Analysis of Metaphor Translation from the Perspective of Relevance Theory—A Case Study of the Translation of Metaphor in *Fortress Besieged*

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Abstract—*Fortress Besieged* **is a unique satirical novel in the history of Chinese contemporary literature. It is deeply loved by readers at home and abroad for its humorous and refined language. There are abundant Chinese metaphors in the novel, so it is of certain significance to explore the translation of metaphors for the cultural exchanges between China and the West. Taking the English translation of** *Fortress Besieged* **as the research subject, this paper explores how to translate metaphor in novel from the perspective of relevance theory. It is found that the translator adopts the following methods in dealing with metaphor translation: retaining the original metaphor image, transforming the original metaphor image, retaining the original metaphor image and annotating it, explaining or omitting the original metaphor image.**

Index Terms—*Fortress Besieged*, **metaphor translation, relevance theory**

I. INTRODUCTION

Fortress Besieged is a novel written by Qian Zhongshu in the 1940s, which describes the situation of Chinese intellectuals during the National Crisis. This novel is widely popular with readers. The main reason of popularity is not only the fascinating story, but also the author's humorous irony and a large number of metaphors in the author's aplomb. All of these make the readers feel the charm of language. At the end of the 20th century, Jeanne Kelly and Nathan Mao finished the English translation of *Fortress Besieged*. The novel has been well received by foreign readers and is regarded as the best Chinese novel of the 20th century. Jeanne Kelly and Nathan Mao contributed a lot to the response of *Fortress Besieged* in western society, which reflects that their translation successfully conveyed what Mr. Qian Zhongshu wanted to convey in the book.

Through the elaboration of metaphor concepts and translation methods by domestic and foreign scholars, this paper analyzes the characteristics of the use of metaphor in the original work. And then, observe the examples of metaphor translation in the English version. At last, summarize the strategies of metaphor translation in the English version of *Fortress Besieged*.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The relevance theory, the metaphor, metaphor translation and the applicability of relevance theory in metaphor are the theory foundations of understanding this paper. There are introductions of them.

A. Relevance Theory

Relevance theory is proposed firstly by Super and Wilson (2001) in their book *Relevance: Cognition and Communication.* It takes relevance as the principle and deductive reasoning as the mode of understanding. Relevance theory holds that verbal communication is a cognitive process, in which people understand utterances according to human cognitive assumptions, and the condition of human cognitive assumption is relevance principle, that is, they perceive things according to related information. Sperber and Wilson (2001) defined relevance as: "The relationship between propositions and a set of contextual assumptions". That is, under the same conditions, the greater the effect of context, the stronger the relevance. The less the processing efforts needed to obtain these effect, the stronger the relevance. It is optimal relevance (Carston, 1988).

Relevance theory holds that if a person wants to achieve communicative behavior, he or she will show his or her communicative behavior, and the other party can judge the communicative intention of this person based on such communicative behavior. The process of communication is a process of reasoning, and its core is a kind of reasoning thinking. It consists of three elements: the explicit language and language environment as the conditions, the process of which is the individual's behavior and processing in the process of communication, and finally the correlation and cognition as the result. The best outcome of the relevance is that the individual gets the best cognitive results with the least effort. Communication is a process of mutual recognition and understanding between two parties in the process of

communication. In the process of communication, people's language, people's environment and people's hints in the process of communication will have an impact on the receiver, who will have different judgments on these languages. When a language is understood by the recipient using only one standard, it is associated with the language.

B. Metaphor

"Metaphor refers to a particular set of linguistic processes whereby aspects of one object are 'carried over' or transferred to another object, so that the second object is spoken of as if it were the first" (Hawkes, 1980, p 26). Newmark（2001）holds that any figurative expression, including the escape of object words, the personification of abstract concepts, the abnormal use of words or collocation, that is, to describe one thing to another. From above we can know that metaphor is referring to one domain of knowledge to understand another. The former is usually a concrete, more familiar entity domain called source domain; the latter is usually an intangible and less familiar abstract domain called the target domain. The connection of two things is the similarity.

