A Study on Aesthetic Representation in the Selected Modern Chinese Essays 1 from the Perspective of Three-beauty Principle

Su-xin WANG¹,a

¹School of Wuhan Textile University, Wuhan, China
a1163676791@qq.com

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Abstract. Hailed as the gem of Eastern and Western culture, essay is one of the four major literary genres. With the further development of the May 4th Movement, a large amount of excellent essays have seen the light of day, among which have been translated into foreign languages. Essays cover a wide range of themes with diversified styles and flexible ways of writing, which are closer to our spoken language and easy to express one’s sentiment and feelings. However, these intrinsic characteristics cause the difficulty of essay translation. As a result, the cause of Chinese essay translation lagged behind other literary genres. Owing to his life experience and special liking for essay translation, Mr. Zhang Peiji is very proficient in translating such a peculiar genre. His masterpieces of translation, Selected Modern Chinese Essays have precisely bridged the gap of essay translation in China.

This article focuses on the aesthetic representation of Zhang Peiji’s Selected Modern Chinese Essays 1 from the perspective of Xu Yuanchong’s “Three-beauty Principle”, namely the beauty of sound, form and sense to explore better strategies in aesthetics representation. Beauty in sound can be demonstrated with onomatopoeia, reduplicated word, alliteration and rhyme. Beauty in form can be conveyed through four-character phrase, parallelism and rhetorical question. The beauty of sense remains top priority among the “Three-beauty Principle”, which needs translators to make appropriate wording and context reconstruction as well as properly tackle with fuzzy language by bring into full play their subjectivity. More importantly, the author hope to appeal to more translators and readers to realize the importance of essays and its translation and put into practice. It is our duty bound to introduce Chinese culture to the rest of the world and contribute our own endeavor to the cause of Chinese essay translation.

Introduction

Research Background

Letters, diaries, notes, reports, critiques, novels and dramas are all written as essays, so are most of the articles in magazines and newspapers. What’s more, there are many more books written in this format than those written in verse. Essay is easier than poetry because it is written in a way that we speak without metrical structure. In our daily communication, we sometimes speak in an illogical manner and use improper words, because we speak as we think without scrupulous speculation and deliberation, leaving little time to choose and process words. Therefore, essays have an intrinsic nature of ambiguity and randomness, thus bringing arduous task for essays translation. On the one hand, the free style of essay leaves even greater room for its creation and changes of the style. On the other hand, different language expressions and cultural backgrounds set many obstacles for
essays translation. So what is essay? Broadly speaking, any article that has nothing to do with verse
is essay. Strictly speaking, the so-called essay is equivalent to that in the West, that is to say, always
including informal essay, random thought, letter, travel note, news report, memoir and so on.

In the past hundred years, not a few people have translated the Western new ideas or theories into
China. However, rare demonstration has been seen where Chinese scholars took the initiative to
translate and introduce Chinese ideas residing in temporal essays since the May 4th Movement in
1919. After translating works of Chinese literature into foreign languages, most of the introductions
abroad were poetry, novels and dramas, with essays gathering dust in the corner. It is regrettable
that the translation work of essays lagged far behind. To fill this blank, Zhang Peiji has made
meritorious service in essay translation. The well-known Selected Modern Chinese Essays, though
limited in length, includes a large amount of outstanding writers in China, such as Lu Xun, Bing
Xin, Zhu Ziqing, Yu Dafu and so on. Therefore, Selected Modern Chinese Essays is not only a
rhetoric textbook on translation, but also a mirror of our nation. If you read the translation version
in Selected Modern Chinese Essay alone, you will find as if it were written by a native speaker.
Because Zhang Peiji not only strives to achieve natural and smooth language, accurate and detailed
words and ensure it appeals to both refined and popular flavor, but also pays special attention to the
recreation and representation of aesthetic value of the original context.

Aesthetics is a discipline that focuses on people’s feeling of beauty, and translation aesthetics is a
combination of aesthetics and translation studies. The translations studies on modern essays are
inseparable from aesthetics due to the intrinsic feature of essays, namely the characteristics of “form
dispersing but spirit concentrating”. In other words, it can express the author’s personal will to the
extreme without losing the beauty and charm of the original text. The integration of translation and
aesthetics enables the translation of Chinese essays not only to accurately convey the original sense,
but also reproduce its style and beauty, allowing readers to be immersed in the text and appreciate
the true feeling of the original author.

