
Kaixiang Xia

School of Foreign Languages, Guilin University of Electronic Technology, Guilin, Guangxi, China.


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Corresponding author: Kaixiang Xia, School of Foreign Languages, Guilin University of Electronic Technology, Guilin, Guangxi, China.

Abstract

Poetry expresses the rich emotions of human beings in a sublime and concentrated way, and affects the spiritual world of human beings with its unique melody and form. The works emphasize connection and use a lot of rhetorical techniques such as imagery, metaphor, personification, etc., and thus produce a special language art. When translating English poetry, in order not to lose the flavor and characteristics of the original text, the handling of adjectives is also quite particular. In “O Captain! My Captain!” in order to emphasize the theme, Whitman used a variety of writing and expression techniques, not only expressing his strong emotions to readers, but also creating an extraordinary artistic atmosphere by his skilfully adjectives. This paper uses Chu Tunan’s translation of Whitman’s poem "O Captain! My Captain!" to analyse techniques and strategies in Chinese translation of English poetry from adjectives aspects.

Keywords

English Poetry, Adjectives, Chinese Translation Strategy, Chinese Translation Technique

1. Introduction

The use of adjectives in the field of literary creation is very frequent, especially the use of adjectives in poetry, which greatly extends the poet’s emotions and feelings, and also spreads his profound fantasies and thoughts. Adjectives, as a class of parts of speech that have not only the main characteristics of words but also other discourse characteristics, occupy an important position in the literary structure, and are widely and flexibly used in literary works.

Due to its unique style and form, poetry has always been defined as something lost in translation, which shows its untranslatability. However, although the Tower of Babel was not built, human beings have been striving to communicate and communicate across nations, cultures, and languages since ancient times. The importance of form transplantation in translated poetry (Lu Shuling & Chen Kepei, 2009).

Literary translation can be said to be a communication of cultural artistic conception, especially poetry translation. Because poetry uses the most concise language to express the richest human emotions and the most complex images in the world, such emotions and images constitute the unique cultural artistic conception of poetry (Xiong Diren, 2008).

"O Captain! O My Captain!" is an elegy written by Walt Whitman in 1865. The poem was originally published in a sequel to the pamphlet Drum Taps, a collection of 18 poems about the American Civil War. "When lilacs last in the
"dooryard bloom'd", from the fourth edition published in 1867, is included in Whitman's "Leaves of Grass".

Walt Whitman became paralyzed at the age of 54, so his writing skills deteriorated and stagnated. In his later years, Walt Whitman fell into a depression and wrote poetry quite occasionally, and the pioneer of free verse finally died in 1892. But thanks to his efforts, contemporary poetry has developed a lot. Although most of Whitman's poems are written as free verse, in "O Captain! My Captain!" shows a unique rhyming scheme, which is rarely seen in Whitman's work. In Whitman's unique sentiment, the anguish of the great president's death is much deeply rooted in the verse that it is so real as the reader spontaneously mourns the loss of the great life and honors him. The form of English metrical poetry includes four aspects: genre, structure (Chen Kepei, 1999). Poetry is an organic unity with a high degree of integration of content and form while content and form are often interdependent, so are connotation and structure (Yang Deyu, 1990).

2. The Writing Background and Poetry Structure of "O Captain! My Captain!"

2.1 Writing background

When the bell of freedom rang in everyone's heart, the captain fell on the deck for liberation and freedom: "I can't breathe anymore, my whole body fallen icy." This elegy was written after President Lincoln was assassinated. To the American people, President Lincoln will always be the captain of the American ship and the guide of America. For a fallen president, the poem "O Captain! My Captain!" is the most accurate interpretation and deepest memory of President Lincoln. Whitman grieves the loss of a great man, not for himself but for the American spirit in him. Though Lincoln is dead, people gather around him to commemorate him, not just to carry on his legacy—his sacrifice to unite the nation, but also the new meaning he gave to the American spirit, the American will that shines forever.

2.2 Poetry structure

In Whitman's "The Captain", we see a majestic ship on a perilous journey, crossing winds and seas in the face of loud bells and cheers. The crowd cheered on the shore with ubiquitous colorful flags. Under such a scene, the ship sailed into the port calmly and dropped anchor. But on the deck, the bright red blood reflected the lying captain. My captain, he is dead and cold. At the same time, the subjective world started to move, and there were fluctuations in one's own emotions. Whitman here aptly and affectionately compares Lincoln to the captain of a ship. There is a partnership between the mourner (me) and the deceased (the captain) with different functions but on equal personalities. Whitman called him the captain, which further shortened the distance between them and added a strong emotional color to their relationship.

