

Faithfulness to the Original Style on Two Chinese Translations of *Wuthering Heights*

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In order to probe into Nida's translation theory of functional equivalence in practice, we compared two popular Chinese versions of *Wuthering Heights* from the aspects of lexical and syntactic translation. We have explored that absolute faithfulness of original style in translation is impossible because of the linguistical and cultural differences between English and Chinese. Thus, a translator can only achieve the resemblance instead of identity in reproducing the linguistic form and spirit.

Keywords: functional equivalence, style, lexical choice, syntax

Introduction

In literary works, style can be regarded as the soul of a writer. Therefore, in the process of translating, faithful representation of the original style in translation can help to fully reproduce the original spirit. Nida's theory of functional equivalence is one of the most powerful and influential theories in translation study dealing with translation problems in the aspects of meaning and style. He emphasizes the closest natural equivalent and the reader's response in target language. *Wuthering Heights*, written by Emily Bronte, is famous for its peculiar structure of narration. The whole story is told by two characters: Mr. Lockwood, the guest and mainly Mrs. Dean, the housekeeper. So in it, the author used the vivid language of common people. There are several Chinese translations of *Wuthering Heights*. Among them, Yang Yi's version and Fang Ping's version are the most popular. Each of them has its own successes. But at the same time, displays the defects in translating the language style of the novel. Style can never go without language. In other words, paragraphing, sentence-making, and wording are absolutely essential to style. Are those two Chinese translations faithful to the original style of the original novel? Can the two versions convey the same emotion to the Chinese readers? Thus, we are going to compare the two versions from the two aspects: wording and syntax.

Translation of Wording

Wording here means "choice of words" and "the rhetorical devices". In translation, every word must be weighed carefully and every figure of speech dealt with seriously according to the demand of the context and style.

Lexical Choice by Different Characters

In *Wuthering Heights*, the author chose proper languages for various characters. The words they used

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are suitable for their own personality. It demands translators considering the language style of different characters.

Example 1. The cowardly children crept nearer also, Isabella lisping— (Bronte, 1994, p. 48)

Yang: 胆小的孩子们也爬进一些，伊莎贝拉口齿不清地说着， (2016, p. 44)

Fang: 那两个不中用的孩子也慢慢爬近来了，伊莎蓓拉刁着嘴嚷道： (2010, p. 44)

The sentence is said by Heathcliff, who despises Linton and Isabella (the children), so he uses the derogatory word “cowardly” to modify them. Here, the two Chinese words “胆小的” and “不中用的” have the same referential meaning of “cowardly”, but their affective meanings are different. “胆小的”, a neutral word, loses the ironic tone of Heathcliff. The derogatory word “不中用的” is proper to the tone of Heathcliff.

Example 2. He’s exactly like the son of the fortune-teller, that stole my tame pheasant. Isn’t he, Edgar? (Bronte, 1994, p. 48)

Yang: 他正象偷我那只驯雉的那个算命的儿子呀，不就是他吗，埃德加？ (2016, p. 44)

Fang: 他活象是算命人的儿子——那个偷我的乖乖的山鸡的算命人的儿子。可不是吗，埃德加？ (2010, p. 44)

When Isabella says this, she is only a child. It is quite strange for a little girl to use “驯雉”, a formal word. Here “乖乖的山鸡” is suitable for her age.

Example 3. Well, say I promise. I won’t speak, but that does not bind me not to laugh at him! (Bronte, 1994, p. 64)

Yang: 好吧，说我答应了我说话，可那并不能管住我不笑他呀！ (2016, p. 59)

Fang: 好吧，你就说我答应不说话就是了，可是不能因之不许我对他笑呀！ (2010, p. 56)

Francis, who has received little education, says this. Fang translated the word “that” into “因之”. Though the word “因之” shows the deep meaning of “that”, it is like to be said by an educated person, and often it is not said in the spoken language. Yang’s translation “那” is better.

Example 4. ...There would be more sense in endeavouring to repair some of his wrongs than shedding tears over them. (Bronte, 1994, p. 54)

Yang: 弥补一下他的委屈，总比为这些事掉眼泪还有意义些。 (2016, p. 49)

Fang: 为他洒泪，还不如想办法帮他减轻些他所受的委屈来得有意义呢。 (2010, p. 48)

This sentence is the recollection of Mrs. Dean, the housekeeper. It sounds unnatural to translate “shedding tears” as “洒泪” in Fang’s version, for Chinese speakers often adopt it in literal language, e.g., “洒泪而别”. So, it is unfit for Nelly, the housekeeper to speak like this. In contrast, “掉眼泪” is a better translation that remains the language style of her.

Example 5. ...and then I remember how old Earnshaw used to come in when all was tidied and call me a cant lass. (Bronte, 1994, p. 52)

Yang: ……于是我就记起老恩萧从前在一切收拾停当时，总是怎么走进来，说我是假正经的姑娘。 (2016, p. 49)

Fang: ……于是我就记起，在从前都一切收拾整齐之后，老欧肖总会走进来夸我是个好姑娘。 (2010, p. 48)

The author used the word “how” to describe the tender heart of Nelly, and it arouses the imagination of readers. However, in Fang’s translation, the word is loosed. Yang translated it as “怎么” faithful to the original style.

