The Difference in Subjective and Objective "Viewpoints"
Between English, Chinese and Japanese

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1. Introduction

The "viewpoint" of a speaker's construal varies from one language to another. The way in which such a viewpoint is chosen varies by language, as is revealed by examining the difference between a source text and its translations. Ikegami (2008) discusses "the fashion of speaking" in English and Japanese and has showed that English construal tends to be objective, whereas Japanese construal tends to be subjective.[1] Xu (2011) employed the same methodology to study Chinese[2], concluding that Chinese features objective construal.

However, this study was limited to a comparison between Chinese and Japanese. In addition, cultural anthropologists say that China is regarded as a high-context culture, as is Japan.[3] A high-context culture relies heavily on context and subjective expressions. The degree of reliance on context affects the speaker's viewpoint. One would thus expect that Chinese would not tend to objective construal like English, low context culture.

In my study, it is possible to clear that these languages have each tendency of viewpoints by contrasting same novels in three languages at the same time. As a result of analyzing expression of subjects in source texts and their translations, this paper demonstrates that Chinese tends to have a different viewpoint from both English and Japanese.

2. Preceding Studies on "Viewpoints"

2.1 About "Viewpoints" of Languages

Language "viewpoints" have been defined in two ways.[4] The first is the viewpoint by a single aspect. Oe (1975) studied the "home base of speakers" by examining verb pairs such as "sell" and "buy." Kuno (1978) sees language viewpoint as "camera angle" —that is, the place

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[1] This paper referred both Ikegami (2008) and Ikegami (2006).

[2] In this paper, "Chinese" refers to Standard Chinese, the official language of mainland China.

[3] Edward T. Hall. (1976) Beyond Culture. Another theory exists.

[4] Kurihara and Nakahama (2010)

where speakers put their mind camera when they speak. Speakers can bring this "camera angle" near to others. Kuno calls this "identification."

The second is the viewpoint with two or more aspects.[5] Saeki (1978) and Miyazaki and Ueno (1985) separate the definitions viewpoint into two dimensions. Moro (1985) and Matsuki (1992) used four dimensions.

In this paper, "viewpoint" is defined as "camera angle" according to Kuno (1978).

2.2 "Viewpoints" and Construal

Ikegami (2008) refers to cognitive types in the viewpoints of English speakers and Japanese speakers. For example, he contrasts the Japanese original text of the novel *Yukiguni*[6] *(Snow Country)* and its translation in English:

(1) Japanese: "Kokkyo no nagai tonnel wo nukeruto,

   border   long tunnel   go through

   yukiguni   de atta."

   snow country   was

English: "The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country."[7]

Though the Japanese original text does not indicate a subject, readers can understand the situation: the protagonist rides on a train and sees the landscape outside the window. However, in English, an overt subject, "The train," appears. When people read this English sentence, they perhaps adopt a bird's-eye viewpoint. As this example demonstrates, subjects are different because of the "fashion of speaking" even if people describe the same situation. Japanese speakers prefer "subjective construal" whose viewpoint is near to a protagonist, subjective. On the other hand, English speakers prefer "objective construal" whose viewpoint is far, objective.

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[5] Kurihara and Nakahama (2010)

[6] *Yukiguni* is a Japanese novel written by Yasunari Kawabata.

[7] Translated by E. Seidensticker.

Xu (2011) examined two Japanese original novels and three Chinese original novels in the same way as Ikegami. Since Chinese word order is restricted, she explains that Chinese speakers need objective information such as when, where, who, and what happened. Japanese speakers can express feelings on stage by free word order. Therefore, Chinese evidences objective construal while Japanese is characterized by subjective construal.

3. A Contrastive Research

3.1 Significances of This Research

The preceding study requires careful interpretation, for three reasons.

First, only two languages are studied. Chinese is more objective than Japanese, but it is not clear how it compares to English.

Second, Xu provides no standard for choosing the novels used, and it is clear that narrative strategies can vary widely even within the same language culture.

Third, China is regarded as a country in which there is a high degree of reliance on context. In a high-context culture, people omit the subject frequently because it can be understood from the context. In a low-context culture, on the other hand, people typically clarify such objective elements as the protagonist, time and place. In the field of cultural anthropology, researchers treat both Japanese and Chinese as high-context cultures, whereas English is seen as a low-context culture.

From these three points, this paper categorizes examples from novels and studies features of three languages.

3.2 Methods

Sources of research are restricted to novels as Xu (2011). Three original novels were examined—a Chinese novel, an English novel, and a Japanese novel—together with the translations of each. In Chinese novel *Kuangren riji (A Madman's Diary),* 25 sentences in which the subject differs between the original text and the translation are extracted throughout the entire story. Concerning other two novels the range of this research is from the beginning to 25 examples. Each novel has 25 examples and there are 75 sentences in total. These are then categorized into four types, as below:

    (1) EC type: English and Chinese express same subject.

