

Study on Translation Methods of Representation of Defamiliarization Devices in C-E Translation of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*

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Received 12 January 2020; accepted 28 April 2020

Published online 26 May 2020

Abstract

It has been almost one decade since Lu Xun's great masterpiece, *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* first published. Although the book is mostly created by simple expression with few rhetorical and ornamental language, it can still bring readers unique aesthetic experience, which has a close relationship with the application of defamiliarization devices created by the author. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's translation of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* successfully recreated the literariness by reproducing the defamiliarization devices. This paper aims at focusing on the translation methods they adopt to deal with the defamiliarization devices in the original, so as to guide other translators' translation process of reproducing the defamiliarization devices. Besides that, the aesthetic effects of defamiliarization are also analyzed in this paper in order to increase translators' awareness of defamiliarization.

Key words: Representation of defamiliarization devices; Translation methods; *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to Lu Xun's works, the significance, the historical background and the creation process have always been the research focuses. Meanwhile, his poetic words and well-designed language can make artistic enjoyment for his readers. Russian formalism proposes that the mode of literary research should be centered on

the works rather than the author. That is to say, the study of literature is the study of poetics, and literary works should be regarded as an independent work of art. (Peng, 2005) From vernacular Chinese to classical Chinese, from foreign languages to Chinese dialect, different language factors affected Lu Xun's language style. Besides, in order to add richness and vitality of his expression, Lu Xun often makes his words deviate from the linguistic rules. Thus, a large number of defamiliarization devices appear in his works. (Huang, 2007) Defamiliarization devices are those writing techniques that the authors intentionally create for the purpose of enhancing readers aesthetic experience, which makes their expression poetic and humorous. Therefore, reproducing these defamiliarization devices in translation process becomes crucial for the translator to convey the literariness and recreate the aesthetic feelings for its target readers. *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* is a series of recollection prose created by Lu Xun in 1926. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's translation of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* has been well accepted by foreign readers. By analyzing the translation methods of representation of defamiliarization in the Yangs' translation of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*, this paper aims at raising the translator's awareness of defamiliarization and better convey the literariness of literary works to readers.

1. DEFAMILIARIZATION AND REPRESENTATION OF DEFAMILIARIZATION IN TRANSLATION

1.1 Defamiliarization

In the early 20th century, Saussure engaged himself in developing linguistics into an independent discipline, whose only research object should be language itself. That brought Russian literature scholars a fresh idea. Russian formalism got rid of the opinion of symbolism

and academism. They put forward that literature should not be attached to other disciplines, and should be an independent system, using special research methods to study internal laws of literary works. Roman Jakobson made the research object of literature further concrete, "The object of literary study is not literature, but literariness. That is to say, what makes the work become a literary work". (Todorov, 1989, p.24) Literariness is the inherent characteristic of literary works, which is reflected neither in the author nor the content of the work, but in the form of the work.

How does the literary language differ from the daily language? In other words, what endows the literary language with literariness? How can the literariness be practiced and perceived? Shklovsky, a Russian formalist scholar, thinks that the key is literary techniques. The application of literary techniques distorts language, creatively breaking the readers' expectation, the habitual cognition as well as the conventional thought. An artistic and novelty enjoyment was produced. (Yang, 2005) Defamiliarization refers to the author's intention of using novel expressions to describe familiar things, as if people heard it for the first time, so as to give people a sense of novelty. (Shklovsky, 1989, p.7)

1.2 Representation of Defamiliarization Devices in Translation

Because of the characteristic of literature and the task of literary translation, representation of defamiliarization devices plays a crucial part in literary translation. Literariness depends on defamiliarization devices. "Without literariness, refinement and vulgarity become isolate, and words turn into a pile of unprocessed language which, however, can't be applied in translation of literature works". (Xu, 2001, p.110) Literary translation is different from other translations in that it has aesthetic characteristics of art. Translators should attach importance to the elements that make literature literary, that is defamiliarization devices.

