

Translation Equivalence and the Reader's Response

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Abstract

The comparison of texts in different languages inevitably involves a theory of equivalence. Equivalence has been one of the central issues in translation although its definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversy. In an effort to explore translation equivalence in terms of the reader's response, this article intends to obtain a plausible account of theories and application regarding translation equivalence and other related fields. I propose that the reader's response is the best answer embracing perspectives of recent developments in translation study in a wide communicative and cognitive frame of reference. Some of today's most important theories on translation equivalence regarding the reader's response will be presented. Then I will propose and elaborate on a more comprehensive model of translation equivalence, followed by detailed practice, analysis and discussion of selected literary works of translation between the Chinese and the English languages.

Keywords: Translation, Equivalence, The Reader's Response.

1. Introduction

Equivalence remains an essential part in the practice, assessment and study of translation (Baker 1992; Ruuskanen 1996; Kashgary 2011; Saule, Aisulu, 2014). This paper aims at an elaboration on the theory and practice of translation equivalence from the selected angle: the reader's response.

2. Translation Equivalence

The theory of equivalence as it is interpreted by some of the most innovative theorists in this field can be substantially divided into three main groups. In the first there are those translation scholars who are in favor of a linguistic approach to translation and who seem to forget that translation in itself is not merely a matter of linguistics. The second group of theorists regard translation equivalence as a transfer of the message from the (Source Culture) SC to the (Target Culture) TC and adopts a pragmatic and semantic or functionally oriented approach to translation. Finally, there are other translation scholars who seem to stand in the middle, Baker for instance, and claim that equivalence is used 'for the sake of convenience—because

most translators are used to it rather than because it has any theoretical status' (Kenny 1998: 77).

Vinay and Darbelnet view equivalence-oriented translation as a procedure which 'replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording' (1995: 342). They also suggest that, if this procedure is applied during the translation process, it can maintain the stylistic impact of the (Source Language) SL text in the (Target Language) TL text. According to them, equivalence is therefore the ideal method when the translator has to deal with proverbs, idioms, clichés, nominal or adjectival phrases and the onomatopoeia of animal sounds.

Roman Jakobson's study of equivalence gives new impetus to the theoretical analysis of translation since he introduces the notion of 'equivalence in difference'. On the basis of his semiotic approach to language and his aphorism 'there is no signatum without signum' (1959: 232), he suggests three kinds of translation, namely, Intralingual (within one language, i.e. rewording or paraphrase); Interlingual (between two languages); Intersemiotic (between sign systems). Jakobson claims that, in the case of interlingual translation, the translator makes use of synonyms in order to get the ST message across. This means that in interlingual translations there is no full equivalence between code units. According to his theory, 'translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes' (1959: 233). He acknowledges that 'whenever there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions' (1959: 234).

There seems to be some similarity between Vinay and Darbelnet's theory of translation procedures and Jakobson's theory of translation. Both theories stress the fact that, whenever a linguistic approach is no longer suitable to carry out a translation, the translator can rely on other procedures such as loan-translations, neologisms and the like. Both theories recognize the limitations of a linguistic theory and argue that a translation can never be impossible since there are several methods that the translator can choose.

Nida argues that there are two different types of equivalence, namely *formal equivalence*, which in the second edition by Nida and Taber (1982) is referred to as *formal correspondence*, and *dynamic equivalence*. Formal correspondence 'focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content', unlike dynamic equivalence which is based upon 'the principle of equivalent effect' (1964: 159). Formal correspondence consists of a TL item which represents the closest equivalent of a SL word or phrase. Nida and Taber make it clear that there are not always formal equivalents between language pairs. The use of formal equivalents might at times have serious implications in the TT since the translation will not be easily understood by the target audience (Fawcett 1997). Dynamic equivalence is defined as a translation principle according to which a translator seeks to translate the meaning of the original in such a way that the TL wording will trigger the same impact on the TC audience as the original wording did upon the ST audience. Nida and Taber argue that 'Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful' (Nida and Taber 1982: 200). Only in Nida and Taber's edition is it clearly stated that 'dynamic equivalence in translation is far more than mere correct communication of information' (1982: 25).

Despite using a linguistic approach to translation, Nida is much more interested in the message of the text or, in other words, in its semantic quality. He therefore strives to make sure that this message remains clear in the target text. In terms of requiring the reader's participation to fill the gap between the text structure and the realization of the meaning, there are a number of limitations in dynamic equivalence approach.

