

Study of Wang Rongpei's Translation of Mulan Ballad from the Perspective of Translation Shifts Theory

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Abstract: The concept of "translation shifts" is based on linguistics and was first proposed by the famous linguist and translation theorist Catford in his *Linguistic Theory of Translation*. From the perspective of translation shifts theory, this paper analyzes the original text of Mulan Ballad and Wang Rongpei's translation version, and discusses the translation shifts in the original text of Mulan Ballad and Wang Rongpei's translation version, so as to provide reference for future poetry translation.

Keywords: Translation shifts theory, Mulan Ballad, Wang Rongpei's translation version, Poetry translation.

1. Preface

Catford is a famous English linguist and translation theorist. His book *A Linguistic Theories of Translation*, as the representative work of the linguistic school of English translation theory, has had a great impact on western translation theory. The book puts forward the concept of "shifts" and classifies "shifts" in detail. "shifts" are divided into level shifts and category shifts. (Catford: 1991, 85) When analyzing the translation shifts used in Wang Rongpei's translation of Mulan Ci, the author found that there are only structural shifts, category shifts and unit shifts in the translation of category shifts, so this paper only analyzes and studies three of these translation shifts. Catford's translation shifts theory is applicable to the sentence and the content below the sentence level, which is used to analyze the shifts between sentences, phrases and words. However, translation is not only limited to the sentence and below the sentence level, but also exists between texts, so there are still some limitations when using Catford's translation shifts theory.

2. Study of Translation Shifts Theory

In the 1950s and 1960s, western translation theories were greatly impacted by the Prague School, the London School, the American Structural School and the Communication Theory School, and the content of translation studies was greatly enriched. Catford is committed to the study of linguistics and applied linguistics, and has mastered a variety of languages, such as French, Russian and modern Greek. He also dabbles in Arabic, Indonesian, Latin, German and other languages, so he can skillfully use existing theories to analyze the translation process (Liao Qiyi: 2006,99). In 1965, his monograph *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* put forward the concept of "translation", which means to achieve equivalence in meaning between the source language and the target language without formal equivalence. There are two types of shifts: level shifts and category shifts. (Catford: 1991, 85)

2.1. Hierarchical shifts

When the original text is translated into a translation, the language level used by the original text and the language level used by the translation can be called level shifts. The four language levels are vocabulary, glyph, grammar and phoneme.

The translation and shifts of phonemes and glyphs, or between them and grammar or vocabulary, is impossible. Therefore, in the process of translation, the shifts between grammar and vocabulary is the only possible level shifts (Catford: 1991, 85). The singular and plural of English nouns can be distinguished by the form of words, while the singular and plural of Chinese words are difficult to be reflected by the form of words, and special words should be used to distinguish the singular and plural.

2.2. Category shifts

Category shifts refers to the change of the level when the source language is translated into the target language, but this is not the only change. In addition, there are changes in categories, words, structures, etc., which is a departure from the corresponding form of the original text. Category shifts can be divided into four types: structure shifts, unit shifts, internal system shifts and category shifts (Catford: 1991, 88).

2.2.1. Structure shifts

Structural shifts is the most common category shifts in the process of translation. The main performance of structural shifts is: the change of sentence elements contained in a sentence (Catford: 1991, 89). For example, the structure in the original text is: subject+predicate+complement, and the structure in the translation is changed to subject+predicate+complement+additional, and the structure in the translation is increased with additional elements than the original; The change of sentence word order in a sentence, such as the structure in the original text is subject+predicate, the translation becomes predicate+subject, or the attribute changes from the preposition in the original text to the postposition in the translation, and so on.

2.2.2. Category shifts

Category shifts refers to the shifts of the categories of two equivalent components in the source language and the target language in the process of translation (Catford: 1991, 91). In most cases, category translation is specifically manifested in the change of parts of speech of words in the target language and the source language, such as the shifts of a preposition-object phrase in the source language into a verb-object phrase in the target language, and the shifts of a noun in the source language into a verb in the target language.