    (2) JC type: Japanese and Chinese express same subject.

    (3) JE type: Japanese and English express same subject.

    (4) Unique type: Three languages express each subject.

This research is designed to support or refute Xu's study. It is important to choose proper novels for this study. This research uses works of fiction involving first-person narrative. Turning to the results, if Chinese evidences objective construal, we would expect many examples of the EC type and few of the JC type.

3.3 Results

Research on the Chinese novel *Kuangren riji (A Madman's Diary)* and its translations in English and Japanese reveals that 12 sentences are of the EC type, 2 sentences are the JC type, one sentence is the JE type, and 10 sentences are the Unique type. The EC type is most common, but there are almost as many examples of the Unique type. In the latter, the Chinese sentences tend to use a personal pronoun for the subject; this is not translated as the subject in English:

(2)Chinese: Ta   man   yan   xiong   guang.[8]

        he be filled eyes unfortunate light

        (His eyes are filled with unfortunate light.)

English: There was a murderous glint in his eyes.

Japanese: Bukimi na metsuki wo shita yatsu   da

        ominous   eyes   man   is

        (He is a man who has ominous eyes.)

The English original novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and its translations yield 15 sentences of the EC type, 5 sentences of the JC type, none of the JE type, and 5 sentences of the Unique type. Examining the English original text, Chinese is regard as objective construal. There are ten examples in which both English and Chinese use a first-person pronoun such as "I" or "we," but the Japanese does not:

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[8] This paper employs Pinyin, the official Romanization system for Standard Chinese in mainland China.

(3)English: We have a fresh basis from which to start our construction of this unknown visitor.

Chinese: Women bian zhaodaole dui   nawei busuzhi   ke

we   just   got   about that   sudden   client

jinxing panduan   de xinde genju.

go on   judgment of new   basis

(We just got a new basis of judgment about that sudden client.)

Japanese: Mondaino kyakujin ni tsuite suirisuru tameno atarashii ashiba ga dekita

problematic client about deduce   for   new   foothold complete

(A new foothold for deducing about the problematic client was completed.)

In contrast, in the Japanese original novel *Kokoro* there are 2 sentences are of the EC type, 16 sentences of the JC type, 1 sentence of the JE type, and 6 sentences of the Unique type Here, Chinese employs subjective construal like the original Japanese:

(4)Japanese: Sensei   wa arigatou to   itte,

"sensei"   thank you   said

sore wo watashi no te   kara uketotta

they   my   hands from received

(Sensei said thank you, and received them from my hands.)

English: "Thank you," he said, as I handed them to him.

Chinese: Xian sheng shuo sheng xiexie,

"sensei"   said   thank you

cong wo shou zhong jie guo.

from my hand   in   received

(Sensei said thank you, and received them from my hands.)

Both the Japanese and Chinese use a viewpoint close to that of the protagonist. However, English injects the subject "I" as in "I handed them to him."

Overall, in a total of 75 examples, 29 sentences are of the EC type, 23 sentences are the JC type, 2 sentences are of the JE type, and 21 sentences are of the Unique type. In addition, tendencies of each construal are organized as Table1.

Table1: Tendencies of Construal

	Kuangren riji (*A Madman's Diary*)	*The hound of the Baskervilles*	*Kokoro*
English	objective	objective	objective
Japanese	subjective	subjective	subjective
Chinese	objective	objective	subjective

From these results, it appears that there are two features. First, Japanese tends to use subjective construal while English prefers objective construal. Second, it is not possible to support Xu (2011) in saying that Chinese employs objective construal. It is different from both English and Japanese, and indeed examples of the JC type are found.

4. Features of Chinese Construal: Contrasted by English and Japanese

4.1 EC type

As above, English, Chinese and Japanese tend to prefer each viewpoint. However, Unique type is not many. By studying EC type and JC type, this chapter shows similar points and different points between three languages. There are two tendencies in sentences of EC type.

First, Chinese and English has same subject, but Japanese doesn't.

(5)Japanese: Tomodachi wa kanete kara kunimoto ni iru oyatachi ni

friend   is   past from hometown in parents by

susumanai kekkon wo shiirare   teita

doesn't wish marry   be forced   has been

(My friend has been forced to get marry which he doesn't wish

by his parents who are in his hometown.)

English: For some time his parents had been trying to persuade him, much against his will, to marry a certain girl.

Chinese: Laojia   de fumu   hen zaojiu qiangpo ta

hometown of parents   already force   him

jieshou yimen ta bu qingyuan   de   hunshi

accept   a   he doesn't wish which marry

(His parents who are in his hometown have already forced him to accept marry which he doesn't wish.)

