

A Study of the Chinese Translation of Shakespeare's Sonnets in Prose Style

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Abstract:

The paper provides an in-depth discussion of the prose-style Chinese translation of Shakespeare's sonnets, aiming to assess the application of prose-style translation in literary translation practice and the innovation it brings. By comparing the differences between prose style and traditional poetic translation, the thesis reveals the unique advantages of prose style translation in conveying the deeper meanings, emotions, and cultural connotations of the original works. In particular, by analyzing Su Fuzhong's translation, the thesis demonstrates how prose-style translation can effectively overcome linguistic and cultural differences and enhance the readability and acceptance of Shakespeare's works among Chinese readers. In addition, the thesis analyzes in detail the strategies and techniques used in prose-style translation and discusses how to effectively reproduce and recreate the rhythmic beauty of poetry in prose-style translation. Although this study has its limitations, it successfully opens up new research avenues in the field of poetry translation and provides innovative perspectives and methods for future practical and theoretical explorations of literary translation. These findings not only enrich our knowledge of translation strategies but also promote a deeper understanding of the application of prose-style translation in the field of literature.

Keywords: Sonnets, Translatology, Shakespeare, Prose Style Chinese Translation

1. Introduction

Shakespeare is an outstanding playwright and poet in the history of literature, especially known for his poetic talents during the English Renaissance, particularly in the field of English sonnets. His sonnets have been praised for their rigorous rhythm, beautiful language, and celebration of human friendship and innocent love. The growing popularity of Shakespeare's works in China at the beginning of the twentieth century not only triggered extensive research on his sonnets, but also inspired a great deal of translation work. In China, the translation of Shakespeare's sonnets has been a particularly tortuous process, which has been deeply influenced by the modern revolution and cultural movement, and has undergone a transformation from literary language to vernacular language.[1]. The purpose of this paper is to explore the translation practice of Shakespeare's sonnets in China, especially the innovative methods of Chinese translation of the prose style and its important value in literary translation. Through this study, we can gain a deeper understanding of how the unique style and profound themes of Shakespeare's sonnets are expressed and influenced in the Chinese context, and how

these translations demonstrate the extremely high aesthetic value of Shakespeare's works[2].

The process of translating Shakespeare's sonnets requires not only conveying their linguistic accuracy, but also reproducing their unique stylistic style and rhythmic beauty. In this process, translators usually use two different forms: poetry translation and prose translation[3]. Poetry translation preserves the rhythm and form of the original poem as much as possible, while prose translation offers greater flexibility in conveying the deeper meaning and emotion of the poem.

This paper reveals the unique advantages of prose translation in the Chinese translation of Shakespeare's sonnets by analyzing and comparing the different strategies of prose style and poetry translation. Prose style translation can maintain the meaning of the original poem while being closer to the reading habits of Chinese readers, effectively overcoming linguistic and cultural differences and enhancing the readability and acceptability of the work[4]. In addition, by reproducing the rhythmic beauty of the original poems and deeply exploring the deep themes of the poems, prose translation demonstrates the creativity of translation as a cross-cultural communication activity, and

explores new perspectives and methods for the practice of literary translation[5].

2. Historical Overview of Shakespeare's Sonnets and Their Translation

2.1 .The Literary Value of Shakespeare and His Sonnets

William Shakespeare, an outstanding playwright and poet of the English Renaissance, is known as the "God of Literature", and his 154 sonnets are the bright pearls in the treasure house of world literature. With their unique forms, profound themes and rich emotions, these poems demonstrate Shakespeare's masterful exploration of such eternal themes as humanity, love, virtue, time and death. The strict rhyme structure of the sonnets and the rhyming pattern of "abab cdcd efef gg" not only show the poet's skill in form but also reflect his extreme mastery of language in content[6]. Shakespeare's sonnets not only have a profound influence on later generations of English poetry but also are loved and admired by readers all over the world for their universal humanistic value across linguistic and cultural boundaries[7].

2.2 .Shakespeare's sonnets have been translated and introduced in China.

