

Strategies on Image Translation of Bamboo in Chinese Poetry

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Abstract: The abstract is to be in fully Chinese poetry is the precious cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, condensing the essence of traditional Chinese culture. From Tang poetry, Song Ci to Yuan Qu, the charm of Chinese poetry has conquered generations of readers. Chinese poetry works like a bridge of communication, allowing a dialogue between Eastern and Western cultures. Image is an important part of poetry, carrying a heavy cultural tradition, which is the sediment of the long history and splendid culture of the Chinese nation. From the perspective of Cultural Translation Theory, this paper selects representative Chinese poems about "bamboo" to study and explore effective translation strategies. The aim of the research in the paper is to made readers appreciate the beauty of the image of "bamboo" in Chinese ancient poetry and promote the international communication of Chinese poetry as well.

Keywords: Cultural Translation Theory; Chinese Poetry; Bamboo Image; Image Translation; Translation Strategies

1. Introduction

Chinese poetry is the precious cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, which embodies the quintessence of Chinese traditional culture. It is difficult for foreign readers to truly understand the cultural connotation of Chinese poetry. Image expression is the main connotation of Chinese poetry, which plays an important role in the theme expression and artistic conception construction of Chinese poetry. Since ancient times, "Bamboo" has been favored by scholars because of its integrity and tenacity. It is often used to show the poet's image of a modest and upright gentleman or hide the poet cannot serve the country and the feelings of grief and

indignation. The bamboo image also expresses the poet's pursuit of a free and unrestrained life of seclusion and leisurely living without regard for fame and fortune. There are many poems depicting bamboo in Chinese poetry, which has rich image and can bring people a variety of aesthetic feelings and experiences. This paper intends to apply Cultural Translation Theory to the translation practice of bamboo image in Chinese poetry to promote translators' theoretical understanding and translation ability. It will promote the enrichment and development of the theoretical connotation of cultural translation concepts and provide rich reference for translators in related fields, so as to contribute to the extensive and profound Chinese poetry culture in the international cultural communication.

2. Related Research on Image Translation of Chinese Poetry

At present, there are many relative studies on cultural translation theory. Many scholars have conducted in-depth research on cultural translation theory. Many scholars hold the view that in the process of current cultural globalization, translators should study the "jade" culture in classical Chinese poetry from the perspective of cultural translation, and accurately interpret the "jade" image in poems. The English translation of "jade" image should apply the translation strategies like foreignization. In another case, people found it difficult for translators to translate "flower" image into English. They analyzed "flower" image and its implied meaning in Chinese classical poetry. Yang (2021) chose some translated poems with images of "birds" to analyze and appreciate the beauty of birds' poetic image from the perspective of Cultural Translation Theory. According to the previous study in related field, we may find there have been much research on poetry translation, but few made research on how to deal with

cultural differences from the perspective of Cultural Translation Theory. Zhang and Chen (2022) studied the cultural communication of poetry from the perspective of Cultural Translation Theory, focusing on cultural exchange in the English translation of poetry, which not only improves the quality of translation but also the acceptance of readers, provided a new reference for poetry research and translation.

Scholars made various research on image translation of Chinese poetry. Li and He (2006) made an in-depth study on the phenomenon of cultural loss in the process of transmitting cultural images in literary translation. They believed that because of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, people have different understandings of the same cultural image. This results in the absence of cultural image in terms of message or communicative intent., Tan and Chen (2008) analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of four common translation strategies of cultural image in English translations of classical Chinese poetry. They argued that cultural differences are not only reflected in language, but also in people's thinking and aesthetic perceptions. The translation strategies of cultural image are far from fixed and rigid but are in constant change and contextual contingency. Yao (2010) analyzed the connotation of bamboo image in his poetry and explored the similarities between bamboo and the poet's personality and spirit, which broadened the path for the development of Song poetry. Ma and Li (2016) studied the bamboo image and its poetic significance in the poetry of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, which was helpful for people to understand the complex relationship between literary development and political, philosophical, religious, economic and other factors. Zhang and Gao (2020) proposed that foreignizing translation strategy was the best choice to ensure that the images can conform to the original text, and the need of rebuilding Chinese cultural context for foreigners requires translators to adopt foreignizing translation strategy.

