A Humble Discussion on EC/CE Translation of Some Commonly-used Multi-Collocating Verbs from the Inter-cultural Perspective

Wang Haihua*

Hubei Polytechnic Institute, Xiaogan, 432100, China
**Corresponding author: 18186483383@163.com*

Abstract: *The present paper aims to enumerate and analyze the EC/CE translations of some multi-collocating verbs that frequently appear in Chinese and English everyday languages from the perspective of cross-culture according to the weak hypothesis theorem of linguistic relativity (also called Sapir-Wolff hypothesis), which is to provide a new angle for language beginners and teachers, so that language beginners can start understanding multi-collocating verbs from the differences of thinking and language between Chinese and Western peoples, improve their ability to acquire and use such verbs of the same kind, and language teachers can better classify and summarize some more multi-collocating verbs in teaching practice and provide effective guidance for language beginners by following the laws of language acquisition and use.*

Keywords: *Multi-collocating verbs; Inter-cultural perspectives; Language and thinking; Generalized verbs*

1. Definition and source

The "multi-collocating verb" is also called the "generalized verb". As the name implies, it refers that the meaning of a verb is not fixed, such verb can act as a syntactic component in the free structure of many languages, and it refers to or substitutes some verbs with specific meanings. Its meaning is broad and variable, and suitable for various occasions. It can be said that it has many meanings, and its usage is "universal", which belongs to "Jack of All Trades" among other verbs.

Early in the beginning of the 20th century, experts and scholars in Chinese language and culture studies in China discovered the special usage of such verbs, and made additional research and analysis on some specific verbs. Since then, many scholars have studied other similar verbs, but these are aimed at the semantics, usage, collocation and other aspects of individual verbs. In 1990, Liu Ruiming formally put forward the concept of "generalized verb" in his article "Not" bastard "verbs, but generalized verbs--One of the essays on generalized verbs"1, which was an academic proposition of great theoretical significance in the academic circles at that time. However, after this concept was put forward, it did not get sufficient attention in cross-cultural communication and practical teaching. The main reason is that Liu's article did not systematically explain the definition of "generalized verb" and lacked clarity. Later scholars could not popularize and spread it well in quoting and using this kind of words, thus could not form effective theory and guide their practice. Therefore, although this concept was recognized by academic circles earlier, there are some reasons such as unclear definition and lagging in the formation of subsequent theories, and it has not been fully carried forward in the actual language teaching and communication.

However, for English language and culture researchers and practitioners, the polysemy is used to interpret the generalized verbs in English vocabulary, which bypasses the linguistic phenomenon of comparative translation between Chinese and English, and lacks the effective integration of multi-collocating verbs from the perspective of cross-culture and cross-language, which is not conducive to the effective spread and communication of language and culture. From this perspective, the present paper aims to summarize the vocabulary characteristics, usage and scenarios of several common multi-collocating verbs in the process of English-Chinese learning and EC/CE translation through examples of commonly-used multi-collocating verbs, with the hope to draw inferences from one example and help English learners to compare and use the commonly-used multi-collocating verbs in Chinese and English from a new angle.

2. Theoretical basis

According to the weak hypothesis theorem of linguistic relativity (also known as the Sapir-Wolff hypothesis), language affects rather than determines thinking mode, and language structures shape cognitive tendencies and form specific thinking habits, but human beings still have generally the same cognitive basis. Different from its strong hypothesis-linguistic determinism, this argument is more in line with the current research consensus and is the mainstream of academic discussion. People who master two or more languages have no obvious changes and differences in thinking mode when they use different language systems to express themselves2. This also helps to form the general cognitive foundation of human beings, which often encounters language phenomena in daily communication: Some situations or scenarios are difficult to describe with certainty, mainly because a suitable expression is not found for the time being. However, when we rack our brains to find vocabulary, there are often words or language fragments that lingers in our mind instantly and then comes out of our mouth, helping us solve these problems at once. Through the induction and summary of such phenomena in various language communications, we find that these words are also active in various formal or informal situations, important or insignificant, they are rich in meaning and flexible in usage, and play a variety of roles in a considerable range. Almost all kinds of phenomena, behaviors and scenes can be described and expressed by them. Moreover, these words are extremely convenient in use, so that people can pick them up almost without thinking. Because of their flexibility, widespread usage and high frequency of use, we jokingly call them "multi-collocating verbs". Sometimes they do help us solve the problem of "it is when you are using words you have learned that you wish you had learned more" or "it is all beyond words ", making verbal communication simpler and easier.

