

Equivalent Tenor in Translation: A Case Study on Ophelia's Confession

XUAN Junbin

Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, China

Tenor determines the Interpersonal Function of language within a context. A matching Tenor is indispensable when a translator attempts to reproduce a context in the target language; especially the translator is translating a dialogue. Translating Shakespeare's dramas is necessarily doing with the dialogue translation, for which the content and interpersonal exchange is vital for transmitting the effect of those foreign readers. Through a comparative analysis on the source text and translated text of Ophelia's confession in the drama *Hamlet*, it goes to show an equivalent Tenor can form a stage for the target readers to know how Ophelia's minds settle and what the position she is at compared with Hamlet. It also proves that Register can be a reference to assessing whether a translation is equivalent to its original text as far as literature translation is concerned.

Keywords: equivalent translation, Tenor analysis, *Hamlet*, translation assessment

Introduction

As for literature translation, on the one hand, the translator needs to convert the communicative effect implied by original utterances of the character to the form acceptable for the target receptors; thus an ideal cross-linguistic and cross-cultural exchange can be therefore triggered. On the other hand, the social status of a character may affect his/her choice of words in the utterance against the addressee, which requires the translator to re-produce a compatible interpersonal relationship within the translated text (henceforward TT). Namely, the translator needs to analyse the social relationships between participants of the dialogues in the original work, making sure the diction in TT can truly reflect the original relationships, to pave a way for the equivalent translation.

And the paper is to capture a confession of Ophelia in *Hamlet* (Act III, Scene 1) as the analysis objective, checking out whether the Chinese translation can reveal the characteristics of Ophelia and her relationship between her addressee Lord Hamlet. The original text (henceforward ST) is:

Ophelia: My Lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.
Hamlet: No. not I;
I never gave you aught.
Ophelia: My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;
And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed

As made things more rich: their perfume lost,
 Take these again; for to the noble mind
 Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
 There, my lord. (Dowden, 1899, p. 102)

Tenor in Translation

As Equivalent Translation concerned, Tytler (2007, p. 9) proposes three principles of translation, namely, (1) the target text ought to transfer the idea of the original work; (2) the writing style and manner of translated text should be the same as that of the original text; (3) the naturalness of source text should not be changed in translating. Afterwards, Nida (1964, p. 11) puts that the translation would be better if the translator transforms the ST into TT from the perspective of the target reader's understanding. As for those Skopoeestheorie advocates, the diction, sentence structure, writing style are all determined by the purpose of translation, part of which is to get receptors to figure out their comprehension within the re-produced context and meaning. For instance, Reiss and Vermeer (1984, p. 140) utilise the term "adequacy" to explain "equivalence", referring to the extent of a target reader's understanding of TT.

Nevertheless, it is hard to assess the "equivalence" of a translation. If we take the translation as a craft (Newmark, 2001, p. 17), the "effect" is almost based on a translator or a reader's intuition, which is hardly quantified. In another place, how a translator provides the TT reader with a chance to experience the aesthetic effect offered by the ST (Hickey, 2001, p. 227) calls up a standard. Thus, there must be language entities for translation critics to evaluate the extent to which a receptor grasps the meaning or effect and the TT concordant to the ST. For example, despite the impossibility of fulfilling complete equivalent translation, integrating the context of situation defined by the numerous interactive factors can be reached, to formulate an "outside context" (Ivir, 1996, p. 155).

Juliane House (1997, pp. 101-102) believes that the equivalent Register of TT compared with the ST can scaffold to a basic mutual comprehension. For one thing, Register is the constitutive part of a context, comprising field, tenor, and mode that correspond to three Meta-functions of language respectively: Ideational Function, Interpersonal Function, and Textual Function (Thompson, 2000, p. 31). For another thing, a drama, *Hamlet* for example, mainly portrays the characters by the interpersonal discourse. Hence a translator needs to re-depict the Tenor so that the target readers can be provided with a parallel context for comprehension, based on which to trigger a "dynamic equivalence" (House, in Hickey, 2001, p. 63).

If translation is taken a communicative practice, "content" is always more important than "form", and the expression ought to be completely natural, to take the receptors to the mode of comprehending in their cultural convention (Nida, 1964, p. 159). Such point is also suggested by Systematic Functional Grammar School that a proper translation can only depend on the par Ideational Function that what the text mainly talks about should be retained (Huang & Chen, 2014).

However, for a drama, the context may be taken in by the dialogues and the relationship between characters, etc., which can be the reflections of particularised meanings within a context. Therefore, to translate the drama, it would be better if the translator brings off the Tenor (or interpersonal relationship implied by the source discourse) in the target language so that it enables the receivers to get across the fundamental effect brought by the presupposed dramatis personae.

