

# Overlapping of Good Examples—In Reference to the Translation of *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*

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The fuzziness of boundaries in abstract categories, the similarity among multiple versions in analysis, integration, and exploration of the source, and the prototypes holding core position within a domain that go beyond regular comprehension lead translation to an overlapping strategy by comparison typical members on both source and target sides. This is especially useful when context shows rhythmic and proselike features.

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## Introduction of Prototype Theory

Prototype Theory, also known as Prototype Category Theory, was founded by cognitive linguist Eleanor Rosch in the 1970s. Eleanor firstly meant it to make people understand classification and conceptualization better. And then it became the milestone of cognitive linguistic development. This theory is unique in obfuscating the boundaries of category with good examples and bad ones but not the distinct demarcation as in the traditional theories, and setting up typicality of examples, similarity of family members, and marginalizing non-typical ones that might otherwise be included into a different concept.

Within a category that is the summary of a series of concepts, one or more examples are considered “typical”—to best represent the major features of concepts inside the category, that is, a good example, or good examples. The contrary description is viewed as being “bad”—i.e., a bad example or bad examples, suggesting the margins of a certain category or the so-called “prototype”. As far as lexical words are concerned, definitely some vocabulary, rather than others, captures features or traits to be regarded more as joining in the majority and even the most representative of the core prototypes. Moreover, prototypes do not need to be concrete. An abstract expression, a certain attribute explained subtly, and a mere trend or touch all form the core constitution of prototype. In view of this, an attempt to cope with translation is feasible and worth a trial in real English-Chinese translation practice.

## Preview About Translation of Proselike Parts in *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*

In a biography with historical features, content does not always go in stern and opaque ways. From time to time, lyricism and essay-style expressions leave the translators in a situation a perfect match being difficult to find between the beauty, delicacy of source, and a mediocre literal output of the target. Some translators concede in accuracy to come to terms with a more balanced sentence structure, or to achieve certain rhetorical effect just

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for the sake of it. And it is also a pity if many Chinese connotations are reduced to meet a possible equivalent in “parallelism”, for instance, only to cause misunderstanding and ambiguity. Meanwhile, the supplementary annotation-style of translation is by no means helpful in solving the matter, as redundancy will occur in the form of newly incurred trouble.

Given the difficulty, perspective of prototype is both innovative and vivid. The application of the theory has gone far beyond the limits of linguistics as in lexical and semantic researching, and it is exploring with larger scopes into more interdisciplinary subjects and exert more significant roles in various fields.

The examples in a 2020-published Chinese version of *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*—biography by Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924), a British novelist and historian, can manifest the above issues concerning the translation of lyricism and expression with prose feature (see Figure 1).

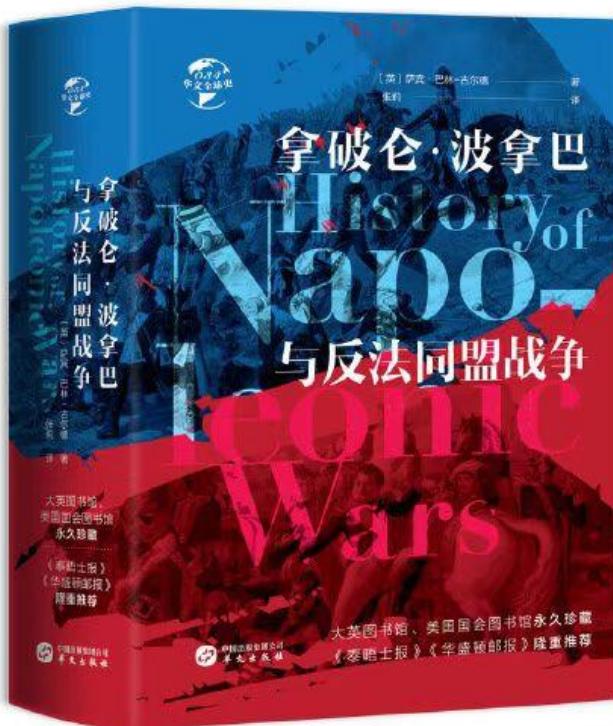


Figure 1. *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, written by Sabine Baring-Gould, and translated by Zhang Li.