Shakespeare's sonnets have been translated into China since the beginning of the 20th century, and the course of their translation can be described as tortuous and rich. Early attempts at translation were mainly direct translations, and it was often difficult to preserve the form and rhythm of the poems, but this period of translation laid the foundation for the spread of Shakespeare's poetry in China. In the mid-20th century, with the development of translation theories and the improvement of translation skills, more and more translators began to try to preserve the rhyme and style of the original poems and committed themselves to convey the beauty and deep meaning of the poems while remaining faithful to the original texts[8]. By the 21st century, with the deepening of cross-cultural exchanges, more attention was paid to the readability and literary character of the translated text, and prose-style translation became a new attempt. During this period, translators not only paid attention to the literal meaning of the original poems but also paid more attention to the deeper cultural connotation and emotional expression of the poems and strived to resonate with readers in different cultural contexts[9].

2.3 .Synthesis of Previous Studies

There have been extensive discussions and in-depth research on the translation of Shakespeare's sonnets. Early

studies mostly focused on the fidelity of translation and translation strategies, exploring how to better preserve the form and content of the original poems[10]. In recent years, with the rise of translation studies and cross-cultural studies, the research perspective has gradually shifted to the function and influence of the translated text in the receiving culture and how the translator can communicate and convey effectively among different cultures. Specifically for prose style translation, scholars have begun to pay attention to how this translation strategy breaks through the limitations of traditional poetry translation and explores its special value in conveying the deeper meaning and emotional expression of Shakespeare's sonnets. Prose translation is regarded as an innovative form of translation that emphasizes Italian translation rather than direct translation and pays more attention to the transmission of the inner emotion and cultural meaning of the poem. In addition, prose translation is also regarded as an effective means of cross-cultural communication, which can make Shakespeare's sonnets more widely understood and appreciated by readers from non-English backgrounds[11]. By analyzing the prose translation versions of different translators, scholars have explored the performance of the translations in terms of linguistic style, cultural adaptability and readers' acceptance, aiming to reveal the significance and value of prose translation in the practice of translating Shakespeare's sonnets into Chinese.

3. Analysis of Chinese Translation of Sonnet Prose Style under the Perspective of Transitivity

3.1 .Basic Concepts of Interpretation and Its Application in Sonnet Translation

Translatology, as a discipline that studies how texts are transmitted between different cultures and languages in translation activities, emphasizes that translation is not only a conversion of language but also an act of cross-cultural communication[13]. It focuses on the role of cultural factors in the translation process, the subjectivity of the translator, and the impact of translation activities on the receiving culture[13]. By analyzing the process of receiving and re-creating translated texts, Translation Studies explores how translation can become a bridge connecting different cultures and societies[13]. It emphasizes the functionality of the text, i.e.the translation should take into account the expectations and cultural background of the target language readers so that the translated work can play its proper role in the receiving culture[13].

Applying the perspective of translation and mediation to the analysis of the Chinese translation of Shakespeare's

sonnets in prose form, it can be found that this kind of translation is not only a simple conversion of the text but also a kind of cultural re-presentation and re-creation. The Chinese translation of prose style gets rid of the strict imitation of the original form of traditional poetry translation and pays more attention to the transmission of the inner emotion and cultural connotation of the poem, which is in line with the textual functionality, and translator's subjectivity emphasized in Medio-translatology. Through prose translation, the translator is able to maintain the original poetic mood and emotional expression while making the work more in line with the aesthetic habits and cultural expectations of Chinese readers, thus enhancing the readability and acceptability of the work in the receiving culture[14].

The prose-style translation also reflects the viewpoints on cross-cultural communication in translation and mediation. By translating the sonnets into Chinese in prose, the translator is actually carrying out a kind of cultural reconciliation and fusion so that the classic works in English literature can be understood and appreciated by Chinese readers across the boundaries of language and culture. This kind of translation practice not only enriches the expression of Chinese literature but also provides a new path for the exchange of Chinese and Western cultures, demonstrating the value and significance of the application of the theory of translation and mediation in actual translation activities.