Proper Addition in Proper Places

In many cases, it is neither possible nor necessary to translate word for word. Sometimes, translators make proper addition of some individual words, so that the deep structure as well as the style can be showed before readers of the target language.

Example 6. I, as zealous as herself hurried eagerly home to admire. (Bronte, 1994, p. 64)

Yang: 在这方面我和她一样热心, 兴高采烈地跑回家去看。 (2016, p. 59)

Fang: 我呢, 也象她一样心里热乎的, 三步并作两步, 赶回家去, 急着要亲眼瞧瞧他的俊模样儿。 (2010, p. 56)

Firstly, the author used only one word “hurried” to express the eagerness of “I”. Yang also used “跑” to translate it. Though it is as concise as the original, we still feel not so satisfied. Fang added the phrase “三步并作两步” having achieved vividness of “hurried” in Chinese. Secondly, in the original sentence, the word “admire” conveys broader meaning than the Chinese word “看”. In Fang’s translation, the proper addition “要亲眼瞧瞧他的俊模样儿” gives the connotative meaning of “admire” and also remains the pleasant and eager tone of the speaker.

Example 7. “But is she very ill?” I asked, flinging down my rake, and tying my bonnet. (Bronte, 1994, p. 62)

Yang: “可是他病得很重吗?” 我问, 丢下耙, 系上帽子。 (2016, p. 58)

Fang: “她可是病得很厉害吗?” 我问道, 一边丢下了手里的耙子, 把软帽系上。 (2010, p. 55)

The present participles “flinging” and “tying” concisely show the companionship of the act. However, in Chinese, we have to use the lexical meanings to achieve the same effect. Fang added the word “一边” to interpret the participles, and then got the resemblance of the original. Through Yang’s translation we cannot distinguish the relation between acts clearly, though it seems to give the same concise style.

As a matter of fact, since there are seldom two words of different languages equal to each other, proper addition of some individual word keeps not only the same semantic meaning but also the similar style of the original.

Translation of Rhetorical Devices

Usually, we may get some traces of a writer’s style through the rhetorical devices adopted by them. So, it is important to remain these rhetorical devices in the target language. However, because of the differences of culture, words collocation, and habitual usage in different languages, translators have to adopt different methods to translate them in order to achieve the resembled style of the original.

Example 8. A beast of a servant came up with a lantern, at last, shouting— (Bronte, 1994, p. 47)

Yang: 一个象畜生似的佣人提个提灯来了, 叫着, (2016, p. 47)

Fang: 有一个狗奴才提着一盏灯笼, 奔过来嚷道, (2010, p. 43)

The metaphor “A beast of a servant” expresses the speaker’s sensation of execration towards the servant. Fang’s translation “狗奴才” is similar to the original form. And at the same time, it expresses the same affective meaning. Though the translator converted “畜生” into “狗”, it also remains the colloquial style. In contrast, the simile “象畜生似的佣人” here is different to the original figure of speech. And the most important is that the structure “象……似的” is seldom used in spoken Chinese.

Example 9. ...and that couple of black fiend, so deeply buried. (Bronte, 1994, p. 56)

Yang: ……还有那对黑黑的恶魔, 埋得这么深。 (2016, p. 51)

Fang: ……还有, 那一对深深地嵌在里面的黑小鬼。 (2010, p. 50)

The word “fiend” means a devil or evil spirit. In the above sentence it is a metaphor to the eyes of Heathcliff. On the surface, “恶魔” and “小鬼” are both equivalent words of “fiend”. But from the context, we know it is the kind scorn of Nelly towards Heathcliff. Thus, “小鬼” is more suitable as it conveys the same sensation of Nelly and affective meaning. On the contrary, “恶魔” has a derogatory meaning deviating the tone of Nelly. It is not equivalent to “fiend” in style within the context.

Example 10. Vinegar-faced Joseph projected his head from a round window of the barn. (Bronte, 1994, p. 7)

Yang: 苦脸的约瑟夫从谷仓的一个圆窗里探出头来。 (2016, p. 7)

Fang: 约瑟夫从谷仓的圆窗里探出一张好像跟谁生气的脸来。 (2010, p. 8)

Joseph is a disgusting character in the novel. Emily Bronte portrayed the bad temper of him by the transferred epithet “vinegar-faced”. In Chinese, there is no such expression. As a result, the two translators translate it freely. Fang in his translation paraphrased the figure of speech into a long phrase, which loses the vivid image. Yang used another taste “bitter” to translate vinegar. Thus, “苦脸” not only achieves the equivalent figure of speech, but also gives the same connotative meaning to Chinese readers. Moreover, it keeps the precise structure of the original.

Translation of Syntax

Syntax is also an important aspect to the style, so that it is better to keep the sentence-making, sentence-order, and sentence-patterns as much as possible. But since there are similar as well as different sentence structures in English and Chinese, a translator on the one hand should try his utmost to keep the charm of the original and on the other, take the law and usage of his mother tongue into full consideration.