3. Demonstration of typical multi-collocating verbs

3.1 Multi-collocating verbs in Chinese

There are many generalized verbs that often appear in use of Chinese. We will mainly discuss the following four verbs: 做、打、弄、搞. Their common semantic features are as follows:

3.1 .1“做”

The basic meaning of “做”is: produce or make, but in some situations it has other meanings, such as

When engaging in a job or activity: we use“做工(to work)”“做事(to do things)”“做买卖(to do business)”

When performing specific labor or business: we use “做寿(to celebrate birthday for seniors)”“做礼拜(to go to the church)”

To organize or carry out an activity, we use “做母亲(to be a mother)”“做官(to act as an official)”

When imitating or pretending to be in a certain state: we use “做样子(to do it merely for show)”“做鬼脸(to make a face)”

To indicate the establishment or formation of a relationship, we use“做朋友(to be a friend)”“做亲(to be engaged for a marriage)”

To create written works: we use “做文章(to write articles)”“做诗(to write poems)”

Other Usage: In some contexts, “做” can also mean to beat, punch, or be used as a pronoun for an action.

3.1.2 “搞”

“搞” is a versatile verb, similar to “做” or “干”, and is used frequently. For instance:

It means "carrying on, carrying out and holding", such as “搞活动”(to engage in activities).

It means "playing", such as "搞花样(to play tricks)".

It means "earning", such as "搞钱(to earn money)".

3.1.3 “打”

The basic meaning of “打” in the semantic range discussed in this paper is "to hit", but it is also a multifunctional verb, for instance

It means "to work", such as "打工(to work as a working class)".

It means "to demonstrate", such as "打个样(to set an example)".

It might mean "to play", such as "打麻将(to play mahjong)".

3.1.4 “弄”

The basic semantic meaning of “弄”is "to handle or handle with your hands", as well as other meanings, such as

It means "to play or handle", such as "戏弄(to tease)".

It means "to clean up or repair", such as "弄好(to get it done)".

It means "to do or deal with", such as "这事可怎么弄(How can this be done)".

In summary, the semantic features of these multi-collocating verbs in Chinese are rich and diverse, which reflect the habits in Chinese language and cultural background. So how are similar expressions embodied in English?

3.2 Commonly-used multi-collocating verbs in English

Common ones are do, make, get and take.

3.2.1 do

do is one of the most common verbs in English, with super collocation options and many uses, so it is also called a multi-collocating verb, which can replace almost any verb in English. When used with nouns, it will produce many meanings, such as producing, making, conducting, learning, engaging, treating, etc. The following are typical example sentences. The main structure is do + noun, from which we can spy some meanings and usages of do.

She did (past tense of do) her hair in the morning and then walked out of the bedroom.

It took me so much time to do my face

Go and do your desk.

I will do the dishes today.

My mother does cooking very well.

He can do five countries within one month according to his travel plan.

He did the main character in the play.

He is doing English at Hubei Polytechnic Institute.

Tom is doing a very tough math problem.

Mary can do 30 kilometers on the first day of hiking tour.

3.2.2 make

As a high-frequency word in English, *make* has many meanings and usages, such as

To make or produce: it means the creation or manufacture of something by some ways or methods. For instance, she made a beautiful cake for her daughter's birthday.

