

The E-C Retranslation Practice of Explicitation Based on Zhu Shenghao's Translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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Cultural differences between the source and target languages often lead to obstacles in reading for target readers. Adopting strategies of explicitation in translation allows target readers to understand the intention of the author and enhances the readability of translated works. Zhu Shenghao's translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, known for its high quality, is the relatively authoritative Chinese version of the work. Based on previous studies, this paper will examine the extent and effect of explicitation in cultural, imagery, and dialogue information in Zhu Shenghao's translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and try to conduct E-C retranslation practice.

Keywords: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, explicitation, E-C retranslation practice

Introduction

With the help of substitution or omission, writers of the source language tend to conceal the linguistic information, cultural information, and logical relations that are familiar to the readers of the source language, so as to avoid the repetition of known information. However, due to huge cultural differences between the source and target language, target readers, in most cases, are unable to understand the meaning of certain language expressions in the source language works. Translators, therefore, are charged with important tasks to deduce the meaning of the original expressions according to the source context, then transfer them into the target cultures, and make them explicit. In this way, target readers are able to understand the intention of the author and the readability of translated works is also improved, which are effects of explicitation in translation.

The study of explicitation in translation was pioneered by western scholars. Vinay and Darbelnet (1955, p. 24), who argued explicitation to include both lexical and informational types, were among the first linguists to view explicitation as a translation technique, examining the nature, manifestations, and motivations of explicitation. Blum-Kulka (1986, p. 19) considered the manifestation of textual articulation form as the embodiment of explicitation. Kenny (1998, p. 57) and Bernardo (2005, p. 75) proposed that commonalities and differences between the source and target languages are what translators have to take into account primarily during translation. Klaudy (2004, p. 80) provided a more detailed division of explicitation from another perspective, dividing it into four categories: obligatory, optional, pragmatic, and translation-inherent

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explicitation. Obligatory explicitation is embodied in semantics, morphology, and syntax, optional explicitation is reflected in discourse and style, and pragmatic explicitation requires translators to explain the cultural information of the source language that target readers are unfamiliar with, while translation-inherent explicitation refers to the changes in the length of translated works due to the nature of translation itself. Focusing on Chinese scholars, He Xianbin (2003, p. 63) did research on explicitation in E-C translation, and concluded that translators tend to achieve explicitation by inserting additional words, making abstract imageries concrete, and conducting conversion in person and figure of speech, pointing out that E-C translation has a relatively high degree of explicitation. Ke Fei (2005, p. 303) believed that explicitation mainly refers to manifestation of meaning. Dai Guangrong and Xiao Zhonghua (2010, p. 77) found that when it comes to E-C translation, there are differences between translated texts and their original ones in terms of words, discourse structure and grammar. Additionally, Han Mengqi (2016, p. 74), in his research on E-C translation of classics, believed that translators should apply explicitation to supplement translation in context.

Based on previous studies, this paper will examine the extent and effect of explicitation in cultural, imagery, and dialogue information in Zhu Shenghao's translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and try to conduct E-C retranslation practice.

Research Purpose and Significance

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Shakespeare's first masterpiece, is a comedy that epitomizes the author's ideas of humanism and the spirit of the Renaissance. Set in the ancient Greek period though, the manners and psychological activities of the characters in this story are rich in Renaissance features. The protagonists' thoughts even shine with the brilliance of humanism, and their value orientation is mainly based on the social reality of Britain at that time.

Zhu Shenghao, whose translation is characterized by high quality and distinctive style, is known as one of the most authoritative Chinese translators who has devoted himself to translating all of Shakespeare's plays. His translations tend to be reader-oriented. The original Oxford editions of Shakespeare's plays are arranged chronologically. In order to cater to the reading experience of Chinese readers, Zhu Shenghao divided all the works into four categories: comedies, tragedies, historical plays, and miscellaneous plays, greatly enhancing the influence of Shakespeare's works in China and promoting the spread of humanist ideas.

Born in turbulent times, Zhu Shenghao still has translated many of Shakespeare's works relying on his sound bilingual skills in Chinese and English. Unlike other translators at that time, Zhu Shenghao showed respect to readers' reading habits, and paid attention to and took care of readers' feelings and reactions. Besides, he focused on improving the readability of his production. Obviously, he already had a certain grasp of explicitation during translation. Due to the limitations of the times, however, the translation industry in China was underdeveloped; the cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries were also seriously insufficient, leading to the unpopularity of various translation guidelines and strategies. It is therefore inevitable that Zhu Shenghao's translation would be inadequate. Adopting explicitation in translation allows target readers to understand and grasp the main ideas of the source text and optimizes their feelings during reading. This paper will explore and analyze the application of explicitation in Zhu Shenghao's translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in terms of cultural, imagery, and dialogue information, and attempts to break through the limitations of the times by conducting E-C retranslation practice.