As for how to reproduce defamiliarization devices, "early translation studies prescribed that a work in translation retain defamiliarization devices, and if existing devices could be transposed in the second language, the translator needed to invent new ones". (Gentzler, 2004, p.82) Zhao Yanchun (2005, p.223) puts forward that in order to reach for the functional similarity from the perspective of form, translators can take analogical translation into consideration in the graphological translation process. On this basis, Jin Bing (2007) stresses that translators should not ignore the defamiliarization devices that cannot be translated by analogical translation, but should employ the compensation method so that readers can perceive the characteristics of the original. Zhu Pan (2012) further discusses the translation methods according to different characteristics of defamiliarization.

2. INTRODUCTION OF TRANSLATION OF DAWN BLOSSOMS PLUCKED AT DUSK

2.1 Introduction of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*

Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk is a series of recollection prose created by Lu Xun. It was first published on the magazine *Mangyuan* in 1926 when the magazine resumed publication. This book has been published for nearly one hundred years. It is still popular among the general public for its profound meaning. It records the little everyday things of the author's childhood and adolescence. There are 10 articles in this book and Lu Xun wrote 9 months. The first six articles mainly narrate the author's recollection of his childhood, the seventh and the eighth articles are about the ups and downs of his study, and the last two are about his teachers and friends. The artistic style is elegant, humorous and full of simplicity. In terms of writing style, its language is seemingly casual with no intention, but the writing charm exists with emotional exchange. (Wang, 1984)

2.2 Introduction of C-E Translation of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*

The English version of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* was translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang and it was published by Foreign Languages Press in 1976. It was the only English version of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* by far.

Yang Xianyi and his wife Gladys Yang spent their whole life in transmitting Chinese literary works to foreign readers. Yang Xianyi once mentioned in his memories, "the most significant translation of mine is the four volume of *Lu Xun Selected Work*, created by Lu Xun, the most important writer and thinker in modern China". Among the English version of Lu Xun's works, the selected works of Lu Xun translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang are still the largest and most comprehensive. The biggest characteristic of their translation is their emphasis on Lu Xun's essays, instead of his novels. (Huang, 2010) Thus, the translation of *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* plays an important role in their translation.

3. TRANSLATION METHODS OF REPRESENTATION OF DEFAMILIARIZATION IN C-E TRANSLATION OF DAWN BLOSSOMS PLUCKED AT DUSK

Shklovsky considers defamiliarization devices at the language level as the premise of artistic defamiliarization. The language in *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* is simple but elegant, which is closely related to the application of defamiliarization devices during Lu

Xun's creation process. In order to reproduce these characteristics, Yang Xianyi and his wife ponder over these defamiliarization devices and apply suitable translation methods of defamiliarization. Eventually, the literariness is retained and transmitted to its target readers.

3.1 Literal Translation

Literal translation is faithful to both the content and the form of the original. On the premise of maintaining the content of the original, translators should make the translation and the original as similar as possible in terms of word selections, syntactic structures, image metaphors and style features. In the process of creating defamiliarization, the author will use unique rhetorical devices or create unique images, which can be transplanted into another language. In many cases, literal translation can keep the defamiliarization devices and recreate such poetic expressions.

Example 1

ST: 记得她自己说过,她的名字是叫作什么姑娘的...后来她回去了,我那什么姑娘才来补他的缺。(Lu, 2000, p.34)

TT: I remember she told me her name was Something Girl...Later on, when she left, this Something Girl of mine came to take her place.

Lu Xun's expressions often apply concise language, but convey profound messages. Here Lu Xun recalls the origin of Mama Chang's name. Because of the long time, the author had not been able to remember her real name. The author deliberately uses an arbitrary pronoun, "什么" to replace Mama Chang's epithet so as to achieve humorous effect. In the process of translation, the Yangs notice such an alienating effect, and adopt the literal translation method to retain such humor effect. Meanwhile, they capitalize the two words "Something" and "Girl", which could not only express the function of the translator's name, but also attract the attention of target readers.

Example 2

ST: 踏破铁鞋无觅处, 得来全不费工夫。(Lu, 2000, p.138)

TT: You wear out iron shoes in hunting round

When all the time it's easy to be found!