Literary translation is a process of aesthetic experience and aesthetic representation. The aesthetic
representation of literary translation is based on the grasp of the aesthetic subject. Different from
Western aesthetics, Chinese aesthetics focuses on subjective aesthetic practice and the manifestation
of imagery, but pays less attention to microscope perspectives [1].

In recent decades, a great number of scholars have engrossed themselves in essays translation.
And the researches over marriage between aesthetics and translation have achieved stellar results.

Purpose and Significance

Zhang Peiji, an outstanding translator in China, flinging himself into the translation of Chinese
essays. As one of his most representative translation works, the Selected Modern Chinese Essays 1
contains many of his classic translation in his career, which offers a good reference for the
translation of modern Chinese essays.

As one of the most important genres, essays exert a profound impact on the development of
Eastern and Western culture. Chinese essays gradually came into sight after the May 4th movement,
and thereafter emerging a large amount of excellent essays work, many of which have been
translated into foreign languages. However, due to the ambiguous definition of essay style, there is
a big difference between Chinese prose and English prose, and its translation has become a major
problem. With the remarkable improvement of China’s international status, foreign readers’ demands for Chinese literature have increased day by day. It is an irreversible trend for Chinese literature to “going out”. Behind this success largely depended on the endeavor of translation. Amid the process of cultural export, the translation work of Chinese essays plays an essential part in bringing Chinese culture and principles to the world, extending far wider beyond its border.

The “three-beauty principle” initially refers to the beauty of Chinese character put forward by Lu Xun in his book From Language to Article in 1900s. Moving forward, it was applied into translation theory and practice by Xu Yuanchong, hailed as a critical principle in such sectors as translation practice, translation teaching and translation research.

This article will focus on the aesthetic representation of Zhang Peiji’s Selected Modern Chinese Essays 1 (shortened as SMCE1 in this thesis) from the perspective of “Three-beauty principle” and explore better translation strategies. It is worth noting that researches into aesthetic translation is a goal achieved not as an end in itself but as a means of urging more translators and readers to realize the importance of essays, do their own bits and make contribution to the Chinese culture. It is our duty bound to bring Chinese culture to the world at large and push the translation of Chinese essays forward.

Literature Review

The Development of Translation Aesthetics in China

Translation aesthetics, both in the West and the East, can be traced back to thousands of years. In China, the aesthetics can be traced back in Spring and Autumn period. Many philosophers, such as Confucius, Mencius, Lao Zi, have discussed the definition of beauty in the perspective of their own philosophical view. All discussion of aesthetics in the pre-Qin period (before 221 B.C when the First Emperor of Qin united China) depended on the moral ontology and the universe ontology (“Nature”, “Taoism”) [2]. A number of articles about arts and aesthetics came into light in the Period of Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, which stressed the subject-object unity and the harmonious and mingled relations between human and nature. The earliest theory of translation aesthetics was brought up by Zhi Qian, who cited the following words of Lao Zi: “The faithful words are not beautiful; and the beautiful words are not faithful.” The first translator, Xuanzang, also one of the most famous translators of Buddhist scriptures, argued that the translation should be “faithful in content, and straightaway in form.” The combination of translation theory and the aesthetics of literature and arts embodies the basic feature of Chinese traditional translation theories, and primarily focus on the aesthetic propositions of content [3].

In the end of 19th century, with some trendy bourgeois thoughts and new techniques introducing to China, translation work ushered in a new era. In 1894, Ma Jianzhong came up with “Shan Yi”, meaning translators should get a good grasp of source texts and translate them faithfully and smoothly. Two years later, Yan Fu, the great master of translation in Qing dynasty, put forward the three principles of faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance. In 1950s, Fu Lei advocated that the translation should focus on similarity in spirit rather than in form in his book The Translation Version of Old Goriot. What’s more, “sublimed adaptation” was proposed by Qian Zhongshu, paying attention to the creativity of the translator.

Liu Chunhui [4] concluded that since 1980s the translation aesthetics has gained intensive research.
The basic idea is that the process of aesthetic appreciation, and literary translation process of aesthetic experience and aesthetic representation, depend on the aesthetic subject’s understanding of subject. The Modern Translation Theory written by Liu Miqing kicked off the studies of translation aesthetics in true sense. He reviewed the origin of China’s translation aesthetics; made a construction of basic theories frame of it and expounded his standards of translation aesthetics.

