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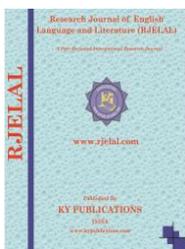**2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)**

ON THE ALLUSION TRANSLATION OF MAO'S POETRY
-FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

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ABSTRACT

Mao Zedong (1893-1976) was a great politician as well as a poet. As a poet, his poetry has become the treasure of the excellent culture of the Chinese nation and attracted a number of people to translate. Poetry translation can be called the translation of allusion in some sense because the latter affects the style of the poetry. But it is difficult to translate the allusion due to the disparities between China and Western culture, so it is also no easy to achieve equivalence in words and sentences. Nida's theory of functional equivalence has deep implications on the allusion translation in practice. So this article intends to analyze the allusions from the perspective of functional equivalence by using contrastive analysis based on Gu Zhengkun's and Xu Yuanchong's English version of Mao's poems. Under the guidance of functional equivalence, the writer concludes four ways to translate allusions according to their different classifications: to choose equivalent words in the target language for the translation of historical stories; to choose equivalence words but add annotations for the translation of mythology; to use Chinese Pinyin and annotations to translate historical figures; to use literal translation but add footnotes in the text.

Key words: Mao Zedong; Mao's poetry; Functional Equivalence; Annotations

INTRUDUCTION

China has always been famous for its poetry. Mao Zedong (1893-1976) occupies a prominent position in the history of Chinese poetry. His poems were based on inheriting Chinese classical poetry as well as reflected the contemporary Chinese social appearance. These two points have created the uniqueness of Mao Zedong's poetry and attracted a large number of Chinese and foreign literati to translate Mao Zedong's poetry. Li Chongyue (2011) points out that the initial English translated text in foreign countries can be found in the book of *Red Star over China* in the year of 1937, and the earliest

English version in China dates back to *Poems of Mao Zedong*, comprising 18 poems and published in 1958. Li Zhengshuan (2009) holds that Mao Zedong's English version has reached more than 20.

The use of allusion is an important feature of Mao Zedong's poetry and a difficulty in translating his poetry, so many scholars have studied Mao's poetry from this aspect and given their own opinions about translation methods. Some scholars have compared different English versions of Mao Zedong, and then summarized the translation methods of allusions. Li Chongyue et al (2008) select eight representative English versions of Mao's poems to compare and

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analyze the allusion translation. Other scholars have focused on the interpretation of the allusion by dealing with the figurative devices. For example, Yu Lixia (2016) probes into the translation of culture-loaded words in Mao's poems within the framework of the skopos theory to analyze the profound implications in Mao's poetry.

On a whole, these studies on the translation of Mao's poems are all meaningful in some senses, whereas, in translating poetry, form plays a more important role than any other literature. Yet throughout the current research situation, there still exist disputes between literal translation and free translation which makes lots of scholars just focus their attention on the form or content of translation studies. Nida's functional equivalence theory can solve this problem of " things can not be obtained at the same time. So this paper intended to use Nida's theory to analyze the translation of Allusion by comparing two most influential English versions of Mao's poems. By doing so, it is hoped that some contributions can be made to help improve the the translation of poems.

1.Nida's Functional Equivalence

Equivalence, Nida & Charles R. Taber (2004: 12) in their book of *The Theory and Practice of Translation* explained: "translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closet natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." Therefore, "reproducing equivalent of the source message" is the primary purpose of the translation.

As for equivalence, there are fundamentally two different types of equivalence: one which may be called formal and another which is primarily dynamic.

Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself—the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language (Nida, 2004: 159) which will require the translator to use numberless footnotes in the text to make the readers fully understand.

Dynamic-equivalence or functional equivalence translation is to describe it as the closest natural equivalence to the source-language message

(Nida, 2004: 166). In such a translation one is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language message, but with the dynamic relationship (the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message). It is to be further defined in term of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language (Nida & Charles R. Taber, 2004: 24). In another word, it is called "equivalent effect" which is closely related to culture. At the meantime, a translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture (Nida, 2004: 159). So in some sense, the degree of the similarity in reader's response is determined by the cultural differences between the original text and the rendition. With regard to allusion, allusion is a kind of language phenomenon rich in tradition and culture, and thus transferring the essence of the original culture is the main aim of allusion translation (Shao Wenxuan). How to realize cultural equivalence is a key point for functional equivalence.

