

Fuzzy Language Translation in the Psychological Description and Its Reflections

Yunli Zhao

Department of Foreign Languages, Shandong Jiaotong University, Jinan, China

Abstract—The employment of fuzzy language is one significant feature in psychological description of fiction. This paper is aimed at analysis of fuzzy language translation in the psychological description in British fiction. The three-character principle of translation formulated by Liu Zhongde is the criterion to evaluate the translation referred to in this paper. Proper addition of fuzzy words and appropriate domestication of fuzzy expressions are two translation techniques analyzed in this research. Reflections on fuzzy language translation in the psychological description are rewarding for further relevant research.

Index Terms—fuzzy language, psychological description, proper addition of fuzzy words, appropriate domestication of fuzzy expressions, reflections

I. INTRODUCTION

Fuzzy language abounds in human languages. Wang Peizhuang maintains that language fuzziness is the intrinsic property of non-artificial languages¹. (Wu, 1999, p.1) Literary works are characterized by the application of fuzzy language, which leaves readers enough space for imagination and enhances the expressive force of literary works. And British fiction is no exception. In the following section, the present author aims to focus on some prominent translators' translation of British fiction and analyze the fuzzy language translation of psychological description in these works. To facilitate the evaluation, the present author capitalizes on the three-character principle of translation formulated by Liu Zhongde, namely, "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance", which is widely hailed as a most practical translation criterion.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION IN BRITISH FICTION

As far as characters in fiction are concerned, Liu Zaifu maintains that fuzziness is one of the most essential features of characters and man's feelings and emotions are the fuzziest because they are the most uncertain and most intangible. (Wu, 1999, p.44)

The following passage is just from the third chapter of Jack London's autobiographical novel *Martin Eden*:

Ambition soared on mad wings, and he saw himself climbing the heights with her, sharing thoughts with her, pleasuring in beautiful and noble things with her. It was a soul-possession he dreamed, refined beyond any grossness, a free comradeship of spirit that he could not put into definite thought. He did not think it. For that matter, he did not think at all. Sensation usurped reason, and he was quivering and palpitant with emotions he had never known, drifting deliciously on a sea of sensibility where feeling itself was exalted and spiritualized, and carried beyond the summits of life.

He staggered along like a drunken man, murmuring fervently aloud: "By God! By God!

A policeman on a street corner eyed him suspiciously, then noted his sailor roll.

"Where did you get it?" the policeman demanded.

Martin Eden came back to earth. His was a fluid organism, swiftly adjustable, capable of flowing into and filling all sorts of nooks and crannies. (London, 2001, p.21)

In this part, Jack London depicts how ambitious and fantastic the poor sailor Martin Eden became when he saw Miss Ruth, the gentle and amorous girl by utilizing a series of figure of speech. The expressions are pretty fuzzy, but the readers are provided with a vivid description and are able to feel the beauty of fuzzy language.

The present author will refer to *Mrs. Dalloway*, one of the masterpieces of Virginia Woolf, detailing one day in protagonist Clarissa Dalloway's life in post-World War I England. The novel follows Clarissa Dalloway throughout a single day in post-Great War England in a stream of consciousness style narrative. The part to be dwelled upon is excerpted from the opening of the novel. "The celebrated example of 'stream of consciousness' is the opening pages of *Mrs. Dalloway*". (Drabble, 1985, P.944)

In the opening of the novel, the author displays for the readers the constant flow of consciousness by employing interior monologue, one particular kind of stream of consciousness writing. Interior monologue, or quoted stream of consciousness, presents characters' thought streams exclusively in the form of silent inner speech, as a stream of

¹ According to Webster's Online Dictionary, language that is deliberately created for a specific purpose is artificial language. <http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/%20artificial%20language>

verbalized thoughts. Interior monologue also often attempts to mimic the unstructured free flow of thought, presenting it as shifting abruptly among topics, jumping by association from one thing to another, and proceeding by incomplete sentences. It is such a writing technique that gives interior monologue its apparently mimetic quality, its vividness and liveliness. Possibly that is why the character of the protagonist in the novel is so fuzzy. Hence, it brings obstacles for translators to reproduce the style and thoughts of the original faithfully, closely, and expressively. Among a host of Chinese versions of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the present author chooses Sun Liang and Su Mei's version as a sample and attaches great importance to the translation techniques for analysis.

