

On Rhetorical Skills in Translation of *Of Study* from the Perspective of the Three Beauties Theory

-- A Case Study of Wang Zuoliang's Translation Version

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Abstract: As an essay written by Francis Bacon four hundred years ago on the issue of study, *Of Study* is a well-known exhortation in English literature. This paper is composed to analyze the application of rhetorical skills in translation of Wang Zuoliang on *Of Study* from the perspective of "Three Beauties Theory". It is found that the translation version of Wang Zuoliang not only retained the style and expression of the original text to a great extent, but also conformed to the expression habit of Chinese with full Chinese charm. Besides, it conveyed the beauty in sound, the beauty of form and the beauty of sense to readers perfectly with various rhetorical strategies. This study is expected to provide new enlightenment for translators in literary translation, such as a new theoretical perspective for the study of the rhetorical skills of the translation of *Of Study* and to serve for translation practice.

Keywords: The Three Beauties Theory, *Of Study*, Translation skills, Rhetorical skills.

1. Introduction

Xu Yuanchong is a famous translator in China, and the "Three Beauty Theory" proposed by him means the beauty in sound, the beauty of form and the beauty of sense. The theory came into being with his researches of quantities of other theories and works of many translators in all ages and with his rich translation practice. The Three Beauties Theory embodied many previous translation theories and thus became an operable standard in translation practice. More and more domestic scholars have devoted themselves to the study of the "Three Beauties Theory", which not only embodies the rationality of the Three Beauties Theory, but also implies the rationality of this paper.

Being one of the typical representatives of Anglo-American prose, the prose *Of Study* written by Francis Bacon is highly favored in the field of translation. Fruitful research results have come into being since it had been studied so many times by so many translators and scholars in different research methods with different research perspectives. Among the researches, few are produced by combining translation theories and rhetorical techniques. It suggests that the current floundering prose translation career is influenced by not only the differences of the ideologies between China and the west and the quality of translators but also by the lack of relevant guiding theories in translation. So, it's worth studying.

2. Current Situation of the Research

According to the domestic current situation on the study of the theory of *Of Study*, it has been quite popular in translation and academia as many scholars have studied it from different angle of view by using different methods. Wang Yonghong (2002) analyzed a large number of cases in *Of Study* and found that the version of Wang Zuoliang's translation was better as the context was clearer and more fluent with proper wording and elegance. Jiang Feng (2011) talked about the dynamic equivalent of English-Chinese translation from the

style of *Of Study*. Yu Jiali, Zhang Jie(2019) expounded the strategies involving cohesive devices in English-Chinese translation and compared the differences between English and Chinese discourse cohesion by analyzing the translation of Wang Zuoliang of *Of Study*. Then they summarized the characteristics and rules of cohesive devices in English and Chinese discourse. And Wenli Tang (2019) made a comparative analysis of Wang Zuoliang's translation and the other two translations to study the superb translation skills of Wang Zuoliang's translation in reproducing the original language features by describing the stylistic features of Bacon's *Of Study*. The research showed that Wang Zuoliang had faithfully restored the characteristics of the original text in terms of ideology, form and style.

From the research above, we can summarize that Wang Zuoliang's translation is a rare masterpiece as it has kept consistent with the original text both in form and in style. By analyzing the translation combining with translation skills, can the original text be better understood, so do the differences between the two languages, thus to promote the development of prose translation.

3. Rhetorical Skills in Translation of *Of Study* from the perspective of the Three Beauties Theory

Since Xu Yuanchong put forward the theory of "three Beauties" in 1978, there had been numerous papers on the English translation of Chinese classical poetry from the perspective of "three beauties theory", which had become the focus of translation studies. The "three beauties theory" proposed by the translator Xu Yuanchong, containing "beauty of sense", "beauty in sound" and "beauty of form", is regarded as the standard of poetry translation, especially of classical Chinese poetry. The "beauty of sense" means that the translation conveys the artistic conception beauty of the original text, and the "beauty in sound" means that the translated text reproduces the beauty of the original in terms of phonology while the "beauty of form" means that the

translation retains the structural and formal characteristics of the original.