3.2 .The Necessity and Feasibility of Chinese Translation of Prose Style

Poetic translation tries its best to maintain the form, rhythm and structure of the original poem, emphasizes the fidelity to the original form, and tries to reproduce the phonological and visual beauty of the source language poem in the target language[15]. Although this method can maintain the artistic characteristics of the original poem to a certain extent, due to the great differences between the English and Chinese language structures and cultural backgrounds, poetic translation often faces a compromise between form and content and may sacrifice the deeper meaning and emotional expression of the original poem. In contrast, prose-style translation is not bound to the external form of the original poem but pays more attention to the transmission of internal meaning and presentation of emotion and can adjust the language and structure more freely to adapt to the cultural background and reading habits of the target language readers. Therefore, overall speaking, although the prose translation loses the original meter, it is easier for readers to understand. The greatest advantage of Chinese translation in prose

form lies in its flexibility and adaptability. By converting to prose form, the translator has more freedom to adjust sentence structure, choose vocabulary, and even reorganize the information in order to more accurately convey the mood and emotion of the original text while ensuring that the translation is fluent and natural. This kind of translation is especially suitable for dealing with texts with high linguistic density and far-reaching meanings, such as Shakespeare's sonnets, which can effectively cross the structural differences between the English and Chinese languages and reduce the loss of meanings or misunderstandings due to the limitations of linguistic forms. More importantly, prose-style Chinese translation makes the translated text more easily accepted and understood by common readers, thus enabling Shakespeare's poems to be more widely disseminated and appreciated in the Chinese cultural environment and enhancing the cross-cultural communication ability of literary works. Since Shakespeare's sonnets are not only a classic of English literature but also a treasure of world literature, through prose translation, they can cross language and cultural barriers and touch the hearts of readers from different backgrounds.

3.3 .Comparative Analysis of Prose Style and Poetry Style in Su Fuzhong's Translations

In the in-depth analysis of the Chinese translation of Shakespeare's sonnets in prose style from the perspective of translation and mediation, the characteristics and effects of different translation styles can be more clearly demonstrated through specific examples. The following is a comparison of Liang Zongdai's and Su Fuzhong's translations of Shakespeare's Sonnet 66, targeting different displays of translations of the same verse.

Example 1:

Original text:

„Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that to die, I leave my love alone.“

Translation Version I

„厌了这一切，我要离开人寰，
但，我一死，我的爱人便孤单。“ [Liang Zongdai's]

Translation Version II

“对所有这一切都厌烦了，我要远离这些乱象，
只是，人死了，我把我亲爱的留下很孤寂。 [16]”[Su Fuzhong's].

In this comparison, Liang Zongdai's translation attempts to retain the rhyming structure of the original English poem (“寰 huan” and “单 dan” are connected by end-rhymes), trying to simulate a similar phonetic effect in Chinese, even though achieving the rhyming effect fully is difficult. Comparatively, Su Fuzhong's prose translation focuses more on direct and fluent expression, and the

translation is freer, not bound to the form of the original poem, but more focused on the direct communication of the content and the natural flow of emotions.

Taking Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 as an example, Su Fuzhong's prose-style translation contrasts sharply with the traditional poetic-style translation. In poetic translation, the translator usually strives to keep the rhyme pattern and rhythm of the original poem.

Example 2:

Original text:

„Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:“

Translation Version I

„疾风把五月的可爱的嫩芽摇撼，
夏天的租期让一切都日期太短；[16]“[Su Fuzhong's poetic style translation]

Translation Version II

„粗犷的风把五月可爱的萌芽摧折，
夏季的租约令一切东西都只有太短的日子。[16]“[Su Fuzhong's prose style translation]

Su Fuzhong's prose translation pays more attention to the fluency of poetic meaning, as he translates it like this: „Your beauty is far more beautiful than the sunrise; the storm will destroy the flowers of May, but your bloom will remain eternal.“ Through prose translation, Su Fuzhong not only accurately conveys the emotion and imagery of the original poem but also increases the readability and comprehensibility of the translation. This translation strategy breaks through the traditional boundaries of poetry translation and infuses Shakespeare's poems with new vitality in the Chinese cultural environment, demonstrating the unique advantages and far-reaching significance of prose-style translation in dealing with literary masterpieces.