In order to solve this problem, Nida puts two ways to reach cultural equivalence: to have equivalent words in the target language; to use formal equivalence but annotations in the text. So in this paper, under the guidance of functional equivalence and the methods, the author intends to compare two versions of Mao's poems to discuss their equivalent effect.

2. Allusion in Mao's Poetry

Mao Zedong's poetry uses a flexible rhetorical approach, and allusions are one of them. The allusions are quoted by ancient stories or words with provenance. Ancient stories are called events, including historical stories, historical figures, myths and legends etc. Words with provenance are called language allusions, involved in directing use and transformation using. Among fifty poems in Xu's *Poems of Mao Zedong* and forty nigh poems in Gu's *Poems of Mao Zedong Rhymed Version with Annotations,* more than 100 allusions can be found.

WANG SHANSHAN, WU JIAPING

According to the definition of allusions, we could divide the allusions into four types: historical stories, mythology, historical figures and literary works. The number of the historical figures is in the first place, the mythical legends are second, the literary works and historical stories are at the end.

2.1. Allusion from historical stories and events

Since ancient times, many historical events and stories in China have had an important impact on today's society in the purpose of alerting people. Mao Zedong's poems have similar references to achieve the same effect such as "不可沽名学霸王" (not give the enemy a chance to come back for the sake of the vain name of "peace.").

2.2 Allusion from Mythology

Apart from the historical stories and events, Mao also quoted extensive allusion from Chinese mythology. All of them have touching stories behind every myth such as "牛郎织女" and "吴刚" etc.

2.3 Allusion from Historical Figures

Mao's poems have a wide variety of allusions about historical figures such as from ancient Qin Emperor and Han Wu, Tang Zong and Song Zu to Huang Gonglue and Zhang Huizan in the near future of Chinese revolutionary construction. The main purpose of the citation of historical figures is to praise the ancient heroes, while encouraging the current revolutionaries.

2.4 Allusion from literary works

The allusions in literature are inexhaustible. China has a history of thousands of years and there are rich allusions in the voluminous books. For example, "万丈长缨要把鲲鹏缚" (mythological legend from Zhuang Zi, a philosopher in the middle of the Warring States). These mythological historical stories are vivid and easy to resonate.

3. Comparative Study on Allusion Translation in Mao's Poetry

Mao's poems have been translated into various versions since 1930s. Chen Anji divided the English versions of Mao Zedong's poems into three stages from the 1950s to the beginning of this century: 1958 to the first half of 1966; second half of 1966 to 1978; 1979 to 2002. After 1979, in addition to the co-translations finished before 1978, personal translation begins to appear, including two English versions of Huang Long, two translations of Zhao Yutao, and the English translation of Xu Zhengkun and Xu Yuanchong. Among them, the English versions of Gu Zhengkun and Xu Yuanchong were published on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth in 1993. And the two versions of Xu's (*Poems of Mao Zedong*) and Gu's (*Poems of Mao Zedong Rhymed Versions with Annotation*) are the most widely discussed and highly accepted. Secondly, the translation methods adopted by Gu Zhengkun and Xu Yuanchong are the same, both of which are the rhythmic style of English poetry. But the difference is that there are a lot of annotations in the text of the Gu Zhengkun's version, while have fewer notes in the text of Xu Yuanchong which makes his translation achieve a high degree of equivalence in sound, form and sense ("three Beauties" advocated by Xu Yuanchong).

Therefore, the two authors have different tendencies to deal with poetry, especially allusions. Based on this, the author chooses these two versions as the research object. Under the guidance of the functional equivalence theory, the author uses the method of comparative method to discuss and study the two English versions, trying to summarize the different methods used for each type of allusion

3.1. Allusion from historical stories and events

Historical stories are treasures in the long history of China, which condense the traditional stories of the Chinese nation and give their inspiration to next generations.

Table 1: Allusion from historical stories and events

	Original poems	Xu's version	Note	Gu's version	Note
1	飞将军自冲销入	flying army falls on them from the sphere.	O	flying general swoops down from the sky	P
2	**不可沽名学霸王**	Do not fish like the Herculean King for renown!	P	Ape not King Xiang for a fame of mercy in a lucky hour	P
3	华佗无奈小虫何	the best physician's skill	O	Hua Tuo	P

Example 1：

"飞将军"is a very brave and skillful general named Li Guang in the Han Dynasty, the phrase here is used to stand for the Red Army soldiers (Gu Zhengkun 2010: 73). The Red Army rushed down from the mountain of Changbai, as if a troop falls from the heaven.