The traditional view holds that metaphor is only a rhetorical device and a rhetorical device to improve literary style. But in recent years, with the development of linguistics, more and more scholars have put forward more novel and comprehensive interpretations of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson have made a bold reform of the definition of metaphor from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Metaphor is not only regarded as a kind of rhetoric, but also a way of thinking. Furthermore, the concept of "conceptual metaphor" is proposed, that is, metaphor is a mapping from the ontological concept to the target concept. Peter Newmark (2001) proposed in his *A Textbook of Translation*: "By metaphor，I mean any figurative expression：the transferred sense of a physical word；the personification of an abstraction；the application of a word or collocation to what it does no literally denote，i.e.，to describe one thing in terms of another." The scope of Newmark's metaphor includes both the transformation of the meaning of a single word and the borrowing of concepts. It cannot be denied that metaphor is an unconscious way of thinking, which is ubiquitous in daily life.

C. A Brief Review of Metaphor Translation Method

Based on the theory of cognitive linguistics and the conclusion of Chinese scholar Shu Dingfang, the key to the establishment of metaphor is to establish the relation between the source domain and the target domain, so as to realize the purpose of rerecognizing the characteristics of the target domain. Metaphor is the connection of similarity between two things by amplifying some features of one thing. That is a process of "cognition-reasoning-expressiveness" in essence, which indicates that relevance theory is explanatory and instructive to metaphor. In the process of translation, the translator actually has to deal with two kinds of relations: one is the connection between the source language metaphor body and the noumenon, the other is the relation of noumenon and metaphor between the source language and the target language. This requires the translator not only to fully understand the original text, but also to convey the original author's intention to the reader as far as possible. A successful translator must be able to use double reasoning skill fully. In the practice of metaphor translation, the focus on the process of translator reasoning becomes metaphor breakthrough in translation.

D. The Cognitive Relevance of Metaphor in Translation

The essence of metaphor is that two different things have similarities, and there is some internal connection, which enlarges a certain characteristic of one thing. It can be seen that relevance theory plays an important role in metaphor translation. In the process of metaphor translation, the translator needs to understand the relationship between the object of translation, namely the relationship between the noumenon and metaphor, the relationship between the source language and the noumenon and metaphor of the target language. In order to translate metaphors, translators must have a deep understanding of the source language, be loyal to the expression of the original author, and convey the original meaning of the original author to readers. The translator should have dual reasoning ability for the source language and target language to meet the optimal relevance.

III. Translation of Metaphor in *Fortress Besieged* from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

How do the translators deal with the translation of metaphor in the *Fortress Besieged* from the perspective of relevance theory? This paper studies on metaphor translation in the English translation of *Fortress Besieged* of Jeanne Kelly and Nathan Mao (2003) and translation strategies from four aspects as following.

A. Retain the Original Metaphor Image

If the original language and the target language in the two languages have the same meaning in the process of translating metaphor of literary works, that means the two cultures have a common characteristic in one area. In order to find the equivalent metaphors in the target language, the translator should try to retain metaphor image that reflects the author's writing style. Thus, the method of literal translation can be adopted. Therefore, the original metaphor image can be retained in this way. There are some examples.

Example 1
Source Language: 可是你这一念温柔，已经心里下了情种。

Target Language: But those tender feelings of yours have already planted the seed of love in your heart.

Example 2

Source Language：方鸿渐给鲍小姐一眼看得自尊心像泄尽气的橡皮车胎。

Target Language: Fang's self-esteem had deflated like a rubber tire under Miss Pao's glance.

Example 3

Source Language：相传爱尔兰人的不动产是奶和屁股。

Target Language: It is said that an Irishman's fortune consists of his two breasts and two buttocks.

Example 4

Source Language: 也许人家讲你像狐狸，吃不到葡萄就说葡萄酸。

Target Language: Some people might say you are like the fox who couldn't reach the grapes and complained that they were sour.

Example 5

Source Language：都是惊弓之鸟，看见女人影子就怕了

Target Language: Having recently been jilted by woman, we are like birds afraid of the bow; we're frightened even by woman's shadow.

In the example 1 "下了情种" can be literally translated into "planted the seed of love". The metaphor image is preserved, so that readers can have a deeper understanding of the original meaning. In the example 2, "橡皮车胎" is translated into "rubber tire". In the example 3"奶和屁股" is translated into "two breasts and two buttocks". The language is humorous, the metaphor is vivid, and the structure of the subordinate clauses in the translated text is more equivalent to the original text. In the example 4, "吃不到葡萄就说葡萄酸" is translated into "who couldn't reach the grapes and complained that they were sour". It is a Chinese slang. The source and the target language have the same metaphor expression. In the example 5, "惊弓之鸟" is translated into "birds afraid of the bow" .

In these translations, the original text and the translation text share the same metaphor. The images between the two conform to optimal relevance. Thus the literal translation can be adopted to retain the original metaphor image. So that readers have a more authentic understanding of the original text.