Xu Yuanchong, a famous translator in China, proposed his theory of three beauties, namely the beauty of sound, the beauty of form, and the beauty of sense in his book The Art of Translation. He also proposed that the beauty of sense is of the cardinal essence of the three beauties. This theory bore a great significance to later translation activities and theories.

As we can see, when it comes to thinking mode, China’s translation theories are more subjective than objective, more emotional rather than rational and more experienced rather than analytic to comment on translation and translated works. As an interdisciplinary research, translation aesthetics combines the research of translation and aesthetics. A deep research of it could help unveil the general pattern of aesthetic representation in literary translation. Delving into it makes it possible to create more translation works with great value.

The Development of Translation Aesthetics Abroad

There has been a long history of western aesthetic ideology, but it was no longer than 200 years when it became an independent discipline. The word “aesthetics” rooted in Greek, which means the feeling of sense. The great philosopher Socrates and Sophist Hippias once had a heated debate of beauty, but they failed to give a definition to it. Ultimately, Socrates could do nothing but say: “Beauty is difficult to define.” It was Alexander Baumgarten, the father of beauty and the first scholar who made aesthetics an independent discipline and defined it as “how we judge what’s good and bad” [2]. Tytler [6] put forward the well-known “three translating principles”. He proposed that a translator is no left to a similar freedom: he must follow the footsteps of his original. In modern time, translation theories are characteristic of pioneering spirit and creativity. By absorbing various disciplines of modern linguistics, traditional translation theories like spring burst with vigor.

In a nutshell, aesthetics in the Western world focused more on microscopic perspectives and always can be shown in the beauty of form or structure, that is to say, it can be seen in formal system while Chinese aesthetics can be grasped through an overall perception into the verve and artistic conception of the work.

A Brief Introduction to Zhang Peiji and His Translation

As a well-known translator and educator in China, Zhang Peiji has done meritorious service to Chinese literary translation, particularly to the translation of modern Chinese essays with his high literary attainments. Born in Fuzhou, Fujian province in 1921, he moved to Shanghai in his early years, where he received elementary and secondary education. He graduated from the department of English of St. John’s University, Shanghai in 1945. After that, he studied in America and returned in China in 1949. Zhang Peiji has sedulously worked in translation world for more than 50 years. Some famous translated works such as My Everlasting Dream and Pursuit, Love is Not a Game, A slave Mother, were published one after another. These works were organized into a book named Selected Modern Chinese Essays 1 in 1999. The SMCE2 was published in 2007; SMCE3 in 2007; and the SMCE4 in 2012. Since then, 4 compilations have eventually been published.
Zhang Peiji’s translation is renowned for its faithfulness and smoothness and heterogeneous elements of the source texts that are preserved in his translation, including language, culture, living conditions and religion. As a result, you will find yourself reading a literary work as if it were written by a foreigner. Due to his special liking for essays translation, Zhang Peiji translated essays with high proficiency. In the preface of Selected Modern Chinese Essays 1, Zhang Peiji[7], said that the essay is whatever the author is and the word “prose” stems from the Latin words “Proversa discourse”, meaning straightforward discourse. In Zhang Peiji’s retired life, he has translated some essays in succession for amusement, the loving for English and essays, and particularly for introducing some remarkable Chinese essays to the international world[7]. His translation not only maintains the basic meaning of source texts but also conveys the original beauty, offering valuable experience to essays translation and later translators.

Previous Studies on Zhang Peiji and His Translation

After the collection Selected Modern Chinese Essays were published, it has drawn attractions of many scholars. Most studies were about his translation practice. Besides, many papers concentrated on analyzing his translation style and aesthetic value. For example, Liu Yinyan published an article in 2001 named Zhang Peiji And His Translation, aiming to introduce Zhang and the feature of his translation; Lai Xiaopeng studied and analyzed Selected Modern Chinese Essays on the basis of aesthetic perspective, and so on. All these studies bring intellectual weight and galvanize more translators into learning essays translation. However, studies on aesthetic representation of Zhang Peiji’s translation under the perspective of Three Beauty Principles are few and far between. To this end, comprehensive and systematic studies in this light are waiting to be touched upon.