III. PROPER ADDITION OF FUZZY WORDS

To vividly depict the flow of the protagonist's consciousness, the translators add a couple of Chinese fuzzy expressions. The translation of the following three sentences is worthy of note:

Sentence 1. She had reached the Park gate.²她不觉已走到公园门口。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.8)

Sentence 2. Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct, she thought, walking on. 当下, 她向前走, 心想, 她惟一的天赋是, 几乎能凭直觉一眼认透别人。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

Sentence 3. But what was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchards' shop window? 此刻, 她向海德书店橱窗里张望时, 心里憧憬什么? (Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

As already noted, this novel opens with the sentence "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself", which is the exterior event. What follows, however, is a plunge into Clarissa Dalloway's past and into her memories of the open air at Bourton where she spent her adolescence long before she became Mrs Dalloway. In the first sentence, the translator intentionally inserts "不觉". It seems that "不觉" is meant merely for the idea of transitory time. In another respect, however, the inserted words imply that the protagonist's psychology is working all the time on the way and thus she feels the time is passing very swiftly. In the second and the third sentence, both"当下", which means at that time, and "此刻" meaning "at this time" are added to function as cohesive devices. Barry Dainton in his work *Stream of Consciousness* shows us that stream of consciousness is not a mosaic of discrete fragments of experience, but rather an interconnected flowing whole. To make the Chinese version smooth and easy to comprehend, it is necessary to add such devices. To sum up, the appropriate addition of the above fuzzy words enhance the expressive force and make readers easily get access to the original.

IV. APPROPRIATE DOMESTICATION OF FUZZY EXPRESSIONS

In this novel, the rich and delicate psychology of the protagonist Mrs. Dalloway is being unfolded in the form of interior monologue. On this account, it is inevitable that the writing style is characterized by using more or less colloquial expressions. Moreover, although Mrs. Dalloway in her monologue claims that "she knew nothing; no language, no history", her elegant status and fine education contribute to her expressive style different from the common people. Thus, the language in the interior monologue should be elegant rather than vulgar. To faithfully and vividly reproduce the writing style of the original, the translators makes an attempt at employing appropriate both colloquial and literary expressions. To catch a glimpse of the appropriate application of domestication, the translation of the following sentences can be considered:

Sentence 1. She would not say of any one in the world now that they were this or were that. 现在她不愿对世界上任何人说长道短。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.8)

Sentence 2. Devonshire House, Bath House, the house with the china cockatoo, she had seen them all lit up once; and remembered Sylvia, Fred, Sally Seton—such hosts of people; and dancing all night; and the waggons plodding past to market; and driving home across the Park. 德文郡大楼、巴思大楼、那幢装饰着白瓷鸚大楼, 他曾看见它们灯火通明, 她还记得西尔维亚、弗雷德、萨利赛敦—那么多的人啊! 她曾经通宵达旦地跳舞; 尔后望着四轮运货车缓缓地经过, 向市场驶去; 她驱车穿过公园回家。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

Sentence 3. How she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fraulein Daniels gave them she could not think. 她真不明白自己怎么凭这点学问生活过来的。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.8)

Sentence 4. But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. 不过, 随着人世沧桑, 她在伦敦的大街上却能随遇而安, 得以幸存, 彼得也活过来了, 他俩互相信赖, 共同生存。她深信自己属于家乡的树木与房屋, 尽管那屋子又丑又乱; 她也属于那些素昧平生的人们; 她像一片薄雾, 散布在最熟悉的人中间, 她们把他高高举起, 宛如树木托起云雾一半, 她曾见过那种景象。然而, 她的生活, 她自身, 却远远的伸展。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

² The part of the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf analyzed in this paper can be retrieved from the following website: <http://www.harcourtbooks.com/bookcatalogs/bookpage.asp?isbn=0156628708&option=excerpt>.

It is evident that the translators' rendering reads smoothly and clearly. The key of smooth and clear translation, in a large extent, lies in the rendering of such fuzzy phrases as "were this or were that", "all night" and "on the ebb and flow of things". Actually, it is rather precise and proper to render the above phrases respectively as the four-word Chinese idioms as "说长道短" and "通宵达旦" and "人世沧桑". Likewise, considering the characteristics of the interior monologue, the translators render some fuzzy expressions into Chinese as some colloquial expressions. For instance, "such hosts of people" is rendered as "那么多的人啊", "few twigs of knowledge" as "这点学问". Pertaining to the rendering of the same fuzzy word, the translators adopt a rather flexible technique. Take the translation of "survive" for example. In rendering the first "survive", the translators first employ a four-word Chinese expression "随遇而安" and then use "得以幸存" to further illustrate the meaning. As a matter of fact, the two Chinese phrases drop a hint that the reason why Mrs. Dalloway is able to survive is due to her life attitude of "随遇而安".

In conclusion, through accurate comprehension of the original and a variety of translation techniques, Sun Liang and Su Mei reproduce the content and artistic style of the original. A scrutiny of the Chinese version, however, can find some imperfect renderings. For instance:

If you put her in a room with someone, up went her back like a cat's, or she purred.