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Translation of Cultural Information

Example 1: Bottom: I can rarely play Ercles, or play the role of a tearing cat, which divides everything. This is the blood of Ercles, the blood of a tyrant; a lover is more condoling.

Zhu's translation: 波顿: 咱会把厄刺克勒斯扮得非常好, 或者什么吹牛的角色, 管保吓破了人的胆……这是厄刺克勒斯的神气, 霸王的神气; 情郎还得忧愁一点儿。

My retranslation: 波顿: 咱会把厄刺克勒斯这位大力英雄扮得非常好, 或者什么吹牛的角色, 管保吓破了人的胆……这是英雄的神气, 霸王的神气; 情郎还得忧愁一点儿。

In Example 1 from the Act I, "Ercles" is what are at present known to Chinese as "Hercules" and translated as "赫拉克勒斯", which at that time had no uniform translation, and the translator had to determine which Chinese characters to use based on the pronunciation of the original word. Ercles, a hero from ancient Greek mythology, was canonized by Zeus as Hercules after his death, which stands for "a man of unusual strength" in today's western culture. Given cultural differences and relatively backward level of science and technology at that time, however, most readers in China knew very little about ancient Greek figures such as Hercules, and had few accesses to knowledge of western culture. Chinese readers were therefore likely to be confused during reading and unable to accurately understand the connotation of this sentence, resulting in no guarantee of readability. Apparently, Zhu adopted the technique of direct translation here, without explicitation of the source language, producing a translation that failed to convey the original message properly. The retranslation applies pragmatic explicitation by supplementing the meaning of "Ercles", adding "这位大力英雄 (i.e., the man with unusual strength)" after his name, which helps target readers comprehend the identity of Heracles and the imagery he represents. The revised translation makes up for the reader's knowledge gap, and at the same time reads smoothly and conforms to the habits of Chinese expression, optimizing reader's experience and reading efficiency. In addition, the retranslation omits "Heracles" in the second half of the sentence and replaces it with "英雄 (i.e., hero)" to strengthen its symbolic imagery, avoiding repetition that affects reading experience while ensuring a dialogue of fluency.

Example 2: Oberon: I just want a changing boy, to be my henchman. Titania: Set your heart at rest. Wonderland will not buy my child.

Zhu's translation: 奥布朗: 我所要求的, 不过是要一个小小的换儿做我的侍童罢了。提泰妮娅: 请放弃你的心, 整个仙境都不能从我手中换来这个孩子。

My retranslation: 奥布朗: 我所要求的, 不过是用妖童换取你那孩子做我的侍童罢了。提泰妮娅: 请你死了心吧, 整个仙境也不能从我手中换来这个孩子。

In Example 2 from Act II, it is inappropriate for Zhu to directly translate "changing boy" into "换儿". In western legends, fairies would ask around for the whereabouts of beautiful kids and steal them away in the dead of night, leaving ugly and stupid demon children in exchange. For Shakespeare and most of the west, this is a familiar folklore which does not pose a reading barrier without elaboration. However, Chinese readers knew little about western cultural traditions, which may create difficulties in their understanding. In order to fill in this cultural message, the retranslation employs the strategies of pragmatic and obligatory explicitation by complementing the cultural imagery of "demon children" and expanding the meaning of "changing boy" to

narrow the cultural gap between Chinese and western readers. At the same time, the original adjective “changeling” is converted into a verb in Chinese to improve the fluency of the translation and enhance its readability.

Missing and conflicting cultural information in the source text often causes reading difficulties for target readers. Therefore, translators, in their translation process, are supposed to consider whether target readers are able to make associations with specific cultural imageries. If not, the strategy of pragmatic explicitation is usually adopted to add explanations to the missing content and make appropriate transformations to the imageries that do not exist in the target culture. In addition to applying the method of information embedding to combine the supplementary explanation with the translated text, it is also acceptable to rely on paraphrasing, adding endnotes and other methods to supplement the information hidden by the source language to achieve the purpose of explicitation.

Translation of Imagery Information

Example 3: At the end of...The simple gray cuckoo, whose song filled the attention of many, dared not answer: No! Really, who would bother with such a stupid bird? Who makes a bird lie, even though it's called a cuckoo? It's never been like this?

Zhu's translation: 波顿: 还有杜鹃爱骂人, 大家听了心头恼, 可是谁也不回声。说真的, 谁耐烦跟这么一只蠢鸟斗口舌呢? 即使他骂你是乌龟, 谁又高兴跟他争辩呢?

