

English-Chinese Translation Strategies of an *Anthology of Appraisal Editorials* from the Perspective of Aesthetics of Reception

Lin Qilei

Fuzhou Technology and Business University, Fuzhou, China, 350715

Abstract: *The translator selects an anthology of appraisal editorials, PANDEMIC! COVID-19 SHAKES THE WORLD, written by Slavoj Žižek, as a translation practice material. The appraisal editorial plays a significant role in information transmission through explaining the news, filling the background, forecasting the future and passing judgement so as to influence the viewpoints of common people. In translation, it is a tough challenge for a translator to effectively use strategies to express the authorial attitudes, take a certain stance, participate in varieties of value positions, negotiate with potential readers and finally align them into the authorial value positions. Due to the textuality and functionality of the appraisal editorial and difference between Chinese and English, the translator chooses Aesthetics of Reception, proposed by Jauss and Iser, as the guiding principle, in terms of reader-centricity, horizon of expectation and response-inviting structure.*

Keywords: *appraisal editorial; Aesthetics of Reception; persuasive functions*

1. Introduction

Among editorials, the appraisal editorial, as a common type, is particularly known for its clarity, profundity and enlightenment. Its task is to give a clear-cut commendation and commentary on typical or important newsworthy figures and events, and to discuss them ideologically and theoretically^[1], so as to reveal the essence and summarize the experience or lessons, thus giving full play to its social function of enlightenment and guidance of public opinion. However, little attention was paid on reader-centricity. Based on the previous introduction of the functionality of appraisal editorials, the effective argumentation can be achieved and the subjective persuasiveness can be optimized only by putting target readers at top priority. In other words, the translators must take readers' expectation into consideration and adopt suitable corresponding strategies.

2. Theoretical Framework

Aesthetics of Reception, a kind of literary theory, came into existence as a trend of literature and art in the late 1960s. The main representatives are Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, as German literary theorists from University of Konstanz.^[18] According to Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, Jauss insisted that it is impossible to understand historical life of a literary work without the active participation of the addressees^[13] in that the reader's reception determines the aesthetic value of a work. Meanwhile, Jauss came up with the concept of "horizon of expectation" and "aesthetic distance"^[13] as the foundation for the Aesthetics of Reception. The horizon of expectation refers to "a structure of expectation or... a mind-set that a hypothetical individual might bring to any text"^[12]. In other words, the horizon of expectation is the pre-understanding that a reader possesses before reading. On basis of this horizon, the reader can carry on an aesthetic dialogue with the literary text to comprehend and achieve a fusion of horizons.^[4] While reading, the readers' horizon was changing over time, which is a decisive element in textual appreciation so that the textual understanding and interpretation are subjective and selective.

According to Jauss, aesthetic distance results from disparity between the presupposed horizon of expectation and the appearance of a new work.^[13] Too large distance may cause difficulty to fuse his/her horizon with the work, so that the reader might express distaste for the work; while too small distance may arouse boredom to achieve the fusion of horizon, so the reader might lose interest on the work.^[4] Therefore, a translator is supposed to surpass his/ her horizon adequately and enrich the reader's knowledge and life experiences properly for optimal reception of literary works.^[10]

But a large number of relevant studies on Aesthetics of Reception are related to literary translation. Comparatively, studies on non-literary translation are chiefly derived from micro perspective, such as linguistic features and its translation techniques, rather than from macro inter-disciplinary perspectives, regarding sociology, psychology, and aesthetics. Faced with appraisal editorials, the translator needs not only to convey the authorial information accurately, but also to make the target text accepted by the readers as more as possible and have the readers convinced to maximize its subjective argumentation.

3. Solutions to Difficulties in Translation

Because of the difference between English and Chinese, the translator may encounter many obstacles in the translation of these appraisal editorials. Here list four categories of difficulties in the translation: appropriateness at the lexical level, acceptability at the syntactic level; expressiveness at the rhetorical-device level; and readability at the semantic-vagueness level.

As an editorial genre, in view of its functionality, this anthology is treated as the mean for the author not only to express attitude and take stances, but also to engage with social valuation to achieve interaction with the potential readers in discourse.