It was with this idea inspiring him, that he returned to his native island in the vintage season of 1792, when the peaceful harvest of the grape was being gathered in to the songs of the peasantry—and the air was scented with the must, a pleasant exchange after the carnage of Paris, and the howls of a blood-drunk mob. (Baring-Gould, 1908, p. 55)

### Translation Under Guide of Prototype Theory

A careful thought on the above source context leads the translator to a realization that the converting journey is longer than sense and connotation exchange, rhyme shuffling among a group of pairs of words that may not necessarily be adjacent, and rhetorical designations not being grudging of heightening difficulty in translation by rhythmical images, as is shown in the following graph (see Figure 2):

*It was with this idea inspiring him, that he returned to his native island in the vintage season of 1792, when the peaceful harvest of the grape was being gathered in to the songs of the peasantry—and the air was scented with the must, a pleasant exchange after the carnage of Paris, and the howls of a blood-drunk mob.* (Baring-Gould, 1908, p. 55)

Figure 2. The marking of resonating pairs to achieve rhythmical and rhetorical effects.

Even the translators who aim to pay least effort find where the true barriers lie. They can have multiple ways to handle the sense group in whatever criteria they innovate or whatever traditions they hold, but the phonetic effect as captured in a way that is more dynamic, subtle, abstract, embedded—than regular manipulation boundaries. It seems in no way possible to create or display the same, or a similar, effect in either rhythm or phonetics in the target language that has different pace and cadence in linguistic construction, as it is always so with languages in different families.

The notion of prototype extends and there are good and bad examples of respective translation, with or without the consideration of rhythm and literature streak. Among various of translative versions that meet the standards all the way from accuracy to elegance, the goodness or typicality is judged on the writer's point of view by how that particular translation constructs environment where the rhythmical or rhetorical atmosphere can also be achieved so as to function as an example for the category. The fuzzy category boundaries or fuzziness, which is used for the boundaries of cognitive categories—“categories of entities”, or “the product of cognitive classification” (Ungerer & Schmid, 2008, p. 19)—gives rise to the possibility of exploration in translating proselike parts with more revolutionary maneuvers.

### Good Examples on the Side of English

A list of attributes can be collected—(1) alliteration of the sound /s/ as in the pair “*season*” and “*songs*”; (2) alliteration of the sound /g/ as in the pair “*grape*” and “*gathered*”; (3) alliteration of the sound /p/ as in the pair “*peasantry*” and “*pleasant*”; (4) alliteration of the sound /m/ as in the pair “*must*” and “*mob*”; (5) loose alliteration of the syllable “*gra-*” and “*ga-*” as in the pair “*grape*” and “*gathered*”; (6) loose alliteration of the syllable “*pea-*” and “*plea-*” as in the pair “*peasantry*” and “*pleasant*”; (7) loose alliteration of the syllable “*mu-*” and “*mo-*” as in the pair “*must*” and “*mob*”; (8) internal rhyme of the syllable “*-san-*” as in the pair “*peasantry*” and “*pleasant*”; (9) loose end rhyme of the syllable “*-on*” and “*-ngs*” as in the pair “*season*” and “*songs*”; (9) loose end rhyme of the syllables “*-santry*” and “*-sant*” as in the pair “*peasantry*” and “*pleasant*”; and (10) end rhyme of the syllable “*-ge*” as in the pair “*exchange*” and “*carnage*”—and rated as good examples of the category of rhythmic translation whose core components can be more varied if resonance were not ruled out for the sake of the convenience about emphasis and main topic in this thesis.

### Good Examples for the Sake of Chinese

Chinese version, due to different linguistic mechanisms, is only preliminary as to the attributes constituting possible examples that might be either good or bad, as effects are delivered in Chinese language in the artistic subtleness rather than manifested resonance (see Figure 3). So, the category of Chinese cannot function as best choices for examples at the starting point. So, the translator needs to improve the examples manually as creation is also a part of translation.

