

A Study of Three Chinese Versions of *Nineteen Eighty-four* from the Perspective of Literary Stylistics and Narratology

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This paper makes a comparative study of three Chinese versions of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* by applying the theories and methodologies of literary stylistics and narratology. The study first scrutinizes the distinctive stylistic features and narrative forms of the source text (ST) and then continues to examine whether these features and forms are successfully represented in the target text (TT). Moreover, it seeks to answer the questions of why "deceptive equivalence" occurs and how the "literariness" in the fiction can be retained and stylistic equivalence can be achieved in translation.

Keywords: *Nineteen Eighty-four*, literary stylistics, narratology

Introduction

Nineteen Eighty-four is one of the most representative works of George Orwell. In this political allegorical fiction published in 1948, Orwell creates an imaginary country named Oceania where people live under strict control of the highly-centralized regime of Big Brother and Ingsoc (English Socialism). The protagonist Winston Smith works in the Ministry of Truth, which is in charge of alternating history and fabricating lies in the purpose of maintaining Big Brother's power. Witnessing all the nonsense and brutalities in his position, Winston secretly outpours his bitterness in his diary. He is at last arrested by the Thought Police for committing Thought Crime and is forced to go through different stages of reintegration until his conscience is surrendered.

The fiction was written with a distinctive Orwellian style. Orwell has created a new speaking and writing system named "Newspeak" for the people in Oceania, a simplified language system that cannot be used to express complicated ideas. The new words he creates include "doublethink", "superplusgood" and so on. Such lexical deviation, together with other unique stylistic features and narrative forms, have all posed great challenges to translation. By employing the theories and methodologies of literary stylistics and narratology, this paper attempts to make a comparative study of its three Chinese versions, namely Dong's version (2006), Sun's version (2002), and Teng & Jin's version (2002), with a particular focus on how these distinctive stylistic features/narrative forms are reproduced in the TT and how stylistic equivalence can be achieved in translation.

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The Application of Literary Stylistics and Narratology to Fictional Translation Studies

Literary stylistics is principally concerned with “explaining the relation between style and literary or aesthetic function” (Leech & Short, 2001, p. 38). By employing theories, approaches and analytical models of modern linguistics, this discipline helps to explicate how linguistic forms, thematic significance and aesthetic value correlate with one another in a literary text. In *Literary Stylistics and Fictional Translation* (1995), Dan Shen makes a pioneering attempt to apply literary stylistics to fictional translation studies, claiming that to avoid “deceptive equivalence”, translators have to sharpen their “sensitivity to the workings of the language system” and “improve their understanding of the function of stylistic norms” (Shen, 1995, p. 7).

Meanwhile, narratology aims to reveal the relationship between narrative structure, techniques, etc. and narrative effect. Genette particularly proposes three aspects from which narrative discourse can be studied: (1) “tense”, the relationship between the time of the story and the time of the discourse; (2) “mood”, the type of discourse, including narrative “point of view” and narrative distance; (3) “voice”, the relationship between narrator and narratee (1980, pp. 30-32). Kairui Fang specifically touches upon the issue of figural point of view in fictional translation. He points out that figural point of view as a narrative mode in fiction is often difficult to discern and the transference of it often constitutes a great challenge to the translator. Therefore, the translator “should pay adequate attention to linguistic forms in the representation of figural point of view” (2003, p. 30) and appropriately represent it in translation so as to reproduce its relevant narrative effect in the TT.

Research Questions and Methodology

The study takes four questions as the point of departure: (1) What are the most distinctive stylistic features and narrative forms in the fiction? (2) How do they contribute to the literary significance and narrative effect of the ST? (3) Can they be successfully reproduced in the TT? If yes, what are the determining factors of the successful rendering? If not, what causes the “deceptive equivalence”? (4) How can both “referential equivalence” and “stylistic equivalence” be achieved?

To answer these questions, a working mechanism is devised as follows.