Metonymy is applied in Xu's version so that the readers who do not understand the culture of foreign countries can still understand the article. At the same time, it also gives people a feeling of tremendous momentum, reflecting the bravery of the Red Army. "Flying general" is rendered literally and it must be supplemented with a footnote explaining the original meaning and the purpose of the author.

Example 2：

As a well-known story in China, the allusion of "不可沽名学霸王" originates the struggle between Chu and Han. "霸王" had the advantage to completely destroy Liu Bang for attaining the throne, but for a vain name of playing fair, chose to let off Liu Bang, resulting Liu Bang finally counter-attack. Here is metaphorically to say, we should learn from Xiang Yu's failure. We should not give the enemy a chance to come back for the sake of the vain name of "peace."(Zhou Zhenfu, 2013: 77).

The translation of Xu's version is to converse the Chinese allusion to Western allusion and a simile "like" is used in the sentence, realizing the functional equivalence and putting the receptor's response first. Meanwhile, the use of imperative sentence to express the author's value and attitude, having

achieved the effect of borrowing the past to satire the present and given his suggestion to the current situation. Therefore, both in form and style, the equivalence has been achieved. Gu directly uses Chinese Pinyin to translate the allusion. There is no process of decoding message and the rhetorical devices of the target text are not embodied. In this aspect, the English version of Gu Zhengkun is less skillful in translating the allusion.

Example 3：

"华佗" is one of the most famous and highly skilled doctor in Han Dynasty.

The translation of "the best physician's skill" in Xu's version can quickly stimulate the strong associative meaning and connotative meaning while losing the artistic expression. "Hua Tuo" just reflects the literal meaning so that the implicit meaning must be explained by notes, weakening the connotation of the allusion. For the target readers, Xu's translation meet the requirement of understanding and rendering yet sacrificing the form and style. Neither of them meets the requirements of functional equivalence.

For the translation of historical stories, it can be seen from the above analysis that Gu mainly uses literal translation and adds footnotes to achieve the purpose of functional equivalence. Xu mainly relies on equivalent words in the target language achieve equivalent culture in the text, rarely supplementing cultural information with annotations. So for the this kind of translation, if there may be no object or event in the receptor culture which responds to some referent in the source text, we can use another object

or event to realize the equivalent function with or without identifying the formal referent in the margin. At the same time, the original text must contain as much cultural information as possible, and it is necessary to grasp the essence of historical events for interpretation.

Mythology is an ancient heroic story about gods or myths. It is a beautiful interpretation and yearning for natural phenomena. For instance, "神女，弟子，嫦娥" and etc are lexicons that have cultural specialties which require translators to design an equal image so as to have the "equivalent effect".

3.2 Allusion from Mythological and Legend

Table 2: Allusion from Mythological and Legend

	Original poems	Xu's version	Note	Gu's version	Note
4	问讯**吴刚**何所有	The Woodman, asked what he has for wine	O	They ask Wu Gang about what he has there	P
5	**神女**应无恙	Mount Goddess	P	Wushan Goddess	P
	帝子乘风下翠微	two queens	O	the princesses	P
	寂寞**嫦娥**舒广袖	The lonely Goddess of the Moon	O	The lonely Goddess of the Moon	P
6	**牛郎**欲问瘟神事	Cowherd inquired about the Plague God	P	Cowherd asks about the plague's crime,	P
7	六亿神州尽**舜尧**	Six hundred million are masters of wisest sort	O	Millions of people in this Divine Land are all Shun's and Yao's.	P

Example 4:

According to a Chinese tale, "吴刚" learned from an immortal but was punished to cut down laurel trees in the Moon Palace due to his mistake. The tree, however, withstanding constant chopping, can never be cut down, thus "吴刚" is punished to do the job forever (Gu Zhengkun, 2010: 148). Therefore, in the eyes of the Chinese, Wu Gang is a person holding a board axe and cutting trees.

Xu translated it as a "Woodman" to replace the source image, translating the main features of the figure and getting the functional equivalence in the text. In another way, "吴" is pronounced "Wu" in China, and "wood" is pronounced [wʊd] in English. The two are very similar in pronunciation, realizing

the beauty in sound which is advocated by Xu Yuanchong. Moreover, putting the "woodman" in front of the sentence will strengthen the tone and show that revolutionaries who sacrificed at that time in China will be respected in anywhere. Gu translated it by using Chinese pinyin "Wu Gang", but foreign readers who are not familiar with the Chinese allusion of Wu Gang will not understand the term, but through the reference in the annotation. Although the original text was parsed by this method, the beauty of the original text was lost.