3.1 Appropriateness at the Lexical Level

The lexical meaning of a word or lexical unit carries the specific value in its particular linguistic system and displays its “personality” through appropriate usage within that system.^[1] On basis of the great differences in meaning between Chinese and English, word selection is often treated as one of the most difficult problems for translators, for example, how to deal with preponderance of nouns over verbs to reduce abstractness; when to use reduplication to present symmetrical syllables, display more vivid description and show strong emotions contextually; and why to choose four-character phrases to convey concise meaning appropriately. It is known that words are minimal units in communication, and appropriate choice of words plays a significant role in sentence structure, even in expressive effect and text construction of the target text. Therefore, because of functionality of appraisal discourse, all difficulties aforementioned at the lexical level should be taken into account from the perspective of Aesthetics of Reception to maximize the appropriateness in the certain words and the understandability of this anthology for the Chinese readers.

In order to maximize the appropriateness of words, conversion of part of speech and preference for reduplicated words are used for lexical distribution and application of four-character phrases are done for structural configuration and attitudinal coherence through externalization of implicitness.

3.1.1 Conversion of Part of Speech

In Shao Weiying’s and Shao Zhihong’s understanding, from the perspectives of the traditional grammar and the cognitive grammar, they concluded that English has a tendency to be static while Chinese to be dynamic, through a contrastive study of the state of expressing in English and Chinese.^[16] On account of such difference between English and Chinese, literal translation may bring about strange expressions to affect fluency and persuasiveness of the target text. Thus, E-C translation is usually the process of conversion from static to dynamic^[14], so as to cater to the readers’ horizon of expectation. In the meanwhile, on account of the functionality of these appraisal editorials, the appropriate conversion of part of speech will promote a thorough understanding of the textuality.

3.1.2 Preference for Reduplication

Reduplication, a kind of lexical phenomena, refers to the repetition of two or more same or similar linguistic elements of form and meaning, which is commonly applied in Chinese literature works. Ideas can be highlighted by appropriate use of reduplication, because of native Chinese readers as the target reader.^[3] Based on readers’ reception and their horizon of expectation, such reduplication can reach fusion of horizons between the author and the readers (including the translator). Also, reduplication can present symmetrical syllables, display vivid description and show strong emotion contextually. Taking the functionality of this appraisal discourse into consideration, the translator chooses to adopt appropriate reduplication to enhance iconic representation for the vividness, empathy, and involvement effects for the target readers in order to realize the persuasive function of this anthology.

3.1.3 Application of Four-Character Phrases

English is a kind of metaphysical language while Chinese descriptive language.^[8] Four-character

phrases, featured by “various meanings, concise structure and harmonious rhythm”, are extensively used in the process of E-C translation. ^[7] (Feng, 1985: 19) Chinese four-character phrases are directly derived from Chinese idioms and conventionalized from practice of common words. In terms of conciseness in meaning, well-order in form, and sweet-sounding in phonology^[6], the appropriate application of four-character phrases in translation can not only convey its original meaning effectively, but also help to add literariness and aesthetics. As an anthology of appraisal editorial, its function is to explicitly or implicitly evaluate the facts and develop subjective argumentation, while persuading the certain readership of the needs to take some actions.

3.2 Acceptability at the Syntactic Level

Apart from the choice of words, there is another characteristic linguistic feature as a decelerator in the process of translation. This anthology is filled with a number of sentences with complex and lengthy structures and commonly-used passive voice. Such textuality may optimize objective ratiocination and subjective argumentation and demonstrate the rigor of the authorial logic. But this textual feature may hinder textual expressiveness and readability and affect the acceptability of the translated text. Therefore, it is urgent to make syntactic adjustment. For sake of readers' reception, it is required to analyze the sentence structure at first. And then the sentence would be split into several sense-groups and if necessary, would be rearranged, simplified or transformed from passive voice into active one, in accordance with the context and Chinese syntactic grammar to achieve fusion of vision between the author and the target readers (including the translator).

On basis of the appraisal editorials full of the sentences with overt cohesion and various and frequently-used cohesive ties in the original text, under the guidance of Aesthetics of Reception, the translator can flexibly use the following methods: to rearrange the sentence order, to simplify the complex sentences and to maintain passive voice or transform passive into active voice.