Xu Yuanchong’s Three-beauty Principle

The Origin of Three-beauty Principle

The origin of Three-Beauty Principle can be found in the essay From Language to Article, which is put forward by Lu Xun[8]. Xu Yuanchong[8] said that the beauty in sound is to please ears, beauty in form to eyes and beauty in sense to feelings. It initially referred to the beauty of Chinese characters; afterwards Xu Yuanchong applied it to translation theory of Chinese poem. He also noted that, of the three elements, the significance of beauty in sense stands above all; beauty in sound is subordinated to that in sense; and beauty in form is the least important.

The Content of Three-beauty Principle

The Beauty of Sound

When it comes to the beauty of sound, one factor that lays foundation for beauty in sound lies in rhyme, including alliteration and consonance. By using rhyme, poems will present a strong aesthetic feeling of musicality that please reader’s ears and convey harmony of the poems. For example, “cāng máng”, “làn màn” are example of assonance because they have repetition of similar vowel sounds respectively with /ang/ and /an/ in Chinese. In English, the word “eternity” and “morality” are consonance since the rhyming words have an effect on the end of the rhyme, sharing the same end rhyme of /ti/. Another rhetorical method frequently used in English lies in alliteration, also named “head rhyme” or “front rhyme”. Take a sentence for example, “The lips of leaves, and the ripple of rain” is a symbolic use of alliteration because it’s the close-order repetition of initial consonants in a line of words. All these create a feeling of pleasant, harmony and completeness.
Another very important element is reduplicated word. In English, it is defined as “repetition of a syllable, a morpheme or a word”[9]. and “a pattern where the double or multiple occurrence of a sound string, syllable morpheme or word within a larger syntagmatic unit is in systematic contrast with its single occurrence, with the iterated elements filling functionally non-distinct positions[10].

**The Beauty of Form**

Xu Yuanchong noted that the beauty of form can be presented by the length as well as symmetry and neat of the poem[11]. It can also refer to parallelism, repetition, antithesis, four-character phrase, and rhetorical question and so on in general translation.

Parallelism and repetition are always used in literary works. Parallelism is a figure of speech with similar structures in separate sentences to express related ideas in order to emphasize and force the sentence. Repetition can be presented through words, phrase and clauses, making the context more logical and clearer, more forceful and effective, and more rhythmical and emotional.

When it comes to four-character phrase, we always associate it with idioms in Chinese idioms. Feng Qinghua[12] pointed it has three prominent advantages: In terms of content, four-character phrases are concise and comprehensive; In terms of form, they are neat and perfect in symmetry; In terms of phonology, they are catchy tunes and boast readability. Making use of four-character phrases in literary work can bring a sense of cadence and twists and turns in the process of reading and offer a beautiful sense of harmony phonologically.

**The Beauty of Sense**

According to Xu Yuanchong[8], he believed that the beauty of sense is of the utmost importance. “We need to convey the beauty of sound as much as possible on condition that the beauty of sense is fully conveyed; and we have to present the beauty of form on the basis of the beauty of sense and sound. However, if there is a trade-off between these three element, we should at least convey the beauty of sense and sound as possible as we can.” The term “sense” was defined in linguistic as “the place which a word or phrase holds in the system of relationship with other words in the vocabulary of language[13].”

Wang Guowei, a famous scholar in Qing dynasty (1636-1911), he pointed that the essence of Chinese classical poems lied in artistic conception which was what about the beauty of sense. Only by savoring the artistic conception of the source text can readers feel the delight of aesthetic taste. To this end, it is translators’ obligation to convey the subtle emotion and sentimental affection of the source text, instead of simply interpreting the literal sense of it. The beauty of sense, in short, is to be faithful in content, be smooth and fluent in language expression, and fully deliver the beauty of artistic conception of the text. It is vital to rise a consonance effect and spiritual vibration between the original author and readers.

The beauty of sense bears three major connotations including the beauty of meaning, the beauty of image and the beauty of artistic conception. Firstly, the “beauty of meaning” means choosing appropriate vocabularies on the basis of a keen penetration into the source text so as to better convey the original emotion and purpose of the text. The second point is the beauty of image. Images are carriers of the soul of the text, and translators should meticulously deal with them. Last but not least, the beauty of artistic conception, which is a harmonious coexistence of strong emotion and vivid objective things, and blending of scenes, depth and integrity. With artistic conception,
with the representation of artistic conception, readers can perceive the original taste and flavor of the texts and experience the real sentiment of the original writer.