First of all, this approach carries a preconception as to suppose meaning or message as concrete, based on linguistic codes. Nevertheless, according to reader-response theories, the meaning is not fixed there in the text, so the reader's participation is required to realize the meaning of the text. The gap to be filled consists of the assumptions, not coded in the text, which the writer and the reader share. Second, therefore, dynamic equivalence refers to the 'dynamics of original' in acquiring this meaning in substantially the same manner. Again, if the meaning is understood as interpreted from linguistic codes, the dynamics are nothing but interpretation. From the translator's point of view, then, the only way to promote the degree of equivalent response is to make explanatory additions for the implied meaning or figurative sense of the original. This approach basically is not concerned about the interaction of the reader's knowledge with the textual realization. Third, concerning the reader's response, this approach does not take account of the reader's text processing effort. Without considering the intra-personal differences of the reader, this approach tends to regard a reader's response to text as if it were unchanging. On the contrary, the reader's response through the interactions between the reader and the text will be ever changing, since the reader's cognitive environment changes through the text processing.

3. Translation Equivalence Theory in Relation to the Reader's Response

Theodore Savory, in his renowned *The Art of Translation*, defines the word 'translation' as follows: Translation, the surmounting of the obstacle, is made possible by an *equivalence* of thought which lies behind the different verbal expression of a thought (Savory 1957). Confusing as it may appear to be, this definition, to a large extent, carries an important element with it, which is either easily neglected or not paid enough attention to. In all honesty, translation equivalence is by no means an easily fulfilled task thus should leave an everlasting topic in our research on translation theories together with our discussion and assessment of translation quality.

As reviewed in the previous part, the notion of equivalence is undoubtedly one of the most problematic and controversial areas in the field of translation theory. Even the brief outline of the issue given above indicates its importance within the framework of the theoretical reflection on translation. The difficulty in defining equivalence seems to result in the impossibility of having a universal approach to this notion. The first discussions of the notion of equivalence in translation initiated the further elaboration of the term by contemporary theorists. Even the brief outline of the issue given above indicates its importance within the framework of the theoretical reflection on translation. The difficulty in defining equivalence seems to result in the impossibility of having a universal approach to this notion.

I propose that the reader's response is the best answer embracing the perspectives of recent developments in the study of translation in a wide communicative and cognitive frame of reference.

The idea is that any translation should aim to achieve equivalence to the Source Text (ST) in terms of the reader's reaction to the text as a result of interaction between the reader's schematic knowledge and the textual realization. The criterion of translation quality is then how to construct the closest sets of dynamic interactions among schemata in the Target Text (TT) reader's mind via the textual form.

Any decision-making and the translator's creativity in finding equivalent expressions should be consistent with the reader's assumptions about the context and his ability to infer the relevant message from it.

3.1 Purposes of Literary Communication and Language

If we look at translation equivalence in terms of reader's response, rather than in terms of a discrete dichotomy of form and content, the final goal of translation should be equivalent to that of original literary communication. So far, many functions and purposes of language and literary communication have been proposed.

Co-operative (Grice 1975) and politeness principles (Lakoff 1973, Leech 1983: 132), for example, reflect the universal need to act together and to maintain social relationships through the communication. Relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson 1969) supposes that to exchange information with respect to the maximal relevance principle is the main function of human communication. However, as shown in literary critics, a wide range of human communicative behavior is not limited merely to exchanging relevant information. According to Cook (1994: 44), some discourse is best interpreted as though it followed a maxim 'change the receiver', although this is not necessarily part of the intention of the sender. He calls this the 'cognitive change principle', adding that another function of literary communication is that a discourse is meant to change the reader's mental representation.

3.2 Translation as a Way of Literary Communication

For translation, the distinction from any other literary communication lies in the fact that any translation seeks a kind of correspondence with its source text. The goals of the task are then largely dependent on what should be preserved in the process of transmission. Nearly all theories discussed above deal with this concern to varying extent. The suggested ones have been the linguistic properties, meaning, the author's intention, function, purpose, the reader's response, and so on so forth of the original text.

Indeed, approaches focusing on a single element of discourse as a discrete entity are basically inadequate in that they fail to account for the effect of the text on its readers as a result of dynamic interactions between the reader's knowledge and the textual elements as one organic body. Any elements or functions characterizing a text should not be treated as discrete entities, but rather as organic parts of the text, since all the aspects are integrated and establish one entity in the reader's mind. Thus, translation equivalence should be understood in terms of broad textual characteristics, rather than mere word-to-word or sentence-to-sentence equivalences.

3.3 The Relationship between ST and TT as Reflected in the Reader's Response

Modern functionalist approaches as well as Nida's notions of dynamic equivalence focus on the reader as the primary evaluator of translation quality, whose reaction to the TT or perception of the function and purpose of the message become decisive criteria for translation quality assessment. Considering the increasing awareness of multifarious aspects of cognitive human behavior, it seems quite natural that the major criterion of translation quality assessment has moved from 'objective' formal correspondence to 'subjective' reader's responses.

Yet, the study of translation has not taken enough account of the TT reader's response to work out the relationship between the text and the reader's mind in terms of text processing across language and culture.

It appears to me that even those recent studies which have attempted to account for translation in the domain of a cognitive process have only been concerned with translation processes or translator behaviors from the translator's viewpoint, not the reader's. Hence, we may ponder

the nature of the relationship between the text and the reader, to which translation equivalence between the ST and the TT is addressed.

The reader's response may well be the most relevant criterion for representing the identity and the characteristic of the text to be preserved into a second language. Thus the TT would be compared to the ST in terms of the reader's response, and with this orientation the TT readership would be expected to perceive the intended message via the text and even to experience the similar cognition change throughout the reading process as the original readership work out the ST.

The status of the reader in the study of translation is, in a sense, very much similar to that of literature. The only difference is that any translation seeks equivalence with its original, so the consideration in translation includes the comparison of the relationship between the TT and its reader with that of the ST and its reader.

In modern literary criticism, the readership has been claimed to be the key notion with which the nature of literary text is identified and characterized. Despite the objection that a reader-based theory inevitably leads to relativism, Fish (1988: 235-40) argues that totally subjective responses are impossible since they cannot exist in isolation from sets of norms, systems of thought which are inter-subjective. Thus he claims that the subject-object dichotomy breaks down as there are no pure subjects and no pure objects. The object, including the literary text, is always a construct by the subject, or more exactly, by a group of subjects or what Fish calls an 'interpretive community'.

To take a closer look at the readership community, regardless of the level of knowledge and interpreting strategy, it is the reader who interacts with the textual form and produces a certain response to the reading.

In this respect, for translation, what is meant to be transmitted into the TT would not be merely the stylistic features, content, function, or even meaning. Despite some marked functions or elements of texts depending on text types, a text cannot be divided into such discrete components, so that one of them is set apart from the organic body of the ST text to be preserved into the TT.

An all-around description of goals of translation will be the preservation or reconstruction of the ST reader's response through the TT. Opposed to the trend of componential analysis of discourse studies rooted on the traditional semiotic communication model, a cognitive approach tends to synthesize all the aspects and elements of the discourse in terms of the reader's knowledge and inferencing strategy. The text would be taken not to have an objective structure but rather a structure to be completed by the reader.

All texts create 'gaps' or 'blanks' which the reader must use his or her imagination to fill. It is in this interaction between the text and the reader that an aesthetic response is produced. If the texts exactly possessed merely the meaning brought to light by interpretation, then there would remain very little else for the reader. He could only accept it or reject it, take it or leave it. The fundamental question is, however, what exactly does take place between the text and the reader.

In principle, representation of a concrete meaning or truth via textual realization is impossible. Though the degree would depend on the kind of texts, texts are 'forced to rely on the individual reader for the realization of a possible meaning or truth' (Iser 1971: 230). The meaning is conditioned by the text itself, but only in a form that allows the reader himself to bring it out.

3.4 A More Comprehensive Model of Translation Equivalence

A more comprehensive model of translation equivalence designed to account for the nature of reader-dependency of text requires a fundamentally different premise from that of any literary communication. An alternative model of communication is, in Sperber and Wilson's (1986) terms, an 'inferential model' in which communication is achieved by producing and interpreting evidence rather than by encoding and decoding of a message.

With that, we need a more detailed version of text processing mechanism from the audience's viewpoint to work out how the interaction between the reader's knowledge and the text occurs so that a reader can infer a certain message. According to schema theory and the research conducted in this study, a given text triggers different types and levels of schemata in the reader's mind. The content and kinds of schemata activated from the same passage may be different depending on the reader's experience of language and culture. The reader's response as a result of reading is the product of interaction between the text and the reader's own schemata.

