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## An Elucidation of the Sentence Translation Process from a Broad Rhetorical Perspective

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### Abstract

Rhetoric in language is as ubiquitous as air. It manifests not only in the form of narrow rhetoric (figures of speech), but is also implicit in all statements from the perspective of broad rhetoric, intrinsically encompassing the domain of narrow rhetoric. This paper begins with narrow figures of speech, uses broad rhetoric to interpret the source language and target language, explores the connection between them, analyzes the process of sentence translation from the perspective of broad rhetoric, and formulates a dynamic principle for measuring the quality of sentence translation.

### Full Text

## A General Rhetorical Interpretation of the Sentence Translation Process

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### Abstract

Rhetoric in language is as ubiquitous as air. It not only manifests in the form of rhetorical devices (narrow rhetoric) but is also implicitly present in all sentences from a broad rhetorical perspective, inherently encompassing the domain of narrow rhetoric. This article begins with rhetorical devices and employs a broad rhetorical perspective to interpret the source and target languages, exploring their interconnections. It analyzes the sentence translation process from this general rhetorical viewpoint and proposes dynamic principles for evaluating translation quality.

**Keywords:** rhetoric; narrow rhetoric; general rhetoric; translation

Rhetoric is a linguistic skill, an art of expression. Since Aristotle, Western rhetoric has primarily defined rhetoric as the art of discourse, “an ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion” [Aristotle, 2007:37]. From the perspective of classical rhetoric, rhetorical figures belong to “the art of persuasion” [Liu Yameng, 2008:5]. Rhetorical figures in language are generally relatively fixed and conspicuous, used to create specific expressive effects in discourse. Through rhetorical figures, authors or speakers convey information to readers or listeners to achieve particular expressive purposes. Later, Western rhetorical studies expanded to literary and written works, and in a broad sense, focused on the overall expressive strategies and choices of entire works rather than being limited to specific verbal techniques including rhetorical figures (referred to in this article as narrow rhetorical figures). With the advent of postmodernism, all cultural behaviors were symbolized and could be interpreted from a rhetorical perspective. Rhetoric thus became the air in the linguistic world—it is everywhere, to the extent that we often forget its existence: “whatever we do or say or write, or even think, in explanation of anything, or in support, or in extenuation, or in despite of anything, evinces Rhetoric symptoms” [Bryant, 1953: 401]. The extension of rhetoric further expanded to the entire linguistic world, which this article refers to as general rhetoric. Consequently, translation as a linguistic activity naturally falls within the scope of general rhetoric.

For translation in the linguistic world, translators strive for accurate translations, which entails a selection process for every word and sentence. Research on this process has a long history with abundant achievements, including both theoretical interpretations and literary expressions. This article focuses on the sentence level, beginning with narrow rhetoric and extending to general rhetoric. It analyzes several translation examples of sentences containing rhetorical figures (including but not limited to narrow rhetorical figures) and reinterprets the translation choices from this new general rhetorical perspective. For convenience, all narrow rhetorical figures mentioned in the examples below follow Chen Ding’ an’ s classification [Chen Ding’ an, 2004: 5], distinguishing four types: image rhetoric, semantic rhetoric, structural rhetoric, and phonological rhetoric.

## 2. Related Research

Currently, translation studies from a general rhetorical perspective are scattered across papers and monographs, with only a few attempting to propose a general rhetorical translation theory, while most focus on the translation of specific rhetorical forms, extending from literal techniques to cognitive styles. In contrast, studies on the translation of rhetorical figures in the narrow rhetorical sense are more numerous.

Regarding domestic research, translation studies from a general rhetorical perspective have not yet been fully developed. Surveying the intersection of rhetoric and translation studies—the topic of translation rhetoric—its main theoretical framework was first clarified by Yang Lili [2001: 71-73]. In her view, translation

rhetoric can be defined as a theory applied to the selection of words, sentence patterns, and styles in the translation process. However, as Yang Lili calls for in her work, this theoretical framework needs further development and elaboration. The general rhetorical perspective was first proposed by Tan Xuechun and Zhu Ling [2008]. Subsequently, Feng Quangong [2012:100-103] proposed what should be considered a very comprehensive outline of translation rhetoric, focusing not only on the translation of rhetorical devices but also extending to discourse-level translation studies along the path of general rhetoric. Later, the core term of general rhetoric—“rhetorical cognition”—gradually emerged in translation studies, becoming a cutting-edge topic in translation rhetoric [Feng Quangong, 2021:74-79+88+109]. Compared with domestic general rhetorical translation research, foreign studies on general rhetorical translation are rare, with almost no relevant literature.

