

# The Study on Translation of Chai Tou Feng by Lu You Based on House's Translation Quality Assessment Mode

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**Abstract.** Song Ci is a kind of unique literary form in the history of Chinese culture, so it is difficult to translate it into English. This thesis applies House's model of translation quality assessment to evaluate the English version of *Chai Tou Feng* by Lu You, which demonstrates its applicability and is helpful to future research of Tang poetry and Song Ci.

## Introduction

Translation Quality Assessment Model, which was put forward by Juliane House in *A Model of Translation Quality Assessment* and *Translation Quality Assessment: A Model Revisited*, is considered as the first completely theoretical and practical translation quality assessment model in the field of international translation criticism. It is common to find out that a number of Chinese proses and novels were assessed by some theories, such as Transformational Generative Grammar and Equivalence Theory and so on. However, it is rare to follow House's Translation Quality Assessment Model to assess literary works, especially Tang poetry and Song Ci, which occupy important positions in the ancient Chinese literature. Therefore, this thesis applies House's Translation Quality Assessment Model to analyzing *Chai Tou Feng* by Lu You and its English version. On one hand, it helps us to apply abstract translation theories to analyzing literary works, films and Tv series; on the other hand, it contributes to spreading Chinese culture to the world, which enables the world to learn China better.

## Introduction to House's Model of Translation Quality Assessment

**Theoretical Background of House's Translation Quality Assessment Model.** Assessing translation quality is based on criteria, and criteria's establishment depends on the definition of translation. Different translation criteria and different translation strategies as well as methods lead to different translation quality and different translation assessment methods [1]. Based on systemic functional grammar and textual analysis, House put forward a revised model of translation quality assessment model from language/text, register and genre to analyze both source text and target text. In terms of register, she quoted Halliday's three elements of register----- field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the subject matter and social action and covers the specificity of lexical items. Tenor includes 'the addresser's temporal, geographical and social provenance as well as his [or her] intellectual, emotional or affective stance (his [or her] "personal viewpoint")'. Mode relates to 'channel' (spoken/written, etc.) and the degree of participation between addresser and addressee (monologue, dialogue, etc.) [2]. Three variables of register display three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. House's revised model [2], which combines some of her earlier categories with Halliday's register analysis of field, tenor and mode, involves a systematic comparison of the textual 'profile' of the ST and TT. Register analysis of both ST and TT is realized by lexical, syntactic and textual means [3]. Besides, genre is included in revised model. Language embodies characteristics of register and characteristics of register embodies genre of text, which reflects function of text. Consequently, the final quality assessment of translation highlights matches and mismatches.

**House's Operating Model.** According to Translation Quality Assessment: A Model Revised, operating model consists of seven parts [2]:

- (1) A profile of the ST register.
- (2) A description of the ST genre realized by the register
- (3) The realization of ST function, including the ideational and interpersonal component of the function (in other words, what information is being conveyed and what the relationship is between sender and receiver).
- (4) The same descriptive process for the TT.
- (5) The TT profile is compared to the ST profile and a statement of mismatches or errors is produced, categorized according to genre and to the situational dimensions of register and genre; these dimensional errors are referred to as covertly erroneous errors, to distinguish them from overtly erroneous errors, which are denotative mismatches or target system errors.
- (6) The assessment of translation quality.
- (7) Finally, the translation can be categorized into two types: overt translation or covert translation.

### **Applying House's Model of Translation Quality Assessment to Analyzing English Version of *Chai Tou Feng* by Lu You**

**Analysis of ST Register.** *Chai Tou Feng* by Lu You is well-known, which describes his love tragedy:

红酥手，黄藤酒，满城春色宫墙柳。东风恶，欢情薄。一杯愁绪，几年离索。错，错，错。  
春如旧，人空瘦，泪痕红浥蛟绡透。桃花落，闲池阁。山盟虽在，锦书难托。莫，莫，莫。

At the age of 20, Lu You married his talented and beautiful cousin, Tang Wan and they lived a happy life. Unfortunately, Lu You's mother was not satisfied with Tang Wan because she could not bear children. Therefore, the loving couple was forced to divorce after three years of marriage. Later, Tang Wan married Zhao Shicheng. On a spring day after several years, Lu You ran across Tang Wan as well as her husband in Shenyuan Garden near the south of the Shanyin City (today Shaoxing City) [4]. Tang Wan treated Lu You to food and wine. Lu You recalled the past and wrote this Ci *Chai Tou Feng* on the wall of Shenyuan Garden, which expressed his deep attachment to Tang Wan and unspeakable sorrow.

#### (1) Field of ST

This Song Ci is divided into two stanzas. In the first stanza, the writer describes their reunion, looks back on happy love life and expresses divorced sadness. In the second stanza, faced with reality, the writer further conveys their sufferings because of several years of separation. Though they still loved each other deeply, they could not love each other; though they had known they were forbidden to love each other, they were not willing to give up lingering affection.

In terms of lexical level, the words are concise and vivid, which convey the writer's helpless attitude. The writer neither went against his mother's order nor forgot his love to his former wife. "春色" describes a thriving natural scene and implies Tang Wan's beauty. "东风" refers to autocratic power which is represented by his mother. "恶" conveys his obedient to his mother and symbolizes divorce from his former wife. "欢情" describes their former happy life, "薄" indicates their current state of separation. "愁绪" and "离索" reveal their acacia feeling after separation. The repetition of "错" manifests that the writer is caught in a dilemma. On one hand, he is difficult to violate his mother's order; on the other hand, they cannot continue their former love. "瘦" reflects Tang Wan is no longer as rosy and plump as before. "空" describes the poet's sad, but helpless and regretful feeling. "泪痕" and "浥" demonstrate Tang Wan's life with tears in the eyes. "落" and "闲" conveys the poet's lonely feeling with spring going by. "山盟虽在，锦书难托" reveals regretful feeling, they have respectively remarried and cannot say love to each other though they have exchanged solemn vows and pledges. The repetition of "莫" describes helpless attitude towards

reality from his inner heart.

In terms of syntactic level, the sentences are short and simple, at the same time they contain comparison, neat antithesis and rhyme. *Chai Tou Feng* is made up of ten short sentences and 60 words. “春如旧” and “桃花落，闲池阁” in the second stanza respectively corresponds to “满城春色” and “东风恶，欢情薄” in the first stanza. The poet compares “离索” “人空瘦” with “欢情” “红酥手”， which describes changed everything. “红酥手” and “黄藤酒” form neat antithesis. In the first stanza “jiǔ (酒)” and “liǔ (柳)”, “suǒ (索)” and “cuò (错)” rhyme. In the second stanza, “shòu (瘦)” and “tòu (透)”, “tuō (托)” and “mò (莫)” rhyme.

In terms of textual level, *Chai Tou Feng* is a tune title and its structure is fixed. This Ci is divided into two parts. The first part describes their happy marriage life and pain for his divorce because of obedience to his mother’s order; the second part expresses his helpless and regretful feeling owing to strong and complicated lingering affection, which is shown by the repetition of “错” and “莫”.

### (2) Tenor of ST

In terms of the writer’s provenance and stance, Lu You is a great and prolific Ci writer as well as poet. He wrote more than 10,000 Ci and poems, among which over 9,000 were handed down. He belongs to the Ci writer of the Wan Yue School. He was obedient to his mother and loved his wife deeply. But he had to divorce his wife because of filial piety. Even if they respectively remarried, they were unwilling to sever lingering affection.

In terms of relationship of social roles, the writer was Tang Wan’s cousin and former husband, and Zhao Shicheng was Tang Wan’s current husband. Mother of the writer was not only Tang Wan’s aunt but also her former mother-in-law.

In terms of social attitude, in the ancient times, sterility of a woman was considered as to be the least filiality. The mother of the writer and feudal autocratic power could not accept Tang Wan’s sterility, so they were forced to divorce [5]. Besides, feudal ethics and moral values cannot bear extramarital affairs.

### (3) Mode of ST

Mode of medium: This Ci conveys the complex feelings of the writer, so it is a formal mode to express his emotion.

Mode of participation: This Ci is a monologue, but there is an implied addressee. Lu You wrote this Ci to describe his great longing for his former wife, so this is a monologue. Lu You is a famous Ci writer, so his Ci has a profound influence on the public. On one hand, he expresses his yearning for his former wife; on the other hand, this Ci draws the attention of the public who has visited Shenyuan Garden. Consequently, the public should be regarded as the addressees.

**Genre of ST.** The most outstanding linguistic features of Song Ci are its delicacy and gracefulness, especially in the works of the Wan Yue School. For example, the writer tends to use “愁绪” “离索” “泪痕” to describe sad feeling and choose “恶” “薄” “空” “红泥” “透” “落” “闲” to create imaginative space, which further express sentiment.

**Statement of Function of ST.** Ideational function is shown by field which refers to the writer’s complex feeling. Though Lu You and Tang Wan still loved each other, they could not love each other any longer; though they had known they were forbidden to love each other, they were not willing to give up lingering affection. This Ci shows us autocratic power and the parents’ absolute authority over their children even if they were wrong in the ancient times.

Interpersonal function is displayed through tenor which includes the relationship between Lu You and his former wife Tang Wan, Lu You and his mother and Lu You’s attitude towards feeling.

Textual function is reflected by mode. As a special genre, this Ci has a powerful textual function, by which language makes links with itself and with the situation. The first part describes their happy marriage life and his divorce because of obedience to his mother’s order; the second part expresses his helpless and regretful feeling owing to strong and complex lingering affection, which is shown by the repetition of “错” and “莫”.

**Analysis of the Same Procedures for TT.** The English version of *Chai Tou Feng* by Lu You is

as follows:

Crisp pink short-bread,  
A flask of yellow wine,  
The city bright with spring, on palace walls a willow line.  
An east wind, a fierce wind,  
Has worn the rapture fine.  
My heart is bound with sorrow round,  
Parted, the many years too long;  
How wrong it was, how wrong!

Spring's the same as ever,  
Vain longings waste and wear;  
My silken handkerchief is soaked, there's blood in every tear.  
Peach blossom scatters round,  
The lake and buildings bare.  
Though solemn oath still bind us both,  
It's hard to trust a message, so,  
It's No, For ever No!

#### (1) Field of TT

In terms of lexical level, using “a fierce wind”, “bound with sorrow round” and “parted”, the translator describes the parting pain which is caused by vicious power. “Vain longings”, “blood in every tear” and “hard to trust a message” are employed to further express complex emotions. They are still devoted to each other, but they cannot love each other.

In terms of syntactic level, there are 13 long sentences except 3 phrases (crisp pink short-bread, a flask of yellow wine, an east wind and a fierce wind). “/wain/” “/lain/” and “/fain/”, “/lɔŋ/” and “/rɔŋ/”, “/wɛə/” and “/bɛə/”, “/bəuθ/” “/səu/” and “/nəu/” make use of the same rhyme.

In terms of textual level, the first stanza expresses parting pain, and the second part conveys helpless and regretful feeling of the writer owing to strong and complicated lingering affection.

#### (2) Tenor of TT

In terms of writer's provenance and stance, this translator uses “a fierce wind”, “bound with sorrow” and “blood in every tear” to reproduce writer's sorrowful, regretful and helpless emotion.

In terms of social role relationship, writer's submission to his mother as well as autocratic power and strong affection to his former wife are reproduced in target text.

As for social attitude, “a fierce wind” reflects resentful attitude towards feudal autocratic power.

#### (3) Mode of TT

As for mode of medium, the writer's complex feeling is well reproduced. Meanwhile, Chinese traditional Confucian culture is also known.