"踏破铁鞋无觅处, 得来全不费工夫" was an idiom from *Aphorisms to Awaken the Public*. It describes that things that are urgently needed cannot be found everywhere, but they are inadvertently obtained. In this catchy idiom "处" rhymes with "夫". By quoting such an expression, Lu Xun reveals his overjoyed mood when he found the medicine for his father. When translating this sentence, the Yangs adopt the literal translation method and retain the defamiliarization device of the original text to the large extent. The image of "铁鞋", which is unfamiliar to foreign readers, is retained to expand the expression of the target language. Here "found" and "sound" enhance the rhythm of the translation work,

imitating the original rhyme to reproduce its literariness. In addition, the Yangs type these two sentences into separate lines to make them look like a couplet, which takes up more space visually, attracts target readers' attention and prolongs their aesthetic perceiving time, so as to enhance the aesthetic experience.

Example 3

ST: 何首乌藤和木莲藤缠络着, 木莲有莲房一般的果实, 何首乌有臃肿的根。(Lu, 2000, p.112)

TT: Milkwort interwove with climbing fig which had fruit shaped like the calyx of a lotus, while the milkwort had swollen tubers.

Hundred-plant garden was the paradise for Lu Xun in his childhood. In the eyes of others, it was a desolate place. However, Lu Xun thought that everything was full of vitality. The word "缠络着" paints a dynamic picture, which describes vivid plants. The root of milkwort is described as "臃肿", which is a description usually applied for human being. The Yangs use dynamic verbs "interweave" to translate "缠络着" by applying literal translation, and "臃肿" is translated into "swollen". The original anthropomorphic rhetoric is retained. The effect of the defamiliarization device is successfully conveyed to the target readers.

3.2 Free Translation

Free translation reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original. (Newmark, 2001, p41) Due to language systems' discrepancies and cultural differences, some defamiliarization devices cannot be completely transplanted into translation. In other words, the defamiliarization effect is produced by the form cannot be conveyed together with content at the same time. Therefore, in order to ensure that the target language readers can enjoy the same aesthetic experience as the source language readers do, the translator can adopt the free translation, discard the literal meaning of the original text, and retain its defamiliarization effect.

Example 4

ST: "哥儿, 有画儿的'三哼经', 我给你买来了!" (Lu, 2000, p.48)

TT: "Here, son!" she said cheerfully. "I've bought you that Book of Holy Seas with picture."

It's a dialogue between Mama Chang and the author Lu Xun. Mama Chang was Lu Xun's nanny who had never been educated before. Because of her ignorance and illiteracy, she miscalled "山海经" as "三哼经". Lu Xun adopts this well-designed figure of speech, malapropism to highlight Mama Chang's uneducated background. The Yangs notice this defamiliarization device. They translate "山海经" into "Book of Hills and Sea". They apply free translation methods to translate "三哼经" as "Book of Holy Seas". Although it does not sound much like "Book of Hills and Sea", the form of "三哼经" was abandoned and the malapropism device was reproduced.

Example 5

ST: 没有“放冷箭”么？无常的手里就拿着大算盘，你摆尽臭架子也无益。(Lu, 2000, p.100)

TT: Have I “stabbed other people in the back”? In Wu Chang’s hand is a big abacus, and no amount of superior airs will do a man any good.

In this case, the idiom “放冷箭” means to shoot a man in the dark when he is unprepared. It’s a metaphor for secretly harming people. Here, the Yangs adopt the paraphrase, a special kind of free translation method and use the idiom “stab in the back” in the translation to replace the saying “cool arrow” in the original language. Not only two expressions have similar meanings, they also achieve the emotional and functional consistency.

3.3 Transliteration Plus Literal Translation

Transliteration refers the translation method of expressing symbols of one language with the characters similar to its pronunciation in another language. (Xiong, 2014) From writers’ creation to readers’ perception, sound is always an important part in poetry and prose. The writer paid much attention to design delicate defamiliarization devices from the phonetic perspective to increase the enjoyment of readers. Chinese is a Sino-Tibetan language, while English belongs to Indo-European language family. Phonetic symbols and referents in the source text are hard to be transplanted together into the target language. Thus, literal translation can be applied to deliver the content, and transliteration, meanwhile, can be adopted to maintain the phonetic features in forms which can guarantee the special aesthetic experience for the target readers.