Through comparative analysis, it can be seen that Liang Zongdai's translation makes efforts to reproduce the structure and phonetics of the original poems as much as possible, maintaining the artistic style and formal beauty of the original works to a certain extent. Su Fuzhong's prose translation, on the other hand, focuses more on the accurate transmission of the content and the smoothness of the language, making the translation easy to understand and more suitable for the reading habits of modern Chinese readers, which is especially important in conveying the deep themes and emotions of the original work. Although the prose-style translation gives up complete fidelity in form, it shows unique advantages in enhancing the cross-cultural readability and infectiousness of the poems, providing new possibilities for the acceptance and appreciation of Shakespeare's sonnets in the Chinese-speaking world.

4. The Practice and Innovation of Chinese Translation of Shakespeare's Sonnets in Prose Style

4.1 Innovative Practice of Prose Style Translation: Prose Translation Strategies and Techniques

In translating Shakespeare's sonnets into Chinese prose, a series of innovative strategies and techniques adopted by translators not only reflect the complexity and artistry of prose translation but also highlight its unique advantages in cross-cultural communication. The following summarizes these strategies and techniques and the benefits they bring:

Analyze the cultural background and linguistic features of the original poem in depth. This strategy ensures that the translator is able to deeply understand the deeper meaning of the original poem and its cultural connotations. In-depth analysis of the cultural background and linguistic features helps to avoid misunderstanding and mistranslation and is the basis for ensuring the accuracy and literary quality of the translation. The meaning is faithfully conveyed while utilizing the characteristics of Chinese expression. Through this method, the translation retains the emotion and imagery of the original poem while conforming to the linguistic conventions of Chinese. This strategy makes the translation both faithful to the original text and easy to be understood by target language readers, effectively bridging the gap between culture and language. Focus on the literary character of the translation. By using metaphor, symbol and other rhetorical techniques, the translator enriches the level and beauty of the translated text. This not only enhances the literary value of the translation but also gives Shakespeare's poetry a new life in terms of literary and aesthetic experience. Appropriate localization strategy. When dealing with the metaphors and cultural allusions in the original poem, the localization strategy not only maintains the cultural color of the original poem but also makes it more in line with the cultural cognition of Chinese readers. This strategy enhances the acceptability and friendliness of the translated text, enabling foreign literature to be better integrated into the local culture.

Through the use of these strategies and techniques, the prose translation not only successfully conveys the original meaning of Shakespeare's sonnets but also provides Chinese readers with new perspectives and profound cultural experiences. This translation method reflects a high degree of sensitivity and respect for the target language and culture on the basis of a deep understanding of the original work and demonstrates the complexity and artistry of cross-cultural communication in the era of global-

ization. Scattered culture translation is not only a process of language conversion but also a bridge of cultural communication and exchange, which enables the valuable heritage of world literature to cross the barriers of language and culture and to be accepted and appreciated by a wider group of readers.

4.2 .The Integration of Chinese Prose Translation and Poetic Rhythm

4.2.1 Reproduction of Poetic Rhythm in Prose Translation

In the process of translating prose from Chinese, although the syntactic and rhythmic forms of traditional poetry are discarded, the translator can still reproduce the rhythmic beauty of the original poem in prose through skillful language use and syntactic design. This reproduction of rhyme is not a direct imitation of the original poem's phonetics but is realized by means of the Chinese sense of rhythm, pauses, repetitions, and counterpoints. For example

In translating Shakespeare's sonnets into Chinese, the translator employs a series of innovative translation techniques and strategies in order to maintain the rhythmic beauty of the original and to adapt to the characteristics of the Chinese language. These techniques include the use of traditional devices in Chinese literature, such as rhythm, pause, repetition, and counterpoint, as well as the use of symbols, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices to convey the deeper meaning of the poem. This method not only conveys the content of the poem but also recreates, to some extent, the musicality and aesthetic qualities of the original work.