Now, given that we are comparing a TT to its ST to evaluate the degree of equivalence, if our measurement is the reader's response, surely the text itself is not a self-sufficient criterion. Rather, the translation will be assessed according to whether it functions appropriately to get the intended response as the ST did with the original readers. Once a certain meaning or message is produced through the interaction of the ST and the original reader's schemata, a high degree of equivalent meaning or message reproduction is expected from the interaction of the TT and its readers. Thus, for the target readers to realize the intention of the text producer, the text should be able to provide textual guidelines for each stage of interaction in text processing.

If we accept modern schema theory in general and especially Cook's (1994) theory of schema deviation as a plausible explanation of discourse processing, then the reader's schemata are understood to contain knowledge of textual structure and language, as well as the knowledge of the world. Interplay between the textual form and the reader's schemata create links among schemata, so that the text is identified as a cohesive unity unless it is worked out as mad or fantastic. In the light of this mechanism, any elements or functions characterizing a discourse should not be treated as discrete entities, but rather as organic parts of the discourse, since all the aspects are integrated and establish one 'discoursehood' in the reader's mind.

There would be a couple of criteria supporting the quality of equivalence. For the text to function as a coherent communicative act rather than as a superfluous or meaningless text, it should have certain themes and plans, as well as proper scripts, to be recognized by the target audience. As a mediator of both the original and the target cultures, the translator first should be well aware of the typical assumptions of the original readers, namely types of schemata and different schema levels triggered by the original text in the average ST readers. Keeping in mind the responses of the original readership, the translator's task then is to find out the most appropriate frame to convey such reactions through the TT.

Considering the list of evoked script schemata and their relations with each other that establish another composite schema as a frame of such upper level schemata as plans or themes, most translations may basically follow the structure and content of the original. However, if it is an indirect communication situation as is often the case, it could be necessary to change the linguistic structure or even content. It is never simple, however, because this must consider not only the first reading of the text, but also revisited readings. The reader's assumptions are ever changing, even during the reading of the passage. The change also must take account of the reader's efforts to understand the passage. The translator's decision should

carefully consider the overall effect of linguistic choices on the interaction of the textual form and the reader's mind.

Again, in an attempt to envisage the intended scripts and plans, the list and content of such entities should be relevant enough to be found under intended upper level schemata, so that the target reader may reasonably interpret the plans and themes through the activated scripts and plans. This kind of concern will be endless, but always should be taken carefully based on the target reader's assumptions of the world and text structure, as well as language. With regard to the text structure and language, to find relevant styles or text type conventions in the target language is also an important matter.

Even if each list and content of the schemata envisaged by the TT reader is fairly close to those of the ST reader, and thus faithful to the ST, it would not guarantee the same responses of the readers. Each schema never remains a discrete entity. To form a meaningful discourse, enormous connections of schemata are created, and the linkages form another composite schema. During this process the discourse in the reader's mind gets bigger, conforming to his or her plans and themes.

In this respect, in principle, a perfect reconstruction of form-content correspondence of the ST to the TT will be impossible. However, if any key information in the content of schemata functions as a decisive cue for a certain schema connection, it should be preserved by the translator. In particular, this would be required in order to convey a figurative sense or implied meaning. In a metaphor, for example, with a significant difference in cognitive environment, many props and objects employed in such expressions are often meaningless if the translator insists on using the original ones.

If this is true, the reader-response theoretic translation equivalence should aim at conveying a high degree of the same dynamics between the target text and its readers as the original text does. The assessment of this change is, however, far beyond the translator or any other evaluator's ability. Just as a discourse understanding keeps referring to higher levels, i.e. scripts --- plans --- themes, it tends to be more anthropological and philosophical and thus complicated with respect to the nature of the human being itself.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The examples of practices are limited to literary works, concentrating on the effect of classic literature on the reader provided with different versions of translation between English and Chinese. I use classical literary works and famed translated versions as referential material, mainly for two reasons. First, privileged translated versions as they are, different ways of rendering may still cause different response on the reader's part. This may better testify to my point that translation equivalence should be judged and managed on the basis of the reader's response. Second, as a reader, I am not partial to any of the translated versions for they are all acclaimed ones by translators of established credit, therefore adding credibility and focus to what I am trying to drive at.