3.1. Rhetorical Skills from the Beauty in Sound

In the translation version of Wang Zuoliang, many translation techniques were used to highlight the beauty in sound of the text. They mainly include assonance and amplification.

3.1.1. Assonance

Being one of the common rhetorical techniques, assonance means the effect created when two syllables in words that are close together have the same vowel sound but different consonants. (Wang Xijie, Li Weiqi 2012:39) In the translation version of Wang Zuoliang, assonance was applied to please the ears of readers. There is a typical example:

E.g.1 Source text: Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability.

Target text: 读书足以怡情,足以傅彩,足以长才。

In the illustrative sentence, consonance was applied. Specifically, the two words "delight", "ornament" in the source text were ended with the same consonants of "-t", which made the original sentence phonologically attractive. Accordingly, the application of consonance in the original sentence was converted into assonance by Wang Zuoliang cleverly while translating. It can be seen that the vowel of "-ai" was repeated in the two words "傅彩" and "长才" in the translation. Such translation strategy not only preserved the beauty of the rhyme in sound of the original text, but also conformed to the expression habits of Chinese and made the translation melodic and rhythmic.

3.1.2. Amplification

Amplification refers to the addition of words that do not appear in the original text but are already contained in the actual content in translation according to the meaning of the original context, logical relationship, syntactic characteristics and expression habits of the target language. [3] And amplification was used by Wang Zuoliang by adding some words while translating the essay *Of Study* to restore the beauty in sound of the original text.

E.g.2 Source text: History makes men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend.

Target text: 读史使人明智,读诗使人灵秀,数学使人周密,科学使人深刻,伦理学使人庄重,逻辑修辞之学使人善辩。

In this example, the original sentence consists of six short clauses, but only the first clause has a predicate "make". This is because English tends to omit the same elements in a sentence. The analysis of the translation showed that the omitted predicates in the original sentence were restored. The amplification of the structure of the five "使人" in the translation supplements the ellipsis of the original text, which made the sense of the translation clearer and more rhythmic and restores the beauty in sound of the original text.

3.2. Rhetorical Skills from the Beauty of Form

Then the beauty of form of the translation of Wang Zuoliang on *Of Study* will be shown through two rhetorical devices: parallelism and division.

3.2.1. Parallelism

Parallelism means to give two or more parts of the sentences a similar form so as to give the whole sentence a definite pattern. (Wang Xijie, Li Weiqi 2012: 59) Literary creation is inseparable from the use of rhetorical devices, but

only when the author repeatedly uses a certain figure of speech, can a language characteristic be composed. In the essay *Of Study*, the author Bacon used the parallelism structure most as parallelism is a rhetorical device that accentuates important points and rhythmic beauty. In the original text Bacon made good use of parallelism to create a powerful momentum and persuasive force through a series of juxtaposed and opposed sentences. Accordingly, when Wang Zuoliang translated this kind of sentence, he not only maintained the symmetry of the structure, but also kept the cross of the levels and the delicacy of the language of the original text. And the beauty of form was reflected in that way.

E.g.3

Source text: And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning to seem to know that he doth not.

Target text: 因此不常做笔记者须记忆特强,不常讨论者须天生聪颖,不常读书者须欺世有术,始能无知而显有知。

E.g.4

Source text: Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.

Target text: 读书时不可存心诘难作者,不可尽信书上所言,亦不可只为寻章摘句,而应推敲细思。

As can be seen from the above examples, the two original sentences are parallelism sentences. In the first case the original sentence consists of three adverbial clauses of conditions, and the pronoun "he" in the latter two clauses refers to the noun phrase "a man" in the first clause. So, the three clauses are parallel with the structure of "If a man...little, he had need have..., if a man...little, he had need have ..., if a man...little, he had need have ...". And Wang Zuoliang not only had a deep understanding of the original content, but also paid attention to the special expression of the original text while translating. He converted the original sentence into a parallelism sentence with three short clauses that have the structure of "不常...者须...,不常...者须...,不常...者须...", which showed the similar forms of these three short clauses. This made the translation look neat and elegant in form.

