

# Comparison of Two Chinese Versions of Pride and Prejudice

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**Abstract:** Pride and Prejudice is the second published and the most attractive novel of Jane Austen. This paper compares Wang Keyi's version and Sun Zhili's version of Pride and Prejudice and points out the characteristics of the two different versions. This paper attempts to study what translation methods the two translators adopted, the differences between the two versions and the reason why the differences exist.

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## 1 General Introduction to Pride and Prejudice and Its Translation

### 1.1 Jane Austen and Her Writing Style

Jane Austen is a famous English female novelist. She was born in a literate clerical family with good upbringings in the United Kingdom. The good family environment cultivated Austen's interest in writing. She was unmarried for her whole life and spent more than 40 years in the countryside.

Austen's writings mainly focus on the marriage and life of squire family's women, using the female peculiar meticulous observation and lively words to depict the small world around her. Austen used mocking tone and the technique of comedy when depicting characters. Irony is the soul of her narration and the essence of her novel.<sup>[1]</sup> Overall, her works express females' pursuit of dignity and gender equality, and show the feminist tendency.

### 1.2 Pride and Prejudice and Its Chinese Translation

Pride and Prejudice was published in 1813. It describes four marriages, following the emotional development of the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet. This novel expresses Austen's attitude towards marriage that the perfect marriage was made up of both love and wealth.

Pride and Prejudice was first translated by Wang Keyi in 1950s, and his version reflects the original text due to his profound cultural deposits and literary talent. Sun Zhili's version came out in 1990. Compared with Wang Keyi's version, Sun Zhili's is more fluent and more faithful to the original style.

## 2 Comparison of the Two Versions

### 2.1 Translation Methods

#### 2.1.1 Wang Keyi's Version

Wang Keyi praised highly of Fulei's "spiritual resemblance theory". His translation version transfers well the spiritual essence of the original work. His version is a combination of rigid translation and literal translation.

Rigid translation is also called word-for-word translation. It doesn't consider the contents of the original work but just follows strictly the word orders of the source language. Wang adopted rigid translation a lot, some of which is hard to understand. On the contrary, literal translation puts faithfulness to the original contents first, faithfulness to the original form second, and idiomatic translation form third<sup>[3]</sup>. Wang adopted both rigid translation and literal translation.

"The two ladies were delighted to see their dear friend again, called it an age since they had met, and repeatedly asked what she had been doing with

herself since their separation.”<sup>[4]</sup>

王译：“那两位小姐和自己要好的朋友重逢，真是非常高兴。她们说，自从分别以来，恍若隔世，又一再问起吉英别来做些什么<sup>[1]</sup>。”

It is about Bingley and his sisters' coming to invite the Bennets to the ball at Netherfield. The first half part is literal translation. However, due to blind pursuit of conciseness, the last part of rigid translation, “又一再问起吉英别来做些什么”，is difficult for Chinese readers to understand, because “别来做些什么” is often an alert not doing something. It is easy to cause confusion. When I read it, I mistook it for “别来无恙”. However, when reading the original work, readers will learn that it is Bingley's sisters' question about what Jane had been doing since their separation. Here Sun Zhili transferred the original meaning clearly as “一再问起简分别以后在做些什么”.

### 2.1.2 Sun Zhili's Version

Sun Zhili thinks that the essence of translation is to unite art and science, the standard of translation is to give consideration to both resemblance in spirit and resemblance in form, and the method of translation is to make literal and liberal translation run in parallel. When translating *Pride and Prejudice*, Sun Zhili made three requirements of himself: first, faithfulness and accuracy; vividness; fluency and smoothness. So Sun Zhili adopted literal translation and liberal translation. As mentioned above, literal translation puts faithfulness to the original contents first, liberal translation is the same with literal translation. However, unlike literal translation, liberal translation puts idiomatic translation form second, and doesn't stick to faithfulness to the original form.<sup>[3]</sup>

“The Gardiners stayed a week at Longbourn; and what with the Philipses, the Lucases, and the officers, there was not a day without its engagement.”<sup>[4]</sup>

孙译：“加德纳夫妇在朗伯恩逗留了一个星期，由于有菲利普斯家、卢卡斯家和军官们礼尚往来，天天都要宴饮一番。”<sup>[6]</sup>

The first sentence is literal translation. When it comes to the second sentence, unlike Wang's verbose version “没有哪一天不赴宴会，有时候在腓力普府上，有时候在卢卡斯府上，有时候又在军官们那儿”<sup>[1]</sup>, Sun employed liberal translation and added “礼尚往来” to express the original meaning accurately and briefly.

