

Distance Iconicity and Quantity Iconicity in Literary Image Translations: Taking Four Versions of *Bian Cheng* for Example

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Abstract

Iconicity is the pursuit in image translation of literary works. The distance iconicity and quantity iconicity can reveal the arrangement of image construction and its interpretation as well. In the four English versions of the local novel *Bian Cheng* by Shen Congwen, both the distance iconicity and quantity iconicity best illustrate the arrangements of image interpretation and reconstruction of translated versions.

Key word: *Bian Cheng* distance iconicity; Quantity iconicity; Literary translation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Distance iconicity refers to the fact that the distance between concepts is often similar to the distance between linguistic symbols (Haiman, 1985B, p.59). That is, the distance between language components is consistent with the distance between corresponding conceptual structures. The relation between language form and meaning is inevitably iconic, just as a seal leaves an Impression and the body casts a shadow (Slobin, 1985, p.221). Syntactically, "Restrictive clauses and antecedents are close because they are similar in concept. It can be said that those non-restrictive clauses are separated from the antecedent and the main clause mostly because they are not closely related to the former.

Distance iconicity is also expressed on the pragmatic level. The well-known "polite language shows social distance" is the embodiment of distance iconicity. Haiman pointed out that "the more polite the register is, the longer the message will be" (Haiman, 1985, p.15).

2. DISTANCE ICONICITY IN LITERARY IMAGE TRANSLATION

The following paragraph describes the image of Cui Cui, an important character in *Bian Cheng*. If we believe the view that literal distance and conceptual distance in language expression coincide as the standard for writing and translation, we will obtain the best understanding of Cui Cui's character in terms of image translation.

2.1 Source Text Information

And the following study will be focused on four versions of translation From the perspective of distance iconicity to know whether the word distance and conceptual distance in the language expression in the target language are consistent or not.

In *Bian Cheng*, it can be found in the description of the little girl's image "Cui Cui" begins with her living environment and appearance with information factors including "在风日里长养着" (raised in the wind and the sunshine), "皮肤" (skin), "眸子" (eyes)、"天真活泼" (naive and active)、"从不发愁, 从不动气" (never worried and angry) respectively. These series of description by the author fully shows the image characteristics of the little girl "Cui Cui". This is also consistent with the author's conceptual structure, the distance between descriptive language and the central word "Cui Cui" which shows the author's level of imagination in image construction beginning with skin, eyes, personality and temper, etc. This Image construction started from the outside to the inside of a person can

let readers naturally formulate the imagination of the character image “Cui Cui”.

Table 1
Examples of distance iconicity in literary image translation

Source text	翠翠在风日里长养着，把皮肤变得黑黑的，触目为青山绿水，一对眸子清明如水晶。自然既长养她且教育她，为人天真活泼，处处俨然如一只小兽物。人又那么乖，如山头黄麂一样，从不想到残忍事情，从不发愁，从不动气。
Translated by Kinkley	Cui Cui grew up under the sun and the wind, which turned her skin and green brooks that met her eyes turned them clear and bright as crystal. Nature had brought her up and educated her, making her innocent and spirited, in every way like a little wild animal. Yet she was an docile and unspoiled as a mountain fawn, wholly unacquainted with cruelty, never worried, and never angry.
Translated by Gladys	Wind and sun have tanned the growing girl's skin, her eyes resting on green hills are as clear as crystal. Nature is her mother and teacher, making her innocent, lively and untamed as some small wild creature. She has the gentleness of a fawn and seems not to know the meaning of cruelty, anxiety or anger. Green Jade grew up in the wind and sun, so her skin was black. She saw only green mountains and blue water, so her eyes were clear as crystal. Nature had nursed and educated her, and she was as innocent and agile as a young animal. She was as gentle as a mountain antelope, never took thought of cruelty or sorrow, and she was never angry.
Translated by Jin and Payne	Ts'ui Ts'ui grew up in the wind and the sun, so her skin was dark. She saw only green mountains and blue water, so her eyes were clear as crystal. Nature had nursed and educated her, and she was agile as any little animal. She was clever as an antelope, she had no thought of cruelty and sorrow, and she was never angry.
Translated by Xiang and Xin	

2.2 Case Analysis of Distance Iconicity

Of the four translations listed in the table above, Kinkley's translation is very close to the source text and manages to convey the informational factors of Cui Cui's character image in an orderly manner “Cui Cui grew up under the sun and the wind”, “which turned her skin”, “green brooks that met her eyes turned them clear and bright as crystal”, “Nature had brought her up and educated her”, “making her innocent and spirited”, “in every way like a little wild animal”, “Yet she was an docile and unspoiled as a mountain fawn, wholly unacquainted with cruelty, never worried, and never angry” and so on. They conform to the author's conceptual structure and imagination order, reflects the iconicity of the distance between linguistic symbols and the distance between concepts, providing the target language readers with an exotic character image, which can arouse the philosophical interest of the readers.