Example 5:

"神女is a Chinese legend went that Goddess of Mount Witch would come out in the morning in the form of a cloud and in the evening in the form of a shower over Mount Witch or Mount Goddess, the

highest peak along the Yangze River (Xu Yuanchong, 2015: 76). "嫦娥" is a <u>lady who stole and ate her husband's elixir and fled to the moon where she became immortal and was secluded forever</u>. "帝子" refers to "娥皇 and 女英" who are the emperor's daughters of "尧" and the queens of "舜", while here highlight the later.

Mao Zedong borrowed these images as a compliment to the revolutionary's loyal soul. For the translation of "嫦娥" and "神女", Gu and Xu chose "Goddess" in the same way which will give people a mysterious feeling. Moreover, in both China and the West, goddess is a symbol of a woman in mythology and is admired by people for their extraordinary talent. So it is easy to be understood in the accepted language reader's response.

Example 6:

"牛郎" is a cowherd and his wife is one of daughters of the command of the Heaven. The emperor of the heaven was furious for her marriage and separated them through the Milky Way. They could not meet each other but on the Double Seventh Day every year. In this article, "牛郎" is the embodiment of the working people.

The two readers translated "牛郎" into "cowherd" in the same way. First of all, there are some small errors in decoding the message, and the author does not embody the rhetorical devices here. Secondly, "Cowherd" here has the same meaning between two English and Chinese but they refer to different objects and cultures. At this level, it will cause some deviations in understanding the original text. Readers can't help but wondering why it's "cowherd" to ask question. But on the other hand, both of them have made corresponding notes after the article, trying to make up for this deficiency.

Example7 :

"尧舜" is the legendary monarchs in ancient China, believed to be saint and wise leaders of the people. The poet is used here to refer to the masses of the people, so synecdoche is employed here.

Firstly, Xu translates "六亿神州尽舜尧" into "Six hundred million are masters of wisest sort". It meets the process of decoding message. Secondly, in terms of the number of words and the form of the sentence, the two are basically equal in form and content. Gu's translation is "Millions of people in this Divine Land are all Shun's and Yao's" . The number of words is nearly twice as many as the original text and the decoding message is replaced by the Chinese pinyin.

Summary: Through the above table and analysis, we can see that when translating myths and legends, the two translators use the same method except for the translation of "Wu Gang" and "尧舜". But the difference is that Gu uses a lot of annotations to explain the cultural meaning included in myths. The author believes that myths are rich in cultural connotations, and they cannot fully realize cultural equivalence between the lines. Therefore, for this kind of translation, the writer holds that we can use equivalent words in the text and adds annotation in the article.

3.3.   Allusion from Historical Figures

As far as the translation of historical figures is concerned, Mao Zedong's poems have many historical figures. The author mainly uses these characters to inspire people in the revolutionary environment of the time.

Table 3: Allusion from Historical Figures

	Original poems	Xu's version	Note	Gu's version	Note
8	<u>惜秦皇汉武...唐宗宋祖...成吉思汗,只识弯弓射大雕</u>	Qin Huang and Han Wu...TangZong SongZu...Genhis Khan	P	The first king of Qin and the fifth king of Han...The first king of Song and the second king of Tang... Genghis Khan	P

| 9 | 盗跖庄蹻流誉后 | rebels like Dao Zhi and Zhuang Qiao Chen Sheng revolt then | P | Zi the bandi and the Jue the rebel who... | P |

Example 8:

"惜秦皇汉武、唐宗宋祖、成吉思汗　and 魏武" are the first or second emperor of the dynasty in ancient China. Mao Zedong used contrasting rhetorical techniques in this poem to affirm their great achievements in history and their efforts to unify the China. In addition, a character of "惜" is full of pity and has a critical spirit, expressing Mao Zedong's lofty aspirations. He believes that today's revolutionaries have more outstanding talents than these historical figures and will surpass them. In a word, the revolutionaries are bound to create the greatest performance, which is also the poet's firm self-confidence and great ambition.