## 2.2 Reproduction of the Original Style

It's important to reproduce the original style because a translation without reproduction of the original style has no artistic charm. Translators should have a good command of the author's writing intention, writing characteristics and sentiments, which consist of the author's writing style. Style includes the use of special words, sentences and rhetoric devices. Due to the limited ability, the writer of this paper discusses only rhetoric devices here.

### 2.2.1 Irony

Irony is used in *Pride and Prejudice*. Irony is to express the original idea with the opposite words, so the literal and the implied meanings are different. It expresses more deeply and amusingly. It is not easy to reproduce the original effect because it needs the translator not only to master abundant knowledge of the culture and history background of the source language but also to make readers of the target language understand the original humor.

“They were in fact very fine ladies, not deficient in good humor when they pleased, nor in the power of being agreeable where they chose it; but proud and conceited”<sup>[4]</sup>.”

王译：“事实上，她们都是些非常好的小姐；她们并不是不会谈笑风生，问题是在要碰到她们高兴的时候；她们也不是不会待人和颜悦色，问题在于她们是否愿意这样做。可惜的是，她们一味骄傲自大。”<sup>[1]</sup>

孙译：“其实，她们都是些很优雅的女性，高兴起来并非不会谈笑风生，适意的时候也不是不会讨人喜欢，但是为人骄傲自大。”<sup>[6]</sup>

These words describing Bingley's sisters are irony. Wang added “问题是在要碰到……” “问题是在于…… 是否乐意……”，thus it does not only convey the original meaning precisely but also makes the version full of the effect of irony. It makes evident the pride and conceit of Bingley's sisters. While Sun adopted literal translation, though the sentence is concise, but it's difficult for readers to learn the original effect of irony, and readers will think the two ladies are indeed fine ladies just with a little pride. Wang made addition flexibly to approach the original contents and style.

### 2.2.2 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech to exaggerate or narrow the original features or degree deliberately in

order to strengthen the expressive effect. Appropriate use of hyperbole can increase the appeal of language and leave readers deep impressions.

“.....for she has, without exception, the sweetest temper I ever met with. I often tell my other girls they are nothing to her”<sup>[4]</sup>

王译：“.....我生平简直没见过第二个人有她这般温柔到极点的性格。我常常跟别的几个女儿们说，她们比起她来简直太差了。”<sup>[1]</sup>

孙译：“.....我一辈子都没见过像她这么温柔的性格。我常跟另外几个女儿说，她们全都比不上她。”<sup>[6]</sup>

This is Mrs. Bennet's comment on Jane. The writer used hyperbole in these words. Wang used “生平简直没见过第二个人”“温柔到极点”“她们比起她来简直太差了”to manifest the flavor of hyperbole and Mrs. Bennet's mean understanding and ignorance. While Sun's version is too plain to convey these connotations.

### 2.3 Reproduction of the Character Images in the Two Versions

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen created many lifelike characters, and the translation quality of such portrayal has direct influence on the aesthetic value of the novel in the target language environment.

Translators will inevitably put their personal value judgments on the character images and refigure them. In result, with rigid translation to follow strictly the word orders of the original work, Wang's version was sometimes a little lack of attention to the original emotions and artistic conception and missed some information which rendered under-translation; and Sun's version was sometimes slight over-translation due to liberal translation and addition of some words or phrases according to his understanding. Under-translation and over-translation will lead to poor transmission of the original character images. Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins are the two most clownish people in the book.

#### 2.3.1 Mrs. Bennet

Mrs. Bennet was a frivolous, shallow and narrow-minded woman.

“Mrs. Bennet's eyes sparkled with pleasure, and she was eagerly calling out, while her daughter read: ‘Well, Jane, who is it from? What is it about? What does he say? Well, Jane, make haste and tell us; make haste, my love.’”<sup>[4]</sup>

王译：“班纳特太太高兴得眼睛也闪亮起来。吉英读信的时候，她心急地叫道：‘嘿，吉英，谁来的信？信上说些什么？是怎么说的？喂，吉英，赶快看完说给我们听吧；快点儿呀，宝贝！’”<sup>[1]</sup>

孙译：“贝纳特太太喜得两眼闪亮，女儿读信的时候，她急得直叫：‘简，是谁来的信？什么事？怎么说的？简，快告诉我们，快点，宝贝！’”<sup>[6]</sup>

Here Jane received a note from Miss Bingley. Mrs. Bennet's anxiousness indicates that “the business of her life was to get her daughters married”. Mrs. Bennet was eager to know the contents of the note, the translation of her words should not be verbose. Sun's version is more concise than Wang's. Sun's version “喜得两眼闪亮” is more vivid than Wang's version “高兴得眼睛也闪亮起来” in highlighting Mrs. Bennet's delight, and Sun's version “急得直叫” is stronger than Wang's version “心急地叫道” in tone and stressing Mrs. Bennet's anxiousness.