Based on a reader-dependency notion, here I will move on to more concrete discussion—the practice of translation equivalence in different contexts.

In literary works, the text's impact on the ST reader should be preserved into the TT by the translation, adopting 'translation techniques' based on the approach of the reader's response.

(1) The Boy's Blank Face Asked the Blank Window: This sentence is taken from *Ulysses*, hailed by many as the greatest masterpiece in the 20th century. Along the years, the translating of this novel has been a formidable challenge facing translators and scholars all around the

world. Jin Di and Xiaoqian with his wife Wen Jieruo are the excellent scholars that have poured their effort into translating of this novel, enabling us with the two Chinese versions of *Ulysses*, which my following discussion would be grounded on. [Jin's translated version will be referred to as Jin's (version), and Xiao and Wen's will be referred to as Xiao's (version).]

Let me come back to the previously quoted sentence. If we look deeply into this seemingly simple sentence, we find it highly effective and expressive. The word 'blank' is used twice for: 1). Emphasis. The boy was asked a question yet failed to answer. The word 'blank' emphasizes the helplessness of that situation. 2). Rhetorical technique. By using 'blank' the window is attached a sense of 'life'. Now let us look at the two versions:

[Jin's] 孩子的茫茫然的脸转过去问白茫茫的窗户。

[Xiao's] 孩子把茫然的脸掉过去问那茫然的窗户。

In Jin's version, we find the word 'blank' is treated differently as the latter one is handled in a way that is less personified to allocate with the 'window'. Whereas in Xiao's version, the word is unanimously rendered as '茫然'. While some may argue that the expression '茫然的窗户' rings false and unnatural, I'd prefer Xiao's version for two reasons. 1. It leaves the rhetorical device the original sentence carries. 2. The author consciously uses this specific word to modify the 'window'. The feeling of unnaturalness is deliberately created so as to echo with the previous 'blank' as well as to send a message by means of personification. In this sense, Xiao's version better grant the TT reader with the sort of 'chemistry' more similar with the TT to the interaction between the ST and the ST reader than does Jin's version. This testifies to the point that when the collocation appears unusual in the original text, preservation of this unusual collocation into the target text should be regarded as signs of appropriate and good translation as in its attempt at allowing the reader to participate in the interaction and use his or her imagination and comprehension to add to the understanding of the text.

(2) A Sweetened Boy's Breath:

[Jin's] 他的呼吸中带有甜丝丝的儿童的气息。

[Xiao's] 少年的呼吸发出一股甜味儿。

The difference is that '儿童' in Jin's version intends to refer to 'children' as a whole, while '少年' in Xiao's version refers specifically to one boy, namely the one in the previous context. Read the original text one finds out that by 'breath' the author actually generally refers to the children's sweet breath. Jin's version here conveys the intention of the ST more precisely, by evoking the common sense and experience of the reader and in turn leading him or her to further thinking.

(3) With Envy He Watched their Faces: Edith, Ethel, Gerty, Lily: Here we see several names that may confuse the readers, which makes the translator's annotation necessary. Both versions go along with that.

[Jin's] 他怀着妒羡的心情注视这一张张脸庞: 爱瑟尔, 歌蒂, 莉莉. [1]

注[1] 伊迪丝等全是女孩子的名字, 而这里却是一座男校. 所以她们不是他课堂上的学生, 而是与他们类似的富裕家庭中的姑娘.

[Xiao's] 他怀着妒意注视着一张张的脸: 伊迪丝, 艾塞尔, 格蒂, 莉莉. [11]

注[11] 斯蒂芬教的是男校, 他从班上男生的脸联想到可能与他们想好的女孩子的名字.

Jin's version here fits more properly into the reader-dependency theory in that it merely states a fact rather than inferring to and a certain situation which might turn out to be untrue, because it presupposes that these boys have girlfriends and what's more, 'he' knows the names of these girlfriends. This may function as misleading on the target reader's part by replacing their own thought with forceful and possibly incorrect information. Annotations are unavoidable in translated versions of any literature, the translator's efforts and thoughtfulness shine through the annotations but they bear a side effect sometimes. They somehow cut the reader's thought and interaction short, therefore incurring misunderstanding and misinformation as the end result. That is why great care should be taken of the annotations to make them as simple and concise as possible, if necessary.

