



A Contrastive Study on the C-E Translation of the Verb of Perception *zhijian* from the Perspective of Subjective Consciousness and Objective Consciousness

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ABSTRACT

Verbs of perception include sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, of which *zhijian* belongs to sight is very common in literary works, and its semantic meaning also begins to change with the development of time. Based on the original text and two translated versions of *the Water Margin*, this paper makes a comparative analysis of the translation strategies of *zhijian* on the basis that Chinese emphasizes subjective consciousness and the mixed consciousness of subjectivity and objectivity, while English stresses objective consciousness with a clear boundary between subjectivity and objectivity. According to previous studies, this paper regroupes the appearance of *zhijian* and divides it into two categories, namely *zhijian* at the beginning of a sentence and at the beginning of a minor sentence. On the basis of the context and the changing function of *zhijian*, that is, the function of being a verb and being a discourse marker, it can be concluded that as the meaning of a verb, the real action, the meaning of *zhijian* is expressed by “seeing”, so translators usually adopt literal translation; while as a discourse marker, it is no longer the main component of sentence structure, but to highlight the following information, translators will adopt deletion, conversion and retaining. It can be seen that translators often need to convert Chinese characterized by subjective consciousness into English dominated by objective consciousness, thus conforming to various meaning of *zhijian*.

1. Introduction

In this paper, the English versions of *the Water Margin* by Sidney Shapiro and Pearl S Buck are taken as the corpus. And *zhijian* has appeared 895 times in the original text, but its meaning is not all the same. Wang Yi (2015) examined the path and mechanism of the evolution of the function of *zhijian*, concluded that *zhijian*

can evolve into verbs and adverbs, and further evolve into discourse markers, which have the functions of introducing new scenes, enhancing the sense of being at the place, highlighting the unexpected, enhancing interaction, etc. She divides *zhijian* into four meanings: 仅仅看见; 只要、只是、只有; 看见; 话语标记. Wang Jianguo (2016) divides the processing and use of verbs of perception into corresponding conversion and non-correspond-

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ing conversion, and concludes that the main methods for translating these verbs are: deleting verbs of perception in the original text and adding other verbs of perception in the target text. Based on the previous classification, this paper divides *zhijian* into two categories: at the beginning of a sentence and at the beginning of a minor sentence. *The Water Margin* is a great literary treasure in Ming and Qing Dynasties, with the same word *zhijian* appearing so frequently but has different meanings. Therefore, it is of great significance to study its English translation.

This paper analyzes different translation strategies based on the function of *zhijian* as a verb and a discourse marker in *the Water Margin* from the difference between the subjective and objective consciousness, namely Chinese emphasizes subjective consciousness and the mixed consciousness of subjectivity and objectivity, while English stresses objective consciousness with a clear boundary between subjectivity and objectivity.

2. The Analysis of the Classification of *zhijian* and Its Translation

On the basis of the function, the classification of *zhijian* falls into two categories: *zhijian* at the beginning of a sentence and at the beginning of a minor sentence. The original function works as a verb, which can be seen as “witness/see”. As time goes by, the function and meaning of *zhijian* is different from its original. At this time, *zhijian* begins to evolve further into discourse markers, which has no predicative function and is not a syntactic component. Its function is usually to emphasize a new topic in the following sentence.

2.1 *Zhijian* at the Beginning of A Sentence

Mostly, *zhijian* at the beginning of a sentence can be seen as a discourse marker without the specific agent, which only reflects the perspective of the narrator or the author to introduce a new scene or situation.