General rhetorical translation studies are scarce, but it is worth noting that there are many studies on metaphor. For example, Liu Fagong [2007: 47-51] proposed research on the standards for metaphor object transformation in current general metaphor studies, arguing that metaphor is a mode of thinking and cognition. Additionally, Xiao Jiayan [2007] used qualitative and quantitative analysis methods, combined with textual context, to elaborate on various metaphors in *Dream of the Red Chamber* [Christina Schäffner, 2004:1253-1269] discussed some implications of the cognitive approach to metaphor for translation theory and practice, revealing how translators handle metaphorical expressions in authentic source and target texts and their effects on the texts themselves, text reception, and subsequent text development. On the other hand, the *Yale Review* introduced an article by Dick Davis [2002: 66-83], which discussed poetry translation within the framework of English poetry rhetoric. Apart from these studies, there are many more on various rhetorical figures, with a considerable portion focusing on metaphor. Metaphor constructs and defines people’s cognitive modes [George Lakoff & Mark Johnson, 2008]. Metaphor may be the most important, or at least one of the most important rhetorical devices, and it could also be considered one of the appositives of general rhetoric. The interpretation in this article converges to some extent with interpretations from a metaphor perspective, but the approaches differ and the categories vary.

In stark contrast to general rhetorical translation studies, translation research in the narrow rhetorical sense has yielded abundant results. Taking pun translation as an example, according to the CNKI database, thousands of domestic studies on pun translation were published in the decade before 2022. It should be emphasized that most of these studies employ linguistic theories, such as Ai Lin’s [2010: 33-36] pun translation theory based on speech acts. The reason may be that rhetoric, in the narrow sense, is limited to linguistic research methods without involving cognitive considerations. Additionally, approximately 20 studies from databases such as SCI and ProQuest propose some strategies for pun translation. Although foreign research on narrow rhetorical figures exceeds current general rhetorical studies, it does not seem to be popular, which is consistent with the domestic research situation.

Furthermore, some domestic translation concepts based on artistic expressive effects can serve as references for interpreting the translation process in this article's general rhetorical sense. For example, Fu Lei proposed a famous concept: "spiritual resemblance" – "in terms of effect, translation should be like copying a painting; what is sought is not formal resemblance but spiritual resemblance" [Fu Lei, 1951]. This effect can be interpreted as the synthesis of people's feelings and thoughts about everything expressed by language, which can be explained from a general rhetorical perspective. From Fu Lei's perspective, translation is the reproduction in the target language of the effect conveyed by the source language. Therefore, pursuing good translation "isomorphism" refers to cognition itself, which aligns with the current general rhetorical standpoint. Thus, spiritual resemblance naturally becomes the summary of standards for determining good translation, as it indicates the pursuit of good translation beyond language or within the current general rhetorical domain. Additionally, Qian Zhongshu [1979] proposed the highest realm of perfect translation— "the realm of transformation." He explicitly stated that the ultimate ideal of literary translation is to achieve perfect translation, preserving the conveyed content while eliminating problems caused by linguistic differences [ "The highest ideal of literary translation can be said to be 'transformation.' Transforming a work from one language to another without revealing stiff and forced traces due to differences in linguistic habits, while completely preserving the flavor of the original, can be considered to have entered the realm of transformation" ]. In short, it also serves as a measure for interpreting the translation process in this article's general rhetoric. Preserving the conveyed content approximates spiritual resemblance, plus the pursuit of complete naturalization. Other domestic studies oriented toward art also contain general rhetorical significance.

Moreover, some foreign translation concepts oriented toward art can be explained in the same way as the domestic concepts mentioned above. These concepts are enhanced feelings and summarized experiences, vividly reflected in Ezra Pound's thought, which emphasizes the translation of atmosphere and the overall aesthetic meaning of vision and focus [Jiang Hongxin, 2009: 77-80]. George Steiner's theory also belongs to this category. He believes that culture has an unchanging core, deriving general inferences from specific works. The translation of atmosphere and the unchanging core of culture may refer to the reassertion of the conveyed content through cultural transformation, including but not limited to language itself. With the progress of linguistics, linguistic theories of translation have become mainstream in translation studies. For example, Peter Newmark defined "meaning" and pointed out that translators should treat texts as wholes, performing two types of translation: one is semantic translation related to the author, and the other is communicative translation related to the reader [Newmark, 1976:5-26]. The most important theory for authors and readers may be Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence theory and functional equivalence theory, the latter being a revised version of the former and the core of his translation thought [Nida, 2000:126-140]. Authors and readers play crucial roles in the aforementioned theories and are also vital in general rhetoric,

where they can be called speakers and receivers.