The subject of Japanese original text is "My friend," but in both English and Chinese, "His parents" are subjects of sentences.

Second, English and Chinese use inanimate subjects, though Japanese regards people as protagonists.

(6)English: It gives us the basis for several deductions.

Chinese: Ta   gei   women yi xie   tui duan   de   yi ju.

it   give   us   a little   detect   of   basis

(It gives us a little basis of detecting.)

Japanese: Soko kara ikutsuka no suiri ga   dekiru yo

that from several   deduction   can

(We can deduce several things from that.)

English original texts and Chinese translation use "it" for subject. However, in Japanese translation, subject is hidden "we." In other words, readers can understand that protagonists who deduce something are "we" without clear expression in sentences.

4.2 JC type

This chapter demonstrates two characteristics of JC type.

First, both Japanese and Chinese don't use the first person, but English uses "I."

(7)Japanese: Shikashi kaette futsukamikka to tatuuchini

however return few days   while

Kamakura   ni ita tokino kibunnga dandan usukunattekita

Kamakura in was when feeling   gradually fade away

(However, while I spend few days after I return home, my feeling in Kamakura has gradually faded away.)

English: A few days after my return, however, I began to feel less inclined to do so.

Chinese: Dan   liangsantian yiguo, zai liancang   shide xinqing

However few days   after   in Kamakura when feeling

jianjian   danbo xialai.

gradually fade away

(However, few days after, my feeling in Kamakura has gradually faded away.)

In Japanese original text and Chinese translation, "my feeling has faded away." English translation use first person "I" which Japanese and Chinese texts don't use.

Second, English sentences use inanimate subject, though Japanese and Chinese regards people as protagonists.

(8)Japanese: Watashi wa sonohitono kioku wo yobiokosu gotoni

I   his   memory   recall   whenever

sugu   sensei to ii takunaru

immediately Sensei   say want to

(Whenever I recall his memory, I want to say "Sensei" immediately.)

English: Whenever the memory of him comes back to me now, I find that I think of him as "Sensei" still.

Chinese: Meidang wo cong jiyi   zhong huanqi ta   shi

every   I   from memory in   recall him when

weichang bu   xiang   jiao yisheng "xiansheng."

never   don't want to   call   "Sensei"

(Every time I recall him from my memory, there is never a time I don't want to call "Sensei.")

Both Japanese original text and Chinese translation say "I recall his memory." On the other hand, English translation says "the memory comes back."

As above, Chinese tends to use inanimate subjects in EC type sentences. Although tendencies of subjects in English and Japanese are clear, Chinese features are different between EC type sentences and JC type sentences. Therefore, Chinese has a flexible viewpoint.

5. Discussion

There are three points which this research discovers. First, "the fashion of speaking" in English and Japanese by Ikegami (2008) is right even if they are contrasted with Chinese. By adding another language, that theory becomes more convincing. Second, it is impossible to

define that Chinese likes objective construal. Chinese shows many examples which are similar to Japanese expressions. Third, Chinese has a different tendency of viewpoint from English and Japanese. Chinese shows both objective and subjective tendencies of viewpoints. It is possible that Chinese change viewpoints in order to becoming suitable for the original text because Chinese translation likes subjective viewpoint in Japanese novel *Kokoro*.

If the theory of high-context or low-context culture has a connection with viewpoints, both Japanese and Chinese are high-context languages, whereas English is a low-context language. In fact, there are examples of Chinese sentences which do not express subjects and are understood in contexts. Therefore, Chinese should not be defined as objective viewpoints.

6. Conclusion

By this contrastive analysis, it appears that English prefers objective viewpoint, Japanese prefers subjective viewpoint, and Chinese has a flexible viewpoint. In other words, Chinese has a viewpoint which is not determined with two standpoints, subjective or objective.

Kurihara and Nakahama (2010) say that even Chinese who learn Japanese and passed The Japanese Language Examination Grade 1 cannot choose subjects in the same way as Japanese native speakers talk. Thus even if leaners have knowledge of words in target languages, they cannot succeed in global communication. The difference in viewpoints of languages is important for acquiring a foreign language and it is required for leaners to understand it.

In this research, differences of expressions between some translators are not considered. For example, Chinese novel *Kuangren riji* is translated into Japanese not only by Takeuchi Yoshimi but also by Fujii Shozo. It is essential to use all translations for resource of data. In order to enhance validity of my hypotheses, other novels should be researched and certainty of examples should be clear by choosing sentences at random. In addition, resource is not limited to literature. Other various materials such as movies, signs or leaflets can be used for proving the differences of viewpoints between English, Chinese and Japanese.

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