(1) 只见班部从中，宰相赵哲、参政文彦博，出班奏曰：“目今京师瘟疫盛行，伤损军民甚多。伏望陛下，释罪宽恩，省刑薄税。” (Kindle, P205)

Sidney Shapiro: Zhao Zhe, the Premier, and Wen Yanbo, his deputy, advanced and said: “The plague is raging unabated in the capital. Victims among the soldiers and the people are many....” (P9)

Pearl S. Buck: Then from among all the officials was there a certain minister named Chao Che and there was a lesser one, When Yien Po, and they came forth and said, “Now is the plague heavy upon us here....” (P4)

There is no specific agent to produce the word *zhijian*,

and the main function is to stress and highlight a new scene. The focus of the sentence is placed after *zhijian*. We Chinese like to say something objective mixed with our feelings, with a strong subjectivity, while English pay attention to the objective things without mingling with personal feeling. Here, the verb of perception *zhijian* stressing the objective scene is seen by the narrator’s view. Except for the function of introducing a new topic or a new situation, it can make the reader closely to the place and strengthen the interaction. And sometimes it’s just a hint by the narrator.

Here, the mixed description of the scene with the subjective perspective *zhijian* shows the obscure boundary in Chinese, so two translators both deleted *zhijian* and just directly translated the scene, which makes readers focus more on the following information.

Sometimes, *zhijian* means what is seen by the outsider or those who are present, which is the original meaning. Here is an example.

(2) 那老叟直至宫中，抱著太子耳边低低说了八个字，太子便不啼哭。【金夹批：奇事奇文。】那老叟不言姓名，只见化阵清风而去。耳边道八个甚字？道是：“文有文曲，武有武曲。” (Kindle, P197)

Sidney Shapiro: The old man went in, picked up the baby, and whispered eight words into his ear. At once the prince stopped crying. The old man disappeared in a puff of air without even revealing his name. ... (P9)

Pearl S. Buck: The old man entered straightway and he lifted up the babe and he whispered certain words into the babe’s ear and the babe ceased its weeping. Now the old man would not tell his surname or his name, but who watched saw him change into a wind and vanish. ... (P4)

Here, the story tells that Barefoot God from Heaven cried night and day when he was born on earth, and Heaven sent the god Taibai changing himself into an old man to come to earth to deal with that. The guard led him into the palace and there the Emperor commanded him to enter into the private palace and see the baby. So we can know that *zhijian* here was the perspective of the emperor, which does not function as a discourse marker of a new scene. The original sentence at first shows the action or the state of the old man, but the following sentence shifts the focus to what the emperor has seen, which highlights the mixed consciousness of subjectivity and objectivity in Chinese. Shapiro translated into “the old man disappeared in a puff of air” by deleting *zhijian* and just described the result of the old man’s action. He used “the old man” as the subject followed by the action “disappear” meaning “passing from view”, and directly described the objective

environment implicating that the old man and his disappearance are what the emperor has seen which indicates the objective consciousness of English.

Pearl S. Buck also used “the old man” as the subject but she explicitly points out who has seen by translating into “who watched saw him”. As what I have mentioned before, it prefers objective consciousness in English. The addition of a new perspective “who watched” will interrupt the fluency of the old man’s action, and obscure the boundary between subjectivity-oriented Chinese and objectivity-oriented English. All in all, Sidney Shapiro’s translation better reflects the objective consciousness of English.

2.2 *zhijian* at the Beginning of the Minor Sentence

2.2.1 “看……+只见” (Look...+zhijian) as the Result/Object of Seeing

(3) 大头领看时，只见二头领红巾也没了，身上绿袍扯得粉碎，下得马，倒在厅前，口里说道：“哥哥救我一救！……”只得一句。(Kindle, 2120)

Sidney Shapiro: The head bandit looked. His lieutenant had lost his red hat, his green robe was ripped and tattered. Number Two dismounted and collapsed in front of the hall. (P63)

Pearl S. Buck: Then the first chieftain looked and saw the second chieftain, his red turban gone and his green robe torn into tatters, and he was dismounting from his horse. He tumbled down before the house, crying, “Elder Brother, save me!” and he gave but this one cry. (P4)

The original sentence connects “looked” and *zhijian* as we Chinese like to repeat what we see from our perspective, or add a specific perspective to the environment, which reflects a strong sense of subjectivity or a mixed consciousness of subjectivity and objectivity. Wang Yi (2015) thinks that “见” is the result or object of “看” based on the semantic relation. As “看” in the previous sentence, so *zhijian* in the following sentence is redundant in its function. Therefore, “只见二头领红巾也没了，身上绿袍扯得粉碎……” is the result of “看”. It’s correct for Sidney Shapiro to delete *zhijian* by just translating “看” into “look”, which it’s concise to shape a focus chain. While Pearl S. Buck translated “看” and *zhijian* into “looked and saw” will cause redundancy because these two words are synonyms, and repeated the perspective of the character will strengthen the subjective consciousness instead.