In summary, current general rhetorical research on translation standards may extract similarities among various results by describing translation from a broader perspective. In other words, with the help of many related studies, this research will expand new horizons for different directions of translation studies. Therefore, this article can, to some extent, expand the field of translation studies in the rhetorical sense. It goes beyond the field of narrow rhetorical translation studies, which is the core of the aforementioned rhetorical translation research. As part of a series of papers, this article first demonstrates how to interpret the translation process from a general rhetorical perspective at the sentence level, laying a foundation for establishing a sound related theory.

### 3. General Rhetorical Analysis of Sentence Translation

#### 3.1 Translation of Image Rhetoric

Narrow rhetorical figures are based on analogy between two objects with common characteristics, similar to the relationship between signifier and signified. The rationality and feasibility of this analogy can be explained by the Invariance Principle, which states that “metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology of the source domain, in a way consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain” [Lakoff, 1993:215], meaning the image-schema structure is consistent. Even between different languages or cultures, the inherent structure of the target domain and the cognitive topology of the source domain may be the same or at least similar. Therefore, direct reconstruction of image rhetorical figures from the source language in the target language can be achieved.

As shown in , in the English linguistic world, a sentence like S01 may be produced; in the Chinese linguistic world, a sentence like S02 may be produced:

**Sample 01 [S01]**

[He] always parrots what other people say.

**Sample 02 [S02]**

[He] is as cunning as a fox.

Each of S01 and S02 contains a pair of implicit relations. Each pair includes an invariant factor, connecting the source domain and target domain in a way consistent with life experience and respective cultural characteristics. As shown in :

Source Domain	[Human]
Target Domain	[Animal]
does not have an idea of his [its] own	parrot

Generally speaking, in the English linguistic world, receivers can receive all content transmitted by sentence S01; in the Chinese linguistic world, receivers

can receive all content transmitted by sentence S02. Both sentences express a human personality trait in a more rhetorically effective manner. Compare S01 with “(He) does not have his own ideas,” and S02 with “(He) is very cunning.” The presuppositions for achieving the above rhetorical effects are shown in :

**Sample 01 [S01]**

Parrots do not have their own ideas.

**Sample 02 [S02]**

Foxes are cunning.

Sentences S01 and S02 can be transformed into translations T01 and T02 respectively, as shown in . T01 and T02 are common translations in translation practice and belong to relatively simple practical operations, but the implicit translation mechanisms may reveal detailed translation processes. Generally, this process occurs quickly in the translator’ s mind, to the extent that we always ignore it; meanwhile, we often consider it a taken-for-granted thought process that needs no attention. In fact, such a thought process involves different translation choices or trade-offs.

**Translation 01 [T01]**

[He] can only parrot others.

**Translation 02 [T02]**

[He is] as sly as a fox.

Sentence translation can also be evaluated through the Invariance Principle and the concept of “presupposition.” It can be argued that human basic cognitive modes are the same or at least similar, so human personality traits can be similarly described in different languages. Regarding S01, people who fit the characteristic of “does not have an idea of his [its] own” are common both in China and abroad. Regarding S02, saying someone is “cunning” is because this person hides their emotional appeals or intentions, perhaps even engaging in deceptive behavior. The meaning of the word “sly” is similar. The invariance of S01 and S02 can be transferred from the source language to the target language. Additionally, without involving zoological or biological classification, starting from the presuppositions of S01 and S02, it can be said that parrots and “parrots” are roughly the same species, and “fox” and “fox” are also the same. Moreover, in the current Chinese and Chinese cultural context, parrots are labeled as an animal without its own opinions; similarly, in the current English and English cultural context, “fox” has a “sly” label. Therefore, it can be said that T01 and T02 are correct translations of S01 and S02. S01 and S02 are very simple. Translating them into Chinese or English is not difficult, but we always overlook the deep mechanism of why such sentences can be translated this way.

However, in the translation process, the invariance of image rhetorical figures is sometimes achieved through substitute images from the source language. Taking metaphor as an example:

**Sample 03 [S03]**

[He] works like a horse.