Tenor in ST and TT

For a comparative analysis, the paper is to adduce the translated version of *Hamlet* by Zhu Shenghao (Shakespeare, 1998, pp. 147, 383) and to focus on Tenor of the dialogue and Ophelia's confession to Hamlet. The TT to be analysed is as follows:

奥菲利娅殿下，我记得很清楚您把它们送给了我，那时候您还向我说了许多甜言蜜语，使这些东西格外显得贵重；现在它们的芳香已经消散，请您拿回去吧，因为在有骨气的人看来，送礼的人要是变了心，礼物虽重，也会失去了价值。拿去吧，殿下。

Tenor Casts Characteristics

Since Register meshes Meta-functions accordingly, part of its functions is reflecting one's personality behind the discourse within the particularised context constructed by the Field, Tenor, and Mode. Besides, due to the simultaneous functioning of the three Meta-functions in a dialogue (Huang & Chen, 2014), the Tenor can interact with Field and Mode to project a speaker's characteristics.

First and foremost, a process analysis is necessarily carried out, getting across what is going on and encoding proposition via a verbal group (T. Bloor & M. Bloor, 1995, p. 110).

Material Process. As the frequently occurring process, the Material Process deals with "doing words" and action-oriented narrative (p. 111) by recognising "Actor" and "Goal", to figure out a speaker's relative status or role behind his/her utterances.

Concerning the ST and TT, obviously, "with them, you composed words of so sweet breath", the performer of the action "composed" is "you" (Hamlet), that is to say, the Actor is Hamlet, bringing an active action to the object and complement. The "words of sweet breath" is the Goal, indicating the item that bears the action. Then "me" (Ophelia) is the Beneficiary, by whom the action and Goal is received, either real benefit or damage.

Thus, Ophelia acts no more than a receiver within the context here, while the admiring Hamlet is the "giver". For further proof, the analysis of Mental Process can make it clear.

Mental Process in the discourse. Instead of physical or material act, Mental Process concentrates on speaker's minds, psychological states, and inner thoughts or feelings, with the keywords as "feel", "know", "hear", etc. (pp. 116-117).

The clause that overtly involves Mental Process in the TT is "My lord, you know well you did". It can be seen that the Senor is the subject "you", indicating the Lord Hamlet, and the Phenomenon is what Hamlet did before the dialogue takes place. And regarding the former plot, "you did" refers to Hamlet's giving remembrances to Ophelia, in which the Actor is Hamlet, the Goal is the "remembrances", and the Beneficiary "Ophelia". The concrete detail of Mental Process is as the following table:

| Senor | Mental Process | Phenomenon |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My honour'd lord, you | know (right well) | you did |

In short, either Material Process or Mental Process in the selected dialogue reveals that Ophelia is merely the passive receiver or bearer in terms of relationship with Hamlet, while the respectable Lord Hamlet is the active "doer" and Senor. Such an outcome of analysis proves Ophelia is in a lower status and Hamlet is in the higher ones, though Ophelia returns the remembrances actively.

Tenor Analysis in TT

Tenor analysis mainly consists of speech function, forming of speech, modality, from which the implied Mood of participants and the interpersonal relationship and status can be peeled (Halliday, 2004, pp. 140-142). Only when the Tenor of ST and TT is compatible can a basis be formulated for receptors to correctly grasp who participate in the performance and in what relationship the participants act. The following illustration can make it evident:

ST: My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;

TT: 殿下，我记得很清楚您把它们送给了我；

The saluted term "My honour'd lord" (my honoured lord) shows Ophelia's position of a subject or subordinate compared with Hamlet, and that Ophelia dare not confess her thought directly though she loves Hamlet, which is an archetype of female at that time. And when the original work is in old-school style, the translation needs to match the archaic writing style for the equivalence or approximating the reception of the original readers as far as possible (Vladova, 1993, p. 13). So, for an equivalent effect in Chinese, the translator uses "殿下", an old-fashioned term to address one's master, as the translated salutation, indicating the speaker is the subordinate to the lord or is showing her great admiration to the counterpart. What is more, "您" in Chinese refers to the respectable second person, corresponding to "My lord" when translating "you", which also reveals Hamlet's nobleness in Ophelia's mind while casting her delicate characteristics.

Besides the form of address, taking the addressee as a giver is also a way to show respect and to humiliate the addresser, which can be proven by the second clause in Ophelia's saying:

And with them, words of so sweet breath composed

As made the things more rich: their perfume lost.

