

A Comparative Study of Style Reproduction of the Two English Versions of Luo Tuo Xiang Zi from the Perspective of Literary Stylistics

Hua Zhao

Shenzhen Longgang Kangyi School, Shenzhen 518118, China

Zhaohua198709@163.com

Corresponding Author

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Abstract: Literary Stylistics, an Interdisciplinary Field among Linguistics and Literary Criticism, Focuses on the Form of Literary Works and the Inseparable Relation between Content and Form. It Provides Not Only a Theoretical Foundation for the Investigation of Style Reproduction, But Also a Feasible Approach for Actual Text Analyzing and Studying. This Present Paper Employs Literary Stylistics as the Theoretical Foundation and Refers to the Analysis Model Put Forward by the Renowned Scholar-Shen Dan. Two Distinctive English Versions of Luo Tuo Xiang Are Selected as Examples of the Study, Which Are Shi Xiaojing's Version (Referred to as Shi's Version in the Following) and Howard Goldblatt's Version (Referred to as Goldblatt's Version in the Following). the Paper Adopts Comparative Research Method. Merits and Demerits Will Be Both Explored in Each Version and the Reproduction and Loss of the Original Thematic Meaning and Aesthetic Effects Will Be Revealed. According to the Distinctive Features of Lao She's Work, the Present Paper Chooses to Select the Most Extruding Two Aspects to Analyze, Namely the Lexical Categories and the Syntactic Categories. the Present Paper Selects Two New English Versions, One is from Shi Xiaojing Who is a Chinese and the Other is from Howard Goldblatt Who is from America. Therefore, as for the Difference between the Two Versions, the Paper is More Representative and Typical. Simultaneously, the Analyzing Perspective is Creative and Inventive. Besides, Goldblatt's Version is Published in the Year of 2010, and Studies about It Are Relatively Limited. the Comparison Demonstrates That There Are Both Merits and Shortcomings in Each of the Translation Versions. the Delicate and Accurate Reproduction of Original Style Can Be Found, and the Loss of Thematic Meaning and Aesthetic Value Cannot Be Neglect. the Difference between English and Chinese Makes Total Accordance Impossible. Generally Speaking, Shi Has a Penetrating Comprehension Towards Both the Content and the Form of the Original Work, Thus Making a Complete and Accurate Translation without Too Much Mistakes. While on the Other side, Goldblatt's Translation Obtains More Features of Native English. the Structure is Simple and Fluent, Which, Generally Conveys the Original Style. However, the Native Language Style, to Some Degree, Influences the Faithful Reproduction of the Original Flavor.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the Past Years, Stylistics and Literary Translation Has Been Considered to Be Closely Related to Each Other, However, They Have Barely Been Taken into the Actual Translating Procedures Simultaneously. the Skills and Techniques Adopted by the Translator Are Often from His or Her Intuitive Knowledge of the Stylistic Features of the Literary Work Instead of a Scientific and Systematic Principle. the Case is Common in All the Literary Genres, Particularly in Fiction. the Situation is Much Worse with Realistic Novel.

Because of Such an Unsatisfactory Situation of Style Research, Translators Meet Quite a Number of Problems When They Want to Retain the Stylistic Equivalence Effect during the

Translating Process. Stylistic Problems Arise Because At Present Criticism of Literary Translation, Particularly of the Translation of Fiction, as Remained Remarkably Traditional, is Characterized by General and Impressionistic Comments on Style or by an Intuitive Analysis Lacking in Sensitivity to Subtle Stylistic Device (Shen Dan, 1998). to Bring Studies of Literary Translation Up to Date and to Improve the Quality and Standard of Literary Translating, It is Highly Necessary to Replace Traditional Impressionistic Approaches by More Precise and Penetrating Stylistic Models and Methods.

1.2 Significance of the Study

As an Outstanding Feature Both in the Literature and Revolution of Recent China, Lao She and His Writings Received Great Attention Not Only in China But Also Abroad. His Works Have Been Translated into Different Versions (English, Japanese and Korean). Inevitably, Owing to the Natural Boundary of Cultural Difference, the Western Scholars Are Apt to Treat Lao She as a Great Fictional Writer, Failing to See through the Underneath Social Criticism and Civilization Criticism, Which Can Inevitably Bring out the Complexity of the Style of His Works. However, This is Not Supposed to Show the Preference to the Version by Shi Xiaojing.

