



A Comparative Study of Translation in Japanese-Chinese Translation of *Snow Country* from the Perspective of Literary Translation Strategies

Take the First Chapter of Ye Weiqu's and Gao Huiqin's Chinese Versions as an Example

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Abstract. *Snow Country*, a masterpiece of the Japanese author Yasunari Kawabata, portrays the snow country as a beautiful, unreal world. This novel has been widely spread in East Asia and translated into several versions in China. Among them, the versions translated by Ye Weiqu and Gao Huiqin are famous in China. Professor Gao's translation was released in 1985, while Professor Ye's was in 2013. The time gap and their unique style of writing have led to differences in literary translation strategies and diction. This paper makes a study of Ye's and Gao's translations of *Snow Country* and takes the first chapter as an example to explore the similarities and differences in the translation strategies of the two Japanese-Chinese translations and the translation effects.

Keywords: Japanese-Chinese Translation · Translation Strategies · Comparative Study · Snow Country

1 Introduction

As one of Yasunari Kawabata's representative works, *Snow Country*, Chen Yiting [4] has commented on this novel that 'sorrow' and 'beauty' blend in this unreal country, making the work has a strong appeal and readability. "It is also because of the unique aesthetics and exquisite style of this novel that different translators have interpreted and translated its beautiful language in different [1] ways. Exploring the Japanese-Chinese translations from different translators will not only help people to understand the translation strategies of the literary work and feel the differences between Chinese and Japanese but also study how the textual information is transformed and extracted during the translation process [2].

The author selects the translations works of the most prestigious translators in China—Ye Weiqu and Gao Huiqin—as the research object and uses the first chapter of *Snow Country* as the primary research subject to explore the similarities and differences in their [3] writing styles, translation strategies, and dictions, in order to get a better understanding of the original and translation works in Chinese and Japanese.

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2 Translation Style

- 窓ガラス越しに見る
風景は遠くの方までもものの形が消えてはいなかった。(Individual shapes were clear far into the distance, but the monotonous mountain landscape, un-distinguished for mile after mile, seemed all the more undistinguished for having lost its last traces of color.¹)
- Ye: 透过车窗玻璃看见的景物轮廓, 退到远方, 却没有消逝, 但已经黯然失色。(The outline of the scenery seen through the window glass has receded into the distance, it was not disappeared but eclipsed.)
- Gao: 隔窗眺望, 远处的景物依旧轮廓分明, 只是色调已经消失殆尽。(Looking through the window, the scenery in the distance is still clearly defined, but the color has disappeared.)

This is a sentence from the translations of Ye Wei-qu and Gao Hui-qin. For example, in the sentence “窓ガラス越しに見る風景,” Ye chooses to translate the sentence directly and tries to get close to the original Japanese text. In contrast, Gao decides to translate the sentence with a certain amount of reduction and makes a rhetoric embellishment, accords with Kawabata’s characteristics. Ye chooses “literal translation,” which is concise and simple; while Gao’s style is “gorgeous translation,” beautiful and poetic; After reading the whole text, Ye’s translation work is closer to the snow country, which is an entirely imaginary world. According to Zhang Hua [5], “The narrative seems simple, but it has profound implications, which will last for a long time.” Ye’s translation style creates infinite imagination space for the readers. If we say that Ye lets the readers appreciate the text themselves, while Gao tries to reveal the beauty of the snow country and its characters as much as possible, using more figurative words to create the snow country. These two styles are different but have their strong points.

3 Translation Strategies

Japanese and Chinese are quite different in grammar and structure. When translating the Japanese text, it is essential for the translator to think about the adjustment of the word order and whether each word needs to be translated, and so on.

3.1 Addition Translation

- 冷たく遠い光であった。(It was a distant, cold light)
- Ye: 这是一束从远方投来的寒光。(It is a beam of cold light cast from afar.)
- Gao: 那是远远的一点寒光。(It was a little cold light in the distance.)

Gao Ning [6] believes that “the addition part in the translation is an implied or omitted composition of the original text, or a ‘fairy’ in the context.” With more exquisite writing, Gao translates the text as it was originally conveyed. But Ye adds the word “cast” to the original sentence. Without changing the general meaning of the text, Ye makes it

¹ Japanese-English translation by Edward G. Seidensticker, similarly hereinafter.

easy to understand and perfect. Only one word creates two different scenes between the two translations. The word “from” has a sense of direction; The scene described in the sentence is on a moving train, and Ye uses the word “cast” the scene becomes like a train is getting closer to the light, and the light casts at the direction of the character. In Gao’s translation, the light is far away from the speeding train, but the novel’s character can watch it pass by. Although this is only a small addition, it has different aesthetic feelings.

3.2 Division

For grammatical reasons, one Japanese sentence may contain several subordinate clauses, and if keep the text intact, the sentences will become tediously long. It is also easier to clear the logic by separating the sentence.

- そのような、やがて雪に埋もれる鉄道信号所に、葉子という娘の弟がこの冬から勤めているのだと分かったと、島村は一層彼女に興味を強めた(Yoko’s brother would be working at this signal stop, so soon to be buried under the snow- -some-how that fact made the girl more interesting to Shimamura.)
- Ye: 这个叶子姑娘的弟弟, 从今冬起就在这个将要被大雪覆盖的铁路信号所工作。岛村知道这一情况以后, 对她越发感兴趣了。(The brother of the girl Yoko has been working at the railway signal station that will be covered by heavy snow since this winter. After Shimamura knew about her situation, he became more and more interested in her.)
- Gao: 岛村听说这名姑娘叫叶子, 她弟弟打冬天起, 便在这行将被大雪掩埋的信号所干活后, 对她就越发感兴趣了。(Shimamura heard that this girl was called Yoko, and her brother had been working on the signal that was about to be buried by heavy snow this winter; he became increasingly interested in her.)