In Chinese poetry, rhythm and pause are important means to build up the musicality of a poem. By arranging pauses at appropriate places (e.g., using commas, periods, etc.), by simulating rhyming rhythms in English poetry, and by adjusting sentence length and structure, translators create a sense of rhythm similar to that of the original poem. Chinese poetry often uses repetition and counterpoint to enhance the effect of expression. In translation, the translator can simulate the rhythmic beauty and structural symmetry of the original poem by repeating key words or phrases and creating counterpoints.

The flat and oblique tones of Chinese provide a unique resource for translating English poetry. By skillfully utilizing the variations and combinations of tones, the rhyming and rhyming effects in English can be reproduced to a certain extent, thus creating a sense of music similar to that of the original poem. It is a major challenge in translation to concisely convey the imagery and emotions in a poem through symbols, metaphors and other rhetorical devices

without sacrificing the poetic meaning. By digging deep into the cultural background and deep meaning of the original poem, the translator chooses or creates symbols and metaphors that are in line with Chinese expression habits and can touch the reader's emotions so as to realize the translation effect of "getting both meaning and rhyme".

The Aesthetic Qualities of Chinese Poetry: A detailed discussion of the aesthetic functions of rhythm, pause, repetition, and counterpoint in Chinese poetry and how to apply these tools to translation. Intercultural Translation Strategies: analyzes how to reproduce the musicality of the original poem in translation through leveling and tonal variations and how to use symbols and metaphors effectively in translation. The Art of Chinese-English Poetry Translation provides concrete case studies that demonstrate successful translation practices in maintaining the musicality and aesthetic qualities of the original poems.

By utilizing these translation strategies and techniques, the translator not only successfully conveys the mood and emotion of Shakespeare's sonnets but also provides Chinese readers with a rich literary experience while preserving the aesthetic qualities of the original. This translation practice not only reflects the translator's superior skills but also demonstrates the role of bridging cultural and linguistic differences in poetry translation.

4.2.2 Aesthetic Value of Prose Translation

The aesthetic value of Chinese prose translation is not only reflected in its ability to effectively convey the mood and emotion of the original poem but also in its ability to inject new aesthetic qualities into the translated text. Through the form of prose style, the translator is able to give free play to a broader linguistic space, giving the translation a unique style and charm. This kind of translation emphasizes the fluency of language and diversity of expression, allowing readers to feel and appreciate the depth and beauty of Shakespeare's sonnets from different perspectives. At the same time, the prose translation makes the emotion of the poem touch the readers more directly and enhances the resonance and infectious power of the poem through the natural and fluent language with a rich sense of rhythm. Chinese prose translation not only provides a new reading experience for the target language readers but also explores an innovative path for the practice of poetry translation that takes into account both fidelity and aesthetic value, showing the infinite possibilities and creativity of translation as a cross-cultural art activity.

5. Conclusion

By exploring the practice of Chinese translation of

Shakespeare's sonnets in prose style and its innovations, this study finds that prose style translation has unique advantages in conveying the deeper meanings, emotions as well as cultural connotations of the original poems. It breaks through the traditional poetry translation's reliance on form, realizes the reproduction of the original poem's rhythmic beauty and mood through more flexible and free language expression, and also enhances the readability and acceptability of the translated text. The practice of prose-style translation also reflects the creativity of translation as a cross-cultural communication activity and provides new perspectives and ideas for poetry translation. The study also has some limitations, such as failing to cover more comparative analyses of translations, and the aesthetic value of prose translation may need to be explored more deeply. Future research can consider deepening the understanding of the application of prose translation in different literary genres and its function of cross-cultural communication from a wider range of texts and diverse cultural backgrounds. At the same time, the new possibilities and challenges of prose-style translation in the modern digital media environment should be further explored with a view to bringing more innovation and development to the field of literary translation.

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