如果让她和另一个人同住一室, 直觉会使她生气或满意。 (Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

The underlined part of the original is the application of simile. The reader can comprehend the above rendering with ease. Such a rendering, however, is much too domestic, without conveying the original idea. The present author holds that the following rendering can not only faithfully retain the original idea but also demonstrate to the reader the foreign images: 如果让她和另一个人同住一室, 她会弓起后背的猫一样非常生气, 或像低叫的猫那样高兴异常。

Another instance can consider the rendering of the following sentence:

She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxicabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone;

她看着过往的出租车, 内心总有远离此地, 独自去海边的感觉。 (Sun Liang, 2000, p.8)

According to the context, to render the underlined part as above is much too mechanic and far from being precise. Actually, the underlined part is used in its figurative sense. When the protagonist watches the passing taxicabs, she has the feeling of loneliness as a tourist traveling far away from his or her hometown. Hence, it is better to put it into Chinese as the following:

她看着过往的出租车, 内心总有一种天涯孤旅的寂寞感。

To concentrate on the analysis of the rendering of the psychological description does not mean that fuzzy language only abounds in the portrayal of psychology. As already noted, language fuzziness, the intrinsic feature of language, can be found in different dimensions of description in literary works. However, the present author opts for the psychological dimension only because this one is inclined to allow fuller play to fuzzy language.

V. REFLECTIONS

Being an inherent feature of language, fuzzy language forms a considerable part of language use, especially in literary works. Just as Zhou Fangzhu noted, since language is the carrier of literature, language fuzziness is also a fundamental feature of literature. (Zhou Fangzhu, 2004, p.265.)

This study is an effort to provide research on fuzzy language translation in terms of psychological depiction. As this is such a relatively new research topic, this paper could not provide an indepth nor comprehensive study. Rather, it should be seen as exploratory and the basis for substantial subsequent research. After all, "translating is a complex and fascinating task." (Nida, *Language*, 1993, p.1.)

The discussion in this paper might convince readers that the translation of fuzzy language is especially a complex and fascinating task. For one thing, the intrinsic feature of fuzzy language dictates that the choice of words or expressions in translating fuzzy language would be a really hard task to cope with. For another, the characteristics of literary language constitute another great difficulty for translators in translating fuzzy language. Additionally, the research and study have convinced readers that the successful translation of literary works is largely dependent upon that of the fuzzy language. Despite the difficulties encountered by the translators, the prominent translators whose classic translations have been delved into have fully and brilliantly exhibited their first-class fuzzy language translating skills. These translation versions referred to have provided food for thought. Thus, a question arises: how can translators have mastery of translating fuzzy language?

Although language fuzziness is a universally shared feature in human speech, it is diverse from language to language owing to different history, nationality, and culture. As a result, language fuzziness is endowed with characteristics of different languages, which adds to the difficulty of translation. As far as English-Chinese translation of literary works is concerned, both the target and source languages cannot fully fulfill this mutual conversion, neither in form nor content because of the lack of equivalence in connotation and denotation. In addition, some other factors, such as different rhetorical expressions and psychological associations incur, from time to time, inevitable misunderstandings and errors. Accordingly, the present author would like to suggest proposals concerning translating fuzzy language:

Firstly, it is a must for translators to have an excellent command of both source and target languages. As Eugene A. Nida has already indicated, the four basic processes in translating consist of analysis of the source text, transfer from source to target language, restructuring in the target language, and testing of the translated text with persons who

represent the intended audience. (Nida, 1993, pp.146-147.) In the four basic processes, no step should be detached from the good command of both source and target languages. There is no doubt that without good command of the two languages, translators would not go forward any further, let alone have a creative use of the target language. As for the prominent translator whose translation has been referred to in this paper, what has impressed the present author, in most instances, is their accurate comprehension of the original literary works and thus their outstanding translations into equivalent Chinese. It is sufficiently confirmable that these translators have an excellent command of both source and target languages and as well have wonderful competence in writing. Actually, their translations have been proven to be in conformity with Liu Zhongde's three-character principle of translation, and have been claimed as classic in the area of literary translation.

Secondly, they should know well the cultures of the source language and the target language. "It is always assumed that translators are at least bilingual, but this really not enough. To be a fully competent translator, one also needs to be bicultural in order to 'read between the lines'." (Nida, 1993, pp.134-135.) As one means of communication, translation is also a process of cultural transplantation. In the process of cultural transplantation, in addition to the form of cultural overlaps, cultural factors in the source and target languages manifest themselves in the forms of cultural blanks and cultural conflicts. Since culture is chiefly deciphered by language, the acquaintance of the respective culture is prone to facilitate the translator's adoption of appropriate strategies and techniques. As Professor Wang Zuoliang noted, "A translator must be a cultural person in its true sense." Only in this way, can translators achieve equivalence, not only at the linguistic level, but also at the cultural level.