3. Image Connotation of Bamboo in Chinese Poetry

In Chinese, "Yi" refers to the inner abstract mind of human, "Xiang" refers to the outer

concrete image of the nature or world. "Yi" comes from the heart and is expressed by the "Xiang". The objective image and subjective emotion fused into something with a certain meaning and mood. Image in Chinese as "Yi xiang" is a means, an intermediary, and a carrier of symbols. Image is the essence of Chinese poetry, as the crystallization of Chinese history and culture, and has a rich cultural connotation. Ye [1] ever said: "Poetry is image, and translating poetry is translating image. No translation can sacrifice the original image". In classical Chinese poetry, image has a special literary aesthetic meaning and reflects the unique poetic quality of the Chinese language. Zhang and Gao [2] mentioned in their study: "Image has become a psychological symbol or cultural phenomenon of the Chinese people, and an important way for cross-cultural readers to interpret traditional Chinese narrative styles and aesthetic tendencies".

The image of bamboo is a classic image in ancient Chinese literature. Throughout Chinese history, bamboo image has been loved by many Chinese literati. Liu [3] points out that "bamboo image is one of the important media for later generations to appreciate and interpret ancient Chinese literary works". In many ancient literary works, you can find the different connotations of the bamboo image, which are used to show the noble characters of the gentleman or to describe the poet's preference of values. Wang [4] thinks: "Bamboo in the poet is no longer just an objective natural object —bamboo but exists in a conscious state —the humanized bamboo". In Chinese culture, bamboo itself has the natural attributes of being upright, evergreen, knotty, and hollow, which always coincides with the image of a gentleman who is upright, modest, temperate, and tough. So, bamboo is often compared to the incarnation of a gentleman. In addition, ancient writers would also express their sadness or anger through bamboo image. For example, in Du Fu's *The Broken Boat*, the whole poem expresses the poet' grief and anger after witnessing the national turmoil through the bamboo image. Through the image of loneliness, the poet expresses his feelings in the face of the displacement of the people, as well as his grief and anger for the turbulent Tang Dynasty which is about to collapse. The fusion of

bamboo, which matches well with human feelings enriches the connotation of bamboo image. As Ma and Li [5] found that "Bamboo became an increasingly rich literary imagery with connotations, which was the result of the continuous development of the philosophical thoughts and literary concepts of the times, and even closely related to the changes in the poet's living environment".

In Chinese history, many poets liked to live in seclusion, especially during the war period. Due to the setbacks in the career, some literati would choose to live in the mountains. They often gather in the bamboo forest, drink wine and write poems, which is very relaxing. It expresses the sentiment of being indifferent to fame and fortune, transcending the world, and manifests their desires to pursue the freedom of the inner world, which are realized through the bamboo image. Poets have endowed bamboo with a serene, ethereal, reclusive style. For example, the "bamboo" in Wang Wei's Bamboo Grove Retreat, the sentence which describes the deep and quiet forest in moonlight shows the image of people who tend to far away from the hustle and bustle of the real world. With the moonlight in the bamboo forest as the background, the poet expresses his detached state of mind. The poem expresses the poet's elegant, unconventional and dashing through the bamboo image. In Buddhism, bamboo has a very high status. Gao [6] mentioned that "during the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism flourished, and the rulers supported the construction of temples, so Buddhist temples, Buddhist monasteries, and meditation grounds were heavily involved in the creation of poetry and songs". In ancient literature, people believe that bamboo is related to Buddha because of its elegant and straight external image. Some ancient literature has entitled "bamboo" the image of Dhyana's thoughts. The bamboo is also endowed with Dhyana's thoughts. Bamboo's elegance can give people a sense of calmness and help them to understand life in a peaceful way. For example, Bai Juyi, a poet of Tang Dynasty who believed in Buddhism in his later years, viewed "bamboo" as his teacher in his poems. Zhang [7] said: "Bamboo, as a plant, encompasses a large number of natural properties, and is also the accumulation of the history of human creation and artistic aesthetics". China is a major country of

bamboo cultivation and production country. Bamboo has brought far-reaching influence on people's production and life and formed a long and profound history of bamboo culture. Since the 1990s, the research on bamboo culture has developed very rapidly in China. People have made comprehensive descriptions and studies of bamboo from different perspectives, covering many fields such as history, literature, linguistics, religions, paintings, and folklores. There are many experts who made research significant in the field of bamboo culture. Tarigan et al. [8] stated "In many cultures, especially in the regions where various species of bamboos grow well, bamboo is frequently used as a parable in their proverbs, one of which is in Karonese culture".