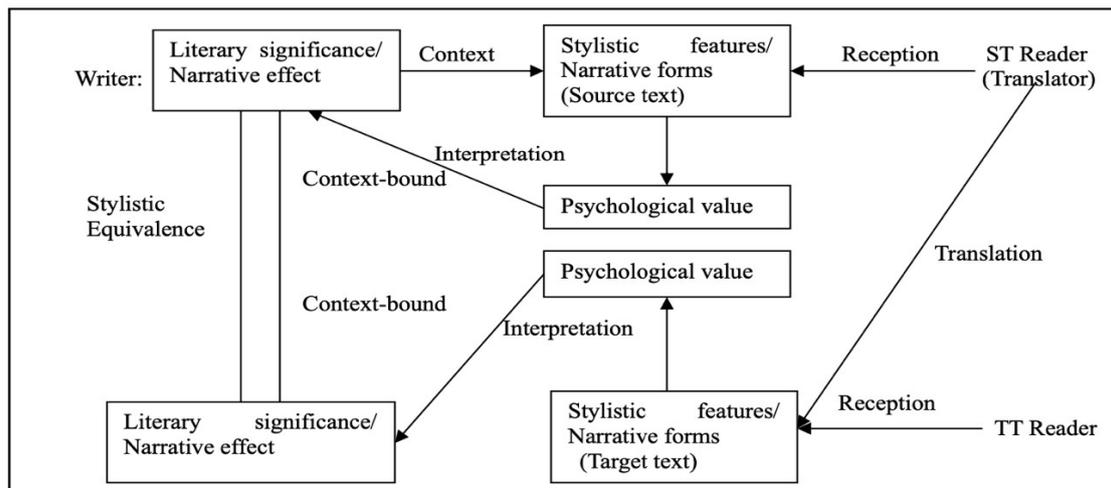


Figure 1. Combination of literary stylistics and narratology in the analysis of stylistic equivalence in fictional translation.

Firstly, in the process of writing, the writer would like to express certain literary significance or to achieve certain narrative effect in a literary text. Therefore, a variety of stylistic features and narrative forms are selected according to different contexts to achieve his/her objectives.

Secondly, in the process of reception, if the translator (as the ST reader) is sensitive enough, s/he will notice the stylistic features/narrative forms which generate relevant psychological value, and then deduct the literary significance and narrative effect in a context-bound interpretation process.

Thirdly, on the basis of a correct understanding of the relationship between the stylistic features/narrative forms and the literary significance/narrative effect in the ST, the translator will properly reproduce these stylistic features/narrative forms in the TT, the core of which is to avoid “deceptive equivalence” and achieve “stylistic equivalence”. This is the process of translation.

Lastly, when reading the TT, the reader can notice the stylistic features/narrative forms which bring about certain psychological value in his/her mind, which helps him/her to obtain similar or equivalent literary significance/narrative effect as the ST reader does in a context-bound interpretation process.

A Comparative Study of the Three Chinese Versions

In this part, the three Chinese versions will be studied in light of literary stylistics and narratology. Analyses will be conducted from four aspects: lexical expression, syntax, focalization, and speech and thought presentation.

Lexical Expression

A common deviant form of lexical expression is neologism, the use of which aims to generate some novel effect for various purposes. Neologism in *Nineteen Eighty-four* is primarily represented by “Newspeak”. After Newspeak is widely adopted, people’s original way of thinking and speaking will be thoroughly erased and any heretical thoughts which might diverge from the principles of Ingsoc will be unthinkable. According its grammar, different parts of speech are almost completely interchangeable. For instance, “speak” and “think” function as both verbs and nouns and their original noun forms “speaking” and “thought” are abandoned.

Example (1)

Newspeak, duckspeak, doublethink	(Orwell, 1950, pp. 35, 55, 35)
Dong’s version: 新话, 鸭话, 双重思想	(Dong, 2006, pp. 32,49,32)
Sun’s version: 新话, 鸭讲, 双重思想	(Sun, 2002, pp. 35, 52, 35)
Teng & Jin’s version: 新语言, *, 双重思想	(Teng & Jin, 2002, pp. 17, *, 17)

The above three compound words function as both verbs and nouns in the ST, which naturally brings about the psychological value of both novelty and puzzlement upon the reader. They are thus motivated to reveal the underlying causes for this phenomenon: this writing system complies with the highly-centralized regime in Oceania where people are trained to write in this way out of ideological control, which is exactly the thematic significance embedded by these deviant forms.