The joy and pride with which Whitman seeks to achieve this endows the scene with a solemn tone. Those high cheers, the rich colors, the cheerful atmosphere are not just for contrast, they are an important part of the whole poem. Endless hate and infinite regret are all pain and depression. The captain was undisputedly dead, and the mourners lingered unceasingly on the deck. Although Whitman himself claimed to be less concerned about the technique of writing poetry and his own format is more authentic, this poem shows Whitman's mastery of technique.

Each section takes the reader to a new level. In the mind, a vivid picture and precise accompaniment unfolded. Eight acts as a part. The first four sentences are two lines and one rhyme, and four short lines are interleaved with rhyme. The first four lines of verses full of festive atmosphere vividly reflect the true appearance of the northern states of the United States at that time. The final four lines paint the aftermath of dastardly political murder: dejection, gloom, and sadness. The stark contrast between the two tells a true night of historical evolution. The first four lines take on the final paragraph. The third section changes slightly, starting with repression and prayer, setting off a wave of emotion, extending to the next four lines of the first line, and then through prayer and repression, it seems that the wave of emotion is gradually transformed into endless ripples. The last two lines (slightly changed from the penultimate line in the second stanza) are repeated as the end of each stanza to intensify this effect, so that when the poem ends, it still has a deep mournful and lingering sound. If the poem is translated into Chinese, leaving the remaining content no rhyme, then such a translated poem will give people the feeling of "disfigurement", even like a peacock without feathers, it will drift outside the rhyme system of English poetry. In addition, after the information contained in the lost rhyme, it is impossible to make vertical and horizontal comparisons (Huang Gaoxin, n.d.)

3. Chinese Translation Strategies of Adjectives in "O Captain! My Captain!"

3.1 Literal translation

Literal translation and free translation are the most commonly used translation strategies in modern text reading. Literal translation theory is a methodological topic in translation, a major issue in translation studies, and a fundamental
issue in translation studies. The fundamental task of translation theory is to study how to give full play to the superiority of the translation while correctly expressing the meaning and structure of the original, so that the translation work is faithful to the original and easy to read.

And in the poem "O Captain! My Captain!", the following cases are applied:
O Captain! My Captain! Our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,

In these few lines, the translator is just translating word for word. For example, translate fearful into scary, done into accomplish.

According to the interpretation of "Modern Chinese Dictionary", "literal translation" refers to the translation that pays more attention to the relationship between the original text and the original sentence. If there is an opportunity for "word-for-word" translation, this will be the most perfect literal translation. Even if it cannot be used as a "word-for-word" translation, there are some additions and deletions, the spirit of the original work is still fresh, and it can also be called a "literal translation".

3.2 Free translation
Free translation means "translation follows the gist of the original text, not word for word". The famous Chinese writer Mao Dun once said: "We think that the so-called literal translation is not necessarily 'word by word'. Because the real meaning of literal translation is not to distort the original text.

Example:
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
Example:
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.
While follow eyes the steady keel,
the vessel grim and daring;

Dead translates into Stop breathing. Translation here is very interesting.
Free translation is a translation strategy based on the two principles of emphasis and smoothness, and taking sentence translation as the unit. Free translation requires the translator to accurately express the connotation of the original text, but not rigidly stick to the expression form of the original text. It is not difficult to see from the above definitions that no matter literal translation or free translation should determine firstly the correct expression of meaning. The form is the existence mode of the original content connotation, and the change of the form will also cause the change of the content connotation. And this change may be an increase or decrease in quantity, or a qualitative change in form, or even a combination of both.

4. Chinese Translation Techniques of Adjectives in "O Captain! My Captain!"
4.1 Shift
Shift is "considering things from another perspective" or what could be called "empathy". Language is multifaceted, and translators often express the same or similar meanings in many different ways. Specifically, translators can consider the perspective shift in English-Chinese translation from the following aspects:
Shift of subject, shift of spatial viewpoint, shift of temporal viewpoint and shift of positive and negative viewpoints. Thus, the shift of positive and negative perspectives in this poem will be discussed in the following case. "O Captain! My Captain!" contains two aspects of this technique.