**Sample 04 [S04]**

[He is] hungry as a bear.

**Sample 05 [S05]**

[He is] at the end of his rope.

**Sample 06 [S06]**

[He in his work] is like a fish in water.

**Sample 07 [S07]**

[He] is as anxious as an ant on a hot griddle.

**Sample 08 [S08]**

[He is] a black sheep.

The invariant factors in the above examples are transmitted to the translations through image substitution:

**Translation 03 [T03]**

[He] works like an ox.

**Translation 04 [T04]**

[He] is as hungry as a wolf.

**Translation 05 [T05]**

[He] has reached a dead end.

**Translation 06 [T06]**

[He is] like a duck to water in his work.

**Translation 07 [T07]**

[He is] like a hen on the hot griddle.

**Translation 08 [T08]**

[He is] a black sheep.

The reason for image substitution lies in the inconsistency of image presuppositions in different languages or cultures. For example, in terms of daily linguistic experience, the image of “horse” in English can map to “hard work,” but in Chinese, the image that maps to “hard work” is generally “ox.”

Additionally, the invariance of image rhetoric is sometimes achieved by eliminating the image because a certain image may not be acceptable in the target language, while at the same time, it is difficult to find an image that can replace it. In such cases, omitting a rhetorical figure is necessary to replicate the rhetorical effect of that device in the source language to a certain degree. In today’s frequent cross-cultural communication, images carrying different presuppositions are difficult or even impossible to convert across different linguistic or cultural backgrounds. Four such cases are as follows:

**Sample 09 [S09]**

[He] is an oyster of a man.

**Sample 10 [S10]**

[I will] treat [her] with kid gloves.

**Sample 11 [S11]**

[She is a] fickle [woman.]

**Sample 12 [S12]**

[This book has] a stimulating effect [indeed.]

To maximize possible rhetoric, the images in the samples must be abandoned. In the transformation process, the imagery of the discourse is eliminated, but the implicit rhetorical effect is realized (to a certain extent).

**Translation 09 [T09]**

[He is] reticent [indeed.]

**Translation 10 [T10]**

[I will] be especially gentle [with her.]

**Translation 11 [T11]**

[She is a] wanton [woman.]

**Translation 12 [T12]**

[The book is] stimulating [indeed.]

The rhetorical figures in S01-S12 are all similes or metaphors, but the method of rhetorical analysis applied to sentences using other rhetorical figures is similar because these sentences all have signifiers and signifieds, or only a signifier indicating simile or metaphor. The same applies to metonymy, synecdoche, allegory, and personification, which will not be elaborated here. Essentially, the imagery of rhetorical figures always means that an object or feature is conveyed through another, or it can be approximately said that one object or feature is a function of another.

### 3.2 Translation of Semantic Rhetoric

Semantic rhetorical figures focus on meaning. The “meaning” of meaning cannot be clearly defined in an unconditional domain. In current general rhetoric, meaning is generated in a very general context, encompassing all feelings and opinions people have about information transmitted by language and extralinguistic factors. This definition is descriptive, including but not limited to meanings contained in specific discourses. Semantic rhetorical figures function through changes in literal meaning and achieve rhetorical effects by maintaining implied meaning.

For instance, euphemism occupies a large proportion in the application of semantic rhetorical figures. Death, for example, has always been an important topic in discourse. Without euphemism, the literal meaning of death discourse

is the real meaning, with no implied meaning. For example, we would only bluntly say: He died. Compared with death discourse without euphemism, the literal meaning of euphemisms about death is altered by themselves, and the implied meaning is weakened by euphemism. Sometimes, this is a strategy or basic principle we must adopt when mentioning death; otherwise, it would be insufficient to meet the sender's psychological needs and the implicit emotional and moral needs of the current context and society.

**Sample 13 [S13]**

[And, it being low water, he] went out [with the tide.] [Dickens,1992]

**Sample 14 [S14]**

[He is going to his] long rest.

**Sample 15 [S15]**

[He enjoyed] an ever-lasting sleep.

**Sample 16 [S16]**

[He] passed away [three years ago.]

**Sample 17 [S17]**

[He] sacrificed [for his country.]

**Sample 18 [S18]**

[He] has gone to the pure land.

When translating statements about death in , we should translate euphemism with euphemism, as the meaning expressed by the euphemism in the source language can be transmitted. Euphemisms about death exist and are meaningful in both English and Chinese contexts. Although the forms of expression differ, their general rhetorical meaning is at least similar, providing a linguistic basis for translating such statements. Translation examples are as follows:

**Translation 13 [T13]**

[And, it being low water, he went out with the tide] and was gone.