3.2.1 Rearrangement of Sentence Structures

Generally speaking, inflected forms, word-orders and functional words are used synthetically to express complicated ideas in English, which leads to frequent appearance of long sentences for preciseness in statement and conciseness in organization. ^[14] On the contrary, changes in word orders and auxiliary verbs are applied analytically in the similar complex textuality in Chinese, instead of any formal inflections, so that short sentences, clauses, run-on sentences often appear in accordance to a certain temporal and logical order contextually. ^[14] Hence, there exist differences in sentence organization between English and Chinese. Generally speaking, declarative parts (judgment, conclusion, etc.) are put in front of narrative parts (fact, description, etc.) in English sentences and the organizational order in Chinese sentences is often the opposite. Besides, end-weight is another organizational feature of English sentences totally different from that of Chinese ones. Moreover, compared with Chinese, English, is more flexible in terms of sentence arrangement, with inflection and coordinators or subordinators. Accordingly, the structure of English sentences is considered as a tree while that of Chinese ones as a bamboo. ^[15] On the account of numerous compound-complex sentences in these appraisal editorials, the original sentences may be broken up and rearranged into Chinese sentences in accordance with Chinese syntactic rules. These syntagmatic shifts in sentence structure may realize an optimized textuality of appraisal evaluation in editorials, which can meet Chinese readers' narrow literary expectations and strengthen the response-inviting effect.

3.2.2 Simplification of Complex Sentences

English, with frequent use of subordination, has many complex sentences with embedded clauses, while Chinese has many composite sentences with many commas. ^[14] English sentences are styled with conjunctive-nexus and Chinese sentence are in chronicle style to streamline the thoughts. ^[14] Thus, Chinese sentences are generally shorter than English ones. The appraisal editorials, filled with compound-complex sentences with attributive clauses and adverbial clauses are featured by preciseness, logic, and objectiveness and persuasiveness. Besides, from the grammatically structural aspect, some clauses aforementioned contain other subordinators as modifiers. Obviously, word-to-word translation would puzzle the target readers. Hence, taking readers' response into consideration, the translator splits and simplifies complex sentences for response-inviting structures, which effectively provoke a positive or negative response in the readers as expected by the author.

3.2.3 Transplantation and Transformation of Passive Voice

On basis of agent, syntax, rhetoric, and style, there is a passive habit in English writing. ^[14] From the

above analysis, it is acknowledged that *PANDEMIC! COVID-19 SHAKES THE WORLD* is an anthology of appraisal editorials with an informative style. Through deleting or deemphasizing the subject within a sentence, the passive voice can promote an overall objective tone in appraisal discourse, accelerate informativeness and reveal authorial stance effectively.^[2] Furthermore, syntactic passive is more often used than notional one in English.^[14] But overuse of passive in Chinese may be wordy, indirect, weak, oracular, mysterious and impenetrable, as if a passive smoke-screen.^[14] As an inflective voice in Chinese, addiction to passive voice will pose a blank between the source text and the target text, with a decrease in accuracy, understandability and acceptability. Thus, it is required for a translator to transplant the passive voice into the translated text or to transform the passive structure into the active one contextually to eliminate estrangement between the source text and Chinese readers in systematical and logical way. Such elimination would reach fusion of horizons between the author and the target readers through response-inviting structures.

3.3 Expressiveness at the Rhetorical-Device Level

Additionally, whatever rhetorical devices adopted have one common purpose—strengthen its expressive effect contextually. Thus, in terms of the expressiveness of the translated text, it is required that a translator should rethink how to deal with rhetorical devices in the source text in the process of translation. Simile, metaphor and pun are applied in this appraisal discourse for subjective argumentation explicitly or implicitly. Simile, a kind of rhetorical device, is often characteristic of “like” or “as”, to make a more vivid description and more lively visualization. Metaphor, contextually refers to a word or phrase used to describe somebody or something in order to show their same qualities for implicit irony. Generally, pun is the humorous and ironic usage of a word, including polysemy, homophone, homonymy and parody. Faced with the three rhetorical devices aforesaid, the translator understands the original meaning of the source text, and creates the reader-friendly translated text through reproduction of simile, explicitness of metaphor, and reinvention of pun to maintain expressiveness in the target text to the maximum extent, for the realization of argumentation and persuasion and the mutual rhetorical effect of solidarity. Meanwhile, the translator should attempt to minimize the translator’s intrusion in argumentation and persuasion in the target text.

3.3.1 Reproduction of Simile

Simile is a way of explicit comparison to describe a person or thing as being similar to someone or something.^[5] Such explicit comparison is featured by a typical structure “the signified or the vehicle + as/so...as/ as... as/ like + the signifier or the tenor”, to transfer the characteristics people associate with one to the other. In terms of rhetorical effect, simile is characteristic of aptness, sharpness and vividness, which is chiefly as a promoter for clarity, freshness and originality.^[5] Apart from the functionality of simile itself, the appraisal functions of these editorials should be taken into consideration. Hence, by the reproduction of similes in these appraisal editorials, Chinese readers’ interest, empathy, and aesthetic taste may be greatly aroused, while the distance between the original text and readers would be narrowed.

3.3.2 Explicitness of Metaphor

A metaphor, similar to a simile, is a way of describing something implicitly by referring to something else that is the same particularly.^[5] To put it in a nutshell, metaphor is to describe one thing in terms of another without explicit key words such as “like” or “as”^[9], which presents clearness, charm, and distinction to the style. Owing to its implicitness, “full understanding of a metaphor is a more complicated process than understanding of a simile”^[9]. Accordingly, due to the expressiveness and persuasiveness of these appraisal editorials, the translator adopts explicitness of the metaphor in accordance with context to persuade the target readers to accept the authorial stance by negotiation and finally ask them to be aligned with.

3.3.3 Reinvention of Pun

Pun refers to “a word or phrase is used in two different senses”^[5] for a witty or humorous effect, which is called a play on a word. Pun, as an English rhetorical device, “can stimulate the readers’ imagination”^[5], which has “rhetorical effects such as for emphasis, humor, sarcasm, fun, irony and so on” (ibid). It is believed that pun can be categorized into homophonic pun, paronomasia, antanaclasis, sylleptic pun and asteismus. But, on basis of divergence on meanings, forms or both of them between English and Chinese, not all pun in the original text can be literally translated into equivalent expression in Chinese. Therefore, it is inevitable to reinvent the meaning or the structure or both of them to achieve the same rhetorical effect as the original text displays. This anthology of appraisal editorials with a number of attitudinal evaluations reveals the authorial feelings and values, related to the global

governance in the COVID-19. These subjective interpersonal argumentations construed by the text rhetorically would efficiently align potential readers into the authorial value positions. Therefore, such ways of stimulation of insight invented humorously in the original text can be reinvented in the translation to realize argumentativeness and persuasiveness. Reinvention of pun, in fact, is to reinvent a pun or punoid in the translated works to recreate the textual effect in the target text effectively, which can help target readers integrate their “horizons of expectation” with the authorial presupposed one.

3.4 Readability at the Semantic-Vagueness Level

Furthermore, semantic vagueness in this appraisal discourse may result from numerous nouns or intentional coinages relevant to sociology, psychology and philosophy for professionalism and euphemism and some fuzzy expressions or abstract diction for implicitness intentionally. As for proper nouns or intentional coinages, some of them are self-evident, while some are familiar to specialists in such field, but unfamiliar to the common readers. These words come from other fields, or load socio-cultural meaning so that their denotative meanings should be expounded in the process of translation. Moreover, there are a great amount of abstract and implicit diction in this anthology, which poses the indeterminacy in semantic meaning. For realization of its understandability and powerful interpersonal argumentation and fascinating persuasive discourse effect, the translator chooses to concretize the exact meaning through annotation and extension for coherence. In the process of externalization of semantic vagueness, the translator turns to some websites, such as Baidu and Sogou to look for another referential material in consideration of the reader's past aesthetic experience. Both annotation for the proper nouns and concretization for coherence are contributive in transitivity in the thematic continuity and typicality, which contributes to the logicity, the stance and engagement in the target text.

