

Study on the Linguistic Style of LIN Shu's Translation

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Abstract

The application of pre-Qin's words and syntax, such as monosyllabic words, modal particles, conversion, declarative sentences and passive sentences, made LIN Shu's translation ancient and elegant. Meanwhile, in his translation there were also frivolous language, vernacular spoken words, and oriental new terms, which disobeyed the rules of ancient Chinese. However, as for these two sides, the ancient elements remained a high proportion and a great number of scholars insist that LIN Shu translated in an ancient Chinese style.

Key words: LIN Shu; Translation style; Lexical feature; Syntactic feature

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INTRODUCTION

In regard to the translation style that LIN Shu displayed in his translation, XU Nianci (1989, p.314), once appraised LIN Shu, "LIN Shu translated western novels in a style of *Shiji*." Such comments were also made by some scholars in the later time. According to HU Shi (1998, p. 345), "In the translation of more than one hundred novels, LIN Shu has applied the ancient writing style into

his translation. And many people who followed the suit has translated novels with the characteristics of ancient style prose as well." From this perspective, it seemed to be certain that LIN translated western novels in ancient Chinese.

THE STYLISTIC FEATURES OF LIN SHU'S TRANSLATION

In regard to the stylistic features of LIN's translation, QIAN Zhongshu presented his understanding in the article *LIN Shu's Translation*. Through the analysis of ancient prose and the explanation of examples, QIAN drew the conclusion that "Instead of the strict ancient literary style, LIN Shu translated western novels in a more casual and plain style, which retained major features of the ancient writing style and appeared to be more flexible in wording (Qian, 1981, p.39)." QIAN generalized the characteristics of LIN's translations: His translations are featured by the style of the ancient Chinese and that of the modern one.

IMITATION OF THE LEXICAL AND SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF PRE-QIN PROSE

It is well-acknowledged that LIN Shu has achieved great accomplishment in his research on the language of pre-Qin, Han, Tang and Song dynasties. As a master of ancient Chinese writing, his language has the characteristics of ZUO Qiuming, SIMA Qian, BAN Gu and HAN Yu and his imitation of pre-Qin's language could be observed in both lexical and syntactic level.

Firstly, it is obvious to detect his imitation of the lexical features of pre-Qin prose. Though there were disyllables in pre-Qin language, the majority

are monosyllables. In order to study the frequency of monosyllables in Lin's translation, the author took the first paragraph of *The Merchant of Venice* from *Tales from Shakespeare* as an example:

歇洛克者，犹太硕腹贾也，恒用母金取子，以居积得囊金无数。然如期要索，未尝假借，人多恨之。仇家曰安东尼，罗马人也，与歇同客于微臬司。其人抗侠好友，有通缓急者，必释子金勿问，歇洛克者以为相形以败其业，憎之次骨。安东尼见辄肆骂，歇洛克静默弗较，至引以为恨。安东尼居微臬司，微臬司匪不尊安东尼为长者，而巴散奴者昵之，尤款款有情愫。巴固微臬司贵胄，家不中资，竟以挥霍罄其蓄，时与安东尼通缓急者数矣。一日，巴散奴走诉安东尼，言：“城中巨家有弱息一，国色也。其父新丧，悉产赐其女，女嫁则挟产与俱。顾其父生时，余亦时造其门，女昵我，将订婚嫁，顾吾家式微矣。今更伸前约者，必得三千圆，或足具礼，君其能为我将伯耶？”安东尼曰：“海贾未归，仓猝不可得资，君必需此者，吾当称贷之犹太人，即以吾海船质之。”于是同造歇洛克许，告贷三千圆，子金听所划，海贾归，即并子母归君。歇洛克自念，彼罗马人视吾犹太遗黎直狗耳，今幸见，非重窘之不足泄吾愤。方夷犹间，安东尼觉状，即曰：“歇洛克，尔吝假吾金耶？”歇洛克曰：“先生向在广众中唾吾衣，蹴吾身，以为犹太者狗耳，吾狗又安从出此三千圆者？”（LIN Shu & WEI Yi, 1981a, p. 3）

There are 340 words in this paragraph, in which 301 words are monosyllables and only 39 words are disyllables and polysyllables. Most disyllables and polysyllables are the names of people and places, such as “歇洛克”, “微臬司” while the rest 13 words are “母金”, “子金”, “居积”, “居积”, “情愫”, “弱息”. Many such kind of examples could be found in LIN's translations, so it is safe to come to the conclusion that the majority of words are monosyllables in his translation.