**Translation 14 [T14]**

[He is going to his] long rest.

**Translation 15 [T15]**

[He] has fallen into an everlasting sleep.

**Translation 16 [T16]**

[It is three years since he] passed away.

**Translation 17 [T17]**

[He] laid down his life [for his country.]

**Translation 18 [T18]**

He has gone to a better world.

Additionally, occupations generally considered to have lower social status in certain societies are sometimes presented indirectly in discourse to maintain

occupational dignity. Like death, sometimes it is impolite to state occupational names straightforwardly to a certain degree.

**Sample 19 [S19]**

Occupations: barber, cobbler, dustman

Alternative Euphemisms: beautician, shoe rebuilder, street orderly

Therefore, occupations can be translated literally, while euphemisms should be completed through basically corresponding euphemisms:

**Translation 19 [T19]**

Occupations: barber, cobbler, garbage collector

Euphemisms: beautician, shoe rebuilder, street orderly

For irony, implied meaning is enhanced through significant changes in literal meaning, or actually by antonyms of literal meaning. Translation is also based on the same pattern.

**Sample 22 [S22]**

You have got us into a nice mess!

**Sample 23 [S23]**

What a noble illustration of the tender laws of his favoured country!—They let the paupers go to sleep! [Dickens, 1995]

**Sample 24 [S24]**

This “hardworking” person only reads one hour a week.

**Sample 25 [S25]**

He plays games all day, truly “diligent” enough.

They can be translated as T22-25:

**Translation 22 [T22]**

Thanks to you, our situation is just wonderful!

**Translation 23 [T23]**

They actually allow the poor to sleep!—What “noble” evidence! What “merciful” laws! What “lovely” country!

**Translation 24 [T24]**

This hardworking man seldom reads more than one hour a week.

**Translation 25 [T25]**

He plays games daylong. What a diligent man!

The translation process has a standpoint and a purpose: to maximize the reproduction of general rhetorical effects. This article does not involve detailed and practical translation techniques but attempts to analyze the translation process in a general and theoretical manner.

For the translation of some other semantic rhetorical figures, rhetoric can be reproduced to the maximum extent, but sometimes it cannot be achieved in this

way. For example, the rhetorical effects produced by hyperbole and oxymoron in English are likely to reappear repeatedly in different Chinese contexts because the changes in literal meaning and sharp contrasts in word meaning have similar rhetorical meanings and functions in both languages. The same applies to nicknames or aliases with strong rhetorical implications. However, rhetorical figures do not always have such characteristics. For instance, the literal meaning of puns simultaneously connects to a pair of implied meanings. This relationship exists in a specific linguistic or cultural background and often does not hold in other linguistic or cultural contexts. In such cases, the untranslatability of rhetoric emerges. For communicative purposes, such sentences can still be translated and achieve good communicative goals, but theoretically, such translation is not feasible, and their meanings are difficult to convey relatively completely.

### 3.3 Translation of Structural Rhetoric

For both English and Chinese, parallel structure, or the repeated use of the same (or similar) sentence structure, means enhanced rhetoric. This is almost self-evident for both languages, based on the assumption that human basic cognitive modes are the same or at least similar.

#### Sample 26 [S26]

Their powers of conversation were considerable. They could describe an entertainment with accuracy, relate an anecdote with humour, and laugh at their acquaintance with spirit. [Austen,1983]

#### Sample 27 [S27]

Their weather-beaten faces are gloomy and deep, their time-worn eyes shine brightly.

Generally, word choice depends on the transmission of rhetorical results, which is an elaboration of the basic principle translators follow, but not a specific translation method—the latter is determined by the translator's specific comprehensive language conversion ability.

#### Translation 26 [T26]

They are truly talkative, describing banquets in minute detail, telling stories with great humor, and mocking friends with spirit.

#### Translation 27 [T27]

Their sun-whipped faces were dark, and their time-beaten eyes were light. [Steinbeck, 2000]

Antithesis, reduplication, conjugation, as well as climax and anticlimax, can also be translated in the same way. They are all expressed through certain sentence patterns, which are accepted in both English and Chinese.

Additionally, antithesis is a very strict parallel relationship. The required rules and formal indicators make it difficult to transmit general rhetorical meaning.