In terms of mode of participation, this version is a monologue, but there is an implied addressee, namely, English lovers and majors.

#### (4) Genre of TT

The version full of too wordy sentences is far from the style of Song Ci which is short as well as concise and emphasizes rhyme.

#### (5) Function of TT

The translator transmits Chinese ancient culture and enriches spiritual and cultural life of the public.

### **Comparison of Register of ST and TT.**

#### (1) Comparison of field of ST and TT

As for lexical level, there are some matches. “A fierce wind” in TT symbolizes vicious power, which has the same effect as “东风恶” in ST. “Bound with sorrow” for “愁绪” describes the writer's sorrowful feeling. “如旧” is translated as “the same as ever”, which shows a sharp contrast with “人空瘦”. The translator employed “scatters round” for “落” and “bare” for “闲”, describing desolate nature to render sad feeling. “Soaked” for “透”, “scatters round” for “落”, “bare” for “闲”, “still

bound us” for “虽在” and “blood in every tear” for “泪痕红浥” imply their lingering affection which cannot be severed. As for mismatches, the translator translated “crisp pink short-bread” as “红酥手”, neglecting the implied meaning of the original phrase because “红酥手” literally refers to a kind of food, but implies Tang Wan’s pink and slender hands in ST. And “a flask of yellow wine” for “黄藤酒” is a mistaken translation. “黄藤酒” is not a kind of yellow wine, but a kind of wine produced for the palace which is sealed with a kind of yellow paper. The translator used “the city bright with spring” for “满城春色”, which lacks implied meaning of Tang Wan’s beauty. “On palace walls” means “在宫墙上”, in fact the willows are lined with palace walls.

As for syntactic matches, some special sentence structures are retained. “Bright with spring” corresponds to “spring’s the same as ever”. There are some mismatches. “Has worn the rapture fine” and “parted, the many years too long” are inverted sentences in TT while “欢情薄” and “几年离索” in ST are declarative sentences. Three replications of “错” and “莫” were translated as exclamatory sentences “How wrong it was, how wrong!” and “It’s No, For ever No!”.

As for textual level, this Ci is divided into two stanzas. The first stanza expresses parting pain, but scarcely describes happy married life. The second stanza further reflects suffering of divorce, which is accordance with ST. But TT adds conjunction “so” and lacks artistic concept of ST.

#### (2) Comparison of tenor

The sad and complex emotions of the author described in the translation are similar to ST. Therefore, the author’s provenance and stance are shown well in the translation. In terms of social role relationship and social attitude, the roles and social attitude appearing in the ST are well preserved in the translation.

#### (3) Comparison of mode

*Chai Tou Feng* and this version are formal monologue, and there is an implied addressee.

#### (4) Comparison of textual genre

The version full of too wordy sentences mismatches the language of Song Ci, which goes against delicate and graceful style.

#### (5) Comparison of textual function

The readers learn Lu You’s sad love story and Chinese ancient culture.

**Statement of Translation Quality.** According to comparison of lexical, syntactic as well as textual levels of source text and target text, to a great extent, we know that interpersonal and conceptual functions of translation version conforms to those of source text. Although genre of translation text is far from delicate style of source text and the language of translation text does not reflect artistic concept of Song Ci, these have no influence on readers’ understanding. Translation text in language, register, genre and textual function basically matches source text, so translation quality of this version is relatively high.

**Overt Translation or Covert Translation.** Song Ci is a kind of Chinese ancient literary form, whose translation is categorized into covert translation.

## Conclusion

By applying House’s model of translation quality assessment to analyzing the English version of *Chai Tou Feng* by Lu You, we conclude that translation text is grouped into covert translation. As there are some matches in translation text, writer’s sad and complex emotion and Chinese culture are well embodied. This thesis makes use of House’s model of translation quality assessment to evaluate *Chai Tou Feng* by Lu You, which proves its applicability and is helpful to future research of Tang poetry and Song Ci.

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