2.2.3. Unit shifts

Unit shifts can also be called level shifts. Levels can be

divided into morphemes, words, groups, clauses and sentences. In the case that the target language and the source language cannot achieve equivalence by using the same level of content, the target language can choose a higher level or several levels to achieve equivalence that could not have been achieved (Catford: 1991, 92). The unit shifts makes it unnecessary for the source language and the target language to achieve strict correspondence at the two levels, and the word to word, clause to clause, or sentence to sentence of the source language and the target language need not be strictly corresponding. The words in the original text can be converted into clauses or sentences in the translation, and so can the clauses and sentences in the original text.

2.2.4. Internal system shifts

Internal system shifts refers to the structure that occurs within the system (such as number system, time/aspect system, reference system, etc.), and the existence form of the source language and the target language corresponds to the structure. When translating into the target language, a different term should be selected in the target language to correspond to it (Catford: 1991, 92). For example, the demonstrative word "the" in English can be converted into "这个" and "那个" in Chinese.

3. A Study of Translation shifts in Wang Rongpei's Translation of Mulan Ci

As one of the "two pieces of music" ("Mulan Ci" and "Peacock Flies Southeast"), "Mulan Ci" has been passed down from generation to generation with its unique cultural charm. Because of its rich ideological content, concise and beautiful language form and legendary story, it is deeply loved by the Chinese people, and has been translated into many languages, which is widely spread in the world. The theme of the poem is war, and the characters of Mulan's loyalty, filial piety, courage and perseverance are reflected in the lines. Wei Yuanfu, a poet of the Tang Dynasty, wrote the Mulan Song, which summarized the spirit of Mulan's loyalty and filial piety as "the world has the heart of a minister, and can be as good as the Mulan Festival. The loyalty and filial piety can never be destroyed." "Relatives hold wine to celebrate their parents, only to know that the birth of a daughter and a gay man" opened up a precedent for later generations to accept the Mulan Ci from the perspective of "gender equality".

Professor Wang Rongpei is a famous English educator in China. In 1991, he saw only the Chinese version of the Tao Te Ching at the Baiyun Guan Logistics General Office, but saw many foreigners come here to visit, so he conceived the idea of translating the Tao Te Ching. Since then, he has continuously translated the Book of Songs, the Complete Works of Tao Yuanming, Laozi, Zhuangzi and other classics. Wang Rongpei's translation of "Mulan Ci" was born in 1998 and included in the "Three Hundred Poems of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties" series of Chinese-English classics. Its translation takes into account the beauty of form and rhyme.

When comparing and analyzing the original Mulan Ci and Wang Rongpei's translation, the author found that from the perspective of translation shifts theory, Wang Rongpei's translation has structural shifts, category shifts and unit shifts, and there are no other two types of shifts. Therefore, this paper mainly elaborates the unit shifts, structure shifts and category shifts in Wang Rongpei's translation of Mulan Ci.

3.1. Structural shifts analysis

In the process of analyzing Wang Rongpei's translation of "Mulan Ci", the author found that most of the sentences in Wang Rongpei's translation have structural shifts. The main reason is that there are great differences in the structure of Chinese and English sentences. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve complete equivalence between the original text and the translation in the process of poetry translation. In addition, there are many sentence patterns in Chinese poetry, such as subjectless sentences, consecutive sentences, and concurrent sentences. Such sentence patterns do not exist in English, and they need to be converted when translating Chinese poetry. Through analysis, it can be found that there are four main reasons for the structural shifts of Wang Rongpei's translation of Mulan Ci:

3.1.1. The absence of the subject in the original Mulan Ci.

Example 1 昨夜见军帖，可汗大点兵。

Translation: I saw the new recruiting lists last night; The Khan is summoning the men to fight.

Example 2 愿为市鞍马，从此替爷征。

Translation: I'll go and buy a stalwart horse and pad So as to go to battle for my dad.

Example 3 归来见天子，天子坐明堂。

Translation: Mulan receives an audience from the Khan, Who makes a huge grant to the valiant 'man.'

Example 4 同行十二年，不知木兰是女郎。

Translation: We fought for twelve years in the same brigade, But never knew that Mulan was a maid!

Example 5 策勋十二转，赏赐百千强。

Translation: Mulan is praised and offered the highest post, And given piles of treasures she can boast.

