Review Article

A Comparative Study of the English Translation of Metaphor in Song Ci from the Perspective of Conceptual Metaphor

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Abstract

Song Ci, as a kind of literary expression, serves as an important part of Chinese literature. Ci writers use the technique of metaphor to express their feelings, but scholars have relatively little research on the English translation of Song Ci metaphors. Guided by the conceptual metaphor theory, this paper makes a comparative analysis of the translations of Xu Yuanchong and Clara Candlin from three aspects: structural metaphor, ontological metaphor and orientational metaphor to explore appropriate translation methods of reducing the loss of metaphor, and to make the target readers appreciate similar metaphor images as the original readers.

Keywords: Translation of Song Ci; conceptual metaphor; vehicle's image; Xu Yuanchong; Clara Candlin.

1. INTRODUCTION

Song Ci is a dazzling star in ancient Chinese literature, which is known as two miracles together with Tang Poetry. Numerous literati describe national enmity and family hatred, joys and sorrows in the past three hundred years. The sentences of Song Ci are different in length, which is not as rigid as Tang Poetry. When tasting the rhythm of Ci, one will feel that there are two styles, one is fresh and refined, and the other is bold and unrestrained. Ancient literati express their inner feelings implicitly by metaphors in Song Ci. They express feelings through scenery, praise things and express their aspirations, which is thought-provoking after reading.

With the increasing exchanges between China and the world, foreign studies on Chinese culture have sprung up. Foreign research on Song Ci can be traced back to the 1930s (Tu Hui, 2015, p.84). Clara Candlin's *The Herald Wind: Translations of Sung Dynasty Poems, Lyrics and Songs* is the first large-scale translation of Song Ci, which is of certain pioneering significance, but there are few studies on it. Since its publication in 1933, the translation has been reprinted many times. Foreign scholar Shryock J. K. first studied *The Herald Wind* in 1934. Wang Lina (2003) mentioned Ouyang Xiu's three poems in *The Herald Wind* in the article "Ouyang Xiu's Poems Abroad". In 2010, Canadian Mezzo Soprano singers sang three Ci poems in this work. Although this translation has existed for many years, it is still full of charm. Tu Hui (2015) introduced *The Herald Wind* in the "The Acceptance Map of Chinese Classical Poetry in the English-speaking World". In addition, Wang Wenqiang and Tang Xiaodong (2020) summarized the number of Ci poets and the number of their works in "A Study on the Pioneering Translation Anthology of Tzu-poems from Tang and Sung Dynasties in The Herald Wind by Clara Candlin" and pointed out that Candlin arranged the Ci according to the era of Ci poets, and marked the birth and death years of poets, so as to help readers better understand the historical development of Ci. However, there is little research on the translation of Song Ci in *The Herald Wind*. As a symbol of Chinese classical poetry in the history of English translation, it needs further studies of its translation.

Translation is a kind of cultural transmission. When translating Song Ci, the translators should first consider the social environment and feelings of the poets at that time to understand the implied meaning of metaphors in Song Ci, and then combine the differences between Chinese and English languages to accurately restore the images in the target language (Zhang Yu, 2018, p.258). Based on the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, this paper makes a comparative analysis of the translations of Xu Yuanchong and Clara Candlin from three aspects: ontological metaphor, structural metaphor and

orientational metaphor, with a view to providing references for the metaphor translation in Song Ci.

2. CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR

Aristotle is the first person to study metaphor, and metaphor research is only within the scope of rhetoric (Peng Jianwu, 2009, p.99). The conceptual metaphor first appears in the works of Kant and Shelley. In Lakoff & Johnson's *Metaphor We Live by*, conceptual metaphor was formally proposed as a theory. Metaphor has begun to be studied in new fields. Lakoff & Johnson believes that metaphor is not only a language expression, but also a way of thinking, which is involved in human cognitive process (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.5). For example, Lakoff pointed out that debate is war. He used war terms such as "attack", "ground", and "strategy" to describe debate, which proved the war attribute of debate at the thinking level. The publication of this book marks that metaphor has spanned from rhetoric to cognition. Later, many scholars began to study metaphor from new fields, such as foreign language teaching (Tang Ling & Wang Weiqian, 2014) and literary works (Wu Lin, 2021).

Conceptual metaphor theory brings a new perspective to the study of metaphor. Due to the differences in cultural environment, people's way of thinking and understanding of metaphors are also different (Zhang Xi, 2012, p.144). The influence of cultural differences on people's way of thinking is particularly obvious in translation. Relevant studies (Zhang Xi, 2012; Sun Fenglan, 2016) have made a comparative analysis of different versions from the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory. The following will take the English translation of metaphors in Song Ci as an example for comparative analysis.