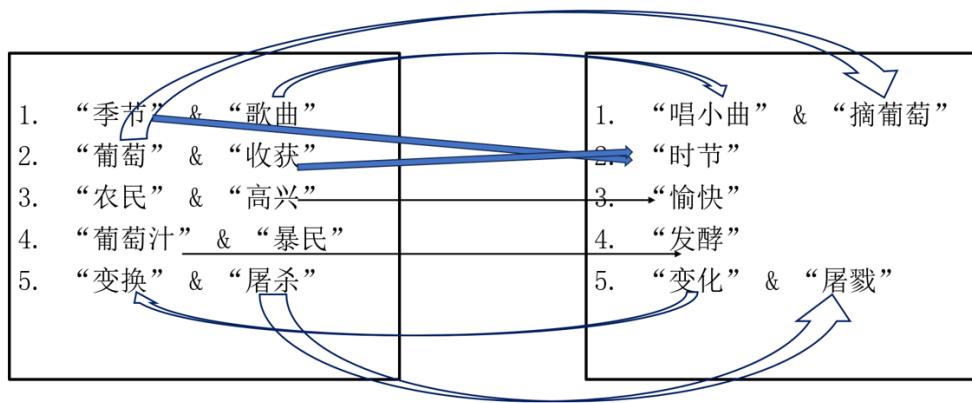


Figure 3. The good examples after improvement in Chinese analysis.

### The Overlapping of Good Examples by Both Languages

Next strategy is to compare the English examples with the Chinese polished ones with the probability of making a balance between two different rhythmic systems in which other rhetorical means indicate desirable supplementary effect. The translator finds an overlapping area on analysis and second-thoughts. This part is representative of both languages in connotation and rhythm. This is an attitude of responsibility for both the original British author as well as the readers in the target language when the translator makes the most of the examples to produce an effect on the side of readers to create an audio-visual sensation, to meticulously describe the atmosphere, to amaze them in historical touch (see Figures 4 & 5).

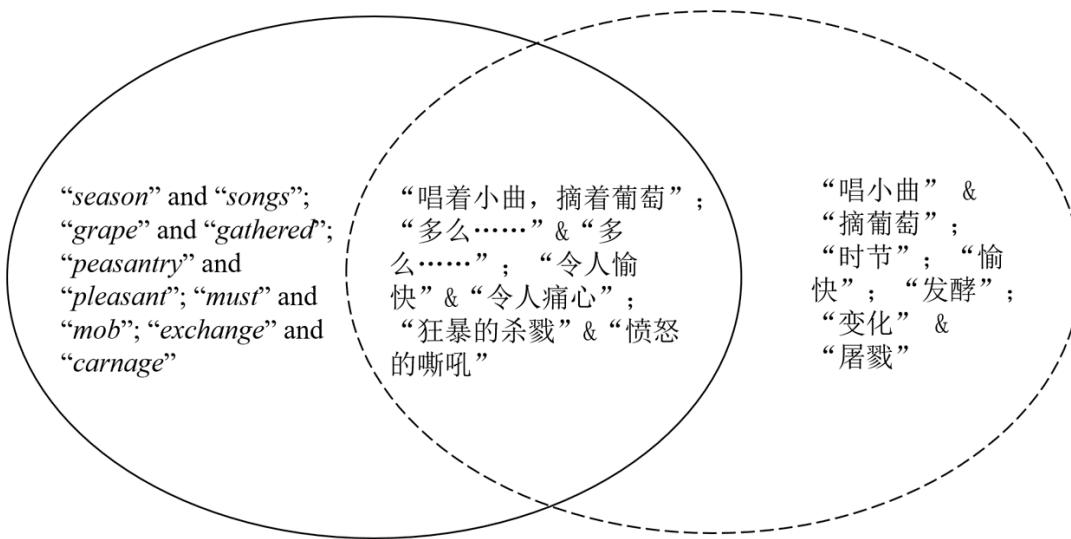


Figure 4. The overlapping of good examples in the source and target.

过的坚定信仰和信念都已经风飘云散，只剩一小股澎湃的热浪留在心中，经久不息——这就是他要解放故乡小岛的热情。这种感情，就像婴儿恋着母亲，像是少年燃烧梦想，是如此炽热，如此浓烈。拿破仑·波拿巴能够感受到这种感情，就像他读到科西嘉岛历史，就像他初次见到巴斯夸·帕歇里。冷静下来后，拿破仑·波拿巴也不得不思考：法兰西当前党派纷杂，派系斗争不断，在他的眼中，这些人都一样渺小，一样肮脏。不过，倒是可以利用这些人来推进自己的理想——解放科西嘉岛。带着这样的想法，拿破仑·波拿巴的心又开始躁动。1792年是葡萄收获的时节，拿破仑·波拿巴返回了家乡。农民们唱着小曲，摘着葡萄，空气中充满泥土的芳香，四处一片祥和。多么令人愉快啊！拿破仑·波拿巴想起了巴黎，狂暴的杀戮历历在目，愤怒的嘶吼还在耳边回荡。这是多么令人痛心的对比。

