Study on Linguistic Arts of Xu Zhimo's Defamiliarized Poetry Translation

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Abstract

This article makes an analysis of Xu Zhimo's poetry translation from linguistic aspects such as defamiliarized lexicon, defamiliarized syntax, defamiliarized textual organization, defamiliarized figures of speech. An objective and just appraisal was given to the translation from the social cultural background of the May Fourth Period. Xu Zhimo's defamiliarized language is thought to be the result of his seeking for novelty and the result of the translator's ideology influenced by the Vernacular Movement of the May Fourth Period.

Key words: Xu Zhimo; Defamiliarization; Poetry translation; The Vernacular Movement

INTRODUCTION

As an important poet, author and translator of Chinese modern literature history, Xu Zhimo left us with a good deal of translation works, ranging from poems, novels, dramas to essays. As far as his short life is concerned, his works are relatively abundant. Although Xu Zhimo had translated about 80 poems, only 66 poems of them were adopted in *Xu Zhimo's Collection of Poems* and *The Complete Works of Xu Zhimo*, the reason of which is that some of them are only fragments. Among the 66 poems, 51 poems are from English, and 15 are translated indirectly from English (Gao, 2009).

The past decades have witnessed negative comments about his poem, such as "not mature enough" (Lin, 1984); "using awkward language" and "full of translationese" (Liu, 1999). Bian Zhilin prefaced in *Xu Zhimo's Translation Poems* that it is easy for him to follow Whitman's style. He is successful in translating Whitman's free verse of long lines on account of his being adept in paralleled stuffing syntax. As far as the translation of *The Carcass* by Baudelaire is concerned, it is a failure both in form and in spirit. As for his translation of Hardy's works, his adoption of brief and oral language makes it nearer to the original (Xu, 1989). Whether what has been mentioned above is fair or not, Xu Zhimo's translated works have the characteristics of being difficult to understand for target language readers.

Recent years have witnessed fairer and fairer comments on Xu Zhimo's translated poems. Some scholars have taken into consideration the Vernacular social cultural background of the May Fourth Period, some make a study of him as a translator. However, up till now, with regard to the linguistic arts of Xu Zhimo's translated poems, few study has been made before. So the author is to make an intensive study with social cultural background and the author's ideology taken into consideration and defamiliarization as the theoretical framework.

1. THE THEORY OF DEFAMILIARIZATION

Defamiliarization was first coined in 1917 by Viktor Shklovsky, a Russian formalist representative in his essay "*Art as Device*" (Crawford, 2008), who holds that art is a process of "defamiliarization". The technique of art is

to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged (Shklovsky, 1998). Shklovsky invented the term as a means to "distinguish poetic from practical language on the basis of the former's perceptibility" (Crawford, 2008). A work is created "artistically" so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception (Shklovsky, 1998).

Defamiliarization was later applied to literary fields by postmodernists to describe some special literary phenomena of dramatic literature by German formalist at the beginning of 20th century. In their works, defamiliarized language is used by writers and poets to create novelty of the theme and the image etc.. Any literary forms are not strictly imitation or representation of reality, but purposeful deviation, rebellion, deformation or alienation (Zhang, 2000).

Defamiliarization was introduced to translation studies by scholars such as Jiri Levy, Anton Popovic and Frantisek Miko, who hold that defamiliarization is to be adopted in the translated works by using creative methods (Jing, 2000). In China, it is Chen Lin who first defined defamiliarized translation as follows, during the transference from one language to another in literature, methods such as alienization or hybridization are utilized so as to produce novelty and aesthetic delight for target language readers (Chen, 2009).

In literary works, defamiliarization exists in lexical, phonetic, syntactic and textual aspects. It is used to intensify literariness and produce better artistic effects. (Jin, 2000) It is usually purposeful deviation for the source text (Sun, 2003) , the aim of which is to increase the artistic effects of the work and motivate the target language readers' interests (Chen, 2008). It is not only the demand of translation aesthetics, but also translation ethics. Defamiliarization in the target language can help us to produce new modern language, ……new words, new syntax as well as delicate and precise expression (Qu, 1985)

2. LINGUISTIC ARTS OF XU ZHIMO'S DEFAMILIARIZED POETRY TRANSLATION

Xu Zhimo adopted defamiliarized language after he came back to China from abroad. Since September 1922, he began to use vernacular Chinese instead of metrical poetry in his translation. And the uncommon indented stanza in his poetry translation is to increase the diversity of rhythm in his poetry and intensify the perception difficulties of aesthetic subjects (Chen, 2008). Xu Zhimo's defamiliarized language is embodied in defamiliarized lexicon, syntax, textual organization and figures of speech.