2.2.2 Time Adverbs + *zhijian*

(4) 太尉又道：“我正走不动，方欲再上山坡，只见松树傍边，转出一个道童，骑著一头黄牛，吹著管铁笛，正过山来。(Kindle, P309)

Sidney Shapiro: “By then I could hardly walk. Just as I was about to continue up the slope, a novice, sitting on a yellow ox and playing a metal flute, came riding over the rise. (P13)

Pearl S. Buck: Again the Commander said, “Truly had I no strength to walk, and even as I thought to climb higher up the ridge I saw come out from among the pines an acolyte flute. (P8)

Wang Yi thinks that some time adverbs such as “正”“却待”“方欲”“忽然” (the first three imply intention, and the last one mean sudden) followed by *zhijian*, and the following sentence after *zhijian* leads to a sudden or unexpected scene. Here, the commander is talking about his feelings, and “我正走不动，方欲再上山坡” is what “I” think or what “I” want to do next, while mixing with what “I” see (只见松树傍边，转出一个道童，骑著一头黄牛，吹著管铁笛，正过山来), so the meaning of “方欲” meaning intention and of *zhijian* meaning what it’s seen are disconnected. Such being the case, *zhijian* expressing the meaning of action which reflects the perspective of subject has changed into the perspective of the speaker. That is to say, *zhijian* has transformed from a verb to a discourse marker. Sidney Shapiro transformed *zhijian* from the meaning of action to directly describe the following information, that is, translating the objective things, “a novice, sitting on a yellow ox and playing a metal flute, came riding over the rise”. In this way, the gradation of what “I” feel and what “I” see is rich and objective, not just only focus on “my” view any more. On the contrary, Pearl S. Buck’s translation “even as I thought to climb higher up the ridge I saw…” by following the structure of the original sentence will cause some problems. On the one hand, the addition of “I saw” may cause redundancy as the following description is exactly what “I” saw. On the other hand, the translator confused the meaning of *zhijian* as a verb with it as a discourse marker so that the translation indicating mixed consciousness of objectivity and subjectivity can’t comply with the characteristics of English focusing on objective consciousness.

2.2.3 Transforming *zhijian* into Other Verbs of Perception

(5) 太尉哪里肯听。众人只得把石板一齐扛起。看时，石板底下，却是一个万丈深浅地穴。只见穴内刮喇喇

一声响亮，那响非同小可。响亮过处，只见一道黑气，直冲上半天里，空中散作百十道金光，望四面八方去了。 (kindle, P359)

Sidney Shapiro: When the men had removed the slab, a pit one hundred thousand feet deep was revealed. A great ripping sound was heard, and a black cloud shot out of the pit. It tore through half a corner of the roof and zoomed into the sky, where it split into more than a hundred golden rays which shimmered in every direction.

Pearl S. Buck: ...The man could but lift up the great stone and when they looked beneath that stone was a pit well-nigh ten times ten

thousand feet deep. There in that pit was heard a great clattering sound of thunder, nor was it like common thunder either. When the sound of the thunder was passed a black cloud was seen to come rolling up out of the pit and it struck against the roof and split it in two and that cloud filled half the heavens.

Here, we can tell from “只见穴内刮喇喇一声响亮” that *zhijian* is not to introduce what is to be seen but what you hear. Actually, it describes all men’s perception. “看时，石板底下，却是一个万丈深浅地穴” is what all men have seen, and “只见穴内刮喇喇一声响亮，那响非同小可” is what they have heard, the men as the subject and their perception form a mixed subjective and objective phenomenon. And the translators both noticed the difference and used “was heard” to transfer the meaning of *zhijian*, which can make readers focus on the description of men, and deliver more fluently by shaping focus chain. By the way, the passive voice can better reflect the objective consciousness of English.

