

A Rhetoric Analysis of the Conversation Translation in the Novel *The Great Gatsby*

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Abstract

In the novel, the dialogue between different characters can describe people's character more directly and vividly. Novelists especially emphasize character personality shaping through personalized language. In the novel, *The Great Gatsby* the persons' personality can be reflected through the translation of the dialogue between persons. In conversation translation, the original style of the dialogue was retained. When the conversation was translated the context should be complied.

Key words: Rhetorical analysis; Dialogue translation; Personality character

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INTRODUCTION

In the novel the dialogue between persons can shape the character image more directly and vividly besides the expressions of the exact examples. The novelists require the characters to express themselves through the dialogue which equals to be open to the readers to show the true ego. Therefore the novelists especially emphasize character personality shaping through personalized language. In the works translating it seems especially important to translate the dialogue vividly which is also the important reference to test the translator's translation accomplishment. It is not easy to both be faithful to the source language and think of the target language

readers' reading habit. Here the translation versions of Wu Ningkun's and Chenghuang's are contrasted with the original works to analyze how the translation words are used to embody the character and spirit of the original works and to discuss the advantages and disadvantages.

About the translation of persons' dialogues in the novel some experts and scholars commented a lot. For example Yu Yungeng pointed that the good translation of persons' dialogue is the key to ensure the quality of the translation version in the book of *The Comparison between British and American Famous Works*. In order to translate the persons' dialogue well many factors should be considered such as the person's identity including his education and family background and so on, the feature of the characters and the context in skill. The conversations between the big men are concise and full of vitality. Certainly the skipping of the language is largely to highlight the feature of the oral language. The following is some exact examples.

1. SHOWING PEOPLE'S PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

Mencius says, "appearance and sound then prefigurative". Yang Xiong also says, "The sound is the reflection of the inner heart." A person's character and his inner feelings are often expressed through his voice, that is to say, his remarks are more or less expressing his true inner thought. This original language can directly reflect a person's true feature. In the dialogue in the original languages are developed in the specific situation which is consistent with the person's identity and character. The character of the heroine Daisy can be seen from the following dialogue.

I told her I had stopped off in Chicago for a day on my way east, and how a dozen people had sent their love through me. "Do they miss me?" she cried ecstatically. "The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rearwheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there's a persistent wail all night along the north shore." "How gorgeous! Let's go back, Tom. Tomorrow!"

Wu's translation: 我告诉她我到东部来的途中曾在芝加哥停留一天, 有十来个朋友都拖我向她问好. “他们想念我吗?” 她欣喜若狂地喊道. “全城都凄凄惨惨. 所有的汽车都把左后轮漆上了黑漆当花圈, 沿着城北的湖边整夜哀声不绝于耳.” “太美了! 汤姆, 咱们回去吧. 明天!”

Cheng's translation: 我告诉她, 我中途在芝加哥逗留了一天, 有十几个人让我代为转达他们对她的问候. “他们有没有想我?” 她嚷道, 脸上挂着迷茫的表情. “全城的人都在为你的离开而伤心, 所有的汽车左后轮都被漆成黑色, 表示他们哀伤的心情, 北岸的人们整夜哀伤.” “太好了! 咱们回去吧, 汤姆, 明天就起程!”