Take these again; ...

The actions of "composed sweet breath", "make the things richer", "make their perfume lost", and "take these again" should be done by Hamlet, the addressee of Ophelia in this context, while all the effects of these actions are drawn upon Ophelia. In other words, Ophelia offers the choice of "doing actions" to her addressee Hamlet, so that she can formulate the proper status and position compared against Hamlet, which abide the secular mores then. And the TT reflects such illocutionary effect:

那时候您还向我说了许多甜言蜜语，使这些东西显得格格外贵重；现在它们的芳香已经消散，请您拿回去吧，……

At the very beginning, the TT takes in Ophelia's giving a way for Hamlet to be "doer" by the subject "您" which is omitted by the ST. Furthermore, "我" (me) is the Beneficiary in the Chinese translation conforming to the ST, which characterises the concordant interpersonal relationship, paving the way toward equivalent comprehension. And the imperative sentence "take these again" is translated into "请您拿回去吧" (literally means "please take it back for yourself", where the two words "请" and "您" give off the saluted form of address, on the one hand, to transform the ST into a more polite and indirect command more understandable for Chinese readers. On the other hand, "吧" can refer to quite a soft, imperative mood in Chinese, expressing the speaker's submitting the choice to the addressee and the speaker's hedging. Due to the lack of particle indicating ambiguity and uncertainty in English language contrasting to Chinese, by which the speaker can hedge the demand or comment, the translator must utilise the diction of high formality to assure the Chinese receptors can get across the original Tenor within the Chinese context.

Also, Ophelia neutralising her comment against the lord makes the translating a difficult work that the personal pronoun is avoided by her on purpose. Thus, for re-constructing the familiar hedging, the translator also uses the third person in the TT:

ST: For to the noble mind, Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

TT: 因为在有骨气的人看来, 送礼的人要是变了心, 礼物虽重, 也会失去了价值。拿去吧, 殿下。

The “noble mind” represents Ophelia herself, while the “unkind giver” is Hamlet, who also makes the “perfume lost”. Notwithstanding the disfavour, Ophelia tries to imply her criticism against her beloved Hamlet. Since when using language, the speaker does not only talk but perform actions (Austin, 1962, p. 3); hence the translator needs to covert such implication to the target receptors (House & Shoshana, 1986). The translator uses the neutral term “有骨气的人” (the one has backbone), “送礼的人” (the one gives present) instead of fixed and direct form of address accordingly. So, with the equivalent address, the TT retains Ophelia's euphemism which represents her argument and unsatisfactory towards her admired Hamlet, getting the Tenor of speech maintained so that Ophelia's passive and struggling position in the dialogue can also be reflected in Chinese.

Conclusion

Tenor is a crucial item when translating dialogue, as to how the participants express their attitudes to adapt themselves in different circumstances to exchange with different addressees is the fundamental of comprehending what is going on for the target audience or reader. More importantly, the compatible Tenor is also the basis of the equivalent function of translation. A translator must lead the readers to the original context while understanding by their mode or habit (Wilss, 1982, pp. 33-34). In another place, a reader cannot get any effect produced by the dramatist without knowing the interpersonal discourse.

Through the analysis above, it can be demonstrated that the translator properly copes with the discourse and reasonably reveals Ophelia's relationship between Hamlet via the meshing form of address, choice of personal pronoun, and means of giving demand, within which the interpersonal relationship is conveyed. And by disclosing the equivalent interpersonal relationship while retaining the style of ST, it can bridge for the Chinese reader to explore the meaning of the dialogue in the by the naturalness of Chinese.

Furthermore, as a typically emotional character, many an emotion that portrays feminist personalities is implied in Ophelia's utterance, especially when she converses with her secret beloved Hamlet, how to reproduce the implicature and cast the complicated relationship between the two might be decisive for the Chinese readers to accept the original work. Although the content of the dialogue is vital, the ideational meaning is primary for re-shaping the context, to sculpture the Tenor and to fulfil the Interpersonal Function of the discourse is the requisite to triggering the ideal outcome that the target readers can understand the original work as far as the source language readers. Equally, it is one of the ways to examine whether the TT can provide the same or familiar context for the receptors.

In a word, the selected sample shows that by giving rise to a concordant Tenor, the Chinese readers should be able to grasp Ophelia's helplessness and abjectness facing Hamlet's refusal. Additionally, the Tenor analysis also validates the status of Ophelia is comparatively lower from the perspective of linguistic study, which can be an additional proof to the literature criticism.

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