“响亮过处，只见一道黑气，直冲上半天里” also shows the mixed phenomenon of hearing and seeing. It means the black cloud may produce from the sound according to the context. But two translators adopt different strategies. Sidney Shapiro deleted *zhijian* by just translating the situation, changing the subjective feeling into the background, which can make it more objective. What’s more, “只见穴内刮喇喇一声响亮” and “只见一道黑气” were put together, which can show the action is happening at the same time so quickly. While Pearl S. Buck used two sentences which may interrupt the fluency of hearing and seeing.

(6) 惊得洪太尉目瞪口呆，罔知所措，面色如上。奔到廊下，只见真人向前叫苦不迭。 (kindle, P359)

Sidney Shapiro: Marshal Hong goggled and gaped helplessly. His face was the color of earth. He hurried out to the porch, where the abbot was lamenting.

Pearl S. Buck: As for the Commander Hung, he was

filled with such terror that he was speechless and he doubted what he had done and his face turned the color of clay. He hastened into the veranda and there he saw the abbot crying bitterness without ceasing.

We should be aware that not all words or phrases containing sound can be translated into “hear”. The meaning of “叫苦不迭” can be sighing, ejaculating concerning the misery and complaining, some of which may contain sound, but mostly it is regarded as a state, not an action of uttering sound. It’s different from the previous example, so the following information of *zhijian* should not be taken as what they hear. Such being the case, Sidney Shapiro just translated the objective environment by using “where” to connect his action and what he sees, which strengthens Marshal Hong’s perspective without shifting the focus. As for Pearl S. Buck, she noticed the difference from the previous *zhijian* and translated into “he saw”, which catches the right meaning of “叫苦不迭”. But I think here Pearl S. Buck’s translation is better because “saw” can stress the striking scene and create a totally different effect on visual image. While “where” treating as a background just like a plain statement which cannot fully deliver the feeling of the narrator.

2.2.4 *zhijian*+ Existential Sentence

(7) 只见一个小小茶坊正在路口。 (kindle, P991)

Sidney Shapiro: On a street corner he saw a small tea-house. (P34)

Pearl S. Buck: But then he saw a little teashop just at the mouth of the road. (P29)

(8) 只见血淋淋的两个死尸，又吃一惊! (kindle, P17546)

Sidney Shapiro: The sight of those two bloody corpses really gave me a fright. (P471)

Pearl S. Buck: There, lying in blood, I saw two corpses! I gave a start of fear... (P440)

(9) 只见顶上有勒死伤痕一道。 (kindle, P17546)

Sidney Shapiro: His throat was cut. (P471)

Pearl S. Buck: It could be seen that the Taoist had been slashed across the throat. (P441)

(10) 只见厨桌上有些鸡毛和鸡骨头，却去灶上看时，半锅肥汁。 (P17769)

Sidney Shapiro: On the kitchen table he saw feathers and bones. A pot on the stove was half filled with greasy water. 480

Pearl S. Buck: Then he saw on the table in the kitchen there were the feathers and bones of a fowl. 448

There are the examples of “*zhijian* + existential sentence” which follows a structure that is used to express

that someone or something exists, appears, or disappears somewhere. From the translations above, two translators both translated *zhijian* into “see/ the sight of”, so we can know that “*zhijian* + existential sentence” means what people see. Here, *zhijian* is not a discourse marker but a physical action. But “the sight of” and “it could be seen...” show a more objective consciousness because the noun phrase “the sight of” indicates a more well-define boundary than the verb “see”, and the structure of “it could be seen” is a typical example showing the objectivity of the speaker when it comes to the description of an environment. However, Sidney Shapiro translated “只见 顶上有勒死伤痕一道” into “His throat was cut” indicating *zhijian* can also be deleted if the translator see it as a hint to introduce new information. And deleting *zhijian* and focusing on the new information can also centralize the attention of readers, so that the new information can be strengthened to show the objective consciousness of English. In the end, literary translation and omission can achieve the goal, that is to convert the subjective consciousness into objective consciousness.