2.1 Defamiliarized Lexicon
In literary works, the coinage of new vocabulary, the use of foreign vocabulary is usually utilized to achieve special artistic effects. The new and defamiliarized vocabularies will be barriers for the target language readers, but at the same time arouse the readers' interest. In Xu Zhimo's poetry translation, transliteration and infrequently used vocabularies are adopted to attain this aim.

2.1.1 Transliteration
Transliteration is frequently used in Xu Zhimo's poetry translation. For example, "angel" is rendered into "安琪儿", "Ilium" into "易列姆", "Pygmalion" into "翩格梅利昂", "Raphael" into "拉飞尔"; "Galatea" into "加拉梯亚", "Apollo" into "阿普鲁", "Endymion" into "应第迷昂", and "Paris" into "巴黎士" etc.. Since these vocabularies were totally new to people in the 1920s or 1930s, they will produce novelty and arouse the curiosity of target language readers.

2.1.2 Infrequently Used Vocabularies
In Xu Zhimo's poetry, new vocabulary such as "骇异的拿把" (dread grasp), "擘画(frame), "不安命" (sweat), "倒运" (off-hand), "微粲"（no corresponding word, "青天微粲地俯看" is rendered into "the sky watched"). These vocabulary was not frequently used either in colloquial or written language, the aim of which is to produce novelty for target language readers.

2.2 Defamiliarized Syntax
Defamiliarized syntax refers to the deviation of syntax or the syntax contradictory to the normal one in literary works, which are represented by English word order, changes in parts of speech, uncommon collocation, partial sentence constituents etc.. (Tian , 2014) Although Xu Zhimo had a good command of both Chinese and English, uncommon collocation is frequently used in his poetry translation. Besides, English word order and changes of parts of speech have also been utilized by him.

2.2.1 English Word Order
In Xu Zhimo's poetry translation, English word order was frequently used. In titles such as "多么深我的苦" (*How Great My Grief*), "送他的葬" (*At His Funeral*), "在火车中的一次心软" (*Faint Heart in a Railway Train*), the English word order is to intensify the target language readers' reading difficulties. Similarly, in Hardy's *Her Initials*, "but from the letters of her name" is rendered into "但她的名字的鲜艳"; and the last line of "I sat by the dying fire, and thought/of the clear dead woman upstairs." in O. Meredith's *The Portrait* is rendered into "冥念楼上我爱的妇人已死". In Christina Rossetti's *The Hour and the Ghost* (新鬼与旧鬼), "And I cannot withhold" is rendered into "我抵抗他的强暴无法".

In fact, it is the English word order that makes Xu Zhimo well-known to almost everyone in China. In his famous poem *Farewell to Cambridge,* although the

famous line "轻轻的我走了" (Very quietly I take my leave) is not normal Chinese syntax, it has been accepted by more and more Chinese readers with the changing of time. In the same poem, the inversion of "沉默是今晚的康桥" (Silent is Cambridge tonight) is also used to achieve defamiliarized effects.

2.2.2 Changes of Parts of Speech

Sometimes changes of parts of speech are used in target language to make it defamiliarized. This phenomenon does not frequently appear in Xu Zhimo's poetry translation. In Hardy's *Her Initials*, "Whence that high singer's rapture came" is rendered as "曾经灵感那歌吟者的欢欣", "灵感" is a denominal verb to achieve defamilizarized effects. Similarly, in *I Look into My Glass* by Hardy, "My heart had shrunk as thin" is rendered as "使我的心，变成一般的瘦损", the adjective "瘦损" is used as a verb to increase the target language readers' reading time and intensify their aesthetic perception.

2.2.3 Uncommon Collocation

Uncommon collocation appears frequently in Xu Zhimo's poetry translation, for example, "枯萎了的心" (distrest) and "消瘦了的身影" (wasting skin) in Hardy's *I Look into My Glass*（窥镜）; "看护着他的呼吸" (And watch'd with eagerness each throb that drew) in G. G. Byron's *Don Juan* Canto 2; "冷酷的暴烈的海" (cold strong sea）, "寂寞的冷落的冬夜" (lone cold winter) and "脆弱的良心" (fair frail sin) in Christina Rossetti's *The Hour and the Ghost* (新婚与旧鬼); "感动了她悲慈的灵府" (Disturb'd her soul with pity) and "我蹰躇的歌声" (my faltering voice) in S.T. Coleridge's *Love*; and "你冷漠的箭镞" (forgetfulness in thine) in Lord Byron's *Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells*.

Besides, "骄傲的道上" and "骄傲的火炬" in Tagore Rabindaranath's *Thanks Giving* (translated indirectly from the English version) also belongs to uncommon collocation.

2.3 Defamiliarized Textual Organization

Defamiliarized textual organization refers to uncommon time sequence, spatial sequence, logical sequence or uncommon pattern of manifestation, the aim of which is to intensify the aesthetic delights of target language readers. In Xu Zhimo's poetry translation, defamiliarized indented lines and defamiliarized rhythm are used.