This conversation shows Daisy's personality full of vanity, exaggeration and disguise. When other people pass greeting to her, she made it become an earth-shaking affair to shout ecstatically asking whether they missed her. Callaway's answer was so wonderful and his compliment was not only satisfied Daisy's vanity and meanwhile he mocked at her vanity without being seen. Of course Callaway's remarks also reflected his acute certainty and super calmness towards the people around him as an onlooker and narrator. After his first short meeting with Daisy he mastered the character of Daisy and began to have a conversation with her quickly and skillfully. It was maybe the intention of the writer to endow his role to embody the narrator's character. The two translation versions convey the writer's original willingness quite well. Certainly there are some improper points especially about the sentence “there's a persistent wail all night along the north shore” in which about the translation and understanding of the phrase “persistent wail”. In Wu's translation obviously he referred to the car while Cheng's translation he thought that it was people in the north bank wailing. Indeed there was no action operator of persistent wail and in the structure of “there be”. It was only inferred from the context. Wu translated it into the car's wailing just because of the subject of “all the cars” so it was literally translated into “汽车的哀声不绝于耳”. But the sentence is made up of the two coordinate clauses with and; the subjects before and after are not consistent. Combined with the former sentence “The whole town is desolate”, it could be explained that since the whole town was miserable, there were not only cars in the city but also including the people there especially to think about the people in the city making carnival noise all night long as wailing. In this way people and cars all felt sad for Daisy's departure. The exaggerating degree was strengthened. It was no doubt that the aesthetic effect has been got. Therefore it was better for Cheng's translation. Another example in the seventh chapter of the novel in the climax there was a quarrelling among the three people Daisy, Gatsby and Tom in a hotel. “Wait a minute,” snapped Tom, “I want to ask Mr. Gatsby one more question.” “Go on.” Gatsby said politely. “What kind of a row are you trying to cause in my house anyhow?” “He isn't causing a row,” Daisy looked desperately from one to the other. You are causing a row. Please have a little self-control.” “Self-

control!” repeated Tom incredulously, “I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. nobody from nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that's the idea you can count me out. ... Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white.”

Wu's translation: “等一会,” 汤姆厉声道, “我还要问盖茨比一个问题.” “请问吧.” 盖茨比很有礼貌地说. “你到底想在我家制造什么样的纠纷” “他没制造纠纷,” 黛西惊惶地看看这一个又看看那一个, “你在制造纠纷, 请你自制一点儿.” “自制” 汤姆不能置信地重复道, “我猜想最时髦的事情大概是装聋作哑, 让不知从哪儿冒出来的阿猫阿狗跟你老婆调情. 哼, 如果那样才算时髦, 你可以把我除外... 这年头人们开始对家庭制度嗤之以鼻, 再下一步他们就该抛弃一切, 搞黑人和白人通婚了.”

This conversation developed among the three people, Gatsby, Daisy and Tom. Tom said most among them and his character showed fully. When Daisy asked him to be self-control, he was almost mad and made a comment giving Gatsby and Daisy hell about their behavior. Although in the beginning Tom called Gatsby Mr. later he said roughly later alleging with other bad names. So it could be seen that Tom's rough character was hard to be hidden and the tail of the fox would not be hidden. In the choice of the words “snapped” and “repeated incredulously” were used in the original works to lead to Tom's remarks. Compared with Gatsby, Gatsby was very gentle and he spoke politely which can reflect his gentle character. Except showing the different character of people in the dialogue, the differences between the people in different educated degrees can also be revealed in the conversation. This point can be shown obviously in the conversation of a gang leader Wolf Sam. The writer intentionally showed this point with the dialogue. Look at the following example : (A) “I handed the money to Katspaugh and I sid, ‘All right, Katspaugh, don't pay him a penny till he shuts his mouth.’ He shouts it then and there.” (B) “It was four o'clock in the morning then, and if we'd of raised the blinds we'd of seen daylight.” (C) “I underst and you're looking for a business gonnegtion.” (D) “He is an oggsford man.”

In sentence A “sid” should be said, so the readers can see his pronunciation was inaccurate. In sentence B the two “of” are obviously misused which is not complied with the English grammar rules. In sentence C “gonnegtion” is the mispronunciation of the word connection. Although in American English turbidity phenomena is more universal in fact it can be seen his lower cultural accomplishment. In sentence D the word Oggsford obviously belongs to the wrong pronunciation of the word Oxford which is absolutely different from the writer's standard words. Francis recorded his spelling according to his pronunciation. Francis had his intention so obviously that the readers could see even the gang leader could not pronounce famous Oxford University so his vulgar meanness could be seen obviously.

