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Text Analysis and Type of Equivalence in Translations of “The Tell-Tale Heart”

1. Introduction

“The Tell-Tale Heart” is a breathless, frightening monologue of the disintegration of consciousness and conscience due to obsession.

The entire short story is in the form of unidirectional communication as the narrator tries to convince readers that he is not mad. As in most of Poe’s tales, the sense of irony here is acute. Poe reveals the mental turmoil of narrator through clever arrangement in sentence structures, leading us to question the narrator.

Sender-oriented approach will be used, in particular “suprasegmental features” (Nord, 1991), to understand the function of marked textual structure in source text (ST). Comparison will be made between two target texts (TTs), 〈泄密的心〉 and 〈露餡的心跳〉, by Xu Ruchun (徐汝椿) and Sun Fali (孫法理) to explore their respective approaches in dealing with the artistic organization of Poe.

2. Analytic Approach

According to Nord, “The style of the text refers to the way the information is presented to the recipient” (Nord, 1991, P.83). The concept of an ST analysis is merely a description of how textual features are used with intention. Understanding ST shapes an objective framework for TT analysis. Among the eight “intratextual factors”, suprasegmental features (i.e. those that perform analogous functions) (Nord, 1991, P.120) will be targeted. Texts can only perform effects if the recipients are impressionable. In Poe’s ST, readers are placed under the dilemma of judging whether the narrator is sane. On one hand, the narrator tries to defend himself; on the other, Poe exposes his abnormality with syntactic

features. While unnaturally chunked sentences reveals narrator's bizarreness, abundant use of dashes allows readers to glimpse into his thought or as the title suggests the heart of him.

To analyze the styles of 〈泄密的心〉 (TT1) and 〈露餡的心跳〉 (TT2), how functional linguistic patterns in ST are translated will be discussed.

3. Translated text analysis

Differences in translation approaches will be discussed in this section.

3.1. Functional structures in ST

Example 1

ST	TRUE! - nervous - very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?
TT1	對！—我神經過敏，非常，非常過敏，十二萬分過敏，過去是這樣，現在也是這樣；可您幹嘛偏偏說人家瘋了呢？
TT2	真的！我一直神經過敏，現在也過敏，非常非常可怕地過敏！你幹嘛硬要說的是發了瘋呢？

In the opening sentence, Poe already tempts readers into suspecting the unnamed narrator. Repetition in “very, very” and “nervous” intensifies the tension. Not only does the use of punctuations create influent rhythm, these key words can also ‘pop up’ surrounded by dashes and commas. Here, commas and dashes can be regarded as “graphical devices” (Nord, 1991, P.120) which facilitate the tone of emphasis. In TT1, the technique of utilizing graphical devices is followed to achieve similar rhythm, tension and stressing of keywords. Though TT2 also utilizes repetition, its strength of emphasis is not as obvious without graphical punctuations.

Example 2

ST The disease had sharpened my senses - not destroyed - not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell.

TT1 犯了這種病，感覺倒沒失靈，倒沒遲鈍，反而敏銳了。尤其是聽覺，分外靈敏。天上人間的一切聲息全部聽見。陰曹地府的種種聲音也在耳邊。

TT2 我生了病，倒沒有因為感覺被破壞而遲鈍，反倒是特別敏感了，尤其是聽覺，天上的，地下的，種種的聲音我也能聽見。地獄裡的事有許多的也能聽見。

Throughout ST, fragmentation serves various purposes. Here, first half of ST sentence is fragmented to achieve a conversation-like effect, manifesting the communicative nature of ST between narrator and ST readers. As what Nord suggested, syntactic punctuations can provide expressivity to sentences (Nord, 1991, P.125). Chunking of sentence does facilitate ST reader's acoustic imagery towards their communication with the narrator. While communicative nature is preserved in TT1 through the use of commas, it is less obvious in TT2 as the translation is done in a more fluent way for TL readers. The alternation in linguistic pattern in TT2 destroys the underlying signification of punctuations, which is considered as one of the deficiencies under Berman's negative analytic of translation. (Munday, 2012, P.221-223)

In the second half of this sentence, exaggeration and emphasis are showcased in ST's repetition of "I heard...". Comparing the two TTs, a more flexible approach is adopted in TT1 whereas TT2 is more faithful to the positioning of vocabularies within the sentence. Apart from imitating ST's repetitive sentence pattern to achieve exaggeration, tone of emphasis in TT1 is further

stressed with a contrast in degree of intensity. “一切” contrasting with “種種”; “全部聽見” with “也在耳邊”. Placing a relatively more heavily stressed phrase after a less heavily stressed one can strengthen the tension of a sentence. Comparing to TT2, which faithfully follows positioning of wordings, which places “種種”, a relatively stronger expression, before “許多的”, a weaker one, the intended effect of emphasis and exaggeration is better achieved in TT1 with flexibility under TL culture.

Example 3

ST Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult.