Considering the Situation Mentioned Above, Since a Series of Researches of the Literary Stylistics Approach Have Been Taken into the Study of Poetry Translation, the Present Paper Wants to Make a Full Exploration of the Relationship between Fiction Translation and Literary Stylistics.

The Paper Tries to Take a Literary Stylistic Approach to the Two Versions Based Upon the Theoretical Framework Put Forward by Shen Dan. It Aims to Explore the Merits and Demerits in the Reproduction of Original Style of the Two Versions.

1.3 Methodology of the Study

The Paper Adopts Comparative Research on the Different English Versions of Luo Tuo Xiang Zi. the Comparison Will Be Made through the Literature Analysis on Actual Examples from the Works in Terms of Their Skills of Reserving and Reproducing the Original Style, Which is Essential for the Thematic Meaning and Aesthetic Value of the Translation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Development of Literary Stylistics

2.1.1 Literary Stylistics in China

Chinese scholars began to devote themselves to the research of this field as early as 1960s. Several outstanding scholars such as Wang Zuoliang and Feng Qinhua showed great interest in this field. They made a great contribution to the division of the different types of material such as advertising translation and news translation. Shen Dan is another renowned scholar who offers not only a sound theoretical basis of literary stylistics but also sufficient case analysis on how to apply literary stylistics to fiction translation. Recently, the application of literary stylistics to translation catches more attention than ever before. Literary stylistics in China is facing a prosperous time.

2.1.2 Literary Stylistics in the West

In the west, the application of literary stylistics to translation has been studied for a long period. However, its main focus is on the style reproduction of poetry, because it is believed to be on a high level of “deviance” concerning the aspects of phonology, rhyme and images. Susan Bassnet (2000) argues that more attention should be paid to the function of linguistic devices in prose.

Snell-Hornby makes her contribution to the development of style reproduction by distinguishing opaque and transparent style. Actually, the above two scholars put forward a new theoretical background to investigate the application of literary stylistics to fiction translation, while Snell-Hornby recommends an integrated top-down approach to investigate the stylistic value of fiction in translation studies (Snell-Hornby, 2001). The whole research of Snell-Hoornby is a scientific system and contributes to the development of the transference of style in fiction translation.

2.2 Introduction to Lao She and Luo Tuo Xiang Zi

Luo Tuo Xiang Zi is one of the great works of Lao She, who is renowned as a modern realistic novelist in China. His original name is Shu Qingchun and “Lao She” is his pseudonym. He was born and raised in poverty. After going abroad, he spent many of his time reading the original western fiction and started his career as a writer. In the earlier period, his works, such as *Philosophy of Lao Zhang* and *Two Horses*, are featured as humorous and sarcastic, which are believed to be similar to the works of Dickens.

He is a Beijing indigenous man. He is good at presenting the character with accurate Beijing dialect, which gives the work a strong sense of local culture flavor. The real life of ordinary people which is performed by irony, his weapon causes his attention. He is one of the best respected writers in modern China. *Luo Tuo Xiang Zi* is one of his mature works. There are mainly four English versions of *Luo Tuo Xiang Zi*. *Camel Xiangzi*, is translated by a famous translator in China named Shi Xiaojing. *Rickshaw*, is translated by Jean M. James, who is a renowned Sinologist and has published many books on Sinology. *Luo Tuo Xiang Zi*, is translated by Evan King, who is the first scholar that translates this work.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1 Literary Stylistics

Literary stylistics inherits the choiceness features of traditional Literary Criticism. It uses modern linguistics as its tool and it is an interdisciplinary subject which combines art and linguistics. In traditional fiction translation, the thematic meaning and aesthetic value have always been neglected, while literary stylistics helps the translator to grasp the features of the fiction language incisively, and more importantly, to transfer those features into the target language so that the original flavor and theme can be reserved.

To get to know literary stylistics, the first thing should be noticed is that literary stylistics is not oriented by the object of advocating linguistic framework and promoting linguistic theory. However, it is undeniable that literary stylistics needs the assistance of modern linguistic approach, particularly in the investigation of literary work. The fact is that literary stylistics does not totally rely on the subjective impression as the traditional literary criticism does. However, the sensation of the thematic meaning and aesthetic value still needs scholar's intuition, experience and literary attainment.

Flexibility is the most significant feature of literary stylistics, which is mainly represented by two aspects. On the one hand, it conveniently combines the traditional literary criticism and modern linguistics. On the other hand, it is not confined to a certain linguistic theory. Instead of that, it absorbs the advantages of different theories according to specific literary works and investigation objectives.