The more precise the transmission, the higher the translation quality. For example, the quality of the following example and its translation can be said to be quite good:

**Sample 28 [S28]**

This were to be new made when thou art old, / And see thy blood warm when thou feel' st it cold. [Shakespeare, 2004]

**Sample 29 [S29]**

From hill to hill no bird in flight; from path to path no man in sight. [Liu Zongyuan, 2005]

**Translation 28 [T28]**

This is like old age gaining new life, and like cooled blood returning to warmth. [Ai Mei, 2008]

**Translation 29 [T29]**

From hill to hill no bird in flight; / From path to path no man in sight. [Xu Yuanchong, 2012]

### 3.4 Translation of Phonological Rhetoric

The translation of phonological rhetorical figures requires attention to the characteristics and combinations of phonetics and sounds. For example, alliteration and assonance frequently used in classical English poetry are common phonological rhetorical figures. Chinese classical poetry also stipulates a large number of phonological rhetorical figures in its metrics.

**Sample 30 [S30]**

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, / The furrow followed free; ...[Taylor, 2014]

**Sample 31 [S31]**

Before my bed, the moonlight glows, I suspect it' s frost on the ground. I raise my head to gaze at the bright moon, lower it to think of home. [Li Bai, 2005]

**Translation 30 [T30]**

The gentle breeze blows slowly, white waves fly in clusters, / water splashes softly behind the boat.

**Translation 31 [T31]**

Before my bed a pool of light; Can it be hoar frost on the ground?

Looking up, I find the moon bright Bowing; in homesickness I' m drowned. [Xu Yuanchong, 2012]

### 3.5 Translation of Comprehensive Rhetoric

In linguistic practice, different rhetorical figures are often used simultaneously, forming comprehensive general rhetorical effects.

**Sample 32 [S32]**

“I Know all, I know all,” said the last comer. “Be a brave man my Caspard! It is better for the poor little plaything to die so than to live. It has died in a moment without pain. Could it have lived an hour as happily?” [Dickens, 2007]

**Sample 33 [S33]**

A thousand-foot dike collapses from an ant’ s nest; a hundred-foot house burns from a spark in a chimney crack. [Han Fei, 2000]

When translating S32 and S33, we should transmit as much as possible the complete rhetorical meaning produced by the comprehensive rhetorical figures embodied in the examples. Specifically, S32 and S33 consist of several specific rhetorical figures. For example, repetition, antithesis, and metaphor are clearly visible in S32. S33 uses hyperbole, parallelism, and metaphor. It is not necessary to replicate all rhetorical figures in translation, but transferring as much rhetorical meaning as possible in a general sense is the proper standard for high-quality translation.

**Translation 32 [T32]**

“I know all, I know all,” said the last comer. “Be brave, my Caspard! For a poor little plaything, it’ s better to die than to live. It died in an instant, no longer suffering. If it lived, would it have had even one happy hour?”

**Translation 33 [T33]**

A long dike will be toppled down for an ant nest in it; a tall building will be burned down by a spark from a chink of the chimney.

The translation of general rhetorical meaning is more comprehensive and precise than the translation of narrow rhetorical figures. If both aspects can be converted simultaneously, the translation will be perfect. Unfortunately, perfect translation, as they say, may always be in sight but forever out of reach.

**3.6.1 Sentence Translation Related to Traditional Rhetorical Devices**

General rhetorical figures are not limited to specific rhetorical figures or the comprehensive application of multiple rhetorical figures. In this sense, the category of rhetorical figures is expanded. For speakers and receivers in specific contexts, the use of rhetorical figures is an active behavior to make discourse vivid and understandable. In other words, communication always proceeds at the cost of misunderstanding the world.

**Sample 34 [S34]**

L’ absence est à l’ amour ce qu’ est au feu le vent; il éteint le petit, il allume le grand. [De Bussy, 2010][parallelism; metaphor]

**Sample 35 [S35]**

In battle, he is as brave as a fierce tiger, annihilating countless enemies. [simile; hyperbole]

**Translation 34 [T34]**

Absence is to love what wind is to fire: it extinguishes the small flame, and makes the great blaze burn. [this author]

**Translation 35 [T35]**

He was brave as a lion and fetched off thousands of enemies in the battle.

As shown in S34, the relationship between absence and love is logically and essentially different from the relationship between wind and fire. These two pairs of concepts belong to different categories and cannot be directly compared. For S35, in fact, the strength and combat skills of a tiger are not comparable to those of humans. Moreover, “annihilating countless enemies” is logically incorrect expression. The above examples are products of linguistic imagination. However, these examples are translatable. In the translation process, we use different vehicles (tiger vs. lion) to express similar meanings to achieve the purpose of translation.

**3.6.2 Translation at the General Rhetorical Level**

In a broad sense, sentence translation is also synonymous transformation of rhetoric. We establish concepts to understand the complex world we live in. But concepts are always vague and distorted, and sentences are no exception because the world is opaque. Distorted concepts can be understood as general rhetorical expressions, maintaining a certain distance from the real world.

Sometimes, rhetorical figures with general rhetorical characteristics are not conspicuous. In other words, it is difficult to define them, and generally, it is unnecessary because the function of general rhetoric transcends specific rhetorical figures.

**Sample 36 [S36]**

A good husband makes a good wife.

**Sample 37 [S37]**

A talented man and beautiful woman [or a talented man and beautiful woman, a match made in heaven.]

S36 and S37 are very common propositions, universally accepted and trusted in their respective speech communities.

Expressions	Conditions
Sample 36 [S36]	a good husband[P] → a good wife[q]
Sample 37 [S37]	man has talent and woman has beauty[p] → perfectly matched partners[q]

The rhetorical meaning contained in S36 and S37 does not belong to traditional narrow rhetorical figures. Obviously, both propositions are false. A good hus-

band does not necessarily have a good wife, and a good wife does not necessarily have a good husband. Moreover, logically speaking, “man has talent and woman has beauty” is not a sufficient condition for “perfectly matched partners,” nor is “perfectly matched partners” a necessary condition for “man has talent and woman has beauty.” There is conceptual distortion in S36 and S37, but people usually default to them as true propositions. In fact, they are both discourse based on rhetoric, far from facts.

When translating S36 and S37, we need to transmit the implicit conditions and relations. In other words, the translation process needs to preserve conceptual distortion or rhetorical meaning, even if they may not be accepted or trusted in different languages or cultures. In today’s world, based on similar basic human cognitive modes, the possibility of rhetorical meaning transfer may be greater than the possibility of reproduction. This transfer may expand the cognitive categories of people in a certain language community or culture.

**Translation 36 [T36]**

A virtuous husband makes a virtuous wife. / A good husband is accompanied by a good wife.

**Translation 37 [T37-1]**

A talented man and a beautiful woman is a right match. / A perfect match between a man and a girl. [Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press Dictionary Editorial Office, 2001]

Due to the concealment or partial absence of conditions and conclusions in S36 and S37, T36 and T37 can be said to have relatively well transferred the rhetorical meaning of the former two (the two versions of T37 have different emphases, which will not be elaborated here). The translation approaches of T36 and T37 are helpful for the translation practice of this type of sentence, providing a clear direction, but not specific sentence translation methods.

Furthermore, for sentences without obvious rhetorical features, rhetoric is invisible but still ubiquitous. Take S38 as an example. This expression is common in daily life, and from a general rhetorical perspective, it is also a sentence with rhetorical meaning. When people utter this sentence, they do not consciously think about its rhetorical meaning—humans are naturally rhetorical animals [Tan Xuechun].

**Sample 38 [S38]**

I love you.

Even in the extended sense of narrow rhetoric, the most straightforward discourse without any narrow rhetorical figures contains rhetorical meaning—having no rhetoric can also be considered a rhetorical device. Or rather, having no rhetoric is sometimes the best rhetoric, as the Southern Song Dynasty poetry critic [Yan Yu, 2012] said: “not following logical paths, not falling into verbal traps.” For example, “I love you” is a short and straightforward sentence requiring two roles, speaker and receiver, to complete the information transmission

process. But the meaning it contains may also be multiple meanings based on rhetoric. Generally, people use “I love you” to express feelings for others. (There are even four words for love in Greek.) If “love” is roughly measured by a certain scale, such as sexual attraction or pure spiritual love, then the degree to which one person loves another may differ from that of another couple or pair of lovers, with different proportions of factors. However, since the degree of affection cannot be precisely quantified, it is difficult to accurately define this degree. Moreover, to maintain efficient communication in reality, we do not quantify it. The perlocutionary act of “I love you” is the most important, being the primary purpose of our uttering this sentence in most situations. Thus, a single utterance conceals diversity, and words distance themselves from facts. This is a distortion and where rhetoric works. Even adding degree adverbs before “I love you” does not change this. For example, “I really love you very much” is also discourse that may contain multiple hidden meanings and different factor proportions. Moreover, for a specific speaker, the specific degree of “loving you very much” is also difficult to define. Furthermore, from a general rhetorical perspective, rhetorical meaning is not only presented in speech, such as the speaker’s clothing and appearance, social status, tone of voice, and even a bouquet of flowers offered when saying “I love you,” all have rhetorical meaning. In fact, general rhetorical methods are always used consciously or unconsciously.