Similarly, in the second case the original sentence is composed of four short clauses that share a same subject "Read". And the four clauses of the original sentence are parallel with the structure of "not to...and..., nor to...and..., nor to...and..., but to...and...". Accordingly, the original sentence was converted into a long sentence with four clauses that have the structure of "读书不可...,不可...,不可...,而应...". We can see that the translation not only maintained the sentence structure of the original text, but also saved the rhetorical application of parallelism. Then the beauty of form of the original text was conveyed by Wang Zuoliang by using parallelism while translating, giving bilingual readers an impressive experience. Besides, the application of parallelism made the article highly artistic and reproduced the language characteristics of the original text, and thus enhanced the artistic appeal of the translation.

3.2.2. Division

Division is a rhetorical device which means splitting a long sentence into short ones. [3] Splitting a sentence at will is bound to damage the style or the meaning of the original sentence, but sometimes splitting a sentence is absolutely permissible and necessary. In the translation version of Wang Zuoliang on *Of Study*, division was used quite often to reveal the beauty of

form.

E.g.5

Source text: So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

Target text: 如此头脑中凡有缺陷,皆有特效可医。

E.g.6

Source text: Abeunt studia in morse.

Target text: 凡有所学,皆成性格。

The above two cases show the impacts of division. In the first case, the original sentence is written in Latin and it means "Studies influence manners" in English. So, it is a simple sentence. But it was translated into a complex sentence with two short clauses by Wang Zuoliang. And the two clauses in the translation were connected by the set phrase “凡有..., 皆...”, which implied the conditional relation between them. The application of division imbued the translation with the beauty of traditional Chinese characters because the set phrase “凡有... 皆...” equals to the traditional Chinese connective “无论...都...”. Thus, the beauty of form of the translation was shown.

And in the second case, the original sentence is a long sentence connecting by two semicolons. As we all know, English is usually in the form of long sentences, while Chinese is in short sentences. Thus, the long sentence in the original text was converted into three parallel clauses with the structure of“其...也,最见于...; 其...也,最见于...; 其...也,最见于...” by Wang Zuoliang. This not only conforms to the expression habit of Chinese, but also makes the sentence in the form of parallelism. And the application of division effectively prevents the translation from being cumbersome, so it looks very elegant in form.

3.3. Rhetorical Skills from the Beauty of Sense

Next, the beauty of sense of the translation of Wang Zuoliang on Of Study will be analyzed through two rhetorical skills: conversion and simile.

3.3.1. Conversion

Conversion is a common rhetorical device of translation. It refers to converting the part of speech of a word in the original text into another part of speech while translating.^[3]Indeed, verbs are used quite often in Chinese while nouns in English. Thus, conversion is often used in translation, which is not tough to be found in the translation version of Wang Zuoliang. And the application of conversion in the translation of Wang Zuoliang will be analyzed in the following cases.

E.g.7

Source text: Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability.

Target text: 读书足以怡情,足以傅彩,足以长才。

E.g.8

Source text: Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.

Target text: 读书使人充实,讨论使人机智,笔记使人准确。

In the first case, the three words “delight”, “ornament” and “ability” in the original sentence all play as nouns, and the meanings of them are “乐趣”, “装饰” and “能力” respectively. If the original sentence was translated into “读书对趣味、文采和能力都有帮助”, it would be mediocre. So, Wang Zuoliang did not simply translate it in the way of literal translation. On the contrary, he made a flexible conversion on the basis of a profound understanding of the original text by translating the three nouns "delight" "ornament" and "ability"

into three predicates “怡情”“傅彩”and “长才”. The flexible application of conversion in the case made the translation more smooth and more consistent with the language habits of Chinese, and revealed the beauty of sense of the translation of Wang Zuoliang.