2. RETAINING THE ORIGINAL WORKS' DIALOGUE STYLE

The dialogue is the communication behavior between the two speakers in the literature works, and in this process both sides can achieve the purpose of communication by means of languages and body languages. In the specific context the dialogue can produce the effect of humor, suspension and satire. In the English language the dialogue is mostly brief and short. It is often by the means of the other non-language information and the remarks known by the two sides, so when the dialogue is translated the translator should consider these factors. In the third chapter of the novel when the narrator of the story Callaway and Gatsby first met their dialogue was rather dramatic. The translator considered this feature fully and dealt with it quite wonderfully, retaining the dialogue style of the original works well. Look at the following example: It was on the tip of my tongue to ask his name when Jordan looked around and smiled. "Having a gay time now?" she inquired. "Much better." I turned again to my new acquaintance. "This is an unusual party for me. I haven't seen the lost. I live over there." I waved my hand at the invisible hedge in the distance," and this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur with an invitation." For a moment he looked at me as if he failed to understand. "I am Gatsby," he said suddenly. "what!" I exclaimed. "Oh, I beg your pardon." "I thought you knew, old sport. I'm not a very good host."

Wu's translation: 我已经话到嘴边想问他的名字, 这时乔丹调转头来朝我一笑。"现在玩得快活吧?" 她问。"好多了"我又调转脸来对着我的新交, "这对我来说是个奇特的晚会。我连主人都还没见到呢。我就住在那边....."我朝着远处看不见的树篱笆把手一挥, "这位姓盖茨比的派他的司机过来送了一份请帖。他朝我望了一会儿, 似乎没听懂我的话。"我就是盖茨比"他突然说。"什么"我叫了一声, "哦, 真对不起。" "我还以为你知道哩, 老兄, 我恐怕不是个很好的主人。"

This conversation developed between Callaway and Jordan first. Knowing Gatsby, Jordan naturally knew that the gentleman who communicated with Callaway was Gatsby. So he inquired "Have a good time?" for the host of the banquet himself chatted with the guest Callaway. Wu's translation is not inflexible and it was not translated as "现在玩得快活吗" So Wu surmised Jordan's mind when he remarked at that moment. While Callaway's casual remarks made the following conversation becomes dramatic. When Gatsby pointed out his identity, Callaway obviously seemed so embarrassed. It was no wonder that he shouted "What!" and then made an apology at once. As the host Gatsby did not make Jordan so shamed and he took the responsibility by himself. The readers can see that he was tolerant enough and self-restraint which is consistent with his character. Wu's direct translation embodied the dialogue style of the original works quite well. In the sixth chapter of the novel Tom and other persons rode the horses to Gatsby's house. The following dialogue fully shows the character of the conversation

in the oral language. "Did you have a nice ride?" "Very good roads around here." "I suppose the automobiles..." "Yeah" Wu's translation: "你们骑马骑得很痛快吧" "这一带的路很好。" "大概来往的汽车....." "是嘛。" Chen's translation: "骑马玩得怎么样" "我这里的路很好。" "我想汽车把....." "是的, 没错。"

The language leaping in this brief conversation is great and its difference with the written language is obvious. Firstly the identities of the guest and the host are only embodied through the dialogue content. In the original works there were not suggesting words about somebody's question or somebody's answer. Secondly between the question and answer there were no direct questions and direct answers. The answerer can answer indirectly or avoid answering and even put forward the different topic completely changing with the different situations. For example the first sentence was Gatsby's question and he used the form of the general question. Normally the listener should express his opinion positively with the answer "yes" or "no". Just because of the unimportant question here the question itself was only greetings which are similar with the Chinese oral language. So the listener's answer was just the sentence "very good roads around here." It seems completely irrelevant with the question. It just seems to ask the question "what about the road here?" In fact it answered the question "ride happily" broadways. Such expression exists both in Chinese and English oral languages. Look at the third sentence and the automobiles were mentioned which seemed puzzled. When listening in the beginning it was as if to stray from the topic but actually it was not. Here the speaker only spoke a half sentence. The listener Gatsby answered right away "Yeah."

The readers who are familiar with the novel should know the other half sentence which was not spoken. It generally meant that the road was well grinded by the coming automobiles. It hinted that the people who entered Gatsby's department were rich men riding their automobiles. So Gatsby answered "Yeah" before the guests finished their remarks. All this showed that Gatsby was satisfied and confident with his plan. If the short conversation has been analyzed deeply the deep intention of the original writer could be seen. Two translation versions all basically retain the style of the original works without adding the additional hinting words like somebody's question and somebody's answer to destroy the beauty of the original sentence. Wu's translation is better than Cheng's. "是嘛" this word can express Gatsby's felling of pride. "是的, 没错。" This translation both adds the words and seems a little plain without showing Gatsby's mind at that moment.