Translation of Attributive Sentences

In English, the meaning consistency can be achieved by using attributive sentence. But in Chinese, there is no such kind of sentence structure. Translators have to rearrange the sentence patterns, so as to give a clear expression and keep the general spirit of the original.

Usually, attributive clauses are rendered as pre-modifiers in E-C translation for instance:

Example 11. I declare he is that strange acquisition my late neighbour made in his journey to Liverpool. (Bronte, 1994, p. 44)

Yang: 我断定他——一定是我那已故的邻人去利物浦时带回来的那个奇怪的收获。 (2016, p. 45)

Fang: 我知道了, 他就是我们故世的老邻居从利物浦带回来的怪物。 (2010, p. 44)

Here, the original sentence is closely constructed by using the restrictive attributive clause. From the point view of syntax, the two translation remain the close construction of the original. But in some cases, things are not always like this.

Example 12. And from that I went on to think of his fondness for Heathcliff, and his dread lest he should suffer neglect after death had removed him. (Bronte, 1994, p. 54)

Yang: 从这我又想起他对希刺克厉夫的喜爱, 他生怕死后希刺克厉夫会没人照管为此所感到的恐惧。 (2016, p. 49)

Fang: 从这个我又想到他对希克厉的宠爱来, 想到他老是担心, 只怕他死了之后再没人照顾那孩子。 (2010, p. 48)

Here, “lest” leads a restrictive attributive sentence. Generally speaking, we should place the attributive before the word “dread” like Yang did. But the attributive is too long. It is not proper for the style of Chinese narration. Fang rearranged the sentence dynamically. He converted the phrase “his dread” into a clause “他老是担心”, and then the attributive clause was rendered as post-positioned explanatory. In this way, the translation follows the Chinese habitual sentence structure, furthermore the ending focus like the original.

Example 13. I could have told Heathcliff’s history, all that you need hear, in half a-dozen words. (Bronte, 1994, p. 60)

Yang: 我本来可以把你要听的关于希刺克厉夫的历史用几个字说完的。 (2016, p. 55)

Fang: 你要听的就是希克厉的生世, 我本来三言两语就可以交代了。 (2010, p. 53)

The two translators both concern the language habit of Chinese. Yang rendered the attributive clause as the pre-modifier. Fang decomposed the whole sentence into two thematic structures, which exhibit the Chinese feature of divergence. Comparatively speaking, we prefer the latter for the two simple T-R structures are appropriate in conversation.

Therefore, in translating attributive sentences, semantic equivalence as well as dynamic equivalence should be achieved according to the original style.

Translation of Passive Voice

Passive voice is used in both English and Chinese. In Chinese it is often used to express the unpleasant act, things, etc., e.g., “被害” and “被捕”. In this case, if the English passive voice also has the same associative meaning, we can keep the passive voice in E-C translation.

Example 14. “You’re not killed—don’t more mischief.” (Bronte, 1994, p. 58)

Yang: 你并没有被人杀死。别再掏气了。 (2016, p. 53)

Fang: 你又没给人杀死。别再招惹麻烦了。 (2010, p. 51)

In English, there are only two ways of forming passive voice: be + pp and get + pp. The above example belongs to the first. In Chinese, we have more expressions of passive voice, for instance: “被”, “给”, “受”, “挨”, “叫”, etc. In spoken language, “被” sounds unnatural. Thus, Fang’s translation is more appropriate to the style though both translations keep the same sentence structure.

However, in most cases, passive voice is used less often in Chinese than in English. Thus, it is not necessary for translators to keep the passive voice in translating sentences.

Example 15. ...and the invitation had been accepted. (Bronte, 1994, p. 53)

Yang:这邀请已被接受了。 (2016, p. 49)

Fang:这邀请他们接受了。 (2010, p. 48)

Fang used the active voice in his translation, and the thematic structure is suitable in the narrative text. Compared with Yang’s translation, Chinese readers can better accept it.

Example 16. ...because she is more thought of than you. (Bronte, 1994, p. 55)

Yang:只因为她比你多被人关心些。 (2016, p. 50)

Fang:只因为人家理会她, 就不理会你。 (2010, p. 49)

It is a pleasant thing to be thought of. So, the passive voice used in Yang’s translation is a little strange in Chinese. Unlike Fang did not keep the passive voice. His translation is not only proper to the whole style but also gives the deep structure of “than”.

In order to obtain the resembling style of the original. Translators need to translate sentences dynamically in accordance with the different or similar usage of the target language. Only when we render the sentence patterns flexibly where necessary can we be said to have satisfied the minimum requirement of clear expression of meaning and smooth use of language in our translation.

Conclusion

All in all, from the analysis of the two Chinese versions of *Wuthering Heights*, the main task of literary translation lies in the faithful reproduction of the spirit and features of the original. However, absolute faithfulness is impossible, because the differences exist linguistically and culturally between two languages. Thus, a translation can only be as close to the original as possible. In other words, a translator can only achieve the resemblance instead of identity in reproducing the linguistic form and spirit.

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