Secondly, LIN imitated pre-Qin's lexical usage. Since Qin dynasty, words are very unstable in parts of speech, that is to say, a noun could be used as a verb, an adjective could be used as a noun and the like. It's worth noting that the earlier the age was, the fuzzier the boundary of word categories was, and the higher degree of flexibility was. It is common to be confronted with interconversions between adjectives and adverbs, nouns and verbs, and prepositions and conjunctions. In LIN's translation, for instance, “与歇同客于微臬司” from *The Merchant of Venice*, the noun “客” was used as a verb; “闻加西林悍声，然以其美而多资也，涎之” from *The Merchant of Venice*, the noun “涎” was used as a verb; In “自起至罐边，温其足” from *Joan Haste*, the adjective “温” was also used as a verb.

Thirdly, LIN Shu applied some rarely-used words in his translation. The words he chose were very unfamiliar to the readers in his time, but they were very popular and prevailing in pre-Qin dynasty. Most of these rarely-used words are nouns, verbs and adjectives and used for describing and representing things, movements and states. There are two examples, “劳劳执爨，如中馈人” in *Kuairou yusheng shu* and “不意竟有人欲攫取以去，鬻之南省” in *Heinu yutian lu*. In these two examples,

both “爨” and “鬻” are nouns, the former means a way of cooking and the later means mistakes. LIN's translations are swarmed with such expressions.

The fourth is the use of pre-Qin's modal particle. Modal particles were frequently used in pre-Qin dynasty. In most cases, “也” and “矣” mean indicative mood while “乎”, “耶”, “欤” and “哉” mean interrogative mood. Lin applied many modal particles in translation as well, such as “善信以礼款我，即所以礼天主也” in *Sakexun yingxiong jiehou lue* and “不待辨，知为此奴之母矣” in *Henu yutian lu*.

The fifth is the imitation of the sentence order of pre-Qin's interrogative sentences and negative sentences. SVO is the basic word order in both pre-Qin Chinese and modern Chinese. However, in pre-Qin Chinese, pronominal object should be placed before verb in interrogative and negative sentences to constitute an inverted construction. LIN Shu obeyed this rule in his translation. For example, “马利亚曰：‘君又欲何言？’” in *Heinu yutian lu*, and “此间应何需？” in *Kuairou yusheng shu*. In the examples “何” was put before the verbs “言” and “需”.

Sixthly, LIN adhered to pre-Qin's determinative sentence structure. In pre-Qin Chinese, nouns or nominal phrases can form a determinative sentence independently without link verbs. For instances, “弓矢者，器也” in *Zhouyi* and “百里奚，虞人也” in *Mengzi*. The former added “者” after the subject and “也” after the predicative adjective, and the later only had “也” after the predicative adjective. Both presented the basic sentence patterns of pre-Qin's determinative sentence, which were also employed by LIN in his translation, such as “歇洛克者，犹太硕腹贾也” in *Yinbian yanyu* and “其人名钵特，盖贵族议院中大绅士也” in *Heinu yutian lu*.

The last is LIN's imitation of passive sentence of pre-Qin Chinese. The passive sentences in his translation are quite small in number because he imitated the syntax rules of the pre-Qin. As a matter of fact, the true passive sentence pattern was relatively rare at that time. However, the uncommon passive sentences in pre-Qin Chinese can be divided into two types: one is the use of the word “见”, and the other “为”. For example, “见” and “为” are used in the two sentences “吾长见笑于大方之家” in *Zhuangzi* and “不为酒困” in *Lunyu*. Of the few passive sentences in LIN's translation, he mainly adopted “见” to form the passive sentence, such as “时大安的及母见拯于渔者” in *Yinbian yanyu* and “亨利素不见爱于其兄” in *Jiayin xiaozhuan*. There was also the structure of “为……所” in his translation, such as “为寒威所逼” in *Kuairou yusheng shu*.

LIN Shu often imitated the morphology and syntax of pre-Qin Dynasty Chinese in his translating, which indeed helped to attract the scholars at that time and make them love his translations. However, he was not completely bounded by his identity as an ancient Chinese writer. His

translation broke through some of the taboos of ancient Chinese prose, so that the characters in his translated novels could always be pictured vividly.