#### 2.3.2 Mr. Collins

Mr. Collins is obsequious, stiff and self-righteous.

“The idea of Mr. Collins, with all his solemn composure, being run away with by his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing..... and he continued: ‘..... and your wit and vivacity I think must be acceptable to her, especially when tempered with the silence and respect which her rank will inevitably excite.....’”<sup>[4]</sup>

王译：“想到柯林斯这么一本正经的样子，居然会控制不住自己的感情，伊丽莎白不禁觉得非常好笑……他往下说：‘我想，你这样的聪明活泼一定会叫她喜欢，只要你在她那样身份高贵的人面前显得稳重端庄些，她就会特别喜欢你……’”<sup>[1]</sup>

孙译：“柯林斯先生这么一本正经、安然若素的样子，居然还会控制不住感情，真叫伊丽莎白忍俊不禁……于是他接着说道：‘我想，你的聪明活泼一定会讨她喜欢的，不过你在那种身分高贵的人面前，势必还会变得文静恭敬些，这样她会越发喜欢你……’”<sup>[6]</sup>

It's about Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth.

Sun translated “with all his solemn composure” as “一本正经、安然若素”，while Wang only used “一本正经”. It can be learned from the novel that Mr. Collins was confident in his proposal and set about it in order, so it's inappropriate to use “安然若素” because the word is used to express one's calm when confronting dilemma or abnormal phenomenon. Sun's version is over-translation here. As for the second



sentence, Sun used “势必” to manifest Mr. Collins’ odd conceit that Elizabeth would definitely receive his proposal and try her best to get the favor of Lady Catherine. It reproduces well Mr. Collins’ image of stupidity, conceit, farcicality and ignorance, and it is better than Wang’s version “只要……就……”. So both Wang’s version and Sun’s have merits and shortcomings.

### 3 Causes for the Differences

#### 3.1 Background of Translators

The background of translators has influence on their translation. Wang Keyi's version came out in 1955, while Sun Zhili's came out in 1990. In Wang's time, translators focused on introducing more foreign literature and art to domestic people, thus many translators thought that faithfulness and smoothness were the most important criterion in translation. So Wang's version is a combination of rigid and literal translation.

Sun’s version was published in 1990. It inherited the merits of the former and revised some inappropriate translation. In 1990s, literatures and translation theories both at home and abroad were thriving, so the need and the view on literatures of domestic readers changed. Translating a foreign book was not only introducing it to domestic readers but also meeting the aesthetic demand of them. In order to achieve that, Sun Zhili adopted literal and liberal translation.<sup>[2]</sup>

#### 3.2 Translators’ Subjectivity

Translators' subjectivity means that translation is often influenced by many factors, like translators' professional knowledge, cultural background, and personal understandings of translation, etc<sup>[8]</sup>. Here it mainly talks about translation thoughts.

Translation thoughts mean translators’ understandings and criterion of translation. Different translators have different translation thoughts, which have influence on choices of translation methods or strategies.

Wang Keyi praised highly of Fulei’s “spiritual resemblance theory”, so he was not restricted by the surface structure and paid little attention to wording. He adjusted the structure of the sentence often<sup>[7]</sup>. Sun Zhili held the view that the standard of translation is to combine the strong points of both resemblance

in spirit and resemblance in form. He also thought that in addition to faithfulness, accuracy, and vitality, a translator should try to improve the readability of the translated texts. So Sun Zhili combined literal translation and liberal translation<sup>[5]</sup>.

### 4 Conclusions

From this paper, it could be known that the two versions have differences in translation methods, and the reproduction of the original style and character images. Translators’ subjectivity will influence translation.

Translation is related to cultural issues. In literary translation, the features of literary language should be reproduced, such as vividness, humor, irony, connotation. To keep the original style, translated texts should be vivid, concise and elegant, and make readers get the same feelings of beauty as that of reading the original work. So translators should analyze the author’s writing background and style, and have deep understandings of the original text, thus the original emotions and style can permeate. They should also improve their cultural deposits and translation skills in order to reproduce well the original contents. Translators should not only give full play to creativity, but also be completely faithful to the intention of the original work, and copy the spirit of the original work faithfully.

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