

Comparison Analysis of Wu and Zhang's Translations of The Old Man and The Sea

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Abstract. *The Old Man and the Sea* by Hemingway has always been a renowned masterpiece representing American literature. With the Chinese culture market getting more and more open, since the reform and open policy have been mounted, the amount of Chinese people approaching exotic literature has been substantially amplified. The demand for prominent translations of foreign literary works has soared. *The Old Man and the Sea* by Hemingway as a typical and remarkable foreign literary work are fairly welcome into the Chinese cultural market, with more than 40 versions of translation. With a whole lot of versions, Chinese readers and literature scholars can feel confused. People cannot choose each one on earth is worth reading the most. Rather, in light of distinct reading aims, different versions can have their own merits. Some versions may be very loyal to the original script, but the words ultimately exhibited may not be so vivid and coherent. The others could overwhelmingly focus on the final presentation of the Chinese context that did not express the author's original intention. So, if people want to comprehend Hemingway's thoughts, they can choose the former one, while those who just feel like trying American literature for the first time, may opt for the latter one. Hence, it is very significant for people to know which translation can fit their purpose best. Otherwise, they may fail in their research or lose their passion for American literature.

Keywords: Translation, Hemingway, Chinese translation, the Old Man and the Sea.

1. Introduction

There have already been numerous comparative analyses on different versions of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Those passages concentrated on the styles of language, the idioms in the translations, or the implications of the translations. People can absorb some of the conclusions of those research to help the readers of this passage understand some of the comparisons going to be conducted. However, there is still a blank of the guidance for readers to select which translation fits their aims best. Even if people possess a robust will to choose the right translation after reading all of those existing articles, they may still be not aware of the answer.

Therefore, in order to sort out which translation fits what aim, the author picked the highest praised two versions of translations of *The Old Man and the Sea*: Wu Lao's version in 1987 and Zhang Chiheng's version in 2015. After reading the analyses and comparisons in this passage, readers would know which translation they ought to choose based on different purposes. This passage will assist them in making the right choice, in case they would not waste their time on reading the version that cannot help them well to achieve their goals.

This passage will focus on the final presentation effect of the translations and will analyze their language styles in general. At the end of the passage, the author will give a conclusion of the aim group of people of each translation. This would help readers to choose the right one. The method used in this passage would consist of three parts: the commentary of the two translations in the past, the conclusions given in other passages, and the analyses conducted in the passage. To achieve the author's own analyses, this passage would be analyzed by means of the words, the vibe, and the syntax of each version.

2. Hemingway's Writing Style

Hemingway was renowned as the beginner of the style of telegraphic literature, whose traits were seen to be powerful, clear, and concise. Hemingway's most striking language style is the simplicity

of his works [1]. No fancy long language, more short sentences, and dialogue, writing full of rhythm and power [1]. It also proves his famous iceberg theory: plain, simple sentences often hide deep, evocative meanings [1]. Meanwhile, Hemingway was also deemed as a “tough guy” within the realm of literature because the themes he exhibited in his works always went around several topics of human rights, war and peace, death, and challenges in life. Hemingway is a legendary writer in the 20th century. His works are good at expressing profound themes with concise language and concise mode [1]. Most of Hemingway's works revolve around the themes of death, war, violence, and human dignity, thus highlighting the strong, brave, and indomitable spirit of a tough man [1]. There is something that also needs to be mentioned about Hemingway before this passage formally starts to compare Wu's and Zhang's versions is the Iceberg Theory. This theory under the context of discussing Hemingway usually means what you apprehend from the direct words is not comprehensive compared to the real intention of the writer which is Hemingway. This is rather important for people to figure Hemingway's works out. Even Hemingway himself has also expressed a similar opinion which is all of the great work of literature has the component of being mysterious. The so-called mysterious component is just those parts that do not exhibit to the readers straightforwardly. This kind of writing style of Hemingway is seen as mysticism. Some see it as a mystical style of writing; He has been criticized for his simplicity, as there are only two main characters in the novel, and the language and structure seem so simple [2]. The first view is a radical one because he is biased against Hemingway's symbolism and fails to see the "iceberg" that lies seven eighths below the surface of the sea [2]. There is an example which is also is the end of the book: “Up the road, in his shack, the old man was sleeping again. He was still sleeping on his face and the boy was sitting by him watching him. The old man was dreaming about the lions.” Reader's today is still not very sure about what the lion is representing. Readers only see the lion being the iceberg out of sea level, but what is behind the lion being the submarine part is problematic. Besides, Hemingway had a very vibrant and sufficient social living experience which makes his work full of American idioms and local terms that are also known as culturally loaded words.

3. Wu and Zhang's disposal of culturally loaded words

In terms of Wu's translation, Wu loved to retain those terms and only translated those terms by syllables into Chinese. Readers can have a glance at that from several words. The first one is the translation of a kind of shark, the bull shark. In the original work, the name of the shark was expressed in Spanish as “Galanos”. While Zhang translated the words into their counterpart in Chinese, Wu translated into Chinese “Jia La Nuo”. At the same time, an identical translation strategy can still be found when talking about baseball. There is a conversation taking place between the old man and the boy: “Naturally. But he makes the difference. In the other league, between Brooklyn and Philadelphia I must take Brooklyn. But then Dick Sisler and those great drives in the old park [3].” Since Chinese people almost have no idea about the baseball when they see the expression within the conversation “In the other league”, they would not be aware of what the other league is. In Wu's version, he gave an explanation about the other league which means the National League. However, in Zhang's version, there was no such kind of explanation. Wu tried to make his readers integrate themselves into the American context. It is hard to say that this kind of translating strategy is wrong, and it is still workable to make readers immerse themselves into the context of such an exotic context. Wu, on the other hand, is more precise and flexible in handling the 23 words of Spanish and baseball culture in the book [4]. This kind of alienation strategy better reflects the loanwords in the original work [4]. The variation shows the different national conditions and cultures [4].