In Gladys' translation, the subject of the first sentence is “Wind and sun” in “Wind and sun have tanned the growing girl's skin”, and the reader of the target language only has the feeling that the little girl was tanned but not

the feeling of “Cui Cui grew up in the wind and sunshine”, while actually she led a carefree and complacent life in the source text. The result of this part of translation is that, compared with the source text, the distance between the language symbols in the translated text is shortened, thus changing the conceptual distance, and finally reducing the effect of distance similarity. In this way, the translation directly introduces the image of “Cui Cui” into a relatively cruel living environment, which not only omits a sentence and shortens the length of the text, but directly affects the readers' understanding of the living environment and circumstances of Cuicui, resulting in some misunderstanding of the image cognition. The rest of the translation is not very different from each other in terms of the distance between linguistic symbols and the conceptual distance. The last sentence mentioned about Tsui Tsui's temperament and behavior: “She has the gentleness of a fawn and seems not to know the meaning of cruelty, anxiety or anger”, without further description of “Never think of cruel things, never worry, never get angry”. That is to say, the image is not fully expressed with the result of tones containing three “never” not perfectly conveyed in Gladys' translation.

Jin and Payne's version is “Green Jade grew up in the wind and sun, so her skin was black. She saw only green mountains and blue water, so her eyes were clear as crystal.” Compared with Xiang and Xin's version-- “Ts'ui Ts'ui grew up in the wind and the sun, so her skin was dark. She saw only green mountains and blue water, so her eyes were clear as crystal”, Jin & Payne's translation has the same format as Xiang & Xin's, with only a few lexical changes. Conceptually speaking, both translations follow a typical logical thinking of causality. “So” is used twice as a connective to connect sentences. The sentence patterns are relatively fixed and boring due to the repetition of sentence patterns. In addition, the translation of the skin color of Cui Cui into “black” and “dark”, visually speaking, the use of these two words to describe the skin color of a Little Chinese girl, while these two words are seriously different from the original adjective “黑黑的” (dark with red) for a little girl's skin in Xiangxi area would not be totally dark or black. Since the author wrote down the phrase “黑黑的” to describe the girl, the author of this article would like to presume that this happened due to the contrast between Cui Cui and other girls who hadn't been tanned in the sunshine all year around. In terms of conceptual structure, what the author of source text wants to present here is a healthy and lively “Cui Cui” character image.

The research on the distance iconicity of literary image translation belongs to the microscopic aesthetic research and the study of translation aesthetics should include the macro and micro mode in combination, and systematically observe the translation object from different angles and levels. Objectively speaking, the above four translations

basically follow the iconicity of the distance between linguistic symbols and the distance between conceptual structures, which reflects the iconicity of distance in image translation. "Translation is not only seen as the conversion of different languages, but as communication between different cultures" (Tan, 1999, p.45).

3. QUANTITATIVE ICONICITY IN LITERARY IMAGE TRANSLATION

The phonetic quantitative iconicity, lexical quantitative iconicity, sentence pattern quantitative iconicity and textual structure quantitative iconicity in discourse can highlight the main idea of a text in form and help readers to interpret the construction of discourse theme. (Xu, 2014, p130) Quantitative iconicity refers to the iconicity correspondence between linguistic signs and the number of concepts, that is, the number and complexity of concepts expressed by people are directly proportional to the number of linguistic units and inversely proportional to the predictability.

3.1 Quantitative Iconicity

Quantitative iconicity is an indispensable means in the creative process of discourse producers. The author of a text will make some special arrangements from the number of language forms such as pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence pattern and even discourse structure, so as to highlight the idea and theme to be expressed. If readers realize this, they can quickly understand the theme and the author's intention of the text according to the quantitative form of linguistic signs (Xu, 2014, p.132).

The idea that poetry quantity iconicity stylistic effect stressed that long poetic lines can express the length, distance and continuity through the reflection iconicity, or with the aid of metaphor, can further denote the concepts of "big", "tall", "expansion", "stretch", "extension" and "wide"; And "the short poetic lines can be used to define the concepts of either small, such as shrinkage, inadequacy and narrow, at the same time it can also mean loss, blankness and singleness." Hiraga (1994) believes that "the more forms a language has, the more meanings it has. The more information people express the larger and more complex their language forms tend to be. Zhang Min (1997) also believes that "the complexity of linguistic forms reflects the complexity of concepts: relatively simple concepts are generally expressed by relatively simple linguistic forms, while relatively complex concepts are generally expressed by relatively complex linguistic structures."

