A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND CHINESE HEADLINES OF HONG KONG LOCAL NEWS STORIES

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Abstract

This study aims to conduct a contrastive analysis of linguistic features between Chinese and English headlines in terms of compression techniques by analyzing a number of headlines of local news stories of one Chinese newspaper and one English newspaper published in Hong Kong, namely Ming Pao and the South China Morning Post respectively. Five strategies of compression and the related linguistic features are identified. The five strategies are the use of abbreviation, the use of synonymy, the variation of passive construction and the use of punctuation as well as the omission of function words and content words.

It is found that the familiarity level of Chinese abbreviations is higher than English ones, and Chinese abbreviations are thus used more frequently. It is also found that more strategies of synonymy are adopted in Chinese headlines, and it explains why synonymy is found more frequently. The primary verb ‘be’ in the English passive construction and Chinese passive markers are always found omitted. Besides, in English headlines, a comma replaces the conjunction ‘and’ while no commas are needed when 和 is omitted in Chinese headlines, owing to the structure of Chinese idioms. More content words are also found omitted in Chinese headlines without any changes in meaning. It is believed that the results of this study have useful implications both in linguistic theories and practical work of news editing.
摘要

本論文按新聞標題的壓縮方法來比較及分析中文與英文標題的語言特點，文中分析了香港一份中文報章和一份英文報章的一些本地新聞標題，這兩份報章分別為明報和南華早報。本文指出五種壓縮策略與相關的語言特點，這五種壓縮策略分別為縮寫的應用、同義的應用、被動句的變化、標點的應用，以及虛詞與實詞的省略。

研究發現讀者對中文縮寫詞的熟悉程度比英文縮寫詞為高，因此，中文縮寫詞的應用也比較頻繁。中文標題也使用比較多的同義策略，這解釋了為何中文同義的應用比較頻繁。研究也發現英文被動句的‘be’與中文的被動詞經常省略。除此之外，在英文標題中，逗號替代了‘and’，但中文標題中的‘和’省略後則無須補上逗號，這與中文成語結構有關。中文標題中也有比較多的實詞可省略而又不影響原文的意義。本論文的研究結果相信對新聞編輯上的語言學理論與實際工作兩方面都會有幫助。
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