The Application of Three-Beauty Principle to Zhang Peiji’s Selected Modern Chinese Essays 1

The Beauty of Sound in SMCE1

Just like universal grammar, human is born with musicality. Language cherishes intrinsic musicality, which drives people to choose vocabularies with rhythm sensation and rhythmic beauty when speaking and writing, so as to demonstrate the musicality of language and enjoy aesthetic pleasure.

The beauty in sound, most of it derives from flexibility in the arrangement and use of vocabularies. In other words, translators have to adopt some phonological skills to realize beauty in sound. In this context, following examples from Zhang Peiji’s Selected Modern Chinese Essays 1 will be illustrated in terms of onomatopoeia, alliteration, rhyme and reduplicated words.

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia, i.e., sound symbolic words, indicate linguistic forms closely related to environmental sounds. For example, Henry David Thoreau described the sound of wind as “Hoo hoo hoo”, fully conveying the winter landscape in the Walden lake. With onomatopoeia, authors can vividly describe the features of things, figures’ mood and action’s status to strike a chord with readers. However, it is not easy for translators to be quite capable of dealing with it due to cultural and language difference. But Zhang Peiji is very adept at handling onomatopoeia.

Example 1:

It is said that one day during his stay in Suzhou when he heard the cracking of firewood from his next-door neighbor at cooking time, ...

In the source text, “bào liè” means the sound made by firewood. Instead of translating it according to literal meaning, Zhang Peiji uses the word “crackling” to intimate the sound made by firewood, which is a very concise, accurate and vivid description. This word echoes with the image of the source sentence, demonstrating the abruptness of the wood, planting a better picture with liveliness to readers.

Example 2:

The ground under my donkey’s feet was slippery with mud. The water in the field ditches was murmuring.

In the original sentence, Bing Xin uses “chán chán” to depict the flowing sound of water in the field ditches, revealing a tranquil and serene night with only softly and slowly flowing water. And Zhang Peiji chooses “murmuring” to represent the quiet babbling brook flowing down the ditches, creating a placid and gentle atmosphere. It is worth noting that behind the word “murmur” lies an underlying meaning of “lamentation”, accurately conveying the author’s longing for past salad days and her nostalgia. Compared with the translation of “The water flows softly and slowly, “murmuring” is more expressive and vivid, painting a lifelike picture before our eyes.
Alliteration

Alliteration is one of the most useful rhetoric devices. It adds the beauty of musicality by adopting the same initial consonant or vowel. As a very common figure of speech, many demonstrations of alliteration can be found in Zhang Peiji’s translation.

Example 3:

Living in this world with its fleeting days and teeming millions, what can I do but waver and wander and live a transient life?\(^7\)

In the source text, “pái huái”, a disyllabic roots word, have the same vowel /ai/ in Chinese. With assonance in Chinese, Zhang Peiji translates it into “waver and wander” with the device of alliteration. Instead of translating it into “hesitation”, Zhang uses two verbs both playing an important role in bring poetic sense to the sentence and emphasizing his sentiment, which presents a stark contrast with “fleeting days”. The alliteration /w/ echoes with the original aesthetic perception, bringing pleasure to our ears. The target readers can feel the same effect of the sound beauty as the original ones, and perceive the despondent feeling of the original author.

Rhyme

End rhyme, also known as “tail rhyme”, often appears in song, poem and essays. With the last syllables or words rhyming with each other, it makes the sentence more pleasant to ears and adds more musicality and phonological beauty to essays or poems.

Example 4:

The lane, though cut off from the hustle and bustle of busy cities, does not taste the countryside at all.\(^7\)

The original context is imbued with poetic flavor and delicate wording. The original writer deals the essay with wit and verve, drawing the reader into a idyllic and elegant world. In the translation version, Zhang Peiji deftly handles it with device of end rhyme /ʌsl/. When Zhang Peiji’s encounters the phrase “hóng chén” and the like in other translation, he used to translate them into “the vanity of the world” or “the vanity of the society”. However, in consideration of the unique style of this original context, he uses “hustle and bustle” to enhance musical beauty, effectively improving the aesthetic value of this sentence.

Reduplicated Word

As a unique lexical tool of language, reduplicated words are accorded with phonological beauty, image beauty and expression beauty of language. The rhythm of language can be represented through translation, because the rhythm of any language is the unity of repetition and change.\(^{15}\) Reduplicated words create a sense of cyclical rhythm through the repetition of words, thus haunting the reader’s mind and deepening the impression.