According to Cleanth & Robert (2004), "Good discourse always has a rhythm that readers can perceive: it reads as if it is going somewhere, and this sense of direction is often implicit in its rhythmic composition". As Xu Honge (2014, p.132) pointed out: the sentence "I

came, I saw, I conquered" has a very strong quantitative iconicity. If the sentence is changed to "I came, saw, and I conquered." according to Standard English grammar, its expression effect on the subject will be greatly reduced. The typical feature of this sentence pattern is to put together three short sentences with the same subject "I", without the cumbersome conjunction "and", so that the rhythm of the sentence is simple and bright, just like Julius Caesar's conquest of Europe, with the speed of the autumn wind sweeping the leaves; At the same time, the repeated use of "I" not only does not make the sentence redundant, but also emphasizes and better reveals the arrogant personality of "I" from the form, and fully shows the main theme of Caesar's successful conquest of Europe and arrogant personality.

3.2 Case Analysis of Quantitative Iconicity

In the translation of *Bian Cheng*, the quantity and iconicity of image translation is obvious in the following paragraph of the description of the Chadong area. From the source text, it can be seen that Chadong is surrounded by mountains and rivers and provides with rich imagination.

Table 2
Example of quantitative iconicity of literary image translation

原文	茶峒地方凭水依山筑城，近山的一面，城墙如一条长蛇，缘山爬去。临水一面则在城外河边留出余地设码头，湾泊小小篷船。
Translated by Kinkley	Chadong was built between the river and the mountains. On the land side, the city wall crept along the mountain contours like a snake. On the waterside, tiny boats with awnings berthed along wharves constructed on the land between the all and the river.
Translated by Gladys	Chatung stands wedged between the river and mountains, its wall in the rear coiling like a snake on the hillside. By the wharves outside the front section of the wall a host of small crafts lie at anchor.
金&白译	Ch'a-t'ung is surrounded by hills and water. On one side the walls of the city crawl up along the hills like a serpent, and on the other side there was a small space between the wall and the river where the junks anchored.
项&辛译	Chatung city was built along the river and hills rose up on one side; on that side the walls climbed the mountain like a long snake. Outside the city wall along the river a small bit of ground was set aside as a row of docks for ferries and small junks.

Language symbols are similar to people's cognitive way and to a certain extent resemble our cognitive world. They mirror their meanings in sound, shape or structure (Wang, 2011, p.155).

Quantitative iconicity of speech Phonological quantitative iconicity refers to the expression of more meanings through multiple identical or similar sounds (Xu, 2014, p.131). It can be found in the above source language that the word before the first comma of the

first sentence of the source text is “city” and the last word is “boat”. And in the middle of the text, there is a word “city wall”. From the perspective of phonetics, this paragraph is characterized by rhyme at the end. When readers appreciate the source text, the phenomenon of rhyme at the end can produce a poetic feeling of cadence. In Kinkley’s translation, the words “On the land side” and “On the Water-side” are also phonetically alliterative and catchy. The rhyming effect of “side” such as “On one side” and “On the other side” also appeared in Jin & Payne’s translation, while Xiang & Xin’s translation not only appeared “On one Side” and “On that side”, There are even two other words, “Outside” and “aside,” which form a wonderful rhyming symphony with the text’s “like.” In Gladys’ translation, the rhymes of “hillside” and “outside” also produce a certain sense of aural beauty.

3.3 Word Number Iconicity

In the source text in the table above, the word “water” appears twice and the word “mountain” appears three times. Kinkley uses “mountain” twice and “water” three times. In Gladys’ translation, “mountain” and “Hillside” appear once each, and “water” only once. In Jin & Payne’s translation, “hill” and “water” appear twice each, while in Xiang & Xin’s translation, “Hill” and “mountain” appear once each, and “water” appears twice. For the description of the geographical location and scenery of the town of Chadong, “relying on water and mountains” is the best description and description. Therefore, Mr. Shen Congwen emphasized “water” and “mountain” in the original text of *Bian Cheng*, so the frequency of words appeared is higher than that of other paragraphs. In four different translations, Kinkley follows the author’s original intention consciously or unconsciously, using “water” and “mountain” five times in total. “Water” and “mountain” appear four times each in Jin & Payne’s translation and Xiang & Xin’s, but only three times in Gladys’ translation.

In his article *Patterns of Lexis in Text*, Michael Hoey, a famous British linguist, proposed that lexical cohesion is mainly reflected in lexical repetition. The types of lexical repetition defined by Hoey (1991) are: Simple lexical repetition, Complex lexical repetition, Simple paraphrase, Complex paraphrase, Superordinate/Hyponymic repetition, Co-reference, and demonstrative pronouns, personal pronouns, “so”, “do”, etc. It can be seen from the information factors in the source text of *Bian Cheng* that the repeated occurrence of “mountain” and “water” belongs to simple lexical repetition, because they are lexical items that appear repeatedly in the text, and the category and word form remain unchanged when repeated. This simple word repetition has a strong stylistic intention. As we all know, when a certain information factor is repeated, it has the poetical effect of emphasis and intertextuality. From the statistical results of four

different translations, it can be seen that the translators have a good understanding of the author’s intention in the source text, and demonstrate the iconic effect in terms of the number of words.