Similarly, the three words "Reading", "conference" and "writing" in the second case are all nouns, but they were converted into three predicates“读书”,“讨论”and“笔记”. In addition, "a full man", "a ready man" and "an exact man" are all noun phrases, but they were converted into three adjectives“充实”,“机智”and“准确”. Through the analysis of the two examples, we can find that if the original sentences are completely transliterated, the translation will become very stiff and awkward. And the application of conversion not only made the translation conform to the way of Chinese expression, but also showed the beauty of sense of the translation and helped readers to understand the deep sense of the original text.

3.3.2. Simile

Simile refers to the analogy of one thing with another thing. It is a rhetorical device that connects two fundamentally different things that share some common features.^[3]In the original text Francis Bacon made good use of simile, which connected with the body by words such as "as" and "like" to show a similar relationship between two things. Accordingly, the application of simile was translated accurately with grace and beauty by Wang Zuoliang, and it will be analyzed in the following cases.

E.g.9

Source text: Natural abilities are like Natural plants, that need pruning by study.

Target text: 盖天生才干犹如自然花草,读书然后知如何修剪移接。

E.g.10

Source text: Nay there is no stound or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies: like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises.

Target text: 人之才智但有滞碍,无不可读适当之书使其顺畅,一如身体百病,皆可借相宜之运动除之。

In the above cases, simile was used in the original sentences and maintained in the translations. The first original sentence means that natural abilities need to be honed by knowledge as plants need pruning. It was the application of simile that enabled readers to understand this profound truth, because the similarity between genius and natural plants was shown by simile. Accordingly, the application of simile was adopted by Wang Zuoliang accurately to readers with the elegant and classical Chinese expressions. Specifically, the word “like” in the first original sentence means“像”in Chinese, but if it was translated into“像”, the translation would be stiff because the words of the original text were classical. So, Wang Zuoliang translated it into“犹如”flexibly, which made the translation full of classical charm. And the use of the word “盖”added full grace and elegance to the translation and revealed the beauty of sense because it is often used in classical Chinese. Similarly, the application of simile in the second original sentence was translated appropriately and graphically by Wang Zuoliang with some classical Chinese expressions, such as “之”, “但有”and“无不可”. Overall, the application of simile in the translation of Wang Zuoliang maintained the style and expression of the original text and revealed the wonderful beauty of sense of the translation.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the research found that the translation version of Wang Zuoliang had not only followed the style and conveyed the deep sense of the original text to a great extent, but also conformed to the Chinese expression habits and showed the beauty of the artistic conception of the translation. To be exact, the translation of Wang Zuoliang showed the readers the beauty of the rhyme in sound, the beauty of form and the beauty of sense on the basis of accurately conveying that of the original text. First, in order to highlight the beauty in sound of the original text, Wang Zuoliang made full use of the rhetorical skills repetition and amplification. The translation became melodic and rhythmic by using the two rhetorical devices. Moreover, parallelism and division were used quite often to enable the translation to be full of elegance and beauty in the form. And conversion and simile were used frequently in the translation of Wang Zuoliang as they were conducive to reveal the grace of sense of the translation with classical charm.

The translation version of Wang Zuoliang on *Of Study* looks impeccable, because the beauty in sound, the beauty of form and the beauty of sense were shown from words to sentences with appropriate rhetorical devices. This is closely related to the profound literary foundation and translation ability of Wang Zuoliang. His high attainment and pursuit in the style and aesthetic value of the original text were manifest in his translation, which is worth for translators to respect and reference. Indeed, the writer has gained quite a lot by studying the translation version of Wang Zuoliang for his profound writing skills and literary accomplishment. Of course, there is also something need to improve. The paper is not in-depth enough due to the short length, so the writer hope to have the opportunity to further study the application of translation skills in the future to learn more.

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