3. Metaphor in Song Ci and its English Translation

Metaphors are frequently used in Song Ci, which implicitly express the poets' feelings. The English translation of Song Ci is a form of cultural exchange. The translation of conceptual metaphor is not just transplantation, but the accurate transmission of the image of the original Ci. It requires the translator to accurately understand the implied meaning of the original Ci and choose the appropriate translation method to translate the specific meaning. This paper makes a comparative analysis of the English translations of Song Ci from three aspects of conceptual metaphor, namely, ontological metaphor, structural metaphor and orientational metaphor.

3.1 Ontological Metaphor

Ontological metaphor refers to the representation of thoughts and feelings with concrete and tangible objects in reality (Wang Yin, 2007:410). A major feature of Song Ci is that it uses rich images, such as "moon", "solitary goose", "cuckoo" and other physical images, to express the poets' emotions. The concrete metaphors and their English translation are as follows:

(1) 只恐双溪舴艋舟，载不动许多愁。——（李清照《武陵春》）

Xu: But I'm afraid the grief-o'erladen boat / Upon Twin Creek can't keep afloat.

Candlin: Ah but I fear / on River Shuang / The boats are frail / they cannot bear / my weight of care.

This poem is written by Li Qingzhao after the downfall of her country, the death of her husband, and the loss of her cultural relics. The image of a depressed and helpless woman comes into view. Sorrow is a vague concept and an emotional state. Li Qingzhao compares the abstract "愁(sorrow)" to an object that can be carried, and she is afraid that sorrow would be too heavy for the boat to carry. In this sentence, the author compares "愁" to things, which belongs to ontological metaphor (Hu Liangyan, 2012, p.55-56). Both translators adopt the literal translation method. Xu's "grief-o'erladen" and Candlin's "weight" will both give specific weight to "愁", but their expressions are different. Xu indirectly highlights that "愁" can be carried through the word "laden", and Candlin directly expresses the weight of "愁" with "weight", which is clearer. The two translators are different in sentence patterns. Xu's translation pays more attention to rhythm, realizing the three beauties of poetry translation. However, Candlin's translation discards the external form and rhythm of poetry. In English-speaking countries, there are also expressions that compare emotions to objects, such as the English classic saying: Love and a cough cannot be hid. "Love" is an abstract emotion, but it is compared to an entity which can be hid. It can be inferred that there is also a cognitive way of comparing emotion to an entity in the target language, so the translator can make readers understand it by using literal translation.

(2)问君能有几多愁，恰似一江春水向东流。——（李煜《虞美人》）

Xu: If you ask me how much my sorrow has increased, / Just see the over brimming river flowing east!

Candlin: How much of sorrow is there left / within my heart ~ / and I reply / A spring-tide river full / of water, flowing East.

Li Yu, the emperor of the Southern Tang Dynasty, expresses his endless sadness by the recollection of the past. Beginning with a question, the poet points out the abstract "愁", and compares the specific thing "一江春水" to the sorrow in the heart, which reflects the ontological metaphor (Xue Shufang, 2010, p.28). Regarding sorrow as a material that can be accommodated is the most common container metaphor

in ontological metaphor. Container metaphor refers to taking the earth, body, mood, etc. as a container, turning the intangible concept into tangible one, so that the intangible concept is within the container (Wang Yin, 2007, p.410). The "一江春水" in this sentence highlights a lot of sorrow. Xu translates it as "brimming river" and Candlin translates it as "a spring tide river full / of water". Both of them highlight the fullness of the river, and also give prominence to the deep sadness. Xu omits the translation of spring to make each translated line have the same syllables, which makes the Ci full of musical beauty. Candlin retains the translation of spring and adds "tide", highlighting the rough spring water and the strength of emotion. The two versions have their own merits. On the whole, the two scholars have expressed the implied meaning of the Ci. In English-speaking countries, there are also such expressions. For example, in the sentence "he was filled with anger", "anger" is regarded as a substance that can be accommodated and the human body as a container. Therefore, the target languages readers can understand the meaning of Ci from the literal translation method adopted by the two translators.

(3)林莺巢燕总无声，但月夜常啼杜宇。——（陆游《鹊桥仙·夜闻杜鹃》）

Xu: Nor orioles nor swallows in their nests will sing, / But I hear the cuckoo's cry / Oft rend the moonlit sky.

Candlin: Mute is the oriole / Deep in the woods. / Hushed is the sparrow / Wrapped in its nest. / Only the owl hoots / All else is still.

