

# Study on Choice of Translation Strategies for Character Name with Pun Meaning from Delabastita's Theory

Taking English Version of *A Dream of Red Mansions* as an Example

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**Abstract**—The translation of pun has been a difficult problem. In this paper, the writer will compare the third chapter of the two English versions of *Hong Lou Meng* on the basis of Delabastita's theories on translation strategies of puns. According to the analysis of the data, it is believed Hawkes is reader-oriented and tends to be assimilating and Yang Xianyi is source-oriented and tends to be alienating.

**Keywords**—product design; interface design; user experience; self-guided tour; user needs

## I. INTRODUCTION

The translation of pun has always been a difficulty in translation. It has always been a controversial issue in translation circle whether "pun" can be translated and how to translate it. Han Dihou put forward in "Modern Translation History" that: "the issue of 'pun' cannot be solved by any translation theory." (1969: 134). Newmark said that, "the translation of pun is of limited importance but unlimited fun." (1988: 217) But according to Delabastita, any language has the ability to create puns, so no one can deny the possibility to carry out various inter-lingual processing of puns (Delabastita, 1987: 151, 1991: 146). Delabastita describes the translation strategies that have appeared before, and summarizes eight translation strategies. The translation strategies summed up by him "can be used in English-Chinese translation, and have been adopted by some people" (Zhang Nanfeng, 2003: 1: 32). Under the framework of Delabastita's eight translation strategies, the translator's view of translation can be exposed by comparing the number of puns in the source language and the translation. "We can count the frequency and proportion of each strategy used in a translation, so as to explore the translator's view of translation" (Change, 1998). "The way of dealing with puns, especially in English-Chinese translation, can reveal the translator's view on translation." (Zhang Nanfeng, 2003: 1: 32) "A Dream of Red Mansions" is one of the most outstanding literary works in ancient China. The source language contains a large number of puns, and numerous scholars have compared and analyzed them from the perspective of word judging, verses, riddles, proverbs and

appellations, obtaining great achievement. They summed up a series of laws, which have promoted the development of translation theory. "The way of dealing with meaningful names in literary works can be regarded as a reflection of the translator's translation thought or translation strategies". (Manini, 1996 171) Through comparing the translations of Hawkes and Yang Xianyi, as well as sorting and analyzing of translation strategies used by them for the character names with pun meaning, the author probes into the translators' view on translation and evaluates the artistic equivalence of the two translation under Delabastita's theoretical framework.

## II. DELABASTITA'S TRANSLATION STRATEGY OF PUN

Delabastita has published special articles to explore the translation of puns, believing that the great argument of translation of puns is mainly caused by the fact that target language cannot achieve the equivalence with source language in terms of structure, feature, semantics and pragmatics. For example, homophones, poly-semantic clusters, and idioms are the difficulties in translation (1994). But these problems can be resolved through a certain strategy. Delabastita divides puns into four types, namely, homonymy, homophony, homography, and paronymy. In addition, Delabastita has proposed eight different translation strategies against the four types, (Delabastita, 1996: 134), including:

(1) Translate puns into puns. For example, the close maidservants of the four ladies of Jia Family, namely Yuanchun, Yingchun, Xichun, and Tan Chun, are called Bao Qin, Si Qi, Dai Shu (she is called "Shi Shu" in the last forty chapters), and collectively they are called "Qin Qi Shu Hua (the Four Arts: lute-playing, chess, calligraphy, and painting)". Hawkes translated them into Lutany, Chess, Scribe, and Picture very skillfully; the names of Baoyu's footboys Peiming, Saohong, Chuyao, Moyu, and Banhe represent their jobs, and Hawkes translate them into Tealeaf, Sweeper, Plowboy, Inky, and Storky.