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*Figure 5. The published version in translated *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* through overlapping of examples (Baring-Gould & Zhang, 2020, p. 132).*

### One More Case of Good-Examples-Overlapping Strategy

Another case adopting similar steps in the overlapping strategy can be found in the same book. Put briefly, attributes work with one another, and a middle area can be found with both the artistic value in rhythm and beauty of parallelism in Chinese. The paragraphs in the former are as follows:

All at once, the indigent Corsican General, who had been under a cloud, had emerged into sunshine. He who had not known where to look for a friend, was now intimate with every member of the Government. He who could obtain no place for himself was able to instal his relatives and friends in comfortable berths. (Baring-Gould, 1908, p. 110)

The attributes in the source mixed and fused in elementary steps with those in the target can be outlined as follows (see Figures 6 & 7):

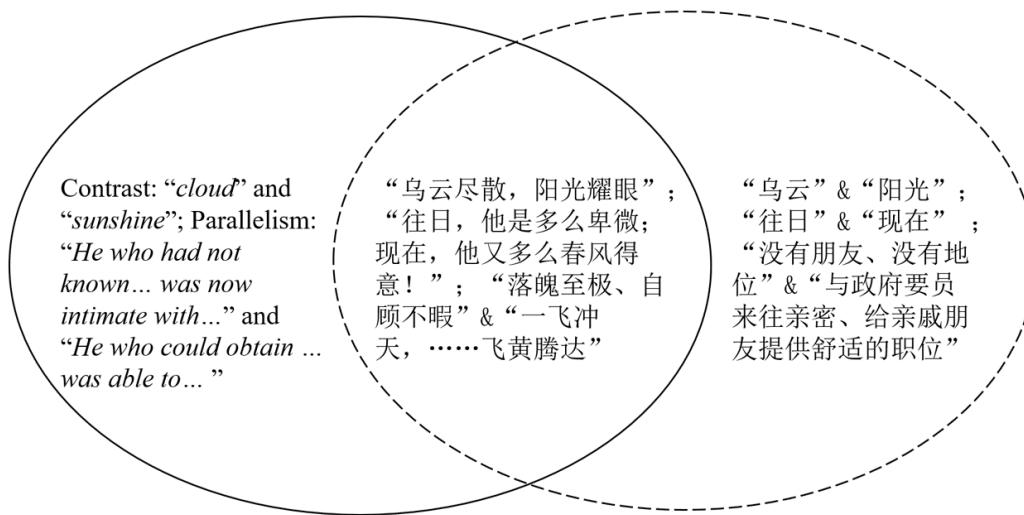


Figure 6. The second case of overlapping of good examples in the source and target.

突然间，乌云尽散，阳光耀眼。出身科西嘉岛的将军拿破仑·波拿巴一扫往日贫寒，开始荣登权贵之阶。往日，他是多么卑微；现在，他又多么春风得意！往日，他落魄至极，自顾不暇；现在则一飞冲天，带着近亲好友一起飞黄腾达，

葡月事件过后的一天，温塞堡伯爵多米尼克-约瑟夫·勒内·旺达姆对拿破仑·波拿巴说：“希望有一天，你可以良心发现，能对自己开炮杀人这件事有所悔悟。”

拿破仑·波拿巴说：“我不会后悔！我是为了法兰西的江山！”<sup>①</sup>

这话说对了。那美丽江山的背后是多少人的鲜血。

<sup>①</sup> 查尔斯·多里斯·德·布热兹 (Charles Doris de Bouteville)：《拿破仑·波拿巴密史》(Second Memoirs of Napoléon Bonaparte)，1816年，伦敦。——译注

## Conclusion

The translator handles the source context with rhythm and certain rhetorical means concerned under guideline offered by Prototype Category Theory, builds good examples in their most analyzed and integrated features on both sides of the source and the target, and arrives at an overlapping domain that better achieves translation effect alongside the traditional standards of Accuracy, Idiomaticness, and Formalization.

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