　　Lu You wrote this poem to express his feelings about life when he was in Chengdu. "杜宇" is a cuckoo. According to legend, "杜宇" is the incarnation of the Emperor of Shu. Cuckoos cry in the mountains late at night, telling his missing of homeland. Cuckoos have the characteristics of human and they cry to express the feelings in their hearts, which belongs to ontological metaphor (Zhu Rui, 2017, p.32). Cuckoos cry in the quiet night, which makes people feel sad, and often triggers the homesickness of people in a strange land. Xu uses literal translation and amplification method to express the sadness of cuckoo with "cuckoo's cry", which causes sadness in readers' hearts. Candlin translates "杜宇" into "the owl hoots" and tries to replace it with another kind of bird, but owl hoots mainly to convey three different messages: 1. To defend their own fields and repel invaders. 2. To scare off predators. 3. To look for a spouse. Therefore, the main reason for Candlin's mistranslation is that she is not familiar with Chinese history and culture, and does not know the differences between "杜宇" that is, cuckoo, and owl in different cultures. It can be seen that Candlin does not understand what "杜宇" is, nor does she understand the implied meaning. Therefore, the target language readers cannot understand the profound

meaning of Ci from her translation. In English-speaking countries, cuckoo has no meaning of homesickness. Instead, a cuckoo is often used to express cheerful ideas. For example, William Wordsworth's poem "To the Cuckoo" compares the cuckoo to hope. If there is no equivalent image in English-speaking countries, translators can use the method of amplification method. Xu's "cry" makes the poet's sadness show forth in his translation.

(4) 胡未灭，鬓先秋，泪空流。——（柳永《诉衷情》）

Xu: The foe not beaten back, / my hair no longer black, / my tears have flowed in vain.

Candlin: The Mongols are unconquered still. / My hair has reached its autumn time. / My tears unheeded fall.

　　Liu Yong uses a comparison between the past and the present to describe his determination to make contributions and serve the motherland. But in the end, when he is old, the Hu people (the northern barbarian tribes in ancient China) still ravage the Central Plains and he fails to fulfill his ideal. The "秋" here originally refers to autumn. The autumn frost is white, and the hair here is as white as autumn frost. Anthropomorphic metaphor is a metaphor refined by ontological metaphor. The poet endows "autumn" with human characteristics, and the change of season is manifested through human physiological characteristics (Hou Fenglin, 2019:21). Xu translates "鬓先秋" into "my hair no longer black", using the free translation method to express the meaning of his white hair and senior age. Candlin adopts the literal translation. The sentence "my hair has reached its autumn time" means that the hair is in its old age, and the profound meaning is that the poet's hair has turned gray and he laments his old age. In English-speaking countries, autumn refers to the third season when crops and fruits are gathered and leaves fall, old age, etc. For example, in the poem "count your life with smiles, not tears and when your life has reached its autumn.", "when your life has reached its autumn" refers to the old age. When there is same cognition of an image in Chinese and Western cultures, the target language readers can understand the meaning of the original Ci if the translator uses literal translation.

3.2 Structural Metaphor

　　Structural metaphor refers to the use of one concept to construct another, so that the conceptual structure of the source domain can be transferred to the target conceptual domain (Wang Yin, 2007:409). There are also structural metaphors in Song Ci poetry. Poets often use other images to express the concepts they want to express. The concrete metaphors and their English translation are as follows:

(5) 桃溪不作从容住，秋藕绝来无续处。——（周邦彦《玉楼春》）

Xu: We did not live long with ease on Peach Blossom Stream; / the severed lotus root can't be united again.

Candlin: Tao Chi Streamlet flows unchecked: / Lotus roots, in autumn cleft, / Never join as one again.

This poem depicts the poet Zhou Bangyan's revisiting old place and expresses his yearning for his lover. In Chinese, "lotus root" is homonymous with "偶", and "偶" means "double", and the Chinese idiom "偶成佳遇" means the best spouse. People think that love is a lotus root, and compares love to two inseparable things, which reflects the structural metaphor of love (Fan Na, 2006, p.99). "秋藕绝来无续处" describes that the lotus root is broken and not connected on the surface, but in fact describes that two different people cannot meet again. The two scholars translate "lotus root" literally. Both use "again", which means that the two people no longer meet, but there are differences in the choice of words. Xu uses "severed" to indicate the separation of two people, and "unite" refers to the gathering of two people. The two words highlight that they part and no longer meet. Candlin also uses "cleft" to indicate the separation of two people, and "join as one" to indicate that two people want to get together. She also expresses the implied meaning of Ci.

(6) 人有悲欢离合，月有阴晴圆缺，此事古难全。——（苏轼《水调歌头》）

Xu: Men have sorrow and joy; they part or meet again; / the moon is bright or dim and she may wax or wane. / There has been nothing perfect since the olden days.

