

Review Article

Research on the Nominalization and Passive Voice Translation Strategies of Energy Discourse

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Abstract: Extensive use of nominalization and passive voice are two prominent features of energy discourse texts. The article analyzes and proves by means of examples, and shows the phenomenon of nominalization and passive voice in the process of Chinese-English translation of energy articles in China. Based on this, this paper makes summaries of the C-E translation strategies of energy discourse in these two aspects. In terms of nominalization, attention should be paid to the ordering of multiple modifiers. In the passive voice, attention should be paid to grammar and marker words.

Keywords: Nominalization, passive voice, energy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

At present, human beings are in a "world energy era", and people pay more and more attention to energy. Today, world energy structure is dominated by the three traditional fossil energy—coal, oil and natural gas, and is supplemented by clean energy such as nuclear energy, biomass energy and wind energy. In 2013, the leaders of the CPC Central Committee creatively proposed "the Economic Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Central Maritime Silk Road" after long-term preparations. The energy cooperation and connection between China and the countries along "The Belt and Road" is increasingly strengthened, which has greatly promoted the development of neighboring countries and even the world, and has received high attention from domestic and foreign media 1. Among them, cooperation in the field of energy is an important area of cooperation in the Belt and Road project. Especially in the context of the increasingly severe situation in Russia and Ukraine, the fluctuation of crude oil prices is obvious, and the

energy industry has been greatly affected. Many European countries are major participants in the deployment of the Belt and Road Initiative. Europe is not only a competitor but also a collaborator in the process of the China Dream, and it is inextricably linked with China. Therefore, Europe has naturally become an important target of China's Belt and Road diplomatic propaganda 1.

Based on this, in order to better serve the development of Chinese energy industry, English discourse research in the energy field is very necessary. Since the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed in 2013, the number of papers published in the field of energy English research has generally shown an upward trend, but the total number of papers is still relatively small. From the perspectives of nominalization and passive voice, which are two notable characteristics of energy English, this paper analyzes the characteristics of nominalization and passive voice, and summarizes the C-E translation strategies of energy discourse.

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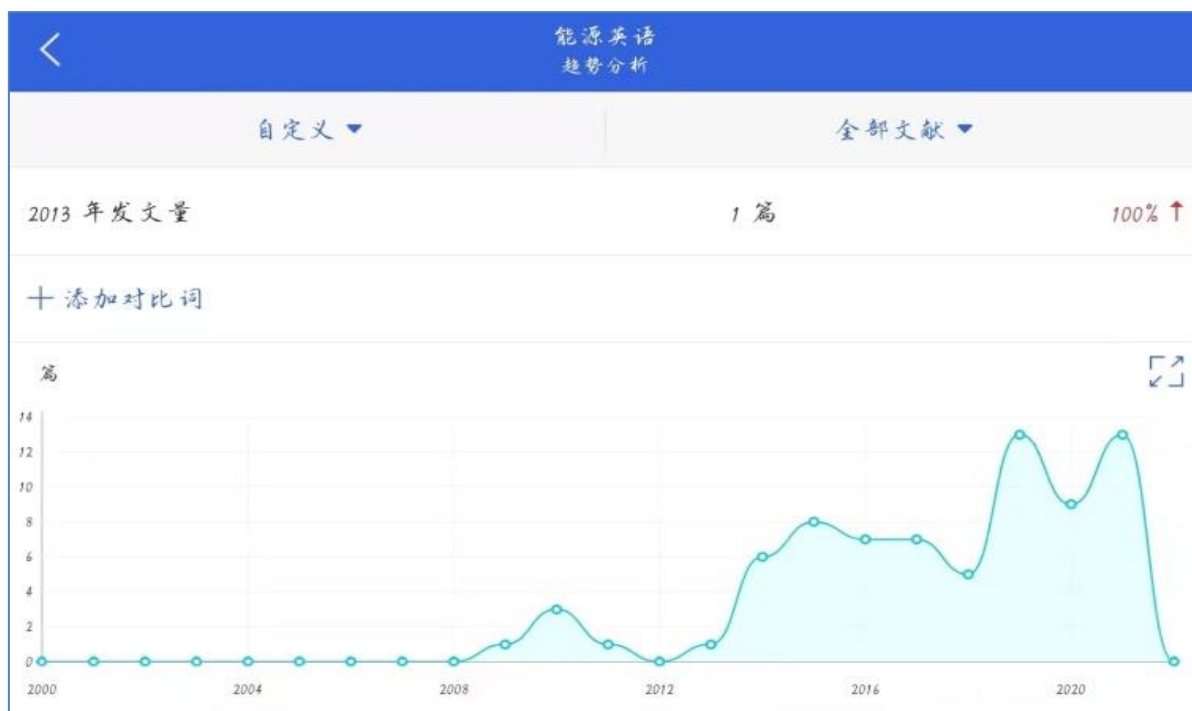