2.3.1 Defamiliarized Indented Lines

In his poetry translation, Xu Zhimo either imitated the indented lines of the source text or use his own creative indented form to intensify the rhythm of the target language. Xu Zhimo is very free in his indented lines, since there is no rules, the following are only some of the examples.

Example 1: Love (S.T. Coleridge)

思想, 热情, 快乐,	ALL thoughts, all passions, all delights,
凡能激动这形骸,	Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
都（无非）是恋爱的臣属,	All are but ministers of love,
增（助长）她圣神的火焰.	And feed his sacred flame.

Examle 2：哈代八十六诞日自述　　A Reflection on My Eight-Sixth Birthday (Thomas Hardy)

好的, 世界, 你没有骗我.	Well, world, you have faith with me,
你没有冤我,	Kept faith with me;
你说怎么来是怎么来.	Much as you said you were.
你的信用倒真是不坏,	Upon the whole you have proved to be,
打我是个孩子我常躺,	Since as a child I used to lie,
在青草地里对着天望,	Upon the leaze and watch the sky,
说实话我从不曾希冀,	Never, I own, expected I,
人生有多么艳丽.	That life would all be fair.

Example 3: To Life (Thomas Hardy)

人生, 你满脸的忧愁与干枯.	O life with the sad seared face,
我不耐烦看着你,	I weary of seeing thee,
还有你的泥污的衣,你的踉跄的步.	And thy draggled cloak, and they bobbingpace,
你的过于装作的滑稽！	And they too-forced pleasantry!

2.3.2 Defamiliarized Rhythm

Defamiliarized rhythm refers to the use of rhythm that is different from the target language so as to make it novelty to the target language readers. Although he advocated "new metrical poetry", it is not easy for Xu Zhimo to achieve the rhythm in his translation as it is in his poetry writing.

Example 4：分离　　　　　　　　Division(Thomas Hardy)

急雨打着窗, 震响的门枢,	Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
大风呼呼的, 狂扫过青草地,	With blasts that besom the green,

在这里的我, 在那里的你,	And I am here, and you're there,
中间隔着途程百里！	And a hundred miles between!

Example 5：**公园里的座椅**   **The Garden Seat (Thomas Hardy)**

褪色了, 斑驳了, 这园里的座椅,	Its former green is blue and thin,
原先站得稳稳的, 现在陷落在土里,	And its once firm legs sink in and in;
早晚就会凭空倒下去的,	Soon it will break down unaware,
早晚就会凭空倒下去的.	Soon it will break down unaware.

In Example 4, Hardy uses free verse which adopts the metrical foot of "abcb". In the translated version by Xu Zhimo, a new metrical foot, abbb is used together with defamiliarized indented lines, the aim of which is not only to express the image but to express the beauty in form. In Example 5, the same kind of rhyme "aabb" as the original, along with defamiliarized indented lines is adopted by Xu Zhimo in the translated version to achieve the aesthetic effects.

2.4 Defamiliarized Figures of Speech

Figures of speech are actually a kind of deviation of the common language. In literary works, combination of one or more figures of speech such as personification, pun, repetition, metaphor and zeugma are usually used to achieve defamiliarized effects. In Xu Zhimo's poetry translation, defamiliarized figures of speech include creating new figures of speech in the target language and retaining the figures of speech of the source text. On the one hand, the linguistic characteristics of the source text are expressed, on the other hand, the artistic beauty appeals to the target language readers.

2.4.1 Creating New Figures of Speech in the Target Language

In literary works, creating new figures of speech in the target language is to make the plain language more appealing. The source and target text of Hardy's poem *I Look into My Glass*（窥镜）are as follows:

Example 6 窥镜   I Look into My Glass (Thomas Hardy)

For then, I, undistrest	因为枯萎了的心, 不再感受
By hearts grown cold to me	人们渐次疏淡我的寒冰
Could lonely wait my endless rest	我自此可以化石似的寂静
With equanimity	孤独地, 静待最后的安宁

In Xu Zhimo's translation, metaphorical words like "枯萎了的心", "寒冰" and "化石似的" are skillfully used to prolong the reading perception and difficulty so as to make it defamiliarized to target language readers.

Similarly, in Hardy's poem *She at His Funeral* (送他的葬), "They bear him to his resting-place——/In slow procession sweeping by" is rendered as "他们送他到他的安息国——/蠕动着一道迂缓的行列". The creation of the defamiliarized words like "蠕动" and "安息国" makes the target texts more readable and increase the target language readers' interest.

