your well-fed troops **to await** his hungry. This is the way to manage strength. (Roger Ames)

Givón(1983) suggests that the linear distance from an anaphor to the antecedent is at least one of the major redictors of referential choice. The farther the anaphor is, the more difficult for the readers to distinguish the indicator. In the case that the sentence stresses the verb or the linear distance is comparatively far, the translator can adopt repetition to activate the readers' phychspace and make the translation rhythmic.

*B.  Zero Anaphora*

Chinese lays stresses on the symmetry in sentence and the balance in phonetics by using lots of antithesis because the part of speech, meaning and function of each word interact with the others in the whole discourse instead of being isolated. The bamboo-like structure enables Chinese to achieve hypotaxis by repeating the same structure without conjunctives, while English tends to avoid repetition in the syllables, words and syntax except for emphatic or rhetoric function. Generally speaking, the repetition of the same verb is not frequent in English. The survey on 43 English essays indicates that the application of the same verb is only 0.7%. Take this proverb as an example: Courage in excess becomes foolhardiness, affection weakness, thrift avarice. All the verbs are omitted in the sentence to make the sentence brief. Take the sentence in Posture of Army, the fifth chapter as an example:

3. 乱生于治，怯生于勇，弱生于强。（兵势第五）

Pinyin: Luan sheng yu zhi, qie sheng yu yong, ruo sheng yu qiang. (Chapter V: Posture of Army)

Version (1). Apparent confusion is a product of good order; apparent cowardice, of courage; apparent weakness, of strength. (Samuel B. Griffith)

Version (2). Disorder is born from order; cowardice from courage; weakness from strength. (Roger Ames)

Version (3). Apparent confusion is a product of good order; apparent cowardice, of courage; apparent weakness, of strength. (Yuan Shibin)

Griffith omits the rest verbs after the first utterance and Roger Ames and Yuan Shibin also take the same method.

4. 不知战地，不知战日，则左不能救右，右不能救左，前不能救后，后不能救前，而况远者数十里，近者数里乎？(虚实第六)

Pinyin: Buzhi zhan di, buzhi zhan ri, ze zuo buneng jiu you, you beneng jiu zuo, qian buneng jiu hou, hou buneng jiu qian, er kuang yuanzhe shushi li, jinzhe shu li hu? (Chapter 6 Weaknesses and Strengths)

Version (1).If one knows where and when a battle will be fought his troops can march a thousand *li* and meet on the field. But if one knows neither the battleground nor the day of battle, the left will be unable to aid the right, or the right, the left; the van to support the rear, or the rear, the van. How much more is this so when separated by several tens of *li,* or, indeed, by even a few!( Samuel B. Griffith)

The linguist of George Kingsley Zipf (1949) suggested in his book *Human Behaviour and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology*, that language is subject to the least effort principle which states that an information seeking client will tend to use the most convenient search method, in the least exacting mode available. He theorized that the distribution of word use was due to tendency to communicate efficiently with least effort and this theory is known as Zipf's Law. On the basis of the previous knowledge of the readers, the translator can omit the repetitious verbs without specific rhetoric function to make the translation as brief as proverbs or idioms if the original text is brief.

*C.    Synonym Anaphora*

In Chinese, the verbal anaphora enhances the momentum of the text with rhythmic structures and rigorous logic. The translator can analyze the specific meaning of each word or use synonyms and hyponyms for conjunction in the target language. To avoid monotonous repetition, the translator can compensate in semantic, phonological, rhetoric and pragmatic functions. For example:

5. 故上兵**伐**谋,其次**伐**交,其次**伐**兵,其下攻城。(谋攻第三)

Pinyin: Gu shangbing fa mou, qici fa jiao, qici fabing, qixia gongcheng. (Chapter 3: Offensive Strategy)

Version (1). Thus the highest form of generalship is to **balk** the enemy's plans; the next best is to **prevent** the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to **attack** the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities. (L. Giles)

Version (2). Thus the highest form of generalship is to **baulk** the enemy's plans; the next best is to **prevent** the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to **attack** the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities. (Thomas Cleary)

Giles and Cleary analyze the three verbs carefully and adopts synonyms of balk, prevent and attack as the subjects in Chinese are plans or strategy, alliances and enemy. Although the Chinese verbs are the same, the collocations are totally different in English.

6. Version (2). Disciplined and calm, to await the appearance of disorder and hubbub amongst the enemy:— this is the art of retaining selfpossession.

In another passage, Sun Tzu elaborates how to detect the surroundings through careful observation:"尘高而锐者，车**来也**；卑而广者，徒**来也**。"（行军第九）

Pinyin: Chen gao er rui zhe, che lai ye; bi er guang zhe, tu lai ye. (Chapter 9: The Army on the March)

Version (1). When there is dust rising in a high column, it is the sign of chariots *advancing*; when the dust is low, and spread over a wide area, it betokens the *approach* of infantry. (L. Giles)

Giles pays attention to the subtext and nuance in the verbs and adopts different words to avoid repetition. The careful choice of lexicon indicates the specific objects and different environment. The synonyms are not exactly the same in terms of etymology, phonic qualities and usage, which make the translation accurate and varied in pattern and phonetics.

## V.  Conclusion

Verbs are almost necessary in all Chinese sentence structures such as exclamation, slogan, public signs, imperative sentence and headlines etc as Chinese is a verb-prominent language. Different from those in English, they have a great deal more flexibility and function and adapt themselves to serve many purposes. Consequently, verb anaphora is a common linguistic phenomenon worth studying. The application of repetitious verbs, zero anaphora and synonym anaphora can make the translation various in sentence structures.

Although the various English versions of *The Art of War* have conveyed the meaning, the aesthetic, syntactic and phonetic features can be further improved. Laying stress on the context and the communication of languages, the systematic functional linguistics focuses on the interaction between sentences and discourses. The research on the verbal anaphora is of some inspiration to the translation of other Chinese classics to be introduced to the world.

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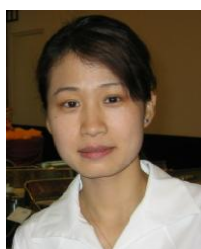
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