

# ***Research on the Improvement of the Translation Technique of Phonological Rhetoric in the Poetry Translation between English and Chinese through the Analysis of Yuanchong Xu's and Yiduo Wen's Theories on the Phonological Rhetoric Translation***

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**Abstract:** Phonological rhetoric technique is an indispensable part of Chinese and English poetry. Due to the existence of phonological rhetoric, a poetry is endowed with both distinctive musicality beauty and unique linguistic beauty. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore the translation techniques of phonological rhetoric in the poetry translation from Chinese to English, both for cultural translation output and for absorption of foreign cultures. Presently, there are some problems in the poetry translation of phonological rhetoric translation between Chinese and English, such as the similarity of content, the singleness of translation means and certain limitations. All of these problems have already become an obstacle to the exchanges between Chinese and English. As famous translators, Xu Yuanchong and Wen Yiduo have rich experience in solving the problem of translating the phonological rhetorics in the poems both English and Chinese. This article further explores and improves the methods of poetry translation of phonological rhetoric between Chinese and English by analyzing and comparing the "phonological beauty" in Yuanchong Xu's "Three Beauties" theory and Yiduo Wen's theory on phonological rhetoric translation.

**Keywords:** phonological rhetoric, translation techniques, three beauties theory, Yuanchong Xu; Yiduo Wen

## **1. Introduction**

Poetry has a long history. In ancient times, poetry, music and dance were mixed together. They have common feature of the beauty of rhythm. English and Chinese poetry have their own fixed characteristics from the initial folk songs to metrical poems with certain requirements. The two complement each other, with similarities and differences [1]. As a carrier of rhyme and rhythm, phonological rhetoric has always been a topic of common concern to many translators and translation researchers when translating poetry from English to Chinese.

Mr. Xu Yuanchong has been engaged in literary translation for more than 60 years. He has

translated a large number of ancient Chinese poems and has made great contributions to spreading Chinese traditional culture and improving the status of Chinese literature in the world. He put forward the "Three Beauties Theory" of translated poetry, and advocated that the charm of the original poetry should be conveyed as much as possible from the three aspects of sound, form and meaning. In his "Three Beauties Theory", the "Beauty of Sound" theory provides lots of translations methods on dealing with the problem that how to translate the phonological rhetoric in the original language into target language.

Wen Yiduo is a famous person in modern China. He is famous for his unique poetry creation, and he has made very high achievements in poetry translation and theory. His poetry translation has shown the charm, poetry and other artistic characteristics of the original poetry to the readers to the maximum extent, making great contributions to the cause of Chinese poetry translation. He used the methods of writing poetry into the translation work and finally summarized his own translation methods on English and Chinese poetry translation.

This article firstly gives some analysis on the common and different things of phonological rhetorical techniques between English and Chinese poetry. Then it further explores the translation methods of poetry translation of phonological rhetoric between Chinese and English based on Yuanchong Xu's "Three Beauties Theory" and Yiduo Wen's handling of phonological rhetoric. Finally, there are some comments and new ideas provided on the modern translation methods dealing with the problems of phonological rhetoric techniques in the process of translation.

## **2. Comparison of Phonological Rhetorical Techniques between English and Chinese Poetry and Analysis of Translation Problems**

Due to the different language systems, English and Chinese poetry present different rhythms. There are many similarities, but they are different in rhythm and phonology. The light and stressed syllables of English make for the intonation clear ups and downs and make English poetry present an intrinsic rhythmic beauty so that it can create harmony without relying on rhyme. Therefore, rhythm has become a significant factor in English poetry. However, since one word is one syllable, Chinese makes poetry easy to be orderly in form but unorganized in syllables. In addition, the end of each sentence must be stopped, and the end of each word must have level and oblique tones, so phonology plays a more critical role in Chinese poetry. Although phonological rhetoric is embodied in both languages, its content is not in complete accord. In English poetry, the stressed syllables and unstressed syllables of each word in each line of poetry are combined to form the foot. The type and number of steps will affect the rhythm of poetry. According to the amount of foot in each line, poetry can be divided into monometer, dimeter, trimeter...octameter and so on. The most common is the four-feet iamb created by Chaucer in traditional English poetry [1]. For Chinese poetry, Hanyu Pinyin is equivalent to the English phonetic alphabet. There is no syllable in pinyin, but four tones are in it. If "syllable" is used to describe Pinyin, a Pinyin is a syllable. In Chinese poetry, a foot is usually composed of one or two words according to word meaning or tone. Therefore, in terms of rhythm, the British style is more complicated. In terms of rhyme, when viewing from the perspective of poetry types, the unrhymed pentameter iambic style is widely popular in English poetry, but rhyme receives special attention in Chinese poetry. It can be seen that rhythm and phonology enjoy a different status in Chinese and English poetry, that great difficulties are brought to poetry translation.