Candlin: But joys and sorrows, / meetings, partings, all / to mortals come / the moon has clear and cloudy nights: / She waxes and she wanes: / This never can be changed.

This poem expresses the author's longing for his brother Su Zhe. China has been upholding roundness since ancient times, and roundness represents perfection. The structure of the "moon" is mapped to the concept of reunion of "man", forming a structural metaphor -- man is the moon (Song Xiaoying, 2011:37). Both translators use the literal translation of "圆缺", with which Xu translates it as "wax or wane", and Candlin as "waxes and wanes". And both translate the moon as "she" and compare it to female entity. In Chinese and Western cultures, most of the moon goddess is female. For example, in China, Chang'e is the goddess of the moon in myths and legends. In the west, Artemis is called the goddess of the moon. In English-speaking countries, "wax and wane" has the meaning of reunion. If there is the same metaphor in the source language and the target language, literal translation can be used.

3.3 Orientational Metaphor

Orientational metaphor refers to the metaphor of direction, which is often used to understand another concept in the up-down, front-back, deep-shallow, far-near and other directions. These specific directions map personal emotions, health, social status, etc. (Wen Xiuying, 2012, p.77). Bold and unrestrained poets often express their grief and indignation that ambition is difficult to fulfill. In the Ci poems, it is inevitable to mention emperors, princes, generals, etc., which all reflect the orientational metaphor with regard to their high status. The concrete metaphors and their English translation are as follows:

(7) 使李将军遇高皇帝，万户侯何足道哉！——（刘克庄《沁园春·梦孚若》）

Xu: Even a hero can only win honours high / under a heroic sage.

Candlin: General Li had met the High Imperial One, / Titles and ten thousand houses / then was easily won.

The poet Liu Kezhuang is ambitious to serve the country in his dream, which is the opposite of reality. Although the poet is full of ambition, he has no way to serve the country. The profound meaning of this sentence is that a heroic general can make contributions and serve his country when meeting a monarch who cherishes talents. In this sentence, "General Li" refers to Li Guang, a famous general and hero of the Western Han Dynasty. Xu's translation of "a hero" highlights Li Guang's historical position and hero image, while Candlin's "General Li" indicates Li Guang's position and does not describe his heroic identity. "King", "emperor" and "lord" are all expressions of high status, which belong to orientational metaphor (Xie bin, 2018, p.12). "高皇帝" refers to Liu Bang, Emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty. Liu Bang is a famous politician and strategist in Chinese history, and he attaches great importance to talents. Xu uses "a heroic sage" to describe the status of Emperor Gaozu of the Han in Chinese history. The target language readers can only know his high status from Candlin's "high imperial one", but they cannot understand his greatness. In English-speaking countries, readers know little about Emperor Gaozu of the Han and Li Guang. If literal translation is chosen, readers cannot understand the implied meaning of the original Ci. Converting the image of the source language into the corresponding image in English can help the target language readers understand its meaning.

(8)要见不得见，要近不得近。——（黄庭坚《卜算子》）

Xu: When I want to see you, you won't appear; / when I want to approach, you won't come near.

Candlin: I wish to see / But cannot see. / I wish to meet / But near I cannot be.

This poem expresses a woman's love for a man. Woman wants to see but cannot see the person she admires, and wants to get close but cannot get close. "近" originally refers to the distance of the position, which here refers to the closeness of the relationship between man and woman. For the first "近", Xu uses literal translation. The word "approach" vividly shows that a woman wants to be close to a man, and the word replaces the distance of the position with the distance of the relationship. Candlin uses the free translation method. The word "meet" expresses a woman's eagerness to meet her sweetheart. Both express the closeness of the relationship. For the second "近", both of which are literally translated as "near". In Merriam-Webster dictionary, "near" means "closely related or intrinsically associated", which clearly points out the closeness of the relationship. For the same metaphor in the source language and target language culture, literal translation can be used after the translator accurately understands the original text.

4. CONCLUSION

The metaphors in Song Ci have profound implied meanings. Due to the different cultural environment, the understanding of Song Ci is also different. Based on three aspects of conceptual metaphor, this paper analyzes the translation of metaphors in Song Ci poetry by comparing the translations of Xu Yuanchong and Clara Candlin. The success or failure of the translation of Song Ci depends in large part on the translation of conceptual metaphors. The authors believe that the translator should give consideration to literal translation and free translation after understanding the cultural background of the poets and the profound meaning of the original Ci, and then adopt different translation strategies according to different situations to help the target language readers understand Chinese poetry and feel the charm of Chinese culture.

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