3.2 Applying Literary Stylistics to Fiction Translation

In different genres of literary works, literary stylistics has been mainly applied to the investigation of poetry, because it is believed that the form plays an indispensable part in the artistic effect of poetry. However, gradually, scholars start to realize that although realistic novels have been always featured by its focus on the plot of the story, its form still contributes a lot to the thematic meaning and aesthetic value. The language novelist use is called mediation. Whatever he/she wants to convey, it has to be done through this mediation (Lodge, 1966). Shen Dan also points out that the form and content of a novel is a combination and cannot be separated. The combination of them is not just simply added together. It is a scientific system which helps the realization of the artistic effects of the work (Shen Dan, 1998). That is to say, in fiction translation, the reproduction of its original flavor is significant.

Based on this foundation, translating activities should be practiced with the measurements of the features of the target language. This is the significant value of literary stylistics. If the content wants to be transferred perfectly, how to preserve its form must be first learned, which contains style and

rhetoric.

4. A Comparative Study of the Two English Versions of *Luo Tuo Xiang Zi*

4.1 Lexical Level

In translating prose fiction, the translator's alteration of the original work is, as a rule, most manifestly reflected in the area of lexical expression (Shen Dan, 1995).

The word selected by Lao She in his work *Luo Tuo Xiang Zi* is a great success both in its thematic meaning and aesthetic value. Here by successful, it does not mean the correct usage of word in its conventional meaning. Take a close investigation, deviations will announce themselves in many parts of the selection of words. However, the deviations are not made by mistake but by deliberation either for emphasis or other aesthetic purposes.

Interjection is a series of words which are applied to the verbal expression of the positive or negative emotions of the speakers, happiness, surprise or sadness. It is not considered to be part of the sentence grammatically. However, the connection between them is undeniable.

Model particle is one of what called empty words, which is mainly added to the very end of a sentence to represent the mood of it. By mood, here it mainly contains statement sentence, interrogative sentence, and imperative sentence, etc. Here, in the following part, several examples from the book *Luo Tuo Xing Zi* are illustrated:

“叫大兵裹了去,刚逃出来。”

“啊!骆驼出西口没什么险啦吧?”

“兵都入山了,路上很安全。”

“嗯!”老者慢慢点着头。”你等等,我给你拿水去。”

祥子跟了进去.到了院中,他看见了四匹骆驼.

“老者,留下我的三匹,凑一把儿吧?”

“哼!一把儿?倒退三十年的话,我有过三把儿!年头变了,谁还养的起骆驼!”老头立住,呆呆的望着那四匹牲口.

(Shi, 2004:62)

“I was nabbed by them, but just managed to escape. “

“Ah, no danger to camels outside the western pass?”

“The soldiers have all gone into the mountains. The road is very quiet now. “

“Umm, “ The old man nodded slowly. “Wait a moment; I'll get you some water. “

Xiangzi followed him into the courtyard where he saw four camels.

“Why don't you keep my three, sir, and make up a caravan?”

“Huh, a caravan! Thirty years ago I had three! But times have changed. Who can afford to keep camels!” He stood staring blankly at the four animals.

(Shi, 2004:63)

“They grabbed me, I just got away. “

“I see, no problem getting the camels through the western pass?”

“The soldier went into the mountains. The roads are safe. “

“Uh-hun. “ The old man nodded slowly. “Wait here, I'll get you some water. “

Xiangzi followed him into the yard, where he spotted four camels.

“Why don't you leave these three with you, sir? You can put together a camel train. “

“Hah! A train? Thirty years ago I owned three trains. Things have changed. Who can afford to feed camels these days?”

The old man stopped to stare at his own four camels.

(Goldblatt, 2010:33-34).

There are both interjections and model particles in the sentence of “啊!骆驼出西口没什么险啦吧?” This pair of words is in the middle of the conversation when the old man tried to get more information from Xiangzi to confirm his question in mind. He used “啊” to show his agreement and trust and then used “啦吧” to make the conversation more natural to the point of two friends talking

about casual staff. Similar to the former translation, Shi decided to put it in a short and brief way, which is quite successful in the transference of the original condition. This is a way that retain the original obscure content of the original text. For interjection “啊” he used “Ah” to metaphrase that there is no extra tone or meaning can be showed off. But for (foreign) readers who did not understand the Chinese cultural background at the time or the relationship between the novel characters, it’s a little indirect. These readers are still in a low-level reading stage, so this is not a perfect translation method that allows them to understand the essence of the original. While for Goldblatt’s version: “I see, no problem getting the camels through the western pass?” with the later sentence being rhetorical sentence too, the slight change is made to the translation of the interjection. It is obvious that Howard has sensed the inner meaning of the word “啊” he chose to explain it in a more obvious way, which, was against the original conational way. The original work wants the connotation to be indicated not emphasized. Although this way doesn’t keep the Original appearance of the work, it’s indeed easy to understand for most readers. Thereby good communication will emerge between readers and work.