## **3. Analysis of "Beauty of Sound" in Xu Yuanchong's "Three Beauties Theory"**

The so-called three beauties are "beauty of meaning," "beauty of sound," and "beauty of form" [2]. Among the three, "beauty of meaning" is the most important, "beauty of sound" is the second, and

"beauty of form" is the last. From this, it can be seen that when Mr. Xu translated poetry, he first preserved the original meaning of the poetry, and the phonological rhetoric in the poetry should be as good as possible. Beauty of sound refers to "cadence, rhyme, smoothness and pleasant sounding". Professor Xu believes that first of all "the 'beauty of sound' of poetry of the Tang Dynasty refers to rhyme. Therefore, even if the translated poem of the Tang Dynasty conveys 100% of the "beauty of meaning" of the original poem, it will be impossible to preserve the style and interest of the original poem if there is no rhyme [3]. The example analysis is as follows:

Example1:

唐诗《春晓》：Spring Morning, the poem of Tang Dynasty:

春眠不觉晓,处处闻啼鸟。夜来风雨声,花落知多少。

Translation:

This spring morning in bed I'm lying  
Not wake up till I hear birds are crying.  
After one night of wind and showers  
How many are the fallen flowers. [4]

From the perspective of rhythm, Professor Xu's translation adopts end rhymes to reproduce the "beauty of sound" of the original poem. The rhyme of the original poem is neat and harmonious. At the end of the first, second and fourth sentences, the words "晓(Xiao)", "鸟(Niao)" and "少(Shao)" are rhymed with "ao", which makes it easy to read. In order to preserve the beauty of sound and rhyme, the translator used the method of end rhyme in translation, which is embodied in the rhyme of "lying" and "crying" in the translation, and the rhyme of "showers" and "flowers", so that the translation maintains certain rhythm rules, thus creatively reproducing the rhythm of the original poem, realizing the principle of sound and rhyme in the "Three Beauties Theory", and making the translated poem of Tang Dynasty not lose its charm of the beauty of sound and rhyme. From the whole view of the poem, Xu's translation conveys over eighty percent of the original meaning to the target readers and also keeps the original rhyme words, which is a great work. However, there are still some problems in the translation. Even though the translation shows the original rhymes as much as possible, it still deletes the metre and stops of the original poem. So when people read the translation, they can only feel certain beauties of this Tang poem.

Example2::

《诗经·采薇》：Book of Songs·Gather the Thorn-ferns:

“昔我往矣，杨柳依依。今我来思，雨雪霏霏。行道迟迟，载渴载饥。我心伤悲，莫知我哀！”

Translation:

When I left here, / Willows shed tear. / I come  
back now, / Snow bends the bough.  
Long, long the way; / Hard, hard the day. /  
Hunger and thirst. / Press me the worst.  
My grief o'er flows. / Who knows? Who knows? [4]

To a certain extent, the rhyme in an AABB way in the translation conveys the beauty of rhyme contained in "依依(Yiyi)" and "霏霏(Feifei)" in the original poems [5]. Besides, for the end of this poem, it expresses the author's deep melancholy. Xu translated it into the repeated questions, which not only converts the rhymes in the poetry but also using the repetition to express the original feelings incisively and vividly.

From the above two examples, it can be seen that in Professor Xu's "beauty of sound", the common features of Chinese and English languages are skillfully used to skillfully convert the rhymes in poetry, so that the problem of phonological rhetoric in translating ancient poetry is solved.

However, people have to acknowledge that using the so-called equivalent rhymes and stops to translate poems is extremely difficult.

#### 4. An Analysis on the Phonological Rhetoric Transformation in Yiduo Wen's Chinese-English Translation

As a famous poet and translator, Yiduo Wen also put forward his own "Three Beauties Theory" - "the beauty of music", "the beauty of architecture" and "the beauty of painting" [6]. This "Three Beauties" theory is his own requirements for both poetry writing and poetry translation. Here are some examples.

Example 1:

The poem Dover Beach.

The sea is calm to-night.

...

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Translation:

平潮静素漪，明月卧娟影，

...