When it comes to translation, “speak” is supposed to be translated into “说” or “讲” as verb or into “话” or “讲” as noun while “think” should be translated into “思考” as verb and “思想” as noun. However, it is impossible to reconstruct this subtle deviation in the Chinese version. Except that Sun translates “duckspeak” into

“鸭讲” which can be treated as either a verb or a noun and that Teng and Jin do not translate this word, the other two words are translated into noun forms. Only cognitive meaning is transferred and referential equivalence rather than stylistic equivalence is achieved. Hence the thematic significance encoded in these deviant forms is lost in the process of translation due to the differences of the two language systems.

Syntax

In narrative fiction, syntax is an important means by which a series of events are organized and different syntactic structures might therefore affect the pace of the processes.

Example (2)

Tonight was one of his nights at the Community Center. He *wolfed* another tasteless meal in the canteen, *hurried off* to the Center, *took part in* the solemn foolery of a “discussion group”, *played* two games of table tennis, *swallowed* several glasses of gin, and *sat* for half an hour through a lecture entitled “Ingsoc in relation to chess”. (Orwell, 1950, p. 109, my emphasis)

The above quotation consists of two sentences. The first sentence is presented in the “telling mode”, by which the narrator introduces the time and place of the following events; the second sentence is presented in the “showing” mode, by which the narrator shows what Winston does that night. The second sentence comprises six verbs/verb phrases that are closely linked to each other, only separated by five commas, which shortens the narration time to the minimum. Obviously, the narrator hopes to produce the psychological value of hurriedness, suggesting that the activities in the Community Center are dull and silly, but the party members are obliged to participate routinely. Since Winston has no alternatives but to take part in those events, he does everything in a hurry without any real interest. The words “wolfed”, “hurried off” and “swallowed” demonstrate quickness in action while “solemn foolery” and only “two games” imply that he is not in the mood and wishes to pass the time as quickly as possible. When translated into Chinese, it is expected that these six verbs/verb phrases are placed in one sentence and tightly connected to each other in order to imitate the hurriedness in the ST.

Dong’s version:

今晚又是他该去参加邻里活动中心站的晚上，他又马马虎虎地在饭堂里吃了一顿无味的晚饭，匆匆到中心站去，参加“讨论组”的讨论，这是一种一本正经的蠢事，打两局乒乓球，喝几杯杜松子酒，听半小时题叫《英社与象棋的关系》的报告。(Dong, 2006, p. 98)

Sun’s version:

这天晚上他要在集体活动中心度过，在狼吞虎咽地吃了食堂里一餐无味的晚餐后，他赶紧去了活动中心。他参加了那看似严肃、其实愚蠢的“讨论组”，打了两局乒乓球，喝了几杯酒，坐着听了半小时名为“英社和象棋”的讲座。(Sun, 2002, p. 102)

Teng & Jin’s version:

今晚又是他该参加邻里活动中心站的晚上，他马马虎虎地在食堂里吃了一顿无味的晚饭后，匆匆到中心站去，参加“讨论组”的讨论。这是一种一本正经的蠢事，打两局乒乓球，喝几杯杜松子酒，听半小时题叫《英社与象棋的关系》的报告。(Teng & Jin, 2002, p. 56)

In Dong’s version, although the six actions are translated within one sentence, the “solemn foolery” is translated into “这是一种一本正经的蠢事”, which contains a set of relatively independent structure and

therefore interrupts the cohesiveness of the consecutive actions. In Sun's version, the six actions are separated into two sentences. Moreover, "He wolfed another tasteless meal in the canteen" is translated into a time adverbial clause "在狼吞虎咽地吃了食堂里一餐无味的晚餐后" and placed in a subordinated position, hence the reduction of its saliency. Furthermore, the second and the third actions are separated by a full stop, generating a sense of suspension in time and pace. The above problems are also found in Teng and Jin's version, which fails to reproduce the quickness of the six actions. A more satisfactory translation might be:

这天晚上他又要在集体活动中心度过了。他在饭堂里狼吞虎咽地吃了一顿无味的晚饭，匆匆到中心站去，参加“讨论组”那看似严肃、其实愚蠢的讨论，打两局乒乓球，喝几杯杜松子酒，听半小时题叫《英社与象棋的关系》的报告。

In this version, the six actions are tightly placed within one sentence and the psychological value of hurriedness is recreated. Thus, the TT reader can feel the character's detest with the routine and meaningless activities. Only in this way can stylistic equivalence be achieved.

