

more...than 及其否定结构的理解与翻译

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摘 要 英语中 more...than 及其否定结构所表达的意义较为复杂,在理解和表达上往往造成困难。把此类结构划为三类,以 Quirk 及章振邦语法专著为理解依据,举出典型译例探讨这一结构在不同语境中的翻译方法,以使译文顺畅、自然。

关键词 more...than 结构 理解 翻译

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许多英语学习者在翻译含有 more...than 结构的句子时,常将其译为“比...多”、“超过”、“多于”,这种译法在有些情况下是正确的。但是 more...than 结构的用法变化较多,理解和翻译非一下所能掌握。本文拟就这一结构及其否定式的理解和翻译做出归纳和探讨。

一、more...than 的理解与翻译

1、more...than... 作 rather...than... 解,通常译为“与其说...不如说...”。例如

(1) I was more annoyed than worried when they did not come home.

他们没有回家,与其说让我担心,不如说让我气恼。

(2) The book seems to be more a dictionary than a grammar.

这本书看起来与其说是语法书,不如说是词典。

章振邦主编的《新编英语语法》中讲解 more...than 结构时,举的例句是 He is more good than bad. 并解释说:“这句相当于 It is more true to say that he is good than he is bad. 即‘与其说他坏,不如说他好’的意思。”在 Quirk 等所著的 A Grammar of Contemporary English 中也论及 He is more good than bad 这一句子,书中指出,它不能用 He is better than bad. 来代替,而是相当于 It is more accurate to say that he is good than that he is bad. 由此可见,这里的 more...than 结构并不是一般的比较级,它所连接的两个相对应的成分,作 rather...than 解。由于英语中 more...than,肯定 than 前面的成分,而汉语中“与其说...不如说...”肯定后面的“不如说”,所以 than 前后的两个成分译成汉语时要互换位置。

当然,这种结构除了“与其说...不如说...”这一基本译法外,有时可以根据汉语行文的习惯,在不背离原义的情况下,采取其他汉语表达法。例如:

(3) She is more mother than wife.

她是贤妻,更是良母。

(4) My upbringing had been more that of a wild boy than that of a young lady.

我早年所受的教养,使我不大像个娇小姐,倒很像个野孩子。

2. more... than 作 not only 解,通常译为“不仅仅”、“不只”。例如:

(5) It takes more than guns to fight an enemy.

与敌人战斗,不只是靠枪炮。

(6) Peace is much more than the absence of war.

和平远不只是意味着没有战争。

Quirk 等所著的 *A Grammar of Contemporary English* 有这样的例句: He is more than happy about it = He is happy about it to a degree that is not adequately expressed by the word happy. 据此解释,上述例句中 more than 的意义为 not only, 译为“不只是”、“不仅仅”。此外, *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* 将 more than glad etc to do sth 解释为 extremely glad (about sth), most willing or eager (to do sth), only too glad etc, 这里的 more... than, 也可理解为 extremely 或 very, 因此, more... than, 既可译为“不只是”、“不仅仅”, 也可以译为“非常”、“极其”, 具体用何种译法, 可视上下文而定。例如:

(7) Please call on me if I'm needed, I'm more than ready to help.

若是需要我请招呼一声, 我非常乐意帮忙。

(8) I never thought your magazine would succeed but I am more than delighted that it has.

真没想到你们的杂志会成功, 但成功了让我非常高兴。

3. more... than 作 not 解, 常用 more than... can/could 的结构, 一般译为汉语“不”。

(9) His insolence is more than I can stand.

他的无礼行为真让我受不了。

(10) The beauty of the mountain is more than I can describe.

此山之美非我所能形容。

章振邦《新编英语语法》直接把 more... than... can 作为一种结构, 指出它在下面句子中具有否定意义: He earns more money than he can spend. 他赚的钱用不完。但也有少数情况下不接 can。例如:

(11) They did their best to make the situation more complicated than it needed be.

他们不遗余力地把势态搞得不必要的复杂。

这句中 more... than 虽然不和 could 联用, 但也表示否定意义。

二、no more... than 的理解与翻译。

1. no more... than... 在表示两者比较时, 其含义是 not any more than, 对双方都加以否定。通常译为“同...一样不”、“既不...也不”。例如:

(12) A whale is no more a fish than a crocodile is. (= A whale is not a fish any more than a crocodile is.)

鲸鱼和鳄鱼同样都不是鱼。

(13) The greatness of a people is no more determined by their number than the greatness of a man is determined by his height.

一个民族的伟大不决定其人口多少,正如一个人的伟大不决定于他的身高。

(14) A home without love is no more a home than a body without a soul is a man.

没有爱的家庭不成其为家庭,正象没有灵魂的身体不成其为人一样。

2、no more than 也可不分开使用,此时其意义为 only,通常译为“只不过”、“仅仅”。如:

(15) This is no more than a rumour.

这只不过是个谣传而已。

(16) We no more than note the significance of the fact.

我们只注意到这件事的重要性。

三、not more... than 的理解与翻译

1、not more... than 表示两者比较时,意义为 not so... as。与 no more... than 不同,它强调前者在程度上不及后者,没有对两者都加以否定的意思,一般都译为“不比...更...”、“既...也...”。例如:

(17) Charles is not more courageous than George.

查尔斯不比乔治更勇敢。(意即查尔斯虽勇敢,但还是比不上乔治勇敢。)

(18) The new edition is not more expensive than the old one.

新版本并不比旧版本价钱贵。

2、not more... than 有时不拆开使用,意义为 at most。例如:

(19) They had not more than twenty dollars left to last the week.

他们至多只剩下二十元钱维持一周的生活。

最后,值得一提的是与 more... than 结构相对应的 less... than 结构的译法,这两种结构的语法功能相同,不同的是它们所表达的意义恰好相反。现以两例比较如下:

(20) I regard him more as my teacher than as my friend.

此句相当于: I regard him less as my friend than as my teacher.

与其说我把他当作老师,不如说我把他当作朋友。

(21) He is no more a writer than a painter.

他既非画家,也非作家。

A whale is no less a mammal than a horse is.

鲸和马都是哺乳动物。

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