3. COMPLYING WITH THE CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

Context refers to the environment to use language which includes linguistic environment and implication

environment. The novel context is formed by all kinds of linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors which are adaptive with the styles of the novels. The context factors include the context related with the words, time, space, situation and people's mindset and status attainment. As the common sense of linguistics people all knows that only in the specific situation the meaning of a certain word is fixed. When in translating except for the careful analysis for a certain exact word the choice of the word should be considered all its meaning and still to be combined with the exact context. Some additional contents should be often added and dealt with. Compare several examples between Wu's translation and Cheng's translation to expound. In the first chapter when Nick visited Daisy and Daisy as well as her guests came to the balcony where the sun shone seeing the four candles weaving in the wind and she was angry shouting "Why candles?" objected Daisy frowning.

Wu's translation: "点蜡烛干什么" 黛西皱着眉头表示不悦。

Cheng's translation: "为什么要点蜡烛" 黛西皱起眉头表示反对。

Here although there was no answer about Daisy's question, the listener was not sure because of the context. It can be understood that both the servants in the home and the person who lit the candle in Daisy's heart. The answer is not important. When Daisy spoke she put out the candle accordingly. The translation language is flexible about the choice of the oral word "点" not the written word "点燃". It is obvious that the translation is complied with the context. If only to translate it "为什么蜡烛", it is neither accorded with the Chinese expression and also makes people puzzled. In translating dialogue the translators are often required to add some words to make the language be smooth according to the context. In this way it is easier for the target language reader to understand.

Another example "Please come and see me" "Phone book" "Under the name of Mrs. Sigourney Howard" "My aunt....."

Cheng's translation: "有时间来看我吧.....电话本上找西戈尼霍华德太太, 那是我姑妈.....?"

Wu's translation: "有空请过来看我.....电话簿.....西古奈霍华德太太名下.....我姑妈.....?"

Jordan said that when he said goodbye to Nick in a hurry. The leaping word was great in the original sentence. Cheng's translation is natural and fluent when he added some illustrative words in translating. He told clearly the person who was connected and the name in the telephone book who was the Jordan's aunt suggesting that she lived with her aunt. Wu's translation belongs to the literal translation without adding some explanatory words to point out the relationship between Jordan and the lady Howard. If the readers don't read the whole novel they will have questions. What's the relationship between calling Jordan and the lady Howard. Who is my

aunt? Meanwhile Wu's translation "有空请过来看我" which seems rigid and lacks oral language. It is inferior to Cheng's translation "有时间来看我吧". It also doesn't show affection between Jordan and Nick who are lovers. Obviously here Cheng's translation is better than Wu's. Another example "I had a woman up here last week to look at my feet, and when she gave the bill you'd of thought she had my appendicitis out.

Wu's translation: 上星期我找个女的来看看的脚, 等她把账单给我, 你还以为她给我割了阑尾哩。

It is not hard to understand the original works combined with the context. It was Mrs. Wilson who complained about a woman who looked at her feet last week and asked for a high price. The price for looking at the feet was almost the same with the price for having her appendicitis out, which made her feel astonished. But Wu's translation was puzzled and it was easy for people to understand the woman who looked at Mrs. Wilson's feet wrongly gave the bill to her. Obviously here it is necessary to add more illustrative information to help readers to remove the understanding ambiguity. Compared with Cheng's translation, Cheng translated successfully. It was translated as the following: 上个礼拜, 我找了个女人来帮我看脚, 可是她收取的费用让我觉得她好像是给我割掉了阑尾。

Look at another example. "I've been lying on that sofa for as long as I can remember."

Wu's translation: 我在那张沙发上躺了不知多久。

Cheng's translation: 我都不知道自己坐在那里有多久了。

In this sentence about the part "as long as I can remember", the two translation versions all consider the target language acceptance habit. The literal meaning of this part is "像我记忆所及的那样长" which is positive in meaning. The translated language was converted into the negative form "不知多久了". Obviously this is a proper statement according to the context from which the creative labor can be seen by the translators.

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