To make something to be in a certain state: to be followed by an object together with an adjective or a noun as an object complement to make someone or something to be in a certain state or a certain nature.

For example, the news made her very happy.

To make someone do something: to be followed by the object and the verb prototype without to serve as the object complement, meaning make someone perform an action.

For example, the teacher made the students finish their homework before the class ended.

To form or produce: It is used to describe abstract concepts, such as "make friends" or "make noise".

To express making a success: we use "make it", "make a success of something", etc.

Knowing the different usages and fixed collocations of make is very important for improving English competence. It is recommended to deepen the understanding and application of make through a lot of reading and practice.

3.2.3 get

get is a multi-collocating verb with rich connotations and complex usage, often used in informal spoken or written language. Knowing its many usages will help to improve the flexibility and authenticity of English expression.

To be used as a transitive verb:

To call someone or get something: For example, "get him" means asking him to come, and "get high marks" means earning high scores.

To get something for someone: For example, "I'll get you a drink" means getting a drink for you.

It can be followed by an infinitive, present participle or past participle as an object complement to indicate making someone do something, or making something start or be in a certain state, or indicating a passive relationship. For instance, I get to go. The manager tries hard to get the team working. His father always gets drunk at parties.

To put someone in a state: as in "get us angry" means making us angry.

To be used as intransitive verbs:

It indicates the change of state: for example, "get tired" indicates getting exhausted, and "get dark" indicates the day is becoming dark.

It indicates the change of location: For example, "get home" means having come back home, and "get to the office" means having come to the company.

To be used in conjunction with the comparative form of the adjectives: It indicates a gradual process, such as "get better and better" indicates becoming better and better.

Other usages:

To form a sentence or idiom: For example, "get it done" means having finished something, and "get married" means being in the marriage relation.

In spoken language, the usage of get is very flexible, such as "I got it" can mean "I understand" or "I already got something".

3.2.4 take

As a high-frequency verb in English, take has many meanings and usages, such as

Basic meaning: It means "take, get or carry", i.e., "move something with hands or tools".

For example, can you take this book to the library?

When the object of take is not a concrete object, but time and opportunity, its extended meaning is used, and it becomes the meaning of "spending and occupying".

For instance, the homework took me two hours.

In daily life, take can replace many specific actions, such as "take a shower", "take a seat", etc.

In the abstract context, take often means "accept, undertake, and understand".

For example, she took responsibility for the mistake.

Fixed collocation: There are many fixed phrases of take, and their meanings often go beyond the literal, such as "take off", "take up", "take after", etc.

Other usages: It means "taking a vehicle", "eating and drinking", "spending time", etc.

The key to mastering take lies in understanding its essence as "moving or changing an object through

some action", whether it is taking something (position transfer), taking time (time transfer), or taking responsibility (state transfer). Learners should cultivate "contextual intuition" by accumulating a large number of example sentences in combination with specific contexts. Also, the difference with get should be noted to avoid confusion.

4.. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the commonly-used multi-collocating verbs in Chinese and English according to the semantic domain, we have drawn the following conclusions:

Some typical multi-collocating verbs in Chinese have the following characteristics

“做”: neutral and universal, focusing on behavior implementation;

“打”: the original meaning is to hit, and the generalization range is extremely wide;

“搞”: colloquial, with the meaning of disposal

“弄”: Highly colloquial, with the meanings of the above three verbs.

Some demonstrative multi-collocating verbs in English have the following characteristics

do: Abstract behavior;

make: Focus on creating and causing;

get: Focus on acquisition, state transition,

Take: Take, get or obtain, focus on selection.