Example 6

ST: 例如木兰从军的出典,他注云:“隋史”。这样名目的书,现今是没有的;倘是《隋书》,那里面又没有木兰从军的事。(Lu, 2000, p.226)

TT: For example, in a note to the story about Mulan joining the army in her father’s place, he ascribed it to the “Sui Shi”(Sui Dynasty History). No book of this name exists. If he meant the Sui Shu (Records of Sui), that work has no reference to Mulan joining the army.

Here Lu Xun discusses the mistake in the *Picture-Book of a Hundred Filial Acts*, and the meaning of “Sui Shi” is unclear. The pronunciation of “史” and “书” in Chinese is similar, but the meaning is very different. The author intends to compare the footnote “隋史” in the article with a culture loaded word “隋书”. For these two words with similar pronunciation, readers will inevitably spend time in pondering and comparing their pronunciation and meaning differences. It largely hinders readers comprehension process, and produces a sense of enjoyment. Through the combination of literal translation and transliteration, the translator successfully reproduces this ingenious design.

Example 7

ST: 那么, 他的卤簿中间就另有一群特别的脚色:鬼卒、鬼王, 还有活无常。(Lu, 2000, p.90)

.....一派是只来一位手执钢叉的鬼卒, 叫作“勾魂使者”, 此外什么都没有; 一派是一个马面, 两个无常——阳无常和阴无常——而并非活无常和死有分。(Lu, 2000, p.250)

TT: ...in their retinue you will find some unusual figures: ghostly attendants, the ghostly king, and Wu Chang or Life-is-transient

...One shows simply a ghost guard armed with a steel trident, known as the Sum-moner of Ghosts, and nobody else; one shows a horse faced devil and two Wu Changs -Wu Chang of the world of men and Wu Chang of the shades-but these are not Life-is-transient and Death-is-predestined.

“(活)无常”, “死有分”, “阳无常” and “阴无常” are names of four different ghosts that Lu Xun creates. “活无常” and “死有分” are a couple of ghosts who have opposite characteristics. “活无常”, also known as “无常”, is a respected ghost in the world of ghosts and gods. On the contrary, “死有分” always brings people misfortune. Their names indicate such information. The words “活” and “无常” are antonyms of “死” and “有分” separately. In order to reproduce such contradictory rhetoric to target readers, the Yangs adopt the literal translation method to retain the meaning of “活无常” as “Life-is-transient”, and translate “死有分” into “Dead-is-predestined”.

In addition, Lu Xun mentions another pair, “阳无常” and “阴无常”. He thinks they are fake pairs of “活无常” and “死有分”. They are literally only one word different from “活无常”. Therefore, in his translation of “活无常”, the Yangs not only use literal translation, but also add transliteration to reproduce the pronunciation of Wu Chang, retaining the relationship between “阴无常”, “阳无常” and “活无常”. Besides, in the translation of “阴无常” and “阳无常”, in addition to transliteration of “无常”, the Yangs also use literal translation to translate the antonyms of “阴” and “阳” into “the shades” and “the world of men” to show their meanings and difference.

CONCLUSION

Russian formalism emphasizes that literature should pay more attention to the form. In Lu Xun’s recollection prose *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*, due to the usage of defamiliarization devices, even simple words are full of literariness. It is because of the successful representation of defamiliarization devices that Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang’s English translations version is well received by readers at home and abroad. Through the analysis, it is found that the translator can use different translation methods to reproduce the defamiliarization devices of the original in the process of translation. For some rhetorical devices and combined images, the translator can adopt literal translation to directly transplant them into the target language; if a defamiliarization device is related to the cultural or literal factor and cannot be expressed directly in the target language, free translation can be

adopted; for the defamiliarization devices at the phonetic level, transliteration plus literal translation can retain the defamiliarization effects without affecting the expression of its meaning. Through the analysis, this paper holds that in the process of translation, according to the different characteristics of the defamiliarization devices created by the author, choosing different translation methods to reproduce defamiliarization devices can ensure the transmission of the literariness to the target readers.

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