The above five sample sentences are all subjectless sentences, which are relatively common in Chinese, and the subject is essential in English. When translating into English, you need to supplement the subject according to the actual situation or translate it into a passive sentence to omit the subject. The subject of the translation of Example 1 is added according to the previous sentence "女亦无所思，女亦无所忆". In the previous translation, "女" is translated into "I". Example 1 extends the subject of the previous translation and adds the subject "I". The subject of the translation of Example 2 is added according to the previous sentence, "阿爷无大儿，木兰无长兄" which translates "木兰" into "I", and the translation of Example 2 continues to use "I" as the subject. Example 3 The subject of the translation is added according to the sentence meaning. There is no mention of "木兰" in the preceding and following paragraphs, but it is inferred from the sentence meaning that Mulan "归来见天子". Example 4 The subject of the translation is also added according to the sentence meaning. It is Mulan's comrade in arms who has been with Mulan for 12 years. Example 5 The subject of the translation was originally "天子". The translator treated the sentence as a passive sentence and added the subject "Mulan" to play the role of emphasis. This kind of shifts involves the shifts between the subjectless sentence in Chinese and the subject-oriented sentence in English, as well as the shifts between the active sentence in Chinese and the passive sentence in English. It is a common shifts in structure shifts.

3.1.2. There are many consecutive sentences in the original *Mulan Ci*.

Example 6 旦辞黄河去

Translation She leaves the Yellow River by daylight

Example 7 归来见天子

Translation Mulan receives an audience from the Khan

Example 8 从此替爷征

Translation So as to go to battle for my dad

Example 9 出郭相扶将

Translation Her parents leave the courtyard arm in arm

Example 10 磨刀霍霍向猪羊。

Translation Her younger brother butchers pigs on the farm

The characteristic of Chinese continuous verb sentence is that it uses multiple verbs in the sentence and these verbs connect with the same subject (Li Linding, 1986: 118), while in English, a sentence cannot have two predicates at the same time. Therefore, when translating *Mulan Ci* into English, a verb in the Chinese consecutive verb sentence will be converted, and it will be omitted or converted into other structures. Examples 6 and 7 are both consecutive sentences in Chinese, and only one of the two verbs is translated in translation. Example 6 omits "去" and only translates "辞"; Example 7 omits "归来" and only translates "见".

Examples 8, 9 and 10 are all translated by treating one of the two verbs in a continuous verb sentence as another structure. Example 8 In the translation, the verb phrase "替爷" is converted into the prepositional phrase "for my dad"; Example 9 Convert the verb phrase "相扶" into the adverbial "arm in arm". Example 10 converts the two verb phrases "磨刀" and "向猪羊" into a verb phrase "butchers pigs on the farm". This kind of processing is relatively flexible. You can treat a verb in a continuous verb sentence as a prepositional phrase, adverbial or verb phrase.

3.1.3. There are many concurrent sentences in the original *Mulan Ci*.

Example 11 唯闻女叹息

Translation You only hear the maiden sigh and moan

Example 12 问女何所思? 问女何所忆?

Translation Good lass, what thought has occupied your mind? Good lass, what thought can you not leave behind?

Example 13 不知木兰是女郎

Translation But never knew that Mulan was a maid

Example 14 爷娘闻女来

Translation On hearing that Mulan will soon be home

Li Linding summed up three characteristics of concurrent sentence: noun is the object of verb 1; Verb 2 is a predicate element; In terms of semantic relations, nouns are the agents of verb 2. (Li Linding, 1986: 163) Generally speaking, Chinese concurrent sentence is a sentence composed of a verb-object phrase and subject-predicate phrase, which is called concurrent sentence. And the subject of the subject-predicate phrase in the sentence is structurally the object of the previous verb-object phrase. In Wang Rongpei's translation of *Mulan Ci*, there are two main ways for the translator to deal with the concurrent sentences in the original text: one is to convert the subject-predicate phrase into an object complement, and the other is to convert the subject-predicate phrase into an object clause. Example 11 converts the subject-predicate phrase "女叹息" of the concurrent sentence to "sigh and moan" in "heart the maiden high and Moan". In Example 13, the subject-predicate phrase "木兰是女郎" is converted into the object clause "that Mulan was a

maid" in "But never knew that Mulan was a maid". Example 14 The translation treats the subject-predicate phrase in the concurrent sentence as the object clause "On hearing that Mulan will soon be home".