Thirdly, they are obliged to read for depth and give their attention to the confining and illustrating function of the context. As far as context is concerned, B. Malinowski, the world-famous Polish anthropologist, pointed out in his paper entitled *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages*, "Exactly as in the reality of spoken or written languages, a word without linguistic context is a mere fragment and stands for nothing by itself, so in the reality of a spoken living tongue, the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation." (Zhou Fangzhu, 2004, p.78)

In summary, 'no context, no text'. The translation of the same word "crouch" in different context can serve as a prime example:

- (1)The cat crouched, ready to spring at the bird.
- (2)He crouched down to stroke the dog.
- (3) Breathing hard, he crouched fully down to the ground and his face turned pale. (Liu Miqing, 2005, p.8.)

Based on the context, translators can clarify the fuzzy meaning and determine the meaning of this word in different sentences. Thus, in the light of the context, the three sentences can be translated respectively as follows:

- (1)猫儿弓下身子，准备扑向小鸟。
- (2)他蹲了下来，抚摸着小狗。
- (3)他蹲坐下来，脸色苍白，呼吸很急促。(Liu Miqing, 2005, p.8)

As a matter of fact, the slips emerging in the instances noted in this paper, to a great degree, result from the neglect of the context of the literary works. This requires the translator's close, careful reading of the literary works rather like detective work. By using context clues, common sense and our knowledge (by connecting ideas and drawing conclusions), and by forming and testing ideas about what the author was trying to say, translators can discover the author's real meaning and thus conduct their proper translation.

Fourthly, they need to enhance their power of appreciation of literary works, because to accomplish, among other things, the aim of closeness to the style, translators must have the ability to appreciate different styles of literary works. Only translators with a good appreciation of literature are capable of fairly judging arts of literary works because of their keen artistic intuition, rich imagination, powerful association of ideas, and particularly their passionate resonance with literary works. In the process of translating, it is significant for a translator to have a profound insight into the style and the creative features of the literary work to be translated, which demands an appreciation of that literary work. Additionally, the knowledge of the author, himself, including his background, thoughts and his creative styles, is also of great help to the translation process.

Last but not least, literary translators are meant to learn translating by translating. From the present author's viewpoint, translation resembles swimming. The best and the most effective way of learning swimming is through swimming. Similarly, constant practice of translating varieties of literary work is bound to improve the translator's skills in translating literary works. Dr. Nida holds that since translating to some extent a skill, it can be best learned by doing rather than by studying the theories or principles which may or may not be applicable to actual performance. (Nida, 1993, p.152) However, besides constant practice, the present firmly believes that practical strategies and techniques can function as guides for translation. Liu Zhongde's three-character translation principle has often been dedicated to evaluating translations, and his principle was preeminent in translating the works cited in this paper. He concludes, "Whoever has a good command of translation both in theory and practice, can, of course, offer satisfactory translations. It is because translation is not only a science—a science with its own peculiar laws and methods, but also an art—an art of reproduction and re-creation." (Liu Zhongde, 1991, p.125)

The study of translation of fuzzy language is a relatively new-born discipline and therefore new to linguistic scholarship. There is still a long way to go before many fruits are yielded in this field. The present author hopes that this paper will inspire interest and encourage researchers to take up the challenge to discover, analyze, and enjoy the

richness of fuzzy language translation in literary works.

REFERENCES

- [1] Drabble, Margaret. (1985). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [2] Liu Miqing. (2005). *An Introduction to Translation Aesthetics*. Beijing: China Translation and Publishing Corporation.
- [3] Liu Zhongde. (1991). *Ten Lectures on Literary Translation*. Beijing: China Translation and Publishing Corporation.
- [4] London, Jack. (2001). *Martin Eden*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [5] Nida, Eugene A. (1993). *Language, culture, and translating*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [6] Sun Liang & Su Mei. (2000). *Mrs. Dalloway*. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Press.
- [7] Wu Tieping. (1999). *Fuzzy Linguistics*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [8] Zhou Fangzhu. (2004). *Translation Pluralism*. Beijing: China Translation and Publishing Corporation.

Yunli Zhao was born in Shandong, China in 1971. He received his M.A. degree from Foreign Studies College of Shandong Normal University.

He is at present a lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages, Shandong Jiaotong University, Jinan, China. His research interests include translation and American and British literature.