B. Transform the Original Metaphor Image

In the translation of literary works, due to the differences between Chinese and Western culture and social environment, metaphors sometimes cannot be found with the same metaphor image in the target language. This metaphorical expression is unique to Chinese culture, but a metaphorical representation of the same meaning can be found, then the translation method of transformed metaphor image is adopted. This method of image conversion is in fact indirect translation. This translation allows readers to experience the charm of the source language culture, reflects the essence of Chinese culture, and reproduces the national culture of the source language. For examples:

Example 6

Source Language：他说这冒昧话，准备碰个软钉子。

Target Language：Having made this rash remark, he braced himself for a polite rebuff.

In this phrase "准备碰个软钉子", "软钉子" in this case cannot find the same word in the target language. If translated as *soft nail*, English readers would have a hard time understanding the meaning. *Polite rebuff* has the same meaning to the original language. It can accurately express the meaning of the original text and realize the charm of the original culture.

Example 7

Source Language：我看李梅亭这讨厌家伙，肚子里没有什么货

Target Language: If you ask me, that obnoxious little Li Mei-t'ing doesn't amount to anything.

In this example "我看李梅亭这讨厌家伙，肚子里没有什么货", if translated "肚子里没有什么货" as *have nothing in his stomach*, it is difficult for English readers to understand the author's writing intention and the profound cultural connotation, so they can only transform the metaphor image to make the original meaning and writing style equal. Therefore, this phrase can be translated into "Li Meiting amounts to nothing".

Example 8

Source Language：鸿渐道: "我今年反正是个倒霉年，准备到处碰钉子的。"

Target Language：Hung-chien said, "This is my unlucky year in any case. I'm prepared to be disappointed wherever I go.

In this example, "到处碰钉子" means be rejected, therefore, it can be transformed into metaphorical images. This sentence can be translated into "I'm prepared to be disappointed where I go".

Example 9

Source Language：斜川笑道："这些大帽子活该留在你的社论里去哄你的作者的。"

Target Language : "Such high-flown talk, "said Hsieh-ch'üan with a smile, "should be saved for your editorials to dupe your readers."

In this example , "大帽子" means impractical words. Therefore, this phrase can be translated into *high-flown talk*.

Example 10

Source Language：他相信苏文纨一定加油加酱。

Target Language: He was sure Su Wen-wan had exaggerated everything.

In this sentence "加油加酱" can be translated into *exaggerated everything*.

Example 11

Source Language :训导长寻花问柳的榜样，我们学不来。

Target Language: We can't follow the dean of student's example of visiting houses of ill repute.

In this sentence "训导长寻花问柳的榜样，我们学不来"，"寻花问柳" can be translated into *visit houses of ill repute*.

In these translations, the original text and the translation text don't have equivalent metaphor image. Thus, the domesticating strategy is adopted to transform the metaphor image. The optimal relevance is met in this way between source language and target language.

C. *Retain the Original Metaphor Image and Annotate It*

Due to different language structure and expression, we sometimes neither find the corresponding metaphor image nor similar meaning of metaphors in the target language. Retaining a metaphor image and adding some brief notes can be used in the process of translation to help to convey primitive culture connotation, national customs, habits and thinking method to target language readers. And this method conforms to the optimal relevance. For example:

Example 12

Source Language：原来是苍蝇，这东西跟蚊子臭虫算的小饭店的'岁寒三友'。 Target Language: In fact, they were flies. These, along with mosquitoes and bed bugs, are considered the "three companions of winter".

In this example, the author succeeds in creating humorous aesthetic effects through profound contrast, further highlighting that flies, mosquitoes and bedbugs are still active in late autumn. In this sentence, "岁寒三友" is translated into three companions of winter. In order to make readers really understand the culture of the original text, the translator add annotations to explain the symbolic meaning of "岁寒三友": Pine, bamboo, and plum flower are traditionally known as "three companions of winter."

Example 13

Source Language :辛楣出路很多，进可以做官，退可以办报，也去坐冷板凳，我替他惋惜。

Target Language：But Hsin-mei has several options open him. He can either work for the government or run a newspaper, but instead he's going to go sit on a cold bench.

In this example "坐冷板凳" means to occupy a position of leisure because it is not valued, can be literal translated into "sit on a cold bench", and translator adds notes "be neglected or ignored". It not only retains the figurative image in Chinese culture, but also reflects the unique style of expressing humor and satire in the author's language, and makes English readers understand its connotation and profound meaning.