MANIFESTATION OF FREEDOM IN LIN'S IMITATION OF PRE-QIN PROSE

Ancient Chinese writers have always paid much attention to the purity of language. FANG Bao, the primogenitor of the Tongcheng School, asked for a stricter adherence to the purity of ancient Chinese. LIN Shu agreed with FANG Bao's requirements and hold the view that there should be no rhetoric or vulgar language expressions in the ancient prose. However, it is not difficult to find that in some cases LIN did incorporate these taboo elements into his own translations. The following is an example, which is a description of the appearance of Rebecca, a Jewish woman in *Sakexun jiehou yingxiong lue*:

身段既佳，又衣东方之衣饰，髻上束以鹅黄之帕，愈衬其面容之柔嫩；双瞳剪水，修眉入鬓；准直颐丰，居中适称；齿如编贝，柔发作圆瓣，披之肩际；缟颈酥胸，灿然如玉；衣波斯之锦，花朵如生，合众美为一。观者无不动色，眼光一瞥，即注其身。
(LIN Shu & WEI Yi, 1981b, p. 39)

The usage of such phrases as “双瞳剪水”、“缟颈酥胸” made LIN Shu's translation break the rules of pre-Qin prose. However, it cannot be deniable that these phrases make LIN's translated novels vivid. Most of the novels are related to human emotions, joys and sorrows, and to their thoughts and behaviors. LIN Shu often made amplifications in his translation. In this example, his render of Rebecca's femininity was somewhat vulgar, but the total spirit of the target text was equivalent to that of the original one. If the translator insisted on using the strict ancient Chinese prose, it was obviously difficult to pass the spirit of the original text.

There were also some colloquial words in LIN Shu's translations, which belong to taboo elements for ancient Chinese. Of LIN's translations, *Kuaiyou yusheng shu*, mainly about domestic trivialities, is featured by the largest amount of colloquial words. Take the sentence for an example, “嫗与母亲吻，有类母鸡之啄物；当往购炙鸭二、牛肉及煮白菜一巨盘，佐食猪腰一碟，冻糕一器。” The original novel is a kind of art to depict the various real lives of common people, which belongs to the category of “secular” literature. The language in the original text is mostly involved in our daily lives. The above words such as “母鸡”、“炙鸭”、“牛肉”、“煮白菜” cannot be replaced by the corresponding ancient Chinese words. Therefore, translators could not avoid using these colloquial words in the process of translation.

LIN Shu once clearly opposed the incorporation of foreign words in ancient Chinese texts, but his translation

had mixed the oriental “new terms”, for example, “彼夫妇在密月期间，两情忻合无间” in *Heinu yutian lu* and “今日相逢，乃至幸福” in *Kuaiyou yusheng shu*. “In these two examples, “蜜月” and “幸福” are oriental new terms to the Chinese at that time. Oriental new terms are foreign words imported from Japan, most of which were translated from Europe and the United States and written in Japanese. They reflect the new objects, new concepts, and new expressions of modern Western capitalist social culture. These new terms are sometimes not readable, but they are indeed very useful and expressive in translation. Therefore, even though LIN Shu did not like them, he could not resist from using them.

In addition to these oriental new terms, there are many European words transliterated, such as the common nouns including “咖啡” (coffee)、“布丁” (pudding)、“列底” (lady)、“麦特拉” (murderer), people's names like “汉姆” (Ham)、“意里塞” (Eliza), and place names like “伦敦” (London)、“鸦墨斯” (Yarmouth) etc. None of these nouns could be translated in ancient Chinese.

Sometimes the syntax of European languages appeared in LIN Shu's translation, but it is unknown today whether this was due to the translator's unconscious mistakes or his deliberate attempt to retain a little “foreign style”. The Europeanized syntax in his translation can be classified into three types: The first one is that the given name and surname must firmly stick to the order of original text; The second is the mechanical faithfulness to the original text, which resulted in the translationese; The third is that the clauses of long sentences are translated in accordance with the order of original text without rearranging the organization, and the structures of translated sentences are too loose but not united as a whole.

CONCLUSION

To a great extent, LIN Shu's translations obeyed the lexical and syntactic rules of the pre-Qin dynasty. Many examples can be found to illustrate his use of monosyllabic words, part-of-speech conversion, modal particles, judgment sentences and passive sentences, all of which made his translation appear in the form of «the ancient Chinese prose». What LIN Shu translated belonged to the category of novels. If he wanted his translated texts to be vivid and acceptable, he would have to break through some of the precepts of the ancient Chinese prose. Therefore, he incorporated elements that were not allowed in the ancient Chinese prose, such as frivolous language, vernacular spoken words, and oriental new terms. In the comparison of these two aspects, it can be found that the former had more advantages. Therefore, it is no wonder that LIN Shu's translation could confuse the readers, and even many scholars thought that he adopted ancient Chinese to translate.

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