2.2.5 “*zhijian*” as a Single Unit

(11) 军马到得栅门边望时，只见：尘土蔽日，杀气遮天；两路军兵投镇上，四条好汉下山来。(Kindle, 13000-13001)

Sidney Shapiro: At the gate they saw beneath a huge cloud of dust which blocked the sun an approaching host whose fierce aura obscured the heavens. Two columns of troops were closing in on the town. Four gallant men had come down from the mountain. (P347)

Pearl S. Buck: When they had come up to the city gate they looked and they saw dust rising to the sky and the very heavens were filled with the fury of war. Two ranks of soldiers by the gates standing still, four goodly fellows riding down the hill. (P322)

Here, the position of *zhijian* is different from the previous ones because it's like a single unit. Although I have mentioned “看+ 只见”(look...+*zhijian*) indicating *zhijian* is redundant and the following sentence after it is the result of “看”, here, “望+ 只见” contains the same meaning with different degree. As a discourse marker, *zhijian* appears in the form of “只见:”, a colon after *zhijian* which means it's relatively independent from the following sentence and it clearly shows the boundary between “my” action and “what” I see. And the pause between “军马到得栅门边望时” and “尘土蔽日，杀气遮天；两路军兵投镇上，四条好汉下山来” indicates the narrator deliberately draw a line between the

two parts in a way to hint or give readers a strong sense of as if they're being here. The isolated *zhijian* with a characteristic of subjectivity appears like a sentence, and the following information with a characteristic of objectivity became a complete sentence, which makes a sharp contrast and shows the shifted focus. Sidney Shapiro deleted *zhijian* and used “saw” to fix the focus, which achieved the goal of objective consciousness but failed to reproduce the narrator's hint or give readers a strong sense of as if they're being here. And Pearl S. Buck translated into “they saw” cannot show narrator's deliberation of shifting the focus and his mental process. In the end, *zhijian* as a discourse marker, but sometimes its position is given a special meaning by the narrator. Therefore, translators should reproduce what it implicates and take narrator's intention or mental process into consideration.

3. Conclusion

Chinese has a strong subjective consciousness or a mixed consciousness of subjectivity and objectivity, that is, it often describes objective things or phenomena with strong subjective feelings. On the other hand, native English speakers focus on objective consciousness, that is, describe and translate objective things or phenomena directly without exerting subjective feelings.

By analyzing the appearance and characteristics of *zhijian*, this paper concluded that the English translation of *zhijian* in *the Water Margin* is mainly based on its two functions, the original verb meaning and the discourse marker, and its use as discourse markers in *the Water Margin* is more than its original verb meaning. When comes to the meaning of a verb, that is, the real action, the meaning of *zhijian* equals to “seeing”, so translators usually adopt literal translation. While *zhijian* as a discourse marker, it is no longer the main component of sentence structure but to highlight the following information. The blending of subjectivity and objectivity embodied in the source language needs to be converted into objectivity in English. There are generally three situations. First, what *zhijian* introduce is not what you actually see, but what your other senses receive. At this time, the visual meaning of the original verb meaning is weakened, and the translator needs to convert into other verbs of perception. Second, when *zhijian* changes from the perspective of the character to that of the narrator or the author, the purpose is often to introduce new topics, so translator will delete it, which reflects the conversion of subjective consciousness into objective consciousness. Third, when comes to “*zhijian*+existential sentences”, *zhijian* is not only used as

a discourse marker, but also as the action of “seeing”, that is to say, it’s original meaning as a verb is also retained, so translators usually translate directly or delete it.

From the above comparative analysis, it can be seen that Sidney Shapiro often adopts the method of deletion when translating *zhijian* into English, which better reflects the conversion of subjective consciousness into objective consciousness. Translators should understand and attach importance to the conversion of subjective consciousness and objective consciousness so as to make a successful conversion in the process of translation and enhance the fluency and authenticity of the translation.

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