TT1 可沒甚麼目的。可沒甚麼怨恨。我愛那老頭。他壓根沒得罪我。他壓根沒侮辱我。

TT2 它沒有目的，也不帶情緒。我原來是很喜歡那老頭的，他也從沒有對不起我，沒有侮辱過我。

Unlike example 2, fragmentation here is more obvious and serves to exhibit a change in mood. Full stops further extend pauses between phrases, as if the narrator is at a sudden loss of word in his monologue. He fails to find a justified reason for his crime and is starting to feel guilty. Style of writing changed drastically from deranged to almost poetic, as if the chaotic and disorganized side of him subsides as guilt arises. In TT1, this sudden change in structure is recognized and a poetic style is followed. TT2, on the other hand, focuses on fluency between the five phrases. They are linked with conjunction “也”. While TT1 preserves the structural effect of ST, TT2

emphasizes on fluency and readability under TL culture and ‘rationalize’ the over-simplified and incoherent ST. (Munday, 2012, P.222)

3.2. Dashes in ST

Example 4

ST He had the eye of a vulture - a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees - very gradually - I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

TT1 他長了一隻鷹眼— 淺藍色的，蒙著層薄膜。只要瞅我一眼，我就渾身發毛；因此心裡漸漸 — 逐步逐步— 打定主意，結果他的性命，好永遠不再瞅見那隻眼睛。

TT2 他那眼睛像鷹，淺藍色，還帶層霧。那眼光一落到我身上，我的血就冰涼，於是逐漸地、非常緩慢地下定了決心要殺死那老頭，永遠擺脫他的那雙眼睛。

Another change in sentence pattern is observed. Suppressed by guilt, the narrator seems to have regained confidence here as he is certain to have found the justified reason for his villainous act. Compared to the conversational-like and chunked sentences, this sentence appears more expressive. Dash, “-”, is typically used for connecting two things that are intimately related, creating continuity. This effect can be experimented on in this example by replacing dashes with commas, which immediately destroy its eloquent rhythm. As graphical devices, dashes not only help in locating readers’ attention towards the narrator’s sudden excitement, they also present a feeling that ST readers are peeking into narrator’s thought with the latter phrases serving as additional remark.

TT1 is more faithful to the mental projection intended by Poe as dashes are used to achieve continuity, contrasting previous sentences, whereas TT2 is fragmented by commas. On the other hand, TT2 is more faithful to the words

used in ST. “blood ran cold” is translated as “血就冰涼” (TT2) rather than “渾身發毛” (TT1); “rid myself of” translated as “永遠擺脫” (TT2) rather than “不再瞅見” (TT1). These completely illustrate how TT2 is leaning towards literal translation. These phrases, however, are directed towards preference of TT readers as they are replaced by Chinese phrases and written in a visualized way to help readers better understand the context so as to facilitate their communication with narrator.

Example 5

ST	-- tear up the planks! here, here! -- it is the beating of his hideous heart!”
TT1	— 撬開地板！— 這兒，這兒！— 他那顆可惡的心在跳呢！
TT2撬開地板吧！就在這兒，就在這兒！老在這兒跳的是他那可怕的心臟！

The tale ends with the only spoken dialogue in the tale as the narrator exposes the corpse of the old man to officers investigating in his house. Unlike the use of dashes in example 4, double dashes, “--”, are used here to indicate that the narrator is at a loss of word, contradicting with his confidence in example 4. Double dashes further prolong pauses between phrases to express hopelessness.

Under TL culture, loss of word is typically indicated by ellipsis “.....”, whereas a long dash “—” is used for providing additional information or bringing out implied meanings in two-part allegorical sayings (歇後語). Although dashes are preserved in TT1, the way they elicit feeling of hopelessness is different from that of ST. Dashes in TT1 seems to resemble their usage in allegorical sayings. They unfold the narrator’s crime and

uncover the truth. Instead of evoking speechlessness, narrator's desperation is implied as TT1 readers witness how the narrator's struggle throughout the tale is in vain when he is forced to betray himself and admit his insanity. Same as example 2, the flexibility in TT1's translation further intensifies the intended effect of ST. In TT2, however, the translator attempts to be faithful to TL culture and uses ellipsis to express desperation. Though the intention is notable, the visual effect in using punctuations to prolong pauses of the entire sentence is not as strong as that of ST or TT1.

4. Conclusion on equivalence

Functional arrangement in sentences is not to be ignored during translations as they play a big role in maintaining the communication between readers and narrator. If Nida's orientation of equivalence (Munday, 2012, p.66-67) is to be taken into consideration, dynamic equivalence should be achieved so the relationship between narrator and ST and TT readers can be sustained. Comparing the two TTs, it is observed that TT1 can be better concluded as achieving dynamic equivalence. On the other hand, TT2 is keenly oriented to TL structure in consistency and fluency. Flexibility in TT1 further enhances equivalent response in TT1 readers and eliminate constrains of structural differences between SL and TL. The differences in effect between these two TTs shed light on how STs with complicated and unconventional structures should be translated. While reasons behind marked syntactic structures should be studied closely, translators should also be flexible and adopt appropriate syntactic strategies available in TL culture to extract similar feedback from TT readers.

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