(4) I Hear the Ruin of All Space, Shattered Glass and Toppling Masonry, And Time One Livid Final Flame: This is a more complicated sentence in wording and structure compared to the previous quoted ones. But this is not saying that the previous ones are any easier to handle than this one. Anyhow, this sentence demands high literary taste and sound language capability on the reader's part.

[Jin's] 我听到整个空间的毁灭, 玻璃稀里哗啦地粉碎, 砖瓦成片地倒塌, 而时间则成了惨淡无光的最后一道光焰。

[Xiao's] 我听到整个空间的毁灭, 玻璃碎成碴儿, 砖石建筑坍塌下来, 时光化为终极的一缕死灰色的火焰。

The original sentence created a momentum of destruction by words like 'shattered', 'toppling', 'livid', 'final'. In Jin's version, words like '稀里哗啦' and '成片' adds vividness to this dynamic effect of the moment as an impact on the TT reader that is similar to that on the ST reader. However, the last part fades in comparison. It lacks the 'feel' and moreover, the collocation between '惨淡无光' and '光焰' somehow sounds awkward. In Xiao's version, 'livid flame' is tactfully rendered as '死灰色的火焰', making it more proper and natural. The word 'final' is translated to '终极', and 'livid' to '死灰色', which are both striking enough to match the sense of hopelessness and desperation, or, a touch of Armageddon, which is sensed through the original context. Xiao's version, in this respect, carries the profound meaning for the target reader to explore.

Next I will divert my attention to Chinese-English translation to see how the issue of equivalence with respect to the reader's response is solved. *A Dream of Red Mansions* (红楼梦) enjoys a very high status in the history of China's and the world's literature as well. There are two influential English versions available. One by Yang Xianyi and his wife Gladys Yang; the other by David Hawkes and John Minford [referred to Yang's (version) and Hawkes' (version) respectively]. Here is the famous introduction of the leading female character Lin Daiyu in Chapter Three.

(5) 两弯似蹙非蹙冒烟眉, 一双似喜非喜含情目。态生两靥之愁, 娇袭一身之病。泪光点点, 娇喘微微。闲静时如, 行动处似弱柳扶风。心较比干多一窍, 病如西施胜三分: This paragraph gives the reader an overview of Lin Daiyu's appearance as well as her characteristics. Her beauty is nowhere near that of a girl-next-door, it's unique; it's one of a kind. Her sentiments and sorrow are apparent and absorbed into her looks and becomes a part of her. The author uses a good number of obscure words and phrases to portray the rare beauty, and additional restrictive words to highlight the obscurity, impressing the readers with the unexplainably delicate beauty even more. Words and phrases such as '冒烟眉', '含情目', '两靥之愁', '一身之病', '泪光点点', '娇喘微微', '娇花照水', '弱柳扶风' are highly effective in achieving the above-mentioned goal. And '比干' and '西施' are historical figures symbolizing wisdom and beauty respectively, yet it would confuse a foreign readership if no

explanation was made. In this case, an annotation is more than necessary. Below are the two translated versions.

Yang's: Her dusky arched eyebrows were knitted and yet not frowning, her speaking eyes held both merriment and sorrow; her very frailty had charm. Her eyes sparkled with tears, her breath was soft and faint. In repose she was like a lovely flower mirrored in the water; in motion, a pliant willow swaying in the wind. She looked more sensitive than Pikan(1), more delicate than Hsi Shih(2).

1. *A prince noted for his great intelligence at the end of the Shang Dynasty.*
2. *A famous beauty of the ancient kingdom of Yueh.*

Hawkes': Her mist-wreathed brows at first seemed to frown, yet were not frowning; Her passionate eyes at first seemed to smile, yet were not merry; Habit had given a melancholy cast to her tender face; Nature had bestowed a sickly constitution on her delicate frame. Often the eyes swam with glistening tears; often the breath came in gentle gasps. In stillness she made one think of a graceful flower reflected in the water; In motion she called to mind tender willow shoots caressed by the wind. She had more chambers in her heart than the martyred Bi Gan; And suffered a tithe more pain in it than the beautiful Xi Shi.