Example 14

Source Language：鸿渐气得脸都发白，说苏文纨是半老徐娘

Target Language: White with rage, Hung-chien called Su Wen-wan Old Lady Xu. In this example , "半老徐娘"is translated into "Old Lady Xu", then the translator adds the note "Old Lady Xu: an attractive middle-aged woman, from the story of Lady Xu a concubine of Emperor Yuan of the Liang Dynasty, who carried on amorous affairs even when she was quite old". This annotation can help English readers further understand the image in the idiom "Old Lady Xu" and the connotation meaning of Chinese culture.

Example 15

Source Language：只可惜这些事实虽然有趣，演讲时用不着它们，该另抱佛脚。Target Language: Such a pity that while these items of information were all very interesting, they could not be used in the lecture. He would have to read something else.

In this example,"抱佛脚" is translated into " read something else". And the translator add note"clasp the feet of Buddha": The idiom means that when someone gets into trouble through lack of due preparation, he seeks help at the last critical moment.

D. *Explain or Omit the Original Metaphor Image*

In translation, if we can't find the corresponding metaphors in the target language or other similar metaphor images, and the translator think it is not necessary to introduce to the readers that metaphor refers to the primitive culture, then interpretation or omit metaphors can be adopted. That is to translate a comprehensible language of the original content according to the target language features and primitives of the author's way of thinking. This method also conforms to optimal relevance. There are some examples.

Example 16

Source Language：批分数该雪中送炭，万万不能悭吝。

Target Language: In sum, when marking one should "send coal when it snows," that is, provide that which is most needed, and never be stingy.

In this example, "雪中送炭" is translated into "send coal when it snows", however, considering the acceptability and

cognitive environment of the translation readers, it is necessary to add explanation. Therefore, the translator adds explanation "that is …stingy".

Example 17

Source Language：你别称赞得太热心，我听了要吃醋的，咱们从前有误会。

Target Language：Don't praise her so enthusiastically. You'll make me jealous. We had misunderstanding once before.

Example 18

Source Language :我该好好的谢你，为我找到饭碗。

Target Language: I have to thank you for finding me a job.

In the above two sentences, if literal translated "吃醋" and "饭碗" to"eat vinegar"and "rice bowl*"*, the readers can hardly understand the meaning of the translation due to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures and the default cultural translation. Therefore, the translation method can be used to explain the meaning of the simile, which can be translated into "jealous and job".

Example 19

Source Language：太太不忠实，偷人，丈夫做了乌龟，买彩票准中头奖。

Target Language: If the wife is unfaithful and has an affair, the husband is sure to take first prize if he buys a lottery ticket, and he is sure to win if he gambles.

In this example , if "乌龟" is literal translated into "tortoise", it's easy to be misunderstand. Because its implicit meaning can be deduced from the context, the translator completely ignores it. Therefore, the translator omit the translation of "乌龟"and explain "买彩票准中奖" in detail. Thus, readers can fully understand the true connotation of the "tortoise" from the context.

IV. CONCLUSION

As we all know, Chinese and western culture is different in customs, way of thinking, aesthetic consciousness and values. If translator mechanically translates metaphor in rhetoric in the process of translation, it is difficult to convey the original author's writing intention, the appeal of language. Thus, readers are likely to misunderstand the original thoughts, which will lead to communication barriers between Chinese and western culture. Translators should flexibly cope with the metaphor translation according to the original author's writing intention, the culture rhetoric of English readers expect, the type of metaphor. Try to retain metaphors, the characteristics of the language and culture of the original work. Translator can also choose appropriate translation strategies and accurately express the connotation of the original to achieve the purpose of communication between Chinese and western culture according to two kinds of language and culture.

Under the relevance theory, through the in-depth analysis and discussion of the metaphor translation of *Fortress Besieged*, we can conclude that the translator adopts the following methods in dealing with metaphor translation: retaining the original metaphor image, transforming the original metaphor image, retaining the original metaphor image and annotating it, explaining or omitting the original metaphor image. All of these methods are used to meet the optimal relevance theory. In the process of metaphorical translation, the translator should use relevance theory to measure whether the metaphorical image of the original text needs to be transformed. This mainly depends on whether the mapping image of the source domain of translation and original image is consistent or not. If not, the translator should make up for the lack of cultural characteristics of the original text in the translation according to the context. If it is impossible to maintain the cultural metaphor of the original text, we should try our best to find the English equivalent to achieve the maximum relevance between the implied meaning of the target text and the semantic meaning of the original text.

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