3.4 Quantitative Iconicity in Sentence Pattern

The original text of *The Border Town* is: “The place of Tea Cave builds a city by the water on the side of the mountain. On the side of the mountain, the city wall looks like a long snake, crawling along the mountain. On the water side, there is room for a dock beside the river outside the city, and a small awning boat is parked in the bay.” Among them, the sentence pattern is characterized by the full expression of parallel structure, “Near the side of the mountain, the wall is like a long snake, climbing to the edge of the mountain.” And “on the water side outside the city to leave room for the river set up a dock, bay park small sailboat.” The antithesis structure, such as ancient poems or couplets, is typical of an iconicity. It reflects the author’s highly condensed language art, especially the “near the mountain” and “near the water” form a rigorous antithesis effect, so that readers can get the literary and cultural enjoyment like chanting poetry. As Shen Dan (1998, p.183) pointed out, “In our view, the discourse of “narcology” and the style of “stylistics” should complement each other. In the study of fiction, we should get rid of the limitation of the traditional study of poetry, and focus on the artistic arrangement of the story events in the text according to the characteristics of narrative works. But at the same time we should recognize that the novelist’s choices in phonetics or writing, vocabulary, imagery, sentence patterns, the way sentences are connected, and so on, are not unimportant. These categories are also where the novel’s artistry lies. This point has been proved by the critical practice of many problem scientists. So we need to avoid playing favorites. The same applies to literary translation. In other words, in the process of literary image translation, the comparison of the number and contextual cohesion between the source language and the target language is also an important part of literary translation research

Gladys’ translation is as follows, “Chatung stands wedged between the river and mountains, its wall in the rear coiling like a snake on the hillside. By the wharves outside the front section of the wall a host of small crafts lie at anchor.”

In the image translation, the information factor in the first half has been better preserved. In the image translation of the latter half, “on the one side near the water, there is room to set up a dock by the river outside the city, and a small awning boat is parked in the bay. It is translated into a sentence, but there is no obvious structural echo with the first part, which may affect the aesthetic and poetic effect of the whole translation. Jin & Payne’s translation and Xiang & Xin’s translation seem

to be structurally similar to Gladys's translation, but the translation of Jin & Payne's translation "Ch'a-t'ung is surrounded by hills and water. On one side the walls of the city crawl up along the hills like a serpent, and on the other side there was a small space between the wall and the river where the junks anchored." "On one side" and "On the other side" are still used to form a certain similar structure with the original text, so as to achieve better poetic effect compared with Gladys and Xiang & Xin's translation. In addition, from the use of long and short sentences, it is clear that Kinkley's choice of sentence length closely follows the sentence pattern and structure of the original Border Town.

Haiman points out that "The complexity of form corresponds to the complexity of thought" (Haiman, 1985, p.147). On the contrary, quantitative iconicity means that "the fewer linguistic forms, the more predictability." Toury (1995, pp.58-59) thinks that "if the translator obeys the source language norm, the translation is inclined to have "adequacy" in China; If the translator follows the norms of the target language, the translation tends to have "acceptability". Preparatory norms refer to translators' consideration of translation policies and "directness" of translation. Operation regulation refers to the distribution pattern of language materials in the text and the way of expression of the text. It can be concluded from the above translation analysis that the translator follows the norms of the source language, so the translation tends to be "adequate". That is, the image information factor of the original text is fully transmitted. For target language readers, the translated text fully conveys the information factor of the original text, which enables readers to have close contact with the town of the Chadong through imagination, thus deepening their feelings and cognition of the town of the Chadong, and helping readers to understand the story and integrate into the beautiful story of *Bian Cheng*. Liu Miqing (2012, p.69, p.110) mentions the problem of form: "As far as translation aesthetics is concerned, the study of linguistic aesthetics in translation is the primary problem. He believes that the beauty of language exists in two systems: the formal system and the non-formal system." And quantity iconicity in literary imagery translation problems belong to the category of formal system, since the number of iconicity meet the requirements of unity in the formal system, will further positively affect the content of the informal system, while the informal system has the characteristics such as fuzziness, uncertainty and integrity, mainly displays in the modern, image and artistic conception, etc."(Ibid, p.148) In other words, the quantitative iconicity reflected in the translation ensures the continuity and representation of the character image information in the target language to some extent .

CONCLUSION

The iconicity demonstrated in the above analysis is of great importance when we observe the process and outcome of the translation versions. Though the translations vary from one to another, the image translation process is rigidly confined within the framework of the translated versions compared with the source text. It is safe to say, distance and quantity iconicity play a vital role in evaluating the target texts.

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