3.1.4. There are also inverted sentences in the original *Mulan Ci*.

Example 15 万里赴戎机，关山度若飞。

Translation She goes for miles and miles to join the war, And crosses hills and valleys with the crops.

When there is inversion in the original text, the inversion will be changed in the translation. In Example 12, "何所思" and "何所忆" are inverted, and the normal word order is "所思何" and "所忆何". In Example 15, "万里" is the attribute prefix, "for miles and miles" is processed in the translation, "关山" is the object prefix, and the object is placed after the predicate "度" in the translation.

The above four reasons are the main reasons for the structural shifts in the original and translation of *Mulan Ci*, and the author classifies and analyzes these shifts in detail. It can be seen from this that structural shifts is the most common and common translation shifts in Chinese-English translation. The unique sentence pattern in Chinese cannot be found when translated into English, so it can only be realized by changing the sentence pattern. There are many ways to change, such as adding a subject or changing it into a passive sentence in a subjectless sentence, omitting one of the verbs in a continuous verb sentence or treating it as another structure, and treating the subject-predicate phrase in a concurrent sentence as an object complement or an object clause.

There are many sentence patterns in poetry, such as sentences without subject, consecutive sentences, concurrent sentences, inverted sentences, etc. Through comparative analysis of the original *Mulan Ci* and Wang Rongpei's translation, we can draw the following patterns of translation of such sentence patterns in poetry:

(1) Subjectless sentences in poetry can add subjects through context. The subject found by sentence meaning in Chinese can also be converted into active and passive sentences according to the content to be emphasized by the translator.

(2) In a poem, a continuous verb sentence can retain one of the verbs and omit or convert the remaining verbs into other structures (such as prepositional phrases, verb phrases, adverbial structures, etc.).

(3) Concurrent sentences in poetry can transform subject-predicate phrases into object complements or object clauses in English.

(4) Inverted sentences in poetry can be adjusted to the normal word order, and then translated according to the adjusted original text.

3.2. Category shifts analysis

Category shifts refers to the shifts of two equivalent components in the source text and the target text. In the process of analyzing the original text and the translation of "*Mulan Ci*", the author found that there would be equivalent shifts between the words and phrases in the original text and the translation, and the two equivalent components would change in the part of speech.

Example 16 女亦无所思，女亦无所忆。

Translation I've nothing that has occupied my mind; I've nothing that I cannot leave behind.

Example 17 暮宿黄河边

Translation And stays by the Yellow River for the night

Example 18 送儿还故乡

Translation To send me home to start my life anew

Example 19 木兰无长兄

Translation I have no elder brother to carry the gun

Example 20 木兰不用尚书郎

Translation High posts at court are not what I pursue

In example 16, the adverb "无" in the original text is converted into the noun "nothing", and the noun "女" in the original text is converted into the pronoun "I". In example 17, the noun phrase "黄河边" in the original text is converted into the prepositional phrase "by the Yellow River" in the translation. In example 18, the noun "儿" in the original text is converted into the personal pronoun "me" in the translation. In the category transformation of words, it is mainly to transform the address of people in the original text into personal pronouns. In example 19 and 20, "木兰" in the original text is a noun, which is converted into the pronoun "I" in the translation. This is mainly because in order to avoid repetition in English, pronouns are often used to replace words that have already appeared, while repetition of words in Chinese is very common.

Example 21 东市买骏马，西市买鞍鞞。

Translation She buys a strong steed in the eastern market; She buys a saddle in the western market.

Example 22 出郭相扶将

Translation Her parents leave the courtyard arm in arm

Example 23 开我东阁门，坐我西阁床。

Translation She opens doors of chambers east and west And sits upon her bed to take a rest.

There are still many changes in the parts of speech of phrases in the original *Mulan Ci* and Wang Rongpei's translation. In example 21, "东市" and "西市" in the original text are noun phrases, which are converted into prepositional phrases "in the eastern market" and "in the western market" in the translation. In example 22, the verb phrase "相扶" in the original text is converted into the noun phrase "arm in arm" in the translation. In example 23, "东阁" and "西阁" in the original text take too long to be translated into English as a prepositional attribute, so they are translated as "of chambers east and west" in the translation. Through the analysis of the above types of phrase shifts, the main reason is that according to the element of the phrase in the original text, the element is appropriately converted during translation to make it more consistent with the language habits of the target language.