Through the comparison of the above translation, it can be seen that the two authors have used different translation techniques. Xu just translated the terms in Chinese pinyin, while Gu builds the proper redundancy by making explicit what is implicit in the original language. But in order to make the reader better understand the original text, both of them added comments at the end of the article. Nida & Taber (2004:165) also believe that we can build in proper redundancy by making explicit what is implicit in the original, and then produces something the readers in the receptor language will be able to understand. This is one of the methods to have equivalent effect.

Example 9：

"盗跖and庄蹻" are heroes of the ancient uprising, just like Chen Sheng. Here is refer to "those who dare to resist tyranny can leave a good name forever." The translation also belongs to build "proper redundancy" in Gu's translation and Xu's translation just as we mentioned above.

Through the above analysis, there are mainly two translation methods for the translation of historical figures: Pingyin with footnotes or proper redundancy with notes. Pinyin can realize the equivalence in style while the footnotes can make up for cultural deficiencies. So the method of Pinyin with annotations is recommended.

3.3. Allusion from literary works

Table 4: Allusion from literary works

	Original poems	Xu's version	Note	Gu's version	Note
10	域外鸡虫事可哀	Trifling disputes abroad...	O	chiken-and-worm	P
11	忽报人间曾伏虎	Tiger o'erthrown	O	tiger subdued	P
12	江山如画	The scenery the mountain displays	O	Mountains and rivers are picture like and sublime	P
13	万丈长缨要把鲲鹏缚	Ready to capture roc and whales with long...	P	To bind roc and whale with a cord...	P

Example 10:

"鸡虫" alluding from Du Fu's poem " Binding Chicken for Worms" in which Du Fu uses it as a metaphor to hint at those who are preying upon another: Worms are eaten by chickens and in turn chickens are eaten by human beings (Gu Zhengkun 2010: 252). This is a famous poem which means things cannot be obtained at the same time. The metaphor, however, here is intended by Mao to insinuate the power strife within the Soviet revisionist leaders (Gu Zhengkun 2010: 253). Mao holds that international strife is small things just like the struggles between chickens and worms.

The translation of "trifling disputes" in Xu's version makes explicit, expressing the author's intention, but ignores the original image in the article. The term "chicken-and-worm" employed by Gu is literal translation, but it is worth pointing out that an annotation about culture is introduced clearly in Gu's translation, maintaining the image of the original text.

Example 11:

"虎" means an evil enemy, "伏" signifies surrendering. "伏虎" here refers to the Kuominating regime was overthrown.

Xu and Gu translated the connotative meaning of the text by using tiger, retaining the original image while Gu uses annotations to interpret the cultural connotation.

Example 12:

"江山如画" is an allusion from the poem"reflections at the Red Cliff upon the Ancient Heroes, to the tune of Charm of Maiden Niannu" by Su Shi (Gu Zhengkun，2010:255). Our China is so beauty that many heroes thus in homage bowed.

A simile "如" is employed in the sentence of "江山如画" to describe the beauty of China. Gu used the similar structure and rhetoric style such as "like" to reproduce the beauty of original poem, which will have "equivalent effect" and "equivalent response". In rhetoric and language style, there is a high degree of consistency. In this respect, Gu is better than Xu.

Example 13:

"鲲鹏" is an allusion from Zhuang Zi. Some people think that Kun is a whale in the northern sea, when it changes into a bird called Peng. "鲲鹏", in this poet, is metaphorically understood as Kuomintang troops, headed by Chiang Kai-shek.

Gu and Xu translated "鲲鹏" as "roc and whales" which retains the original image(formal equivalence in the text). To have the "equivalent effect", they add notes in the footnote to explain the formal reference.

In order to better maintain the image of the original text, and grasp the unique connotation of poetry in the purpose of making readers better understand the author's intentions. The method of literal translation but add footnotes is refered.

4 CONCUSION

Poetry is a cultural card in our China, and the translation of allusions in poetry will directly affect the meaning of poetry and the spread of culture. For the allusion translation, we have made great efforts to analyze them from the perspective of Nida's functional equivalence and also given different translation methods. It can be seen from the analysis that the translation method of Xu and Gu is different. Xu Yuanchong advocates the principle of "three beauties" which make him try his best to reflect the beauty of the original text and to realize functional equivalence as far as possible in the article. Gu Zhengkun uses a lot of annotations in his text to explain the source text which makes his article slightly tedious, but it can also achieve the effect of functional equivalence.

Through the above discussion and summary about the allusion translation methods , it is hoped that it can be better used for allusion translation in Mao Zedong's poems and even in ancient Chinese poetry.

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