(2) Translate puns into non-puns. This category is most common in two translations of "A Dream of Red Mansions", which is usually translated by transliteration. For example, Wu

Xindeng, the character appears in Chapter 8, was commented by Zhi Yanzhai as "Maybe Wu Xing Deng". And both Hawkes and Yang Xianyi choose to translate it as "Wu Xing-deng" by transliteration; Qian Hua, "means flowers blooms on the money", so both Hawkes and Yang translate it as "Qian Hua" by transliteration; Dai Liang, commented by Zhi Yanzhai as "Wonderful! Maybe it is Da Liang", and for this very "wonderful" name, the two translators also choose to translate as "Dai Liang" by transliteration.

(3) Translate puns into relevant rhetoric. This kind of rhetoric mainly refers to the use of such rhetoric means as repetition, alliteration, rhyme, and irony to reproduce the effect of pun in the source language. For example, Hawkes translates Li Wan's maid "Su Yun" and "Bi Yue" as "Candida" and "Casta". Because they serve the same mistress, so the initials of their names are the same. For example, in order for Princess Yuan to visit her parents, Jia Family bought twelve girls to sing opera, and their Chinese names contain a certain "Guan", such as "Ling Guan", "Wen Guan", "Fang Guan", and "Dou Guan". Hawkes translates them in French into "Charmante", "Elegante", "Parfume" and "Cardamome" respectively, so that they have the same rhyme, and also takes their inner meaning into account.

(4) Translate pun into zero, namely, to delete the paragraph containing puns. "A Dream of Red Mansions" is a huge novel, and there are about 500 people who have names in it. "To remember hundreds of names that they do not know how to pronounce will certainly create a lot of troubles to Western readers ..." (Hawkes and Minford, 1977: 20) Therefore, Hawkes deleted some characters and related paragraphs in his translation. For example, when introducing Jia Yucun in Chapter 1, the source language author said that "his family name is Jia, given name is Hua, Chinese-style name is Shifei, and he is nicknamed as Yucun". Hawkes deletes these completely, only retains the name of "Jia Yucun"; Zhenguogong "Jia Hua" which appears in Chapter 101 is also deleted directly.

(5) Copy the source language, namely to copy the pun of source language into translation completely.

(6) Translate non-puns into puns, that is, the translator creates a pun on their own to deal with the source language which does not contain a pun. Throughout Chinese ancient literary works, the phenomenon of translating non-puns into puns is extremely limited. Almost all names of characters in "A Dream of the Red Mansions" have pun meaning, and the translation of non-puns into puns is not found. But there is an example in Chapter 23, although it has nothing to do with the names, it can reflect the strategy of "translating non-puns into puns".

金钏一把拉住宝玉，悄悄的笑道：“我这嘴上才是才擦的香浸胭脂，你这会子可吃不吃了？”

Golden seized him by the hand, and thrusting out a pair of heavily carmined lips, she said to him in a whisper: "Look at

that byootiful lipstick! I've only just put it on. Wouldn't you like a taste of it?" (Hawkes, Ch. 23, P. 456, Vol. 1)

In this sentence, Hawkes expresses the meaning of beautiful via the italic word byootiful, and at the same time, the joking tone of the source language is expressed very well.

(7) Translate zero into a pun, namely to add some new data containing a pun into the translation.

(8) Use the means of editing, that is, to explain the puns of source language or provide another translation in notes, prefaces and other places. For example, with respect to the character appears in Chapter 1 "Zhen Shiyin", the author of source language implies its meaning "to hide the real meaning" in the first paragraph. Yang Xianyi translates it as "Zhen Shiyin", and adds footnote of "Homophone for 'true facts concealed'" at the end of this Chapter; Hawkes translates it as "Zhen Shi-yin", and explains in the preface that "Zhen is another word-play who are a sort of mirror-reflection of the Jia family".

What should be pointed out is Delabastita's description of translation strategies mainly comes from the summary of western translation phenomena. Therefore, some translation strategies are not common in Chinese, for example, "copy the source language" is commonly used in the language belonging to the same Latin language, but it is used relatively less in the English-Chinese translation. (Zhang Nanfeng, 2003: 1: 32) In China, the commonly used pun translation strategies are concentrated on a few strategies. By comparing the use of pun translation strategies in the two English translations of Hawkes and Yang, we can judge the two translators' translation views and make a general judgment on their artistic effects.