2.4.2 Retaining the Figures of Speech of the Source Text

Retaining the figures of speech of the source text which are appealing can also make the target text appealing to the target language readers. In Xu Zhimo's poetry translation, figures of speech are retained in most cases. For example, the former four lines of Hardy's *A Reflection on My Eighty-Sixth*（八十六岁诞日自述）are as follows:

Example 7 八十六岁诞日自述 A Reflection on My Eighty-Sixth (Thomas Hardy)

Well, World, you have kept faith with me	好的, 世界, 你没有骗我,
Kept faith with me;	你没有冤我,
Upon the whole you have proved to be	你说怎么来是怎么来,
Much as you said you were.	你的信用倒真是不坏.

In the source text, "you" means "the world". By means of using metaphorical words like "keep faith with me" and "you said", the aim of personification is achieved. In Xu Zhimo's translated version, words like "骗我", "冤我" and "信用" are used to achieve similar metaphorical effects.

Similarly, by translating "Which, being join'd, like swarming bees they clung" into "花蜂似的胶附着——" in Byron's *Don Juan* Canto 2, similar metaphorical effects are attained in the target language.

3. CAUSES FOR XU ZHIMO'S DEFAMILIARIZED POETRY TRANSLATION

J. Drydon once said: "This only fora poet to translate a poem". In this sense, Xu Zhimo is a best one to translate poems. On the one hand, he had been in English speaking countries for many years and had read many English classics. After coming back to China, he had been teaching many English related courses, so his knowledge of English

is unquestionable (Gao, 2009). On the other hand, he grew up under the influence of traditional Chinese culture and had learned the classics like *The Four Books* and *The Five Classics*, and his Chinese is undoubtedly outstanding. But what on earth are the reasons why his translated works have not been approved by most scholars? The author holds that his defamiliarized language roots from his seeking for novelty and the results of the translator's ideology influenced by the Vernacular Movement of the May Fourth Period.

3.1 The Social Cultural Background of the May Fourth Period: The Vernacular Movement as the Mainstream Poetics

After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, China was severely defeated, which makes some men of insight realize the most important thing was to educate and enlighten people instead of material development. And some scholars even propose abolishing and latinization of Chinese characters in the innovation of classical Chinese.

After the New Culture Movement (around the time of the May 4th Movement in 1919), vernacular Chinese had the tendency of taking the place of classical Chinese. As the head of the New Culture Movement, Hu Shi and his followers holds that vernacular Chinese are easy to understand, which can make up for the weakness of classical Chinese that differ in its written and colloquial form. Besides, in absorbing the foreign culture, the deficiency of vocabularies and expressions in classical Chinese highlights the advantages of vernacular Chinese. However, the vocabularies and syntaxes of vernacular Chinese are far from enough in the process of translation. So the only way out is to Europeanize vernacular Chinese.

Most scholars of the New Culture Movement holds that Europeanized vernacular Chinese is inevitable. (Dai & Zhang, 2004) Hu Shi holds that Europeanized vernacular Chinese is the demand of the new era and the result of assimilation of the foreign language. Besides, it can make Chinese easy in conveying complex thoughts and difficult theories (Liu, 2009).

Europeanized vernacular Chinese is common in Xu Zhimo's poetry translation. The defamiliarized language lies in inputting not only new contents, but new way of expression (Lu, 1973). Consequently, the aim of innovation of classical Chinese is achieved.

3.2 The Ideology of the Translator

In his *Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, Lefevere holds that if the target language readers are taken into consideration, the target text should correspond with the social cultural background of the time. The value orientation of the target language is to correspond with the mainstream poetics and ideology of the time. He also holds that ideology decides on the translating strategies as

well as way of translation for his language and domain of discourse (Lefevere, 1992).

During the May Fourth Period, scholars are partly influenced by Realism and Romanticism in both their writing and translation (Cha, 2000). There is no exception for Xu Zhimo. Apart from his influence from mainstream ideology and poetics, Xu Zhimo's poetry translation is also connected with his disposition and his personal experience. Romanticism is the translation themes of his former part, Realism, his middle part, Mysticism and Pessimism, his later part.

His translation themes range from praise for gifted scholars and beautiful ladies to the gloomy ghosts, from praise for love to death. Xu Zhimo's translation is rather subjective self-representation than collision and coordination of his rebellious character with history and reality (Cai & Mu, 1985).

CONCLUSION

Wang Kefei holds that from the perspective of translation history, the degree of faithfulness in translation does not correspond with its effects in cultural communication. The translators' assimilation is the most important. During the process of translation, the delicate changes such as addition, omission or transformation are what interest the translation scholars (Wang, 1997). So the appraisal of Xu Zhimo's poetry translation should be based on the special social cultural background of the May Fourth Period rather than using the so-called "faithfulness" or "equivalence". The New Culture Movement makes up objective factors of Xu Zhimo's defamiliarized language, and the translator's ideology is the subjective factors of his translation language. The defamiliarized poetic language lies in inputting not only "new contents", but also "new ways of expressions", the result of which is to enrich the vocabularies and expressions of modern Chinese.

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