E.g:
Rise up -for you the flag is flung -for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths-for you the shores crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
These verses actively express people's enthusiasm for the captain, so readers are also accessing to feel the love for the captain and get real love. Some adjectives such as flung, crowding, swaying, turning, simple but meaningful words express the theme of this poem.

Besides that, the reader may see other adjectives to describe this:

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,

Fallen cold and dead.

The reader can see the sentence "My captain; my father; our ship; but with my mournful steps", these are written from another angle, the mourner's point of view, in the last part of the poem. Pale, still, closed and done, fearful mournful cold and dead, these negative adjectives present us a different picture, sad and depressed. When translating a poem or a work accurately, the shift of adjectives is usually the highlight of the translation.

4.2 Conversion

Speech conversion means that a word does not change its form, directly converts from a word to a word, and gives the word a new meaning and function. Part-of-speech switching in English is an important method of word formation, and word-shifting in Chinese is often used as a rhetorical means to distinguish parts of speech.

E.g:

For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths-for you the shores crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

The focus of this part is mainly divided into two parts. The first part is descriptive English. There are mainly two types of conversions from adjectives to nouns and adjectives to verbs. For example, crowding is directly translated as the verb (crowded) here. The second part is the conversion of English adjectives in the second sentence of the case. For example, swaying is translated (cheering), and turning is directly translated as (turning).

Conversion is a common phenomenon in English and Chinese, and this language phenomenon is a manifestation of people's thinking process of transformation. This article is described from the adjectives of poetry.

4.3 Replacement

The so-called "replacement" refers to the replacement of words with a common word, synonym or another angle of use of words, or to translate the meaning of words through deduction to meet the needs of style or meaning. If it is easy to translate from a lexical point of view, replace a word lexically to overcome the barriers of translatability and turn the barriers into smoothness. From a syntactic point of view, simple sentence translation is to change (replace) a sentence, and translate the same meaning from different sentences by grasping the semantic structure on the surface of the original sentence. Replacement is a very effective readability method and an important means of functional compensation. Replacements are very efficient and readable, and an important way to compensate for functionality.

It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

The translator just translated dead into a verb. This verb is used instead of adjectives, which is to replace obstacles into smoothness.

The most important thing is that the translator should understand the meaning of English words accurately and thoroughly. Replacement is one of the most important methods in English-Chinese translation. Use alternatives appropriately, carefully selected. Choosing alternative words can remove obstacles in Chinese writing.

4.4 Amplification

Amplification: In view of the differences in thinking methods, discourse conventions and expressions between English and Chinese, some words, phrases or sentence patterns are added to the translation in order to more accurately express the meaning contained in the original text.

For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths-for you the shores crowding.
Crowds and the myriad of translation techniques that use amplification. Many Chinese sentences do not have a subject, while English sentences usually have. Therefore, there are a small number of English without subject sentences, passive voice or inactive voice in the translation of Chinese without subject sentences. Except for the subject structure, sentences generally change according to the context of the sufferer. Therefore, there are big differences between English and Chinese in the use of objects, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions and articles. Pronouns are often used in English. But when talking about a person or something related to a specific person, such as a human body, we often need to put the possessive pronoun first. Therefore, possessive pronouns must be added in Chinese-English translation, but possessive pronouns must be deleted accordingly in English-Chinese translation. Therefore, it is often necessary to add conjunction in the process of Chinese-English translation. Prepositions and articles are inseparable from translated sentences. In addition, in the process of Chinese-English translation, the translation should also pay attention to adding some implicit and unobvious words to the original text, and even some general and annotated words to ensure the accuracy of translation. Above all, the use of amplification, one is to ensure that the grammatical structure of the translation is more perfect, and the other is to ensure that the meaning of the translation is clearer.

5. Conclusion

The essence of translation is the sublation of the mother tongue in the process of communication and interaction with foreign languages, including collision and conflict, as well as coordination and compromise (Wang Kefei, 2008, p. 13). "For Chinese-English translators, whether they have a certain awareness of protecting the essence of Chinese culture will affect their cultural orientation and specific translation strategies.

In the practice of literary translation, adjectives can provide translators with language materials for rhetorical selection and summarize possible collocations of language materials, but sometimes they are not the most meaningful collocations. In the final analysis, literary translation is a creative activity.

Poetry is the essence of human language, and poetry can enjoy such a high reputation because of the rich connotation and various expressive techniques of the vocabulary it uses. As language learners, we should absorb such essence and recreate it, so as to achieve the purpose of applying what we have learned (Wang Lanlan, 2012).

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