

WHY ENGLISH OFTEN USES NOUNS TO EXPRESS MOTIONS WHILE CHINESE PREFER VERBS.

Why English often uses nouns to express motions while Chinese prefer verbs.

People may ask why English people often use nouns to express motions while our Chinese prefer verbs. I would like to give some points for explanation.

First, English has comparatively stricter grammar rule restricting the use of verbs in the sentence, while verbs can serve almost as any part of the Chinese sentence. However, there are deeper reasons behind this phenomenon. We know, languages reflected the ways of people's thinking, which can be compared to a chain - a chain of thought formed by many links - language entities in the form of words.

To the English mind, actions or motions have been highly generalized and conceptualized to be represented by nouns (including verb nouns). Such nouns have become entities like words denoting concrete objects. Words like actions, coming, arrival, being, etc form the links in the chain of thought just as words like book, desk, man, etc.

The two kinds of words are of the same value as far as the sentence structure is concerned. However, to the Chinese mind, actions or motions have not yet become abstractized concepts which can be expressed through nouns, that is, not as entities serving as links in the chain of

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thought.

Verbs in Chinese are used rather as connectors to join links represented mainly by nouns. If we compare the English sentence to a piece of architecture, which is of three dimensions but stative, then we can compare the Chinese sentence to a moving picture being shown, which is also of three dimensions, but formed of a two dimensional surface plus the surface of time. It is dynamic.

The claim that the Chinese sentence is like “flowing water” also prove this. When looking at a stative building, people see or want to see not only details, which can stands scrutinization, but also how its different parts, including the parts representing actions and motions, are linked together.

Their spatial relation must be clear. All these are expressed through grammatical forms including morphological changes of words and connectives like conjunctions, prepositions, relative words, etc., thus English is mainly hypertactic.

However, when watching a moving picture, people would not and can't ask too much about spatial details, but rather its time sequence and progress becomes more important, which are expressed mainly through verbs (representing actions and motions).

In a sense, the Chinese sentences can be compared to a piece of music, which can be enjoyed through the flow of the whole melody, whose notes can only be enjoyed as a whole. This also results in Chinese being mainly a paratactic language in structure.

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