### III. TRANSLATING STRATEGIES OF THE NAMES WITH PUN IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF HAWKES AND YANG

According to the author's collection, at present, there are nine English versions of "A Dream of Red Mansions", among which only two complete translation versions, namely The Story of the Stone translated jointly by English Sinologist David Hawkes and his student John Minford, and A Dream of Red Mansions translated jointly by Yang Xianyi and his wife Gladys Yang. These two translations are also the most influential of all the translations. Numerous scholars conduct researches around these two translations.

The author selects Chapter 3 (Jia Yucun restored his official post by relations, Lin Daiyu goes to Beijing leaving his father alone) of the original "A Dream of Red Mansions" as the analysis object. After counting the characters' names in the whole chapter, it is found that a total of 27 people who have names appear in this chapter (the servants, concubines appear in approximate number are not counted in), and 16 people in total have names with a pun meaning. The author compares the two English versions, and indicates the type of each pun and translation method with figures. Refer to Table 1 for detail analysis.

TABLE 1 DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS OF THE 16 NAMES WITH PUNS

No.	Name		Yang's Translation		Hawkes' Translation
1	Jia Baoyu	2+4	Jia Baoyu Omit the description of relation between "Jia Baoyu" and the "gem" in his mouth directly.	2+8	Jia Bao-yu The context of Chapter 2 indicates that "Baoyu" has the meaning of jade, treasure
2	Jia Lian means "hypocritical mercy"	2	Jia Lian	2	Jia Lian
3	Jia She means "false pardon"	2	Jia She	2	Jia She
4	Jia Tanchun collectively refers to "Yuan Ying Tan Xi (something that should have been sighed for)" with her three other sisters	2	Jia Tanchun	2+8	Jia Tan-chun Referred to as one of the "three Springs" in the Introduction
5	Jia Xichun collectively refers to "Yuan Ying Tan Xi (something that should have been sighed for)" with her three other sisters	2	Jia Xichun	2+8	Jia Xi-chun Referred to as one of the "three Springs" in the Introduction
6	Jia Yingchun collectively refers to "Yuan Ying Tan Xi (something that should have been sighed for)" with her three other sisters	2	Jia Yingchun	2+8	Jia Ying-chun Referred to as one of the "three Springs" in the Introduction
7	Jia Yucun commented by Zhi Yanzhai as the same as "false talk"	8	Jia Yucun Footnote: Homophone for "false talk"	2+4	Jia Yu-cun Omit the expression about Jia Yucun in the source language that "his family name is Jia, given name is Hua, Chinese-style name is Shifei, and he is nicknamed as Yucun"
8	Jia Zheng the same as "pretend to be a saint"	2	Jia Zheng	2	Jia Zheng
9	Leng Zixing commented by Zhi Yanzhai as "generate cold in heat, and create something out of nothing"	2	Leng Zixing	2	Leng Zi-xing
10	Li Wan Judgments say: "Peach and plum in spring winds finish seeding, but who is a pot of orchids in the end."	2	Li Wan Judgments say: "Peach and plum in spring winds finish seeding", but its relationship with "Li Wan" is not indicated clearly.	2	Li Wan There is such translation in the judgments as "the plum-tree bore her fruit after the rest", but no clear relationship with the name of "Li Wan" is indicated.
11	Lin Daiyu Judgments say: "hanging in the wood the belt of jade"	2	Lin Daiyu Judgments say: "hanging in the wood the belt of jade", but its relationship with "Lin Daiyu" is not indicated clearly.	2	Lin Dai-yu There is such translation in the judgments as "the jade belt in the greenwood hangs", but no clear relationship with the name of "Lin Daiyu" is indicated.
12	Wang Xifeng commented by the judgments as "female phoenix"	2+8	Wang Xifeng Footnote "Splendid Phoenix"	2	Wang Xi-feng There is such translation in the judgments as "a hen phonex", but no clear relationship with the name of "Wang Xifeng" is indicated.
13	Xue Yan	2	Xue yan	1	Snowgoose Meaning snow goose
14	Xi Ren comes out of the allusion of "we can know that it is getting warm by the flowery flavor"	2+8	Xiren Footnote "literally 'assails men'"	1	Aroma Meaning aroma
15	Yingge	2	Yingge	1	Nightingale
16	Zhang Rugui commented by Zhi Yanzhai as "like a ghost"	2	Zhang Rugui	2	Zhang Rugui