Example 5:

When I opened my eyes, I found that I was all by myself and nothing was heard except the pit-a-pat of rain drops.\(^7\)

Among all forms of reduplicated words in Chinese, say, “AABB”, “ABB”, “AAB”,

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“ABAB”, “AABC”, and so on, “AA” is very common form of reduplicated word. In the original text, the reduplicated word “dī dī” was an imitation of the dripping rain. However, strictly speaking, there is only one form of reduplicated word in English—“AA” form, including “goody-goody” and “pitter-patter”. Zhang Peiji is very proficient in dealing with such words and translated “dī dī” into “pit-a-pat”. From this, we can find that he makes every effort to reproduce the beauty of sound and try to enhance reader’s imagination and association with the rain drops.

The Beauty of Form in SMCE1

Samuel Taylor Coleridge once said: “Prose is words the best order.” It is necessary not only to be true to the original text in sense, but also to attach great importance to the unity of form. Parallelism, repetition, rhetorical question and four-character phrase are the most common form in essays.

When dealing with these sentence pattern, Zhang Peiji always abides by the original structure, but sometimes he gives play to subjectivity and makes some adjustment to correspond with the original feelings so as to better balance the relations between beauty in form and sense.

Parallelism

As a common figure of speech, parallelism was used as a means of ordering and emphasizing sentences. With three or more sentences, parallel structure can stand out viewpoint and highlight atmosphere relying on clean and tidy sentence, forceful rhythm as well as majestic momentum.

Example 6:

That exhilarated us children and our servant girls as well, and we soon started buying seeds, ploughing the land and watering the plants. We gathered in a good harvest just after a couple of months!

It is quite clear that this sentence used parallelism, which depicted a busy and urgent image where kids, with great excitement and joy, planted the peanuts they have longed for a while. Compared with the structure “Some bought, ....others ploughed...., and still others watered...” Zhang Peiji weighs and considers the hidden mood of figures and handily uses the form of “start+ doing sth.”. In one way, it makes the sentence more accurate and pithy. Besides, it adds a sense of movement to the image. As if readers themselves were come to the scene, viewing a cluster of kids doing their work with great dynamism.

Repetition

According to Cuddon[16], repetition may consist of sounds, particular syllables, words, phrases, stanzas, metrical patterns, ideas and allusions, and assonance, rhyme, internal rhyme, alliteration and onomatopoeia are frequent in repetition. By repeating the same words or same phrases, it will make the sentence more memorable and the idea more legible.

Example 7:

There is nothing but stillness there. At any hour of day, you can even distinctly hear in the dusk-like quiet your own footstep.

In the original sentence, the original writer uses the figure of speech—repetition “ji ji de, ji ji de”, to emphasize the calmness of the lane. To represent the emphasis of the original sentence, Zhang
Peiji uses “There is nothing but...” to correspond with it, which is a common sentence pattern to underline the content. If dealing it with literal translation as “The lane is very quiet and silent”, it will impair the luster of the original text, which is full of lyric beauty and exquisite conception. He not only keeps the original style but also represents the beauty of form.

Example 8:

*If swallows go away, they will come back. If willows wither, they will turn green again. If peach blossoms fade, they will flower again.*

As the beginning of the essay, Zhu Ziqing uses four adverbials to enhance continued and unreturnable time. In the translation version, Zhang Peiji uses parallel structure of “If..., they will...” to comply with the original sentence. In this way, the language is fluent and forms momentum to effectively strengthen emotions. The device of repetition goes a long way to not only translating the meaning of the original sentence, but also reproducing the aesthetics of it syntactically.

Rhetorical Question

When there is no real answer expected, asking a rhetorical question aims to achieve results or to emphasize a point that has already been discussed. Rhetorical questions are often self-evident in literary works, and are used in style as an impressive method of persuasion.

Example 9:

*What traces have I left behind me? No, nothing, not even gossamer-like traces.*

The second sentence of the original text is a rhetorical question. Zhu Ziqing expresses his lamentation that he failed to make gratifying accomplishment during past few years. In terms of its translation, it can also be translated into a rhetorical question as “Have I ever left behind gossamer-like traces?” that imitates the original text and reproduces it in the sentence pattern. However, Zhang Peiji uses a question-and-answer sentence, directly expressing his deep regret. Although the sentence pattern is very different from the original text, it’s a relatively new approach to handle such a sentence pattern and is better than the aforementioned one to convey the remorseful message with three negative words of “no, nothing, not even”.