冲流断复续，长夜发悲哽。

The author of the original poem was Matthew Arnold (1882-1888), a famous poet and literary critic in the Victorian period of England. Dover Beach is one of his most famous poems. The poem is not long, with a total of five bars, in the nearly free style, and the rhymes are mixed and complex. Yiduo Wen translated it in five-character ancient style, and his translated poetry is quite different from the original poem in structure, but better conveys the ideological content of the original poem [7]. However, there are still some little problems in the translation. Even though it is in five-character ancient style, when people read the translation, they can find the rhymes are a little weird and it deletes some meanings in the original text like "sweet is the night air."

Example 2:

Mrs. Browning's Sonnet

I thought/ once/ how Theo/ ritus /had sung/

Of the sweet / years/, the dear /and wished /for years, /

...

"Guess now /who holds/ thee? " "Death"/ I said. / But , there "/

The silver/ answer / rang/, "Not Death, /but Love." /

Translation:

我想起/昔年/那位/希腊的/诗人/，

唱着/流年的/歌儿/——可爱的/流年/，

...

一个/厉声/ "谁/掇着你/， 猜猜! /"

"死， " /我说。 / "不是死， /是爱， " /他讲/。

The rhyme words of the Mrs. Browning's poem are abba, baab, cdcd and cd, with monosyllabic words as the rhymes. The rhymes of Wen's translated poems are basically abba, baab, cdcdcd, with disyllabic words as the rhymes. Therefore, Wen's translated poems present the beauty of rhyme harmony of the original poems [8]. Even though his translation can be regarded as the modal of poetry translation, we can still find that translating the rhymes based on the same kind of rhyme words is so difficult for there are still two sentences whose rhyme words are different from the

original ones.

## 5. Analysis on the Two Kinds of Translations

It can be seen from the above examples that both in Mr. Xu's theory on poetry translation from Chinese to English and Yiduo Wen's theory on poetry translation from English to Chinese, they all make skillfully use of the feature that syllables or Pinyin in English and Chinese poetry can rhyme, so as to reproduce the rhythm and rhyme characteristics of the source language poetry as much as possible. Through the former cases, we can clearly see that Yunmu in Pinyin is usually can be rhymed, which is similar with the end rhyme of English language. Based on this, translating poetry between English and Chinese can be easier because people can find some words in the target language to get the same effect, providing a sense of rhyme to the target readers. However, this method also has certain limitations. For example, Professor Xu put "beauty of sound" in the second place in his "Three Beauties Theory". Sometimes, the phonological equivalence has to be sacrificed in poetry translation for the sake of the integrity of meaning, or sometimes, in order to pursue phonological equivalence, a large number of free translations have been carried out on the meaning of the original poem. Besides, we can understand that English rhyme contains metre and metrical feet but Chinese rhyme contains three things, Sheng, Dun, Yun. Sheng is about the intonation of one sentence, but Chinese poems have their own light and stress marks. Dun is about the stop in one poem. And Yun is similar with metrical foot in English language. It is worth noting that, Sheng and Dun in Chinese poems sometimes are usually depended on the emotion of one poem. In this case, it can be hard to translate Chinese poems into English in the same metre style [9]. So for the modern translation methods, our goal is to try our best to find the most equivalent words, rhymes and styles to the target readers. Even though sometimes we can achieve dynamic equivalence, there are still some limitations.

So I consider that maybe people can apply some new translation methods on translating poems. The multimodal translation can be a good technology or method addressing the problems of phonological rhetoric translation. Using multimodal translation is to use auditory, visual, touch and other senses to communicate through language, which can be effective to convey the information in unexpected ways. The integration of audio, video, text and other modes can help cross more cognitive gaps, especially for some terms and concepts with Chinese characteristics [10]. A bite of China is an excellent documentary serious of Chinese food culture broadcast by CCTV. It not only shows the profound traditional Chinese culture of food, but at the same time delivers Chinese cultural values from unique humanist perspective. The translation of it in its subtitles affects directly the foreign audiences' understanding of Chinese culture [11]. We can find the great effectiveness of using multimodal translation to translate some Chinese characteristic words. So maybe people can make a balance between multimodal technologies and modern translations methods to find a new way of translating phonological rhetoric in poetry.

## 6. Conclusion

For the phonological rhetoric translation in poetry translation from Chinese to English, most scholars emphasize that the rhyme and rhythm in the original poem can be reproduced as much as possible through the unique rhyme method in Chinese and English languages on the premise that the original meaning of the poem can be fully translated. However, actually, from the perspective of cultural exchange, whether it is the translation from Chinese poetry into English or English poetry into Chinese, it may be possible to apply multimodal translation to ancient poetry translation rather than being subject to the originally inflexible paper translation. After all, the origin of a poetry is a song. If a poetry can be combined with melody effectively, it may play a positive role in dealing

with the phonological rhetoric translation.

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