4. Zhang and Wu's rendering style

In this paragraph, this passage will use the two versions of translations of the beginning part of the book as an example to give a comparative analysis of the language style of the two versions. It is

fairly obvious that the sequence and the amount of information presented in the original piece and the is very distinct. Wu's version almost expresses the identical information as Hemingway did. Both Hemingway and Wu portrayed an old man who was very unlucky, and the boy left him etc. However, when readers read Zhang's version and compare it to the original piece, readers can astonishingly find that Zhang added tons of additional and even superfluous information to his work. There is a sentence in Zhang's version: "The Gulf Stream has an ocean current running from south to north" [5]. There is not such a counterpart in Hemingway's original book, it can be assumed that it is Zhang intended to elaborate how what the "Gulf Stream" was like, and he used the word "running" rather than "floating" maybe to show how dangerous and dire the gulf can be. It is possible that Zhang thinks this can erect a tough and determined vibe of the old man in San Diego. The original piece went "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream", and there was not any specific description of the gulf in Wu's translation. There is still a lot of examples like that in Zhang's version, like "The temper of the sea is not so gentle, and the waves are dashing all the time, but the old man always conquers it" [5]. and "The boy loves the old man so much" [5]. All of these sentences were just made by Zhang. It cannot be deemed that the extra information is absurd, because readers can still infer that description according to the context. The merit of this strategy is that readers can derive more sense of the scenario from the words, which could possibly make the book less monotone and more vibrant. Nevertheless, such kind of strategy can be seen as disloyalty to Hemingway's primitive intention. It can be hugely detrimental to the original language style of Hemingway. As mentioned above, Zhang's adding a lot of sentences can make the novel look much less concise, maybe even trembling. Hence, it is not even close to "Telegraphic Literature". There are very few adjectives, adverbs, and modifiers in these conversations, and the sentences are short, the language is concise, straightforward, and concise, and it reads like a telegram [6]. But it is these telegraphic conversations that are rich in meaning [6]. Hemingway is careful to put some important content "underwater", and let the reader dig into the dialogue contained in the "seven-eighths" subtext [6]. Additionally, Zhang has made everything clear in the passage, which left no room for readers to comprehend the book themselves and utilize their imagination, or readers can say that there are not any connotations that exist in the book anymore. It totally prompts the "Iceberg Theory" to vanish. Therefore, what readers will see via Zhang's version can be deemed as a completely different book compared to the original piece. The only relation between Zhang's version and the original piece is just the plot. People who read Zhang's version can be very aware of what has happened in the book and maybe the thought of Hemingway but can be so ignorant about Hemingway's writing style. Instead, Wu tried his best to sustain Hemingway's style. The sentence Wu created in his version was rather short, people can finish each of them in a second. The information can be garnered so effortlessly just like when people are reading a news or telegraph. For instance, the first sentence written by Hemingway was "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream, and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish [3]." Wu translated this sentence into Chinese for three individual sentences: "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream" [7], "he had gone eighty-four days" [7], "he didn't take any fish" [7]. Maybe this is not the same as the original piece, but it still exhibits the style of being concise and not accomplished (Iceberg Theory) of Hemingway. Wu's preference for literal translation is revealed most prominently in his renderings of metaphorical expressions compared to the other three versions [8]. Wu consistently renders the images of metaphors literally by reproducing the original noun phrases constituting the ideational metaphors similar to noun phrases [8]. Apart from this, there are also many previous studies relating to the metaphorical expressions [9-10].

5. Conclusion

Therefore, the conclusion is clear and obvious now. Given that Zhang's rendering has adapted too much from the original text, it is not so appropriate for academic utilization. For those who would give American literature or Hemingway's writing style a try but are not so adept at foreign literary

works, Zhang's rendering could be deemed as a relatively suitable beginning. Since Zhang has supplemented a lot of his own comprehension, the final presentation of his rendering may be rather effortless to figure out. Even though that personal explanation might not be radically authentic according to the original work's subtext, such kind of adaption is surely helpful for people stepping into the American realm for the first time. Meanwhile, when dealing with those culturally loaded words, Zhang adapts the strategy of localization which can help Chinese readers get more acquainted with the text, this strategy substantially has the reluctance of Chinese readers. Having said that, neglecting the disloyalty of Zhang's version is undoubtedly problematic. Under no circumstance can the readers who cling to appreciate the original text conduct an academic study depending on Zhang's translation. The exaggerated adaption to the original text has made Zhang's version's magnitude to academia peripheral. Luckily, Wu's rendering just offsets what Zhang's is bad at. Wu developed his version in a very prudent and precise way, but readers can seldom see the translator himself, Wu, from the passage. Wu has tried his best to maintain Hemingway's composing style by accurately capturing Hemingway's genuine intention. Hence, Wu's version is just for academic usage and for readers who long to know more about American literature and Hemingway's writing style. This could lead to a contrary consequence as well, however. Children or those people who are not so aware of exotic literature are not this version's aiming group. Reading Wu's version means they will have to confront the "iceberg" themselves, which can be too arduous for them, ultimately causing boredom and reluctance to American literature.

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