Based on the analysis, Ye translates the long sentence respectively, while Gao translates the sentences together by using the syntax “Somebody heard that……”. The original sentence is a very typical Japanese long sentence, “だと分かった”. In the Chinese word order, Ye’s translation reads smoother, even though Gao’s translation brings the clauses together, but the clauses “This girl was called……”, “her brother……” divides the sentence into two characters, one sentence contains two subjects, and the content of “heard that” is too long, which result in the reader being confused in the process of reading and makes this sentence unclear. Therefore the technique of division can help the reader clarify their logic better.

3.3 Translation Variation

Translation variation, to sum up in a word, means changing the package without changing the content, using a more original and unique form to interpret the meaning of the text.

- 顔の裏を流れてやまぬ夕景色が顔の表を通るかのように錯覚されて、見極める時がつかめないのだった。(Shimamura had the illusion that the evening landscape was actually passing over the face, and the flow did not stop to let him be sure it was not..)

- Ye:因为从姑娘面影后面不停地掠过的暮景,仿佛是从她脸的前面流过。定睛细看,却又扑朔迷离。(.....Because the twilight that passed ceaselessly behind the girl seemed to flow in front of her face. Even look fixedly, only to find it's complicated and confusing.)
- Gao:在她脸背后疾逝的垂暮景色,仿佛是从前面飞掠过去,快得令人无从辨认。(...The twilight passing behind her face seemed to fly across her, so quickly that it was impossible to recognize.)

“流れてやまぬ” means “flow ceaselessly.” Here, the two translators do not translate the word “flow” directly; instead, they use other words to convey the same meaning. Ye translates it as “passed ceaselessly” compared with “flow ceaselessly,” “passed ceaselessly” has a sense of feeling that the reflection and flowing mirror are interlacing but flashing across. Gao translates it as “fly across,” which is more condensed and concise; the aesthetic feeling of the article is instantly raised, “passed ceaselessly” and “fly across” reflect a picture of the speeding train and transient variation of the twilight vividly, which master the quintessence of the original context.

4 Diction

4.1 Modification of Composition

- つまり娘の眼と火とが重なった瞬間、彼女の眼は夕闇の波間に浮ぶ、妖しく美しい夜光虫であった。(As the eye and the light were superimposed one on the other, the eye became a weirdly beautiful bit of phosphorescence on the sea of evening mountains..)
- Ye: 她的眼睛同灯光重叠的那一瞬间,就像在夕阳的余晖里飞舞的夜光虫,妖艳而美丽。(The moment her eyes overlapped with the light, it was like a firefly flying in the fading light of dusk, glamorous and beautiful.)
- Gao: 当姑娘的星眸同灯火重合叠印的一刹那顷,她的眼珠儿便象美丽撩人的萤火虫,飞舞在向晚的波浪间。(The moment the girl's starry eyes overlapped with the lights, her eye was like a beautiful and alluring firefly, dancing in the evening waves.)

In this point, Gao's translation is more prominent in aesthetic value. It was just an ordinary eye, but Gao intentionally uses “starry eyes” to portray the eye. In the degree of modification, compared to the “beautiful” in the original text, “starry eyes” are modified by the word “beautiful and alluring.”

Furthermore, reading the whole text, it can be seen that Ye is describing “a flying firefly,” “flying” is a state, while Gao is describing “a firefly flying in the evening waves,” “flying” is an action, which is similar to the Japanese word “ている。” “ている” can indicate both a state and a continuous action. Ye translates “flying” as a state and emphasizes the feeling of “a moment,” it is just like Shimamura losing himself when he looks into the eyes of Yoko, and it becomes a flying firefly for an instant, while Gao emphasizes the feeling of smart and graceful. The countless moments when Yoko's eyes overlapped, the light hallucinated into a firefly fluttering and weaving constantly. The literary skills of both translators are so strong that simply changing the word composition can bring out two different senses.

4.2 Modification of Construction

- 外は夕闇がおりているし、汽車のなかは明かりがついている。(Outside it was growing dark, and the lights had been turned on in the train.)
- Ye: 外面昏暗下来, 车厢里的灯亮了。(It was dark outside, and the lights on the train came on.)
- Gao: 窗外, 天色垂暮; 车内, 灯火明亮。(Outside the window, the sky was getting dark; Inside the train, the lights were bright.)

Japanese can be translated into different sentence structures to convey the same meaning. Ye translates the text as a cause-effect sentence, which can be interpreted as turning on the lights in the train because it is dark outside or as the train appearing brighter because it is dark outside. But in either case, Ye uses the technique of literal translation without any other construction treatment of the original text, which is simple and clear, but to a certain extent, becomes less flavorful. Gao's translation, on the other hand, adopts a neat form of antithesis, "outside" "inside," "dark" and "bright", all of which are one-to-one correspondence, not only similar in form but also identical in the word count. Gao transforms the sentence structure to a certain degree to make the text more attractive, but some people believe that being loyal to the originals and uncomplicated is undoubtedly the better choice. They think Gao's translation is inflated with fine language, instead a little hollow. But Gao's beautiful style of writing fits unquestionably well with Kawabata's uncommon aesthetic style, and Ye's translation is sometimes too direct and slightly stiff. However, *Snow Country* is only an imaginary world, different translators can see the various scenes in it; that's why we can see the different details between them.

5 Conclusion

Both translators' translations are of first-class level from the viewpoint of literary value or readability. That is why both translations have been recognized by most people and studied as models. Both professors adopt the strategies of division and reverse translation and have their own emphasis on sentence structure, which is worth every translator to learn and research, and can apply to their translations in the future to add different colors to the originals.

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