My retranslation: 波顿: 还有杜鹃爱骂人, 大家听了心头恼, 可是谁也不回声。说真的, 谁耐烦跟这么一只蠢鸟斗口舌呢? 即使杜鹃“咕咕”地叫着, 就像奸夫在骂丈夫是缩头乌龟一样, 真是卑劣啊! 可是谁又高兴跟他争辩呢?

Example 3 comes from Act III. In Chinese mythology, Emperor Wang of the Kingdom of Shu was forced to give way to his courtiers and later lived in seclusion. After Emperor Wang's death, his soul became a cuckoo. Each spring when the peach blossoms were in bloom, the cuckoo shouted over and over again, “Why not go home? Why not go back?” Until the blood was cried out, the people of Shu knew that the former emperor was nostalgic for his homeland. The cuckoo thus represents sorrow in the hearts of the Chinese people, conveying the literati's cherished and unrequited feelings for spring, the wanderer's homesickness, and the king's hatred for his fallen country. But in the western view, the cuckoo often lays eggs in the nests of other birds, borrowing the strength of others to raise its own offspring, hence its use as a metaphor for adulterers. In addition, “cuckoo” means “turtle” in western slang, referring to a husband who already knows about his wife's betrayal and is too angry to make a sound. The humor of this sentence can be appreciated if imagery of cuckoo in western culture is understood. The cuckoo in the eyes of the Chinese people has no such meaning. It is hard for them to associate “cuckoo” with “stupid bird” or understand how a bird with a meaning of sadness could even make a move as “骂人 (i.e., scolding)”. The retranslation adopts the strategy of pragmatic explicitation by reducing “cuckoo” to the “咕咕 (pronounced as ‘gugu’ in Chinese)” sound of the bird and adding “就像奸夫在骂丈夫是缩头乌龟一样 (i.e., like an adulterer scolding the husband for being a cowardly turtle)” to inform readers how the imagery of “cuckoo” is like in western culture. “真是卑劣啊! (i.e., How despicable!)” is also added to reinforce the image of cuckoo as despicable, emphasizing the tone under the premise of fluency to drive readers' emotion and upgrade their reading experience.

Translation of Dialogue Information

Example 4: Flute: Oh, sweet Bottom's ass! He lost sixpence a day in his life; he can't spend sixpence a

day: If the Duke doesn't give him sixpence a day to play Pyramus, I'll die. He deserved it: sixpence a day in pyramids, or nothing.

Zhu's translation: 弗鲁特: 哎呀, 可爱的波顿, 真是个男人! 他从此我们就不能再拿到六便士就是一天的恩俸了。他每天必须得到六便士。我可以向陛下发誓, 只要他扮皮拉摩斯, 每天就会给他六便士。扮演了皮拉摩斯, 应该拿六便士就是一天, 少一个子儿都不行。

My retranslation: 弗鲁特: 哎呀, 可怜的波顿! 他再也拿不到六便士一天的恩俸了。他完全可以得到这个赏赐的。我敢打赌, 如果公爵大人见了他扮演的皮拉摩斯, 一定会赏他六便士的, 少一个子儿都不行。

In Example 4 from Act IV, "Sixpence a day" appears many times in the original text, and Zhu adopted the method of literal translation, which is not a problem, and Chinese readers can fully understand the meaning of the translated text without ambiguity. However, "六便士一天 (i.e., sixpence a day)" occurs at a high frequency, leading to redundancy and verbosity in translation, which is entirely the habit of English. But in Chinese, repetition is not encouraged, the articulation between sentences is not obvious, the reference is not clear, and the logic is embedded between the lines. In accordance with Chinese conventions of expression and the reading habits of the Chinese people, the retranslation thereupon adopts optional explicitation in translation, merging the last two clauses, and transforming the second "六便士一天" into "赏赐 (i.e., rewards)" as a synonym for "恩俸". In the translation of the second half of the sentence, the revised translation employs obligatory explicitation by replacing the subject of the sentence from "Bottom" to "the Duke", that is, the Duke gave sixpence to Bottom, which is more coherent in context.

Conclusion

Based on previous studies, this paper examines the extent and effect of explicitation in cultural, imagery, and dialogue information in Zhu Shenghao's translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and tries to conduct E-C retranslation practice. It is found that in the translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Zhu Shenghao attached great significance to the equivalence of the source and target text in all aspects, and in most cases adopted the method of literal translation to strive for completeness of meaning. But the limitations of the times resulted in the insufficiency of explicitation in translation. In retranslation, this paper makes use of explicitation in an attempt to help the target readers understand the relevant cultural information and imagery differences, laying stress on the expression conventions of the target language and the reading experience of the target readers, and bring about better readability of the translation.

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