Four-character Phrase

As a classical form of Chinese culture, four-character phrase has something to recommend itself in its form, content and pronunciation. Hailed as the essence of Chinese culture, Chinese four-character idioms bear profound history and cultural deposit. With vivid sense of rhythm, graceful artistic conception, they always contain more aesthetic information. Therefore, successfully interpreting and transmitting the aesthetic information is the golden key to present the aesthetic value of the translation to the fullest.

Example 10:

*Therefore, let me be reconciled to being saddled with the epithet of “originator of a bad practice”.*

“shǐ zuò yǒng zhě” in Chinese refers to the initiator of bad practice, which is a derogatory term. However, by contextualizing this Chinese idiom we can find that the original author, Ji Xianlin means to humorously describe himself. Hence Zhang Peiji discards its literal sense. Instead, he
turns to the connotative meaning, say, “originator of a bad practice”. It must be noted that he uses the phrase “be saddled with” to reinforce the epithet, retaining the humorous style and aesthetic value of the original text.

The Beauty of Sense in SMCE 1

In terms of literary works. It is the most important and hardest task for translators to reproduce the beauty in sense of the original text, especially in essays. To give an analogy, beauty in sound and form are skin-deep level, but beauty in sense is nothing less than the very essence and core in translation process. In order that the merit of the original work can be so completely transfused as to produce its full effect, it is necessary, not only that the translation should contain a perfect transcript of the sentiments of the original, and present likewise a resemblance of its style and manner; but, that the translation should have all the ease of original composition[6]. In order to reproduce the beauty of sense of the original text, Zhang Peiji’s language sensitivity and masterful control of reining context has reached the acme of perfection. In this part, following examples will be elaborated to show his strategy in reproducing beauty of sense.

Appropriate Wording

Wording refers to vocabularies and sentences that people carefully choose when they speak and write. Writers will take large effort to choose suitable and proper words. Sometimes, the use of a word can determine the success of a sentence. A writer’s wording is a direct acting factor of his language style, therefore translators need to carefully choose words to keep the original style and maintain its verve. Painstakingly efforts have been made in Zhang Peiji’s translation to reproduce the beauty in sense. His delicate approaches are evident in the following examples.

Example 11:

*Art is long, life is short*[7].

*Dear scientists, please don’t laugh at me. Methinks the world is very much in need of reform simply because of the presence of these flunkeys*[7].

In the first example, “art” is an archaic word, shares the same meaning with “learning” and “scholarship”. And “Art is long” was originated from A Psalm of Life, a famous lyric created by American romantic poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The same is true to the second example. Zhang used the archaic word “methinks”, an impersonal verb meaning “I think” or “It seems to me”, which is a laconic yet barbed style. From these examples we can find that Zhang is very deft at handling language and has an aptitude for representing the aesthetic value of the original texts.

Context Reconstruction

Competent translators are always aware that ultimately words only have meaning in terms of the corresponding culture. But while a language can usually be acquired within a period of ten years, it takes a lifetime to understand and become an integral part of a culture[17]. In part of the translator, they have to fully understand the original text, infer it and get an associated explanation. When the two contexts have conflict, the translator can only choose to change the original language code, so that it can be combined with the new context and trigger the association of the target reader. In the process of Chinese-English translation, context reconstruction is based on the stylistic characteristics of the original text, the purpose of the translation, the language, historical background and regional factor of the target readers, the stylistic factors of the Chinese language as
well as sociological factors and situational factors. In this way, translators can bring into full play subjectivity and achieve creative reconstruction.

Example 12:

_Buddhist monks exert every effort to renounce this life in favor of future nirvana. But, without a full knowledge of this life, how could they see through the vanity of human society and make a clean break with this mortal world?_

In the source text, “niè pán” refers to “the realm of nonself, everything is emptiness, stilling the fire to make rebirth, which keeps the reincarnation again and again” in Buddhism. “sān jiè” means the three realms where masses live, which is also a Buddhist context. However, Western people embrace Christianity and there is a huge gap between Eastern and Western religion. To relieve conflicts of religious idea, Zhang puts the original text in the target context and reconstructs the original one. These two Buddhist terms are translated into “nirvana” and “make a clean break with the mortal world”. In this way, he swifts the original image and makes the text more readily to understand for target readers.

