

# A Brief Analysis of the Chinese Translation of Tess of the D 'Urbervilles from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory

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**Abstract:** This paper applies Nida's dynamic equivalence theory to the appreciation of Hardy's masterpiece *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles*, discusses the translation of the meaning and spirit of the source text in terms of dialects, idioms and annotations from the perspective of functional equivalence theory, and further explores whether the spirit and value felt by the readers of the target text is dynamically equivalent to that felt by the readers of the source text. Finally, this paper shows the clever application of this theory and the determination to promote cultural exchange through *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles*.

**Keywords:** *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles*; Functional Equivalence; Zhang Guruo

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## 1. Introduction

In order to establish a standard for conversion between source language and target language and decrease the discrepancy, according to the nature of translation, Eugene. A. Nida proposed the translation theory of "dynamic equivalence" ("functional equivalence") from the perspective of linguistics. Nida's dynamic equivalence "means that the response of the target reader to the target text is basically the same as that of the source-text reader".<sup>[1]</sup> Besides, "equivalence" includes lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence and stylistic equivalence. With all these four, Nida argues, meaning trumps form. From the perspective of this theory, translators ought to translate the meaning and spirit of the source text instead of being confined to the form and further explore whether the spirit and value felt by the readers of the target text are dynamically equivalent to those felt by the readers of the source text, rather than simply translating the source text word by word.

As Hardy's representative work, *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles* is one of the Wessex Series. The novel tells the story of a pure rural girl Tess suffered a miserable life. Tess is a typical woman image shaped by Hardy, but she has dual personality which is different from ordinary women. She dared to resist the shackles of traditional morality and false religion, but she could not completely get rid of the fetters of the former one.<sup>[2]</sup> This is the same problem today as it was in the late nineteenth century.

## 2. The Embodiment Of Dialect In Translation

As a typical local literature, the translation of *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles* needs to show its regional feature well. So dialect, as a unique national culture, is the language variety full of local flavor, and is also the most suitable for describing the character image and character background in the novel. When translating dialects of other countries, many translators will adopt the mode of dialect-for-dialect translation. That is to make the original dialect's translation corresponding to the local dialect's, which makes the whole translation more distinctive.

Mr. Zhang Guruo also made full use of this translation method when translating this work. By integrating Shandong dialect into the translation, Mr. Zhang makes the readers of the translation more clearly understand the education level of the rural characters and the distinct gap between the rich and the poor. Therefore, he successfully shapes the characters' images and effectively relays the characteristics of local culture and language.<sup>[3]</sup>

For example, at the beginning of the first chapter, we can see the appearance of "俺". As a representative word in Shandong dialect, this word brightly shows the speaker's low level of education and the strong rural life atmosphere of the story, so that readers

can understand and integrate into the story at the beginning, which is conducive to readers' association and imagination. "Then what might your meaning be in calling me 'Sir John' these different times, when I be plain Jack Durbeyfield, the haggler?" This is what the peddler said in the conversation between him and the priest. Mr. Zhang Guroo translates this sentence with all the first person into "俺". "俺分明是平平常常的杰克·德伯, 一个乡下的小贩子, 你可三番两次, 老叫俺‘约翰爵士’, 到底是什么意思?" The appearance of "俺" makes readers quickly understand D'Urberville's rural hawker image. At the beginning, it indicates the gap in education level, which lays the foundation for the ruthless suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie in the following part of the article.

### 3. The embodiment of idioms in translation

#### 3.1 The idiom in the title

Mr. Zhang Guroo has showed his love for idioms and his profound cultural background in the title. Idioms are a major feature of Chinese traditional culture, with profound connotation and full of emotion. Incorporating idioms into translation enables readers to gain the culture of both China and the West when reading the text, which not only shows the beauty of words in Western literary works, but also promotes the beauty of the structure of Chinese culture. For example, The title of the first chapter, "The Maiden", originally meant a virgin, but Zhang translated it as "白璧无瑕", adding a touch of modesty and elegance unique to Chinese women. In the title of Chapter 4, Mr. Zhang translated "The Consequence" into "兰因絮果". "兰" means happy marriage and "絮果" means the fluttering catkins. [4] It on the surface shows the happy life of Tess and Clare in this chapter, but in fact implies the tragic ending of their separation to the readers of the translation. It fully demonstrates how extensive and profound the Chinese culture is, foreshadows the overall trend of the story, and arouses readers' interest in reading the translation.

#### 3.2 The idiom in the article

In the description of the article, the use of idioms can not only make the article more fluent, but also improve the target reader's understanding of the article. The use of appropriate idioms can keep the expression of the target text consistent with the original meaning, so that the target readers can feel the charm conveyed by the source text. Mr. Zhang used many idioms in his translation. For example, in Chapter two, "There were a few middle-aged and even elderly women in the train, their silver-wiry hair and wrinkled faces, scourged by time and trouble, having almost a grotesque, certainly a pathetic, appearance in such a jaunty situation." "游行队里的妇女, 有几位中年的, 甚至于还有几位快要老了的; 她们都饱经风霜, 受尽磨难, 一头银丝, 满脸皱纹, 却也夹在这种轻快活泼的队伍里, 让人觉得, 几乎不伦不类, 毫无疑问, 十分可怜可叹." The use of a series of idioms fully describes the appearance of middle-aged and elderly women. In the process of translation, the picture which is intended to be expressed in the source text is clearly presented to the target readers. It both shows the hardship of rural life and the happiness of local women celebrating the festival of Seri.

In addition, in bar 25, "She seemed stilled, almost alarmed, at what had occurred, while the novelty, unpremeditation, mastery of circumstance disquieted him... palpitating, contemplative being that he was." Zhang Guroo's version: 她好象是叫这件事吓怔了, 差一点儿吓坏了: 他呢, 这件事情里不同寻常。未容思索。完全受环境支配那种种情况, 使他心神不定起来.....他本来就是忐忑不安。In it, Mr. Zhang uses "未容思索", "心神不定" and "忐忑不安" to describe Clare's male shyness and joy after getting the further development between him and Tess, but at the same time there was an anxiety in his heart that the relationship had not been made clear. This is a genuine expression of a couple's initial expression of love, and these idioms can best express it. The embellishment of idioms makes the translation more fluent, which also shows that idioms have an important translation value in picture shaping.

### 4. The Embodiment Of Annotation In Translation

Cultural difference and the lack of cultural information are one of the difficulties and obstacles in translation. Mr. Zhang Guroo said in an interview, "I think annotation is necessary for translation and even annotation takes precedence over translations. My so-called annotation, of course, is not to copy the dictionary. That is so simple. What I mean for annotation is to solve difficult problems during the translation." [5] Hardy used a lot of folklore, historical allusions and geographical knowledge in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. For target readers who do not know the native British culture, these will cause obstacles in reading and understanding, so Zhang added many annotations to solve this problem. [6]

## 4.1 Annotation on cultural allusions

In his translation of *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles*, Mr Zhang added many local English cultural allusions to the annotation, which greatly improved the readability of the article. For example, in the third chapter, "Three Leahs to get one Rachel", the translation is: 三个利亚, 都为的是一个拉结呀. This is the story of the Israelite patriarch Jacob with two sisters, Leah and Rachel, but the imagery of Leah and Rachel is unfamiliar to the reader. So Mr. Zhang noted this Biblical allusion clearly in his annotation: In Genesis, Chapter 28, Isaac called Jacob to his grandfather's home and married one of the daughters of his grandmother's uncle Laban. In Chapter 29, Jacob came to the house of Laban, and Laban had two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel, and worked for seven years for Laban, and wished to marry her. But Laban let Leah marry him, and Laban worked for another seven years to get Rachel. This annotation gives a brief description of the allusion, so that the readers of the target text can have a deeper understanding of the meaning that the author of the source text wants to take example by from the allusions, and make the text more smooth and easy to understand.

## 4.2 Annotation on historical figures

In *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles*, Hardy uses a lot of history to describe the text, and at one point he borrows a line from Thomas Lodge to describe Tess's beauty. The article reads: He had never before seen a woman's lips and teeth which forced upon his mind with such persistent iteration the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow. Zhang added an annotation to the translation, giving the reader a brief introduction to the Elizabethan period and pointing out that the "rose with snow" is a reference to Thomas Lodge's poem: "Two red cherries met, pearl lined up, I am happy to smile, the first rose with snow." Through this annotation, the reader of the translation can feel the charm of *Tess* better, and can read more smoothly.

## 5. Ending

To sum up, indeed, we can effectively improve our familiarity with and application of functional equivalence translation theory through appreciation of *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles* from the perspective of functional equivalence. After the above analysis, we can feel different translation effects from different methods, which will enhance our country's overall level of translation, promote the spread of literary works and drive the Sino-foreign cultural exchanges. [6]

## References

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