Fig-1: Statistical chart of energy English literature published in recent ten years Data from CNKI <https://www.cnki.net/>

2. The phenomenon of nominalization in energy discourse

According to A Dictionary of language and Phonetics, nominalization is "the process of forming a noun from some other part of speech or a derivation process of obtaining a noun phrase from an underlying clause"². In layman's terms, according to definitions, nominalization structure can be divided into two types, namely, compound-modifying noun structures and deverbative noun structures.

2.1 Compound-modifying noun structures

The outstanding feature of the C-M structure is that a noun is the central word, while other nouns, adjectives, adverbs, participles, and prepositional phrases are added before or after the central word³. These prepositions or postpositions play the role of modifying the head word and serve as attributives in the whole structure. As the phrase "capacity additions" in Energy Outlook 20214, "additions" is the central word, and the noun "capacity" modifies "additions". This structure is equivalent to "the additions of capacity". What's more, the word "generation" in "cash flow generation" is the central word, and "cash" modifies the "flow". At the same time, "cash flow" is used as a noun phrase to modify "generation". This structure is explained in English as "the generation of a flow of cash". The prepositional noun modifies the head word,

which constitutes a compound-modifying noun structure.

2.2 Deverbative noun structures

In contrast to the former, the deverbative noun structure is obviously derived from the verb. In order to make the expression more concise and precise, people often combine multiple short sentences to a long sentence. Considering that there can only be one predicate in a sentence but multiple nouns or nominalized structures³, the deverbative noun structure emerges as the times require. This type of structure is generally based on the same root, and the derived morphemes in the cohesive morpheme are added before or after it, such as -ion, -ment, -ness, etc. After turning the original verb into a noun, the noun is matched with the preposition to form a complete nominalization structure. E.g:

(1) Semisubmersibles⁵

The word refers to an offshore drilling platform that extracts oil. Half of the platform is above sea level and half is below sea level. The root "submerge" has two parts of speech, verb and adjective, and it becomes an adjective with suffix "-ible". The prefix "semi-" means "half" which is added to "submersible" as an adjective prefix. Finally, a plural noun suffix, the letter "s", is added to the end of the word to make it become a derived long noun. Use Morphological Tree to represent the following figure:

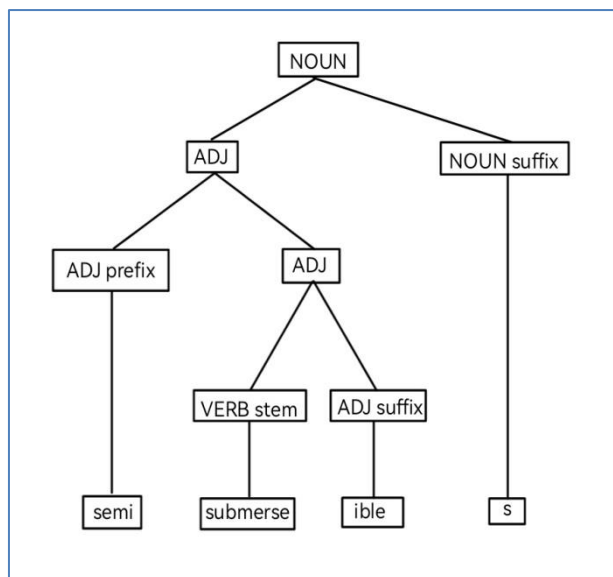


Fig-2: Morphological Tree of “semisubmersibles”

(2) *In the energy sector, the programme aims to contribute to further integration of the European energy market* 6.

This sentence is a typical deverbative noun structure. In general English, the entire sentence is expressed as "In the energy sector, the programme aims to further integrate the European energy market." Comparing the two sentences with each other, we can easily find that the former is "integration of", which is better reflects the formality of energy discourse and makes the organizational structure and expression logic more rigorous. This also reflects the overall view of the program and a good idea for the European energy market. The blueprint of the integrated market is more intuitive. However, the latter has relatively thin semantics, and just simply indicates what the purpose of the program is.

3. Passive voice in energy discourse

The expression of passivation in energy discourse texts is also a distinguishing feature. It is well known that the passive voice changes the relationship between the subject and the predicate through the form inflection of the verb. Unlike Chinese, which often uses active expressions, passive voice is more common in energy-related English texts. By reading a lot of energy texts, it is not difficult to find that the widespread use of passive voice is not caused by accidental phenomenon or the personal preferences of some authors, but an expression of certain purpose and inevitability. The use of passive voice has some common functions, which are mainly reflected in three aspects, discussion angle, writing structure and semantic expression.

3.1 Function analysis

3.1.1 Objective perspective

Energy English has the attributes of technical English, and it is mostly an expository style and

argumentative style that describes objective things and expresses official attitudes. Most of the texts describe energy phenomena from the perspective of the third person, which can minimize the interference of subjective factors, highlight objectivity, and thus be more authoritative and convincing.

3.1.2 Proper ellipsis

Energy English has the attributes of scientific and technological English, and it is mostly an expository style and argumentative style that describes objective things and expresses official attitudes. Most of the texts describe energy phenomena from the perspective of the third person, which can minimize the interference of subjective factors, highlight objectivity, and thus be more authoritative and make readers more convincing.

3.1.3 Semantic clarity

The effect on semantic expression can be divided into two aspects. One is to emphasize the passive, that is, to emphasize the object in the active voice. Usually, the object is prepositioned and placed in a more conspicuous position.

The second is to blur or hide the identity of the actor when it is inconvenient to say the actor, thereby reducing the attention. In this way, on the one hand, it is convenient for the author to describe the main body of the discourse efficiently. On the other hand, overly verbose sentences can be avoided by removing information that is not relevant to the discussion.

3.2 Typical cases analysis

The passive voice is used in the vast majority of energy texts for more than one purpose. The use of passive voice in a sentence often has two or more linguistic advantages, and several advantages are

intermingled and mutually reinforcing. As mentioned in the "China Oil and Gas" journal:

(3) *During the event, fifteen best practice cases of international energy cooperation were unveiled* 7.

The backbone of example (3) is "cases were unveiled". In general English, this sentence should be expressed as "A speaker/ certain person unveiled fifteen best practice cases of international energy cooperation." Example (3) hides the unnecessary actor and avoids the sentence being too long by omitting the irrelevant element. Also, the actor is omitted, making the sentence more objective. At the same time, "fifteen best practice cases" is placed before the predicate verb as the subject which highlights "cases" and naturally leads to the further elaboration of "cases" below.

In the journal "China Oil and Gas", there are more typical examples of using passive voice such as:

(4) *...the cooperative mechanism among the world's five largest emerging economies from four continents has been constantly deepened, and a comprehensive multi-level cooperation framework has been formed which...*⁷

In example (4), two parallel passive voice sentences are linked with "and". The two subjects "the cooperative mechanism" and "cooperation framework" have the same actors, "human", which can be omitted directly. This also shortens the sentence length and avoids repetition.

4. The output strategy of English translation of energy discourse

In today's society, the energy field, as one of the important battlefields in the international game, deserves greater attention. Language is an important medium to express the attitudes of countries and convey their voices. Therefore, when the two are combined, the importance of energy discourse is self-evident. In order to better convey the Chinese voice and weaken the barriers between Chinese and English discourse expressions, the English translation strategy of my country's energy discourse needs to be summarized. Through research, it is found that the English translation process of energy discourse characterized by nominalization and passive voice is regular, strategic and can be summarized. There are many strategies, and it is impossible to repeat them one by one, so based on their own understanding, the following typical strategies are summarized.

4.1 Nominalization Related Strategies

Pay attention to the ordering of multiple modifiers

Ordering problems often arise in compound-modifying nominalization structures. In this type of structure, there are usually more than two nouns before the head word, and these nouns are related to the head in different degrees. Therefore, the ordering of multiple

modifiers before the central word is worth studying. Looking at multiple documents, we can draw a rule: the more the modifier expresses the attributes of the central word, that is, the more immutable and objective characteristics, the closer it is to the central word. Conversely, the more variable, temporary, and subjective factors are, the farther away the central word is. In this structure, the central word is check, and fire-safety expresses the basic properties of the central word. It is second only to the central word "check", that is, the inspection of fire safety type, which cannot be omitted, and is more important than home. And "home" is a temporary adverbial of place. At this time, the inspection place is "home", in other cases the place can be a company, school, etc., which is not unique and exclusive. Therefore, this nominalization structure is home fire- safety check not fire-home check.

The problem of sorting nominalization of combined modifier types is a very common error-prone point for English translators. Translators not only need to have a high accumulation, but also need to think rationally, and make reasonable judgments through life experience and logical thinking. Therefore, if you encounter such nominalization structures in the process of English translation, you need to pay special attention, think carefully from multiple perspectives, and finally give a reasonable translation.

4.2 Passive voice related strategies

4.2.1 Focus on the grammatical problems derived from the voice transformation process

The frequent appearance of passive voice and technical terms in energy articles often causes some grammatical problems in the English translation process. Several common grammatical problems are as follows:

When the verb phrase changes from active to passive, the suffix that comes with the verb cannot be dismantled or omitted; for example, of, for to, etc., cannot be lost due to passivation.

After the transformation, the subject and verb are the same. The position of the agent and the patient are exchanged. The form of the verb carried after that may also change.

Intransitive verbs (belong, appear...) have no passive form; in the process of English translation, we cannot blindly change the active into passive mechanically. Especially with intransitive verbs, they cannot be changed to passive form. Therefore, in the process of English translation, we must avoid "brainless" passiveness, and check professional and unfamiliar words in time to determine whether they are transitive verbs.

4.2.2 The emergence of passive voice Chinese-to-English marker words

In English, the passive voice has a very obvious marker word and standard format, namely "be + past participle of the verb". However, in Chinese, in many cases, sentences have passive semantics, but the sign word "bei" does not necessarily appear. For example, it is mentioned in *Energy Outlook 2021* :

(4) *Wind and solar energy are expected to gain cost competitiveness over fossil fuel and nuclear power in 2021.*

It can be seen from this that the word "you wang" in the Chinese original does not have the word "bei", but is translated into passive form in English, "are expected to".

It is for this reason that the translator must read out the passive meaning in the Chinese manuscript and translate it accurately in the English passive voice format. Especially in energy English articles, the passive voice is often used because it can better reflect the formality. Therefore, the translator needs to consciously and selectively find the passive voice hidden in the semantics, so as to make the translation more sticky. In line with the style of international native English articles.

4.3 Complement each other

Chinese and English languages have different discourse styles and discourse attitudes. Our country adheres to the concept of people-oriented governance, and pays attention to the leading role and enthusiasm of people as the subject of discourse. In the Chinese expression of energy discourse, the active voice is more frequently used than the passive voice, and the nominalization phenomenon is less than that in English. To a certain extent, nominalization is also the transformation of the speaker's action into the subject. That is the verb into a noun. In the comparison of Chinese and English language styles, we can find that the focus of the two is different. Chinese focuses on the subject, while English focuses on the object. The transformation of subject and object is the intersection of nominalization and passive voice. Therefore,

nominalization and passive voice rely on each other, and most of them exist at the same time, reflecting the formality, rigor, and scientificity of energy texts.

5. CONCLUSION

Nominalization and passive voice are common phenomena in energy discourse. With the change of Chinese role in the international energy situation, the requirements for the accuracy and authenticity of energy discourse translation have also increased. By summarizing and researching English translation strategies, this essay uses international rhetoric to express opinions, promotes language to better exert its information function, and express semantics formally, rigorously and authentically. At the same time, it also enriches the research on energy discourse and translation strategies, which is conducive to better shaping the image of a major energy country, and is conducive to enhancing my country's discourse power and influence in the international energy field.

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