As a result, in view of reader-centricity, the translator needs to balance the understandability and the aesthetic of this anthology of appraisal editorials through annotation for proper nouns and concretization for coherence to regain confidence facing the unprecedented common challenges of the global pandemic, economic recession and climate change and stand up to others with courage, solidarity and responsibility.

3.4.1 Annotation for Proper Nouns

Proper nouns, refer to a word as the name of a person, a place, an institution, etc. It is believed that some specific words, especially concerning geography, meteorology, sociology and philosophy will give rise to vacancy in its meaning for the common people. Because appraisal editorial is functioned as a presentation of fact and opinion related to various topic events, a number of proper nouns involved in meteorology, sociology and philosophy in this anthology lead to lexical vagueness, hedging the readability of these editorials and then resulting in an adverse effect on interpersonal argumentation. Therefore, it is imperative for the translator to annotate the proper nouns so as to cater to Chinese readers' interest and to broaden readers' horizon. Such literal translation with explanation or annotation can fill the vacuum successfully and effectively evoke the empathy.

3.4.2 Concretization for Coherence

In response to this appraisal discourse, the translator, in light of its complexity in textuality and variety in functionality, not only focuses on the meaning given in the dictionaries, but takes the contextual meaning in the original text into account, which can make the translated works more accurate and readable. It is said that every coin has two sides. Although the Aesthetics of Reception lays great stress on response triggered by blanks in source text, too complicated or too vague expression will have a negative effect on readers' interest. In this anthology, the author intentionally made subjectivity and persuasiveness expressed lexicogrammatically in the due forms of vagueness to implement appraisal and evoke critical thinking. The frequent usage of fuzzy words can strengthen flexibility. Nonetheless, these fuzzy words also pose the indeterminacy in semantic meaning which is an obstacle for its understandability, which dampens the interpersonal argumentation and the persuasive effect consequently. So, it is of necessity to fill the blanks in the translated works by concretization of fuzzy words through extension for semantic coherence. The semantic extension here refers to meaning extension, including logical, pragmatic, rhetorical and cultural extension.^[17] Such extension would accurately present the essence of the original content contextually, without limitation to the literal meaning in the dictionaries.

4. Conclusion

To maximize subjective argumentation, the translator chooses to reconstruct response-inviting

structure in the translation with reader-centricity and horizon of expectation in mind.

First and foremost, the textuality and functionality of this anthology of appraisal editorials should be taken seriously from preparations before translation to proofreading after the translation. This text is involved in editorial discourse, with motivation to argue, attack, criticize and attempt to persuade the potential readers to convince its principles. Hence, owing to a such special genre, the translation should be pervaded by subjective persuasiveness and interpersonal argumentation of the issues under discussion. Thereafter, in view of the typical features and the main purpose of the source text, the translator made a prudent decision on the guiding theory—Aesthetics of Reception to guide translation practice to achieve appropriateness, acceptability, expressiveness and readability in this anthology of appraisal editorials.

Secondly, in terms of Aesthetics of Reception, there is an “iron triangle” formed by reader-centricity, response-inviting structure and horizon of expectation. Aesthetics of Reception has been widely applied in literary translation, but this report aims to verify its instructiveness and feasibility in the translation of appraisal editorials. In compliance with Aesthetics of Reception, proper strategies should be employed in response to difficulties at the lexical level, at the syntactic level, at the rhetorical-device level and at the semantic-vagueness level. The realization of reader-centricity, response-inviting structure and horizon of expectation in the translation can be a promoter to render a persuasive and reader-oriented effect.

In the end, there are no universal and optimal translation strategies in response to every difficulty. The readers’ knowledge, textual experiences and writing purpose should be taken into consideration in the translation because this appraisal discourse is essentially featured by interpersonal reaction and ultimate persuasiveness. Based on different categories of typical difficulties, different strategies are adopted: appropriate choice of words, adjustment of sentence structure, elaborateness of rhetorical devices and externalization of semantic vagueness, which boost the attitudinal effect in these appraisal editorials through affect, judgement and appreciation.

From the above discussion, the conclusion can be reached that a qualified translator should analyze the contextuality and functionality of the source text effectively, collect referential information thoroughly and summarize it seriously, select a guiding principle prudently and finally kick off initial translation for the realization of accuracy, coherence and literariness continually.

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