4. Application of Cultural Translation Theory in Chinese Poetry Translation

Chinese poetry is valuable cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, but it is difficult for foreign scholars to correctly understand the cultural connotation of Chinese poetry, because of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. Li and He [9] pointed out that "different ethnic groups give different cultural connotations to the same cultural image". When translating, the translator often follows the customs of his own country. In this way, the communicative intent of the original author can be effectively conveyed, and a cultural deficit can be avoided. According to the Cultural Translation Theory, the translator is required to preserve the cultural connotation of the source language images while taking into account the cultural contexts of different nationalities and the receptivity of readers. It enables Western readers to understand the connotation of each line of poetry, so as to promote the exchange of Chinese and foreign cultures.

For example, in the untitled poem written by the famous ancient Chinese poet Li Shangyin, which portrayed the doom of silkworm and the tears of burning candles, this poem can be translated as "Till last day a silkworm spins, love at heart, a red candle burns up with no tear to shed." by Cao Shunfa. From the perspective of rhetorical means used in the translation of the poem, there is a metaphor in this poem, which shows the love between a man and a woman that lasts until death. As we all know, in Western culture, the candle is a

symbol of sanctity, and Westerners often use white candles to express their respect to the Gods. While Chinese people prefer red candles, because red candle is a symbol of festival in China, which is related to sweetness and warmth. Red candle represents vitality and hope, and it is a symbolic color of wealth and auspiciousness, which is generally used on such festival or occasions as marriage. So, the translation of the candle as "red candle" shows the Chinese characteristics and retains the characteristics of Chinese culture.

Yang [10] hold the opinion that "translators must integrate the historical background and cultural connotations of the language into the translation process". Under the guidance of Cultural Translation Theory, translators should adopt various forms when translating. When dealing with cultural factors like these, translators should adopt foreignization strategies as much as possible, in order to achieve the reproduction of the culture of source language to culture of target language and convey the cultural information equally.

5. Translating Strategies about the Image of Bamboo in Chinese Poetry

There are often a series of problems in the translation of bamboo images in poetry, such as inaccurate translation, deviation of meaning, and so on. Therefore, in order to make the translation of bamboo image better and easier, translators should adopt the following translation strategies to promote the creation between its language image and meaning.

5.1 Foreignization

Foreignization translation method was proposed by the famous German philosopher Schleiermacher in 1813. It is a translation strategy that the author shouldn't be disturbed and should be closer by the readers. It refers to the comprehensive use of language forms, cultural traditions and customs of the source language in the translation process. Foreignization translation method intentionally breaks the tradition, highlights the exotic mood of the source language, and retains the language characteristics of the original language, so as to enhance the foreign cultural characteristics of the primitive and improve the reader's understanding. Foreignization advocates that translators should consider and care for the culture of the source language and

the expressing habits of the author. Foreignization is a translation strategy that allows the target reader to perceive the heterogeneity of the target culture, which is a form of resisting ethnocentrism and racism, cultural self-worship and imperialism in order to create democratic geopolitical relations. So such translation deviates from the nationalist center of the target language and challenges its inherent cultural values, in order to help the target reader obtain a very different reading experience.

In the process of poetry translation, the translator should try to reflect the poetic world created by the poet. For example, in the poem *The Zen Garden Behind the Broken Mountain Temple*, the original sentence can be translated into "The bamboo path was leading to a place of seclusion, a Buddhist retreat was in the recesses of flowers and trees". Because this poem emphasizes the expression of a quiet atmosphere, the two Chinese characters "Zhu jing" are translated as "the bamboo path". The translator uses "the bamboo" to modify "the path", highlight the scene of bamboo forests on both sides of the path and depict a unique, deep and silent scene, which is in good accordance with the semantics of the original poem. The image of bamboo can show the quiet environment, and also expresses the poet's love for natural scenery, his transcendence and his seclusion from the world. The quiet and dense bamboo forest demonstrates the poet's elegant and comfortable self-image in a harmonious way, expressing the poet's peaceful state of mind.

5.2 Domestication

Domestication means that translators should take readers as the center in the process of translation. From the cultural standpoint of readers, translation should be carried out in accordance with the language habits and cultural traditions of the target language. It's important to make the reader familiar with the way of thinking, language habits and expression methods, and correctly convey the content of the original text. The domestication method means that the readers shouldn't be disturbed and should be closer by the author. It aims to convey to readers the basic spiritual and semantic content of the original works, without emphasizing the linguistic form or individual details, and paying more attention to

readers' understanding. Domestication can reduce national emotions and cultural features of the original text, eliminate cultural barriers in translation and avoid cultural conflicts. It can improve the fluency and integrity of the overall translation, and help reduce readers' unfamiliarity with the translation, so as to promote the target language readers to understand the translated text and promote the effects communication between the author and readers.