From a cross-cultural perspective, that is, when we turn our perspective to EC/CE translation, how does language express thinking? On the whole, there are roughly three ways, one is to express thinking directly with literal meaning, the other is to express thinking indirectly with meaning other than literal meaning, and the third is to express thinking creatively with literal meaning 3. Thus, we can roughly divide them into three categories

a. Corresponding collocation: semantic one-to-one correspondence (For example: do homework = 做作业, do my hair =做头发)

b. Partial corresponding collocation: semantic crossover and incomplete overlaping (For example: Make noise = 制造噪音, Make friends = 交朋友)

c. No corresponding collocation

(For example: 打麻将 = Play mahjong, 打的 = take a taxi)

From the above analysis, it can be seen that multi-collocating words have broad semantics, many collocations, and depend on context to determine their meanings. There is no generalized collocation equivalent to "hit" in English for working, taking a taxi and playing cards in Chinese. take a walk and take a rest in English is acceptable but 拿散步 doesn’t make any sense in Chinese. Moreover, there are differences in spoken/written styles: “搞” is highly colloquial; get is mostly used in informal English. Formal correspondence does not mean complete equivalence of semantics, and there are objectively a lot of semantic misalignments. The reason for this difference is that of thinking mode between Chinese and Western people, to be precise, that is, the concrete embodiment of language differences. A person's language expression will have a direct impact on the inertia of thinking. Thinking is "conceptual thinking" or "linguistic thinking", and language is the important content and expression of thinking 4. The Western thinking mode emphasizes formal logic, object separation → make/get to distinguish "creation/acquisition", and the semantic boundary is clearly visible, while the Eastern Chinese thinking mode is characterized by overall fuzzy thinking → “搞 and 打” have higher generalization level and weakened boundary. At the same time, it is also influenced by social culture and language tradition. Chinese spoken language pursues simplicity and popularity, and“搞 and 打” rely on local life and culture to constantly expand its semantics. However, English receives the morphological constraint of Indo-European, and the multi-collocating verb differentiates into a relatively stable semantic division. Furthermore, there are also differences in conceptual metaphor. Chinese relies on the prototype of "hitting" to expand the metaphor (fetching water, fetching rice and dealing 打水、打饭、打交道), while English relies on the prototype of "acquiring and making" to expand the metaphor. Finally,

communication culture also brings differences, Chinese advocates euphemism and vague expression; English preferences clearly distinguish behavioral concepts with the help of lexical division.

From the above, we can see that the differences between Chinese and English multi-collocating verbs bring about practical communication problems. It is precisely because of the above reasons that lead to corresponding differences that there will be some common errors in second language acquisition, such as Chinese students misusing make: I make homework; Excessive abuse of “做” instead of take/make, foreigners abuse “做” when learning Chinese, and will not distinguish between “做、打 and 搞”. These not only cause difficulties and pain points in translation-multi-collocating verbs are difficult to accurately translate (for example: how to dictate in translating 搞定”and“打工”), but also cause misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication-literal translation or expression cause semantic deviations.

5. Enlightenment forTeaching and Translation

In view of the differences and characteristics between Chinese and English multi-collocating verbs, the core enlightenment for English teachers is that students cannot be guided to recite collocations simply mechanically, but they should explain to the students the semantic generalization logic in combination with cultural cognition. In translation, the corresponding translation principles include weakening literal correspondence, giving priority to contextual cultural connotation, and if cross-cultural communication is involved, we should place importance on the thinking differences behind multi-collocating verbs, thus to avoid communication misunderstanding. This is the topic that our language educators must focus on in the practice.

References

[1] Liao Dongwen.On Interesting Chinese "Multi-collocating" Verbs. Guiyang: Guizhou People's Publishing House.2013.9.
[2] Lin Ying, Zhao Shuhua. Language, Thinking, Translation and Art from the Perspective of Chinese and Western Cultures. Wuhan: Wuhan University of Technology Press. 2021.12.
[3] Le Ming. Teaching and Research on Language and Thinking. Beijing: Chinese Publishing House. 2008.9.
[4] Zhou Yanyan. Multi-dimensional Thinking on Linguistic Relativity. Journal of Hubei Radio and Television University, 2010 (12)