Example 13:

_By way of allaying their anxiety, I said jokingly, “A good guy always enjoys Heaven’s protection.”_

In the original sentence, the Chinese idiom “jí rén tiān xiàng” indicates that a good guy would be helped and get assistance from the god. In Chinese Taoism culture, “tiān” refers to the place where the immortals live, while in Christian culture, “Heaven” refers to the world that people who worship Jesus head for after their death. To arise similar response and experience, Zhang Peiji fully considers differences among languages and properly changes the image. Therefore, it is advisable to take into account all cultural and religious elements and connotations to achieve functional equivalence.

Fuzzy Language

Fuzziness is an intrinsic character of our natural language, and it plays an important part in translation. People’s communication process is inseparable from vague language. In other words, vagueness of language does not affect normal communication in people’s life. It may be well (in order to rescue the concept itself from vagueness) to define this quality with reference to an antonym: being ‘precise’. If we can define what we mean when we say that meaning is ‘precise’, then we may be able to say that vagueness is the absence of that quality. A proper use of fuzzy language can indirectly, implicitly and flexibly express the content, making the language more decent, gentle and full of tension, and thus enhance the expressiveness of speech and receive unexpected effects. However, some translators often ignore the vague beauty of the language, instead focusing a “accuracy” and translating word by word. A pursuit of 100% “precision” or “equal value” will obliterate the artistic charm and aesthetic value of the original work, and leave no imagination to readers. As a result, a fully understanding and imagination of the original text is prerequisite for fuzzy translation.
Example 14:

*I was then such a smart aleck that I frowned upon the way father was haggling and was on the verge of chipping in a few words when the bargain was finally clinched [7].*

Due to different understandings and culture, the original text will perplex the target readers without further explanation. In the original text, “cōng míng guò fèn” is not a commendatory expression and praises “me” for intelligence. It uses irony to blame the author for his self-assertion and frivolousness. With free translation, Zhang Peiji bridges the language and cultural gap and translates it into “I was then such a smart aleck”. In addition, “shuō huà bú piào liàng” may be understood as “unseemly remarks”, which is a fuzzy expression that may confuse readers. While contacting the context we may find that father is quiet poor at making a bargain and translates it as “I frowned upon the way father was haggling”. Zhang Peiji fully scopes out the whole text and considers reader’s feeling, making the fuzzy language more explicit.

Example 15:

*He looked back at me and said, “Go back to your seat. Don’t leave your things alone [7].”*

There is a big ambiguity of “lǐ miàn méi rén” in the original sentence. More often than not, it may be understood as “There’s nobody here.” which is out of context and causes confusion to target readers. However, only a sentence being put in the whole context can it be meaningful. All factors should be taken into consideration before understanding a sentence’s specific meaning. We can infer from the text that father was worried about the luggage being stolen and thus urged son to return to his compartment. Therefore, the translation “Don’t leave your things alone.” complies with the original meaning and successfully conveys its implied meaning.

Conclusion

This thesis makes a tentative exploration on Zhang Peiji’s translation style and his strategies of reproducing aesthetic values. His translation, full of beauty and elegance, with a careful consideration into the original meaning and style, contains rich translation aesthetics. It is his life experience, translation career and deep love for essays that endow him a great command of language and the ability in reproducing the beauty of context.

Generally speaking, the three principles, namely beauty in sound, in form and in sense are closely tied up with each other. Sometimes, the beauty of sound and form can also convey the beauty of sense. However, if there is a trade-off between these three element, we should at least convey the beauty of sense as possible as we can. All we should pursue is to realize the ideal state of essay translation, that is to say, the actualization of three beauties can be met altogether.

However, due to the limit of time, this thesis proceeds from a relative microscopic angle. The author just single out an individual sentence from the passage, but different author has different writing style. For example, the works written by Bing Xin are very simple and plain with deep meaning; the works of Hu Shi are ironic and full of pedagogical meaning; the works of Guo Moruo are poetic and imbued with elegant expressions. More importantly, Zhang Peiji can change his translation style in accordance with that of different authors, which requires high degree of professional proficiency. This thesis does not pay much attention to different styles of his translation. The author hopes more discovery about the aforementioned regrets will emerge.
References