As we all know, Chinese poems display many material images with the characteristics of the times, which create a unique atmosphere for the readers and help to enhance their cultural experience. Due the profound and rich imagination, Chinese people tend to think over the proper choice of translation strategies. For example, in *Calming the Waves* by Su Shi of the Song Dynasty, the original sentence used to describe the walking man with a bamboo stick in rainy days was translated into "Better than saddled horse, I like sandals and cane. Oh, I would fain, in a straw cloak, spend my life in mist and rain". The poet was living in poverty and was at a low social status at that time in his life, but he faced these difficulties positively and optimistically. This poem was written in the third year after he was banished to Huangzhou. The image here includes "cane", "sandals", "straw-cloaked", which gives us the information about author's dressing. The poet wore a bamboo cane and straw sandals, indicating his poverty at that time. The poet wrote about his feelings and experience of encountering rain on the road in a humorous way, expressing his optimistic attitude towards life and face setbacks positively. When translating this sentence, we find that image of "stick" has no corresponding words in Western culture, so the translator adopted the strategy of domestication when translating "stick" as "cane". This translation is more conducive to the reader's understanding and expresses the author's stubborn character and open-mindedness despite the setbacks he suffered.

According to the Cultural Translation Theory, translator must take into account the cultural factors behind the language in the process of translating. For the above two examples, the translator mainly adopts the domestication strategy, which reflects the concept of Cultural Translation Theory. In this way, translating is more acceptable to the readers of the translated

language which can reduce the barriers of cultural exchanges and attract more popularity.

5.3 Explication

Explicit translation is to transform and interpret the deep connotation of the image through certain words of the target language, so that readers can clearly understand the meaning and connotation of the image. Essentially, it is to express the implicit information or unclear information in the source language clearly during translation, which is conducive to readers' understanding. Explication can make the target language more fully express the information of the source language and make the target language readers clearly understand the content to be conveyed by the original language text. In this way, the rational use of explicit translation can help the translator express the meaning of the original text flexibly and realize the purpose of promoting cultural understanding and cultural exchange.

For example, in Li Bai's *Ballad of a Merchant's Wife*, the original sentence in the poem told the story of childhood love story. The translation of the famous sentence in the poem — "On a hobbyhorse you came on the scene, Around the well we played with mimes still green". Hobbyhorse is a kind of children's toy when Chinese children play, with a long pole as the main body. Its end is made of bamboo, like the model of the horse's head. When children play with bamboo poles between their legs, it is like riding a horse, rather than the toy or rocking chair we are familiar with today. The two Chinese characters "Zhu ma" are translated directly into "hobbyhorse", so that foreigners can immediately understand it, which recalls their intimate and innocent memory of their early childhood. In Zheng Banqiao's *Bamboo in the Rock*, the translator translated the well-known sentence which pictured the standing pine trees on Rocky Mountains as "Upright stands the bamboo amid green mountains, it's toothlike root in broken rock is planted deep". It's clear that we don't find any description of "bamboo" in the poem, but bamboo is the implied message. If Western readers are not familiar with the poem, they will become confused as to what is being written. So, effective translation with proper translation strategies tend to clearly express the image of bamboo,

which helps the Western readers to understand the connotation of the poem. In addition, the poet praises the vitality of bamboo and shows the noble character of the poet himself, which is upright, strong and does not bow to any vicious power.

6. Conclusions

Based on the fact that there is almost no current research exploring bamboo image under Cultural Translation Theory, this paper provides a new research perspective for the study of bamboo image. China is a major country of bamboo cultivation and production. In China bamboo has brought far-reaching social influence and formed a long and profound bamboo culture. Bamboo image has been given a rich cultural connotation. Bamboo culture not only influences the literary field but also permeates all aspects of life, like economy, politics, military and religion, etc. Bamboo culture is closely related to the development of the Chinese civilization. Due to today's cultural globalization, it is very important to promote the international dissemination of bamboo culture. To make Western readers understand the connotation and cultural essence of bamboo image, translators should have a profound understanding of the historical and cultural background of the poet, and the cultural background of the target readers of the translation. When translating poetry image, translators should practice using different strategies flexibly according to the real situations. In a word, the translation of cultural images is a challenging task. The translation strategies should be combined with the actual situation and cultural background, which is more conducive to the communication between Chinese and Western cultures.

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