4.2 Syntax Level

Stylistic investigation is always comparative in nature, no matter intra-lingual or inter-lingual. The boundary of lexical level and syntactic level is unclear because the aesthetic effects planted in the source language by syntactic means might be conveyed, to some degree, by lexis. So in the following investigation, the focus is on syntactic stylistics, but other linguistic features may be referred to as well.

English is a hypotactic language, hence syntax is significant concerning the division of different levels of information.

坐在那里,他不忙了.眼前的一切都是熟悉的,可爱的,就是坐着死去,他仿佛也很乐意.歇了老大半天,他到桥头吃了碗老豆腐.

(Shi, 2004:74)

He sat there quietly, in no hurry to leave. Everything about him was so familiar, so dear. He would gladly have sat feasting his eyes on it until he died. After a long rest there, he went to eat a bowl of bean curd at the head of the bridge.

(Shi, 2004:75)

He sat there, happily idle, filling his eyes with familiar, affectionate sights; if he never moved from that spot, he’d die a happy man. After sitting a while longer, he got up and went to the bright head, where he ordered a bowl of briny bean curd.

(Goldblatt, 2010:40)

There are two differences concerning the translation of the above two versions. The first sentence is “眼前的一切都是熟悉的,可爱的” the distinctive details are given due to the emphasis in the first translation where it is fore-grounded by a separate sentence. In the second translation, it appears in the form of a participle clause: “filling his eyes with familiar, affectionate sights.” The treatment by the second version fits well the emotional conditions of Xiangzi. It is relatively fluent and smooth comparing to the first one, which suits perfectly the smoothness and harmonious of the whole picture and in the form of the sentences, the second one is more integral. Simultaneously, the peaceful mental condition is also mirrored in this form of expression.

Opposite to the first sentence, the second sentence “就是坐着死去,他仿佛也很乐意.” finds itself in a participle clause in the first translation version, while it is transferred into a conditions adverbial clause in the second one. It is apparent that the conditions adverbial clause is not supposed to be a casual expression as it often concerns logical and rational thinking. The participle clause, however, is natural and fluent, which exactly conveys the idleness and casualness of Xiangzi. The enjoyment of the peace in his mind is stressed by this simple and fluent form of expression. The emphasis of the original work has been fully reproduced in the target language.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the two translation versions have their own merits and shortcomings. Generally, the story is clearly reproduced and the main flavor of the work is successfully conveyed. The translations reveal both the skillful translation techniques and the literary sensitiveness to the novel of the two translators. The detailed examination of the two translations reveals many different treatments of certain specific sentence. And both of the translators have made mistakes in reproducing the style of the original novel due to their negligence of the stylistic value carried by lexical expressions and syntactic structures:

On Lexical level, Shi's translation shows her penetrating comprehension of the original work. The words selected are both precise in meaning and accordant in its style. It avoids many losses of thematic meaning and aesthetic effects that Goldblatt's translation does. But generally, it cannot be denied that Howard recreates the work in a more natural way of express in English.

On syntactic level, first of all, the two versions all present themselves with flexibility according to the needs of aesthetic effects. The deliberate adoption of nominal clause and inverted sentence, and the delicate decision on the length of each sentence all contribute greatly to the reproduction of the original style. If comparison has to be made, Shi's translation tends to be in a more logical and precise structure, while Goldblatt's translation is featured with a natural presentation of local way of expressing in the West. Shi's translation tends to be strict with the accurate reproduction of the original meaning, which, to some degree, leads to the complexity of sentence structure and redundant expression in some circumstances. While Goldblatt's translation is relatively free in form. With less attention on the accuracy of the meaning, it stresses on the accordance of form and pace between the original work and the translation. More western ways of expressing are found in his version.

The investigation in the paper concerning the specific literary work of Luo Tuo Xiang Zi and its two translation versions indicates the facts that the application of literary stylistics on fiction translation is necessary, and most importantly, feasible. And the truth is that, in fiction translation, besides the highly deviant usages, the thematically or artistically motivated choices are also contributive to the style reproduction. This demands a keen sense of the translator to detect the original flavor.

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