In Catford's *Linguistic Theory of Translation*, it is mentioned that category shifts is the shifts of two equivalent components in the process of translation. Some theorists have proposed that category shifts is mainly the shifts of part of speech of words, but when analyzing category shifts in *Mulan Ci*, the author considers that the equivalent components of the original text and the translation may also be at the level of phrases, so the shifts of part of speech between phrases is also classified as category shifts.

3.3. Unit shifts analysis

There are many unit shifts in Wang Rongpei's translation of *Mulan Ci*. In Wang Rongpei's translation of *Mulan Ci*, words in the original text are converted into phrases and clauses in the translation.

Example 24 女亦无所思，女亦无所忆。

Translation I've nothing that has occupied my mind; I've

nothing that I cannot leave behind.

Example 25 朝辞爷娘去，暮宿黄河边。

Translation She leaves her dearest parents by daylight, And stays by the Yellow River for the night.

Example 26 寒光照铁衣

Translation The chilly moon shines on their coats of mail

Example 27 火伴皆惊惶

Translation They stare at her in great surprise and say

In Example 24, the verbs "思" and "忆" in the original text are translated into the object clauses "that has occurred my mind" and "that I cannot leave behind". Example 25 Convert the noun "朝" in the first half of the original sentence into the prepositional phrase "by daylight", and the noun "暮" in the second half of the original sentence into the prepositional phrase "for the night". Example 7 converts the verb "见" in the first half of the original sentence into the verb phrase "receive an audience".

In addition, there are also situations where phrases in the original text are converted into compound phrases or sentences in the translation. Example 26: Translate the corrected phrase "铁衣" in the original text into the noun and prepositional phrase "coats of mail". Example 27 converts the verb phrase "惊惶" in the original text into the verb phrase and prepositional phrase "start at her in great surprise" in the translation.

Through the analysis of some examples of unit conversion in *Mulan Ci*, we can find that the main reason for unit conversion is that the meaning of a single word or phrase in Chinese is relatively rich, while it is difficult to find a corresponding word or phrase in English, so it often requires a higher level of unit to correspond. In Example 12, the verb-object phrase structure "何所思" and "何所忆" in the original text are translated into the sentences "what thought has occurred your mind?" and "what thought can you not leave behind?" respectively. In example 8, the verb "征" in the original text means "出征", which is converted into the verb phrase "go to battle" in the translation. A short word or phrase in Chinese often needs a phrase or sentence to correspond to it when translated into English.

4. Conclusion

Through a detailed analysis of the original *Mulan Ci* and Wang Rongpei's translation, the author finds that structural transformation is the most common translation transformation, followed by category transformation and unit transformation. In the analysis of category conversion and unit conversion, the author found that the equivalent components in the original text and the translation are phrases with different parts of speech, which are classified as category conversion. Because the author believes that the conversion between parts of speech of phrases is also attributed to category conversion. However, different theorists have proposed that only the conversion of part of speech of a word is classified as category conversion, while the conversion of a phrase is classified as unit conversion (Wen Jun, Li Yingying, 2013). Therefore, the question whether the conversion of a phrase belongs to category conversion remains to be further clarified.

In addition, when analyzing the translation conversion between the original *Mulan Ci* and Wang Rongpei's translation, the author only uses the translation conversion theory to analyze some transformations below the sentence

level, without involving some cohesion between sentences. The author finds that when the original sentence lacks the subject, sometimes the subject actually exists in the previous sentence, and it is far from enough to analyze a single sentence. For example, the subject of "昨夜见军帖" in the translation of "I saw the new recalling lists last night" is added according to the previous sentence "女亦无所思, 女亦无所忆". The subject of "I'll go and buy a steed horse and pad So as to go to battle for my dad." is added according to the previous sentence "木兰无长兄". Therefore, the use of translation transformation theory can also be supplemented by Halliday and Hassan's text transformation theory (Lin Yinyin, 2010).

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