On the other hand, the receiver may have deviations in understanding and accepting the meaning expressed by “I love you.” Whether the rhetorical meaning of “I love you” can be completely transmitted is unknown. Because the implied meaning and factor proportions may differ in the receiver’s interpretation and understanding. There may be superimposed distortion, having some impact on information transmission. However, in this information transmission process, uncertain meaning may not matter much; the quality and quantity of information transmission are sufficient, basically having no impact on the perlocutionary act. For the receiver, knowing that the speaker “loves” them is enough; the specific degree and specific meaning need not be considered for the time being. On the other hand, considering possible superimposed distortion, the information transmission process may also not meet the speaker’s expectations. In the process of courtship, the receiver has more discourse power than the speaker. The receiver has the right to decide whether the information transmission process can be completed in the way the speaker expects, mainly depending on whether the receiver’s interpretation and understanding are consistent with the speaker’s expectations. For example, the receiver may understand the expected perlocutionary act of “I love you” as the speaker’s desire to have sex with him or her. The receiver may be dissatisfied with this, while the speaker may want to express admiration for the receiver’s spiritual world by saying “I love you.” In other words, the rhetorical meaning interpreted and understood by the receiver may differ from the rhetorical meaning initiated by the speaker, and these different interpretations and understandings together constitute the multiple rhetorical meanings of discourse.

The above analysis based on general rhetoric is a general classic example and

cannot cover all possible rhetorical meanings of “I love you” in reality, but other possibilities can be similarly analyzed. For example, even if the speaker does not intend to lie, the discourse may still be far from facts. No matter what he or she says, superimposed distortion still exists. The receiver’s interpretation and understanding may also be far from facts, but the receiver can choose to believe or doubt the speaker’s intention, completing the information transmission process to a certain degree.

Regarding the translation process, “I love you” is the correct translation of “I love you,” and vice versa. Such mutual translation processes can transmit all possible rhetorical meanings contained in the discourse. This is because, in the general rhetorical sense, starting from basic life experience, “I love you” and “I love you” are similar in all possible communication processes in English and Chinese languages or cultures. It may also be the same in another different language or cultural context, as shown in . These translations are all acceptable. The deep reason is that humans have similar basic cognitive modes and similar emotions and reason, just as the saying goes: “people share the same heart, and hearts share the same reason.”

**Translation 38-1 [T38-1]**

Te quiero [Spanish]

**Translation 38-2 [T38-2]**

Je t’ aime [French]

**Translation 38-3 [T38-3]**

[Russian]

**Translation 38-4 [T38-4]**

I love you

The standards for discourse translation can be constructed in the general rhetorical sense. Specifically, through the analysis of the invariance principle of rhetoric and rhetorical distortion, that is, the translation process of discourse can be interpreted from a general rhetorical perspective. The translation of traditional rhetorical devices frequently used in linguistic practice is based on the invariance principle, and the translation of comprehensive rhetorical devices in discourse is also based on the invariance principle. Sometimes, the general rhetorical meaning of discourse is deeply buried beneath the surface of the word world. The translation of such rhetorical meaning is not as intuitive and easy to operate as translating traditional rhetorical devices and comprehensive rhetorical devices, requiring in-depth and comprehensive consideration of its rhetorical meaning. General rhetorical meaning constitutes the meaning of discourse. Therefore, discourse translation can be basically equivalent to the re-conveyance of general rhetorical meaning in different linguistic forms. The degree and accuracy of rhetorical meaning transmission constitute the evaluation standard for sentence translation quality.

Through the analysis of the invariance principle and distortion, through the

elaboration of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary expressions, and through the elaboration of the transmission of words, modal particles, and context and their processes, we can evaluate the generation and reproduction of rhetorical effects in the sentence translation process. All concepts, means, and translation processes are integrated and fused into the scale of general rhetoric, which can measure the quality and quantity of rhetorical meaning transmission. The more accurate and comprehensive the re-conveyance of rhetorical meaning, the higher the quality of sentence translation.

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*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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