Focalization

Focalization is the angle or vision from which a fictional story is narrated. According to Dan Shen, the omniscient narrative mode represents an authoritative and intermediate point of view by which the narrator can see every detail of an event and then selectively conveys to the reader. However, this unlimited point of view sometimes ruins the realness and dramatics of a literary work. That is why the omniscient narrator may temporarily replace his perspective by the limited point of view of the character inside the story to overcome this defect (1998, pp. 230-231).

Generally, the fiction adopts a third-person omniscient narrative mode. The story is seen from and told by a narrator-focalizer outside the events. However, the novelist sometimes replaces this omniscient narrator by a character-focalizer (Winston Smith in most cases), who directly observes and perceives an event as a participant. This shift of focalization as a narrative form is closely associated with certain narrative effect that the novelist wants to achieve.

Example (3)

He could just stop his teeth from chattering, but his knees were beyond his control. *There was a sound of trampling boots below, inside the house and outside. The yard seemed to be full of men. Something was being dragged across the stones. The woman's singing had stopped abruptly. There was a long, rolling clang, as though the washtub had been flung across the yard, and then a confusion of angry shouts which ended in a yell of pain.*

"The house is surrounded," said Winston. (Orwell, 1950, p. 222, my emphasis)

Winston and Julia are sleeping in the little room above his friend Mr. Charrington's shop, where they have been secretly meeting each other for quite a number of times. Although Winston is divorced, dating another party member secretly is forbidden, which is considered as "sexcrime". Only the two of them are inside the room, yet a third voice is heard from the wall. Only at this moment do they realize that a telescreen is hidden behind the picture hanging on the wall and has been surveilling them all the time. They are falling into panic without knowing what is going on and the italicized part in this passage is what he hears and feels downstairs from the room above.

Here, the focalization is shifted from an external one to an internal one. The italicized part is perceived from Winston's point of view: the words "seemed to be", "something" and "as though" all imply the narrator's uncertainty about the situation downstairs and he can only guess what is going on according to what he has heard. Since an internal focalization can generate the psychological value of realness and directness, the focalization shift enables the reader to stand in Winston's shoes and feel the tension of the atmosphere. The internal focalization as a narrative form brings about a suspense on the reader who has to follow the character's limited point of view and gradually discover the surroundings rather than depend on the omniscient narrator to tell him/her about what is going on, which in turn creates a dramatized effect when Winston finally understands that "the house is surrounded". By sharing the character's nervousness and extreme panic, the reader can rightly obtain the narrative effect that the Thought Police in Oceania is everywhere, a reflection of Big Brother's strict control over people's mind and life.

Dong's version:

他咬紧牙关才使自己的牙齿不上下打颤，但他控制不了双膝。下面屋子里里外外传来一阵皮靴声。院子里似乎尽是人。有什么东西拖过石板地。那女人的歌声突然中断了。有一阵什么东西滚过的声音，好像洗衣盆给推过了院子，接着是愤怒的喊声，最后是痛苦的尖叫。

“屋子被包围了，”温斯顿说。(Dong, 2006, p. 200, my emphasis)

Sun's version:

他只能控制住不让自己的牙齿格格作响，但是他的膝盖已不听使唤了。楼下响起了皮靴声，房内房外都是。那个院子里好像挤满了人，有什么东西被人在石板上拖着。那个女人的歌声突然停止了。又响起了长长的一声在地上滚动的声音，似乎是洗衣盆从院子这头滚到了那头。接着是十分混乱的愤怒呼喊声，最后是一声痛苦的号叫。

“房子被包围了。”温斯顿说。(Sun, 2002, p. 205, my emphasis)

Teng & Jin's version:

也许这是他在哆嗦，他控制不了自己。屋子里传来一阵皮靴声。院子里似乎尽是人。那女人的歌声突然中断了。还有痛苦的尖叫声。

“被包围了。”温斯顿说。(Teng & Jin, 2002, p. 140, my emphasis)

Here, both Dong and Sun are sensitive enough to notice the focalization shift in the ST. By translating "seemed to be", "something" and "as though" into "似乎", "有什么东西", "好像" and "好像", "有什么东西", "似乎是" respectively, they successfully reconstruct the internal focalization in the TT. The TT reader is thus exposed to the realness of the scene, as if s/he were inside the story and witnessing the event. Therefore, s/he can acquire the narrative effect to the same extent as the ST reader does and stylistic equivalence is achieved. In contrast, Teng and Jin rewrite the text and only translate part of the content, with "seemed to be" translated into "似乎" and the other two indicating words left un-translated. Consequently, their version fails to achieve the narrative effect intended by the author and hence fails to achieve the stylistic equivalence.

Speech and Thought Presentation

Speech and thought presentation is a crucial overlapping area between literary stylistics and narratology. Due to the different reporting modes of Chinese and English, it is very likely that in the inter-lingual conveyance

of the character's speech and thought, there is no equivalent mode in the target language or even there is, the literary effect is quite different in the two linguistic contexts (Shen, 1995, p. 207). In view of this, translators must be fully aware of the basic reporting modes in Chinese and English and their respective functions so that they will be able to make necessary adjustment and rightly reproduce the peculiar stylistic features/narrative forms.

Example (4)

His heart had leapt. *It's started!* He had thought. *A riot! The proles are breaking loose at last!* (Orwell, 1950, p. 70, my emphasis)

The italicized parts in the ST are the free direct thought (FDT) of Winston Smith. FDT is the freest form of thought presentation with the highest degree of immediacy and the lowest degree of narrator's interference. The three exclamation marks are essential graphological feature of FDT, displaying the direct outpour of the character's nervousness and excitement when he sees the crowds and hears them shouting loudly; and the predicate "are breaking" with present continuous tense is the direct presentation of the character's immediate thought. By using FDT, Orwell makes Winston assume the role of character-focalizer and narrate the event from his point of view. The reader can directly share Winston's strong desire of witnessing the happening of a riot to overthrow Big Brother, hence the literary significance and narrative effect is perfectly achieved.

Dong's version:

他的心怦怦地跳。*开始了！*他这么想。*发生了骚乱！无产者终冲破了羁绊！* (Dong, 2006, p. 64, my emphasis)

Sun's version:

他的心脏猛烈跳动起来。*开始了！*他想到。*暴乱！群众终于挣脱羁绊了！* (Sun, 2002, p. 66, my emphasis)

Teng and Jin's version:

他的心卜卜跳个不停。*骚乱毕竟发生了！这是暴动！群众终于在怒号了！* (Teng & Jin, 2002, p. 38, my emphasis)

Interestingly, the three Chinese versions of the italicized parts can be interpreted as a blend of FDT/FIT (free indirect thought). On the one hand, there are no personal pronouns in the italicized parts, meaning that personal pronouns cannot be used as an indicator of telling FDT from FIT. On the other hand, the present perfect tense in "*It's started*" and the present continuous tense in "*The proles are breaking loose at last!*" cannot be recreated in the TT, since Chinese is free from verbal tense indicators. Based on these two factors, the reporting mode of the three translated versions can be understood as either FDT or FIT, which is thus "two-way ambiguous" in Shen's words (1995, p. 217). Therefore, stylistic equivalence is reduced to some extent from the perspective of both literary significance and narrative effect.

Conclusion

Distinctive stylistic features and narrative forms abound in *Nineteen Eighty-four*. Detailed analysis has been conducted with particular focus on four examples from the aspects of lexical expression, syntax, focalization, and speech and thought presentation. These examples are closely associated with the literary significance and narrative effect and enormously constitute the "literariness" of the fiction. While some of them are properly reproduced in the TT, others are not, so "deceptive equivalence" occurs. On the whole, both Dong and Sun

sensitively discern these features and forms and make great efforts to provide suitable renderings. However, due to the insurmountable differences between English and Chinese, some of them are just untranslatable, which proves to be great losses of aesthetic value. On the other hand, Teng and Jin's translation is more like a "condensed" version because they only retain the main story plot while omitting lots of details. Their intentional rewriting is believed to be readership-oriented, which is to satisfy the common reader's taste since s/he is likely to pay less attention to the "literariness" of the fiction.

It is easier to achieve referential equivalence once the cognitive meaning of the ST is properly transferred to the TT. However, since "stylistic equivalence" hinges on the subtler characteristics of the literary work, translators must be sensitive enough to the stylistic features/narrative forms and explore their association with literary significance/narrative effect. In the second place, translators must be fully aware of the similarities and disparities of the two languages, so that they are capable of reproducing these features and forms from the ST to the TT. Last but not least, translators must be familiar with the cultural background of the two languages, so that stylistic equivalence can be achieved in compliance with the appropriate cultural contexts.

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