We know that the in the original text, the words and phrases used for describing Lin Daiyu are highly literary and poetic. Now compare the two versions: Hawkes' catches the hint of poetry and rhythm that characterize the wording of the original. Also, Hawkes' version, by maintaining the obscurity of the words, carries the depth and impact of the original text. '似蹙非蹙': 'at first seemed to smile, yet were not merry'; '似喜非喜': 'at first seemed to smile, yet were not merry'—very vivid outline with a distant-to-near and general-to-careful perspective. '罥烟眉': 'mist-wreathed brows'; '含情目': 'passionate eyes'; '两靥之愁': 'a melancholy cast to her tender face'; '一身之病': 'a sickly constitution on her delicate frame'; '泪光点点': 'Often the eyes swam with glistening tears'; '娇喘微微': 'Often the breath came in gentle gasps'—poetic and refined words echo the original text in its style of elegance and class experienced by the ST reader. '娇花照水', '弱柳扶风'—these two phrases were led by '如' and '似' to enhance the degree of delicate beauty. In Hawkes' version, the whole concept of that beauty is reflected by the description 'she made one think of a graceful flower reflected in the water; In motion she called to mind tender willow shoots caressed by the wind', inspiring the reader with an imagination of the unworldly beauty and intelligence of Daiyu. In this sense, I can say this version provides the reader with the literary treat and space for thought at the same time in the same level the original text does. Yang's version falls short of the poetic and visual flavor in comparison. On the whole it reads a bit plain, modern and too 'out and loud', when it's supposed to be obscure—'罥烟眉': 'her dusky arched eyebrows'; '含情目': 'her speaking eyes'; '态生两靥之愁, 娇袭一身之病': 'her very frailty had charm'. The rendering of '似蹙非蹙' and '似喜非喜' also lacks the obscurity and dynamics of the original text resulting in discrepancies of understanding, imagination and appreciation on the reader's part.

However, the last sentence has made me take note. As is said earlier, '比干' and '西施' are historical figures representing the virtue of wisdom and beauty. While they are nearly household names in China, the target reader might well find it confusing and hard to relate to Daiyu. This problem Yang's version pays attention to. In an attempt for the target reader to acquire the same knowledge and understand this comparison in the same way as the ST reader do, it mentions that Daiyu is extremely sensitive and delicate in the translated sentence, followed by a footnote where the background of the two figures are introduced. This is done

to deliver the message as clearly as possible to the TT reader so that he or she gets the chance to experience that comparison with the maximum degree of similarity to the ST reader does. Nevertheless, the Hawkes' version handles its surface meaning by direct translating. The loss of information here would most possibly cause the target reader wonder who are these two people and fails to figure out the connotation of the comparison, which would lead to a detached response compared to the ST reader'. In a word, both have its merit with regard to the principle of equivalence based on reader's response.

Consider 'she is like a cake in a picture'. Even though some people reject this as not being a conventional expression, most people understand what it means—she is unattainable. A literal rendering of the original ST expression, however, would be '*she is a sticky-rice in a picture*'. From this average Chinese get the message without any problem even though there are many possibilities that the sticky-rice can stand for, e.g. 'mouth-watering' since it is delicious, 'special' because it is somehow served on a special occasion, and so forth. From these meaning potentials, the translator creatively chose a 'cake', which seems to come across the most relevant image of the sticky-rice for the TT context. Interestingly, however, for both Chinese and English readers, this image of 'something mouth-watering' triggers another context-bound meaning of 'wanting to have a special relationship', or simply 'desirable', which is not a literal eating.

5. Conclusion

Equivalence remains an essential part in the practice, assessment and study of translation. This paper aims at an elaboration on the theory and practice of translation equivalence from the selected angle: the reader's response.

I propose that a more comprehensive approach of translation equivalence raised to account for the nature of reader-dependency of text requires a fundamentally different premise from that of any literary communication.

The idea is that any decision-making and the translator's creativity in finding equivalent expressions should be consistent with the reader's assumptions about the context and his ability to infer the relevant message from it. Any translation should aim to achieve equivalence to the Source Text (ST) in terms of the reader's reaction to the text as a result of interaction between the reader's schematic knowledge and the textual realization. The criterion of translation quality is then how to construct the closest sets of dynamic interactions among schemata in the Target Text (TT) reader's mind via the textual form.

An alternative model of communication is an 'inferential model' in which communication is achieved by producing and interpreting evidence rather than by encoding and decoding of a message. I analyzed translations literary works between the English and the Chinese languages to prove that the translator needs to understand how the reader keeps coming up with refreshed schemata, and how this works when reading texts further and again.

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