Each chapter of "A Dream of Red Mansions" is interlocking, and the plot is compact, forming an integral part of the whole novel. Each chapter can also be presented as a separate story as it is a novel divided by chapters. The author chooses Chapter 3 as the object of analysis, aiming to re-understand the main characters of the novel through Lin Daiyu's eyes when she comes to Jia Family the first time.

Throughout Chapter 3, only eight notes are used in Yang Xianyi's translation, three of which were related to the names of the characters, and one to the place name. Of the sixteen names with puns, thirteen are fully transliterated without any compensation, including one that is omitted. In Hawks' translation, ten are transliterated without any compensation, including one that is omitted. It should be pointed out that, in

Hawkes' translation, the names of "Yingchun", "Tanchun" and "Xichun" appear in the preface, which are far away from the position in the text, and the compensation effect is worth to be discussed. However, as can be seen from Table 1, the two translators mainly focus on strategy 2. See Table 2 for details.

TABLE 2 THE DETAILS OF TRANSLATION WITH STRATEGY 2

Translation Method	Yang's Translation		Hawkes' Translation	
1	0	0%	3	18.75%
2	15	93.75%	13	81.25%
3	0	0%	0	0%
4	1	6.25%	1	6.25%
5	0	0%	0	0%
6	0	0%	0	0%
7	0	0%	0	0%
8	3	18.75%	4	25%

What is interesting is that the same person's name can be called in different types because of China's unique name culture, for example, when Lin Daiyu first met Wang Xifeng, the original author describes:

贾母笑道：“你不认得他，他是我们这里有名的破落户儿，南省俗谓叫做‘辣子’，你只叫他‘凤辣子’就是了。”黛玉正不知何以称呼，众姐妹都忙告诉他到：“这是琏二嫂子。”

Yang's Translation: "You don't know her yet." The lady Dowager chuckled. "She's the terror of this house. In the south they'd call her Hot Pepper. Just call her Fiery Phoenix"

Daiyu was at a loss how to address her when her cousins came to her rescue. "This is Cousin Lian's wife." they told her.

Hawkes' Translation: 'You don't know her,' said Grandmother Jia merrily. 'She's a holy terror this one. What we used to call in Nanking a "peppercorn". You just call her "Peppercorn Feng". She'll know who you mean!'

Dai-yu was at a loss to know how she was to address this Peppercorn Feng until one of the cousins whispered that it was 'Cousin Lian's wife'.

Wang Xifeng is called in four types in the original text, but only "Fenglazi" has something to do with her name "Wang Xifeng". Yang Xianyi who prefers to foreignization strategy chooses to paraphrase as "Fiery Phoenix", while Hawkes who prefers to domestication strategy selects to translate into "Peppercorn Feng" by transliteration. Therefore, the selection of translation strategy is not absolute, which only represent a kind of inclination, and the translation view we are talking about can only reflect the tendency of the translator in a certain work.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the author uses Delabastita's theory of puns to analyze the names of the characters in Chapter 3 of "A Dream of Red Mansions", and probes into different translation views of different translators in the same text. In general, Hawkes favors domestication, and in order to facilitate the reader to understand, he will omit part of the content and even rewrite the original text to some extent; Yang Xianyi is faithful to the

original text although he will also omit some of content, and he tends to translate using foreignization strategy. From the aesthetic point of view, the two translators have adopted a variety of translation strategies, having high learning and reference value. The author only choose one chapter from eighty chapters of the whole book (refers to the original part of Cao Xueqin) focusing on the name for the characters, so there will be deviations in the statistical data, but the overall results are identical to the conclusions recognized in the translation circle.

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