

Original Paper

The Adaptation Features and Text Reconstruction in Translating Grand Canal Poems into English

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Abstract

The English and Chinese versions of the Grand Canal poems have different adaptation features, which have an influence on the text reconstruction of the English versions of the Grand Canal poems. This study analyzes the pragmatic adaptation features of the English versions of the Grand Canal poems in terms linguistic choices and non-linguistic choices with the representative works of the English and Chinese versions of the Grand Canal poems as the corpus. The study finds that at the level of linguistic choices, the English versions of the Grand Canal poems is, to a large extent, adaptive to the current communicative purpose of the Grand Canal culture expressed in the original Chinese versions, but at the level of non-linguistic choices, it is, to a little extent, adaptive to the above communicative purpose. Therefore, the practice of translating Grand Canal poems into English needs to be improved in terms of linguistic choices at the level of vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric, as well as non-linguistic choices at the level of state of mind, moods and cultural image, so as to reconstruct English versions of Grand Canal poems that are adaptive adequately and fully to the pragmatic features of poems expressed in the Chinese versions and the needs of target readers of English versions.

Keywords

Grand Canal poems, English version, pragmatic adaptation features, text reconstruction

1. Introduction

In 2014, the Grand Canal was successfully inscribed on the World Cultural Heritage List, renewing the world's understanding of Chinese culture. With the introduction of "Protection, inheritance and utilization of the Grand Canal culture" and "Implementation Plan for the Construction of the Grand

Canal National Cultural Park”, Grand Canal Cultural Belt has been frequently featured in national policy discourse since 2017. Therefore, it is of great significance to enhance the influence of the Grand Canal culture, and to help the construction of the Grand Canal cultural belt.

The Grand Canal poetry is an integral part of the Grand Canal culture and translating the Grand Canal poems into English is an important way to disseminate the Grand Canal culture overseas. Translating into English versions of the Grand Canal poems is not only a kind of cross-cultural communication, but also the process of using language, choosing language, and realizing the value of using language. This process of translating has the characteristics of general communication. Translators (together with the authors of the original text) and the target readers are two-way communication subjects. The adaptation analysis on the English versions of the Grand Canal poems is the basis for the correct handling of the English translation of the Grand Canal poems, and it is also the key to realize the communicative purpose of spreading the Grand Canal culture overseas. Thus, it is of great significance to examine the adaptation degree of the English versions to the source text and to the target readers in the process of translating, both in terms of linguistic and non-linguistic choices. Therefore, this study selects English and Chinese versions of the Grand Canal poems as the corpus, and analyzes the different treatments in vocabulary, syntax, rhetoric, state of mind, mood, and cultural image in the process of translating, in order to analyze the adaptation features to both source poems and target readers, and to discover the necessary factors in reconstructing the English versions of Grand Canal poems.

2. Research Status of Grand Canal Poems

Most of the existing studies on the translation of cultural heritages such as the Grand Canal focus on the English translation of foreign-oriented publicity materials (Xu & Wang, 2006; Yang, 2018; Xu & Wang, 2016), the choice of translation strategies (Yang, 2018; Xu & Wang, 2016), and the phenomenon of translation errors (Xu & Wang, 2006; Song, 2018). The current research methods are mainly ecological translation, communication and context theory (Yang, 2018; Hu & Wen, 2016; Zeng, 2018). There are also a number of works studying the importance of the international communication of the Grand Canal culture from the communication and literary perspectives (Liu, 2010; Zhang & Fan, 2019; Tang, 2021; Lu & Wu, 2021; Wang, 2021). Although the importance of the overseas dissemination of the Grand Canal culture has been covered, there is a lack of research on how to realize the overseas dissemination of the Grand Canal culture through the English translation of the Grand Canal poems.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Subjects

This study applies quantitative and qualitative methods in exploring the adaptation features of the Grand Canal poems and the text reconstruction in translating Grand Canal poems into English. First, the study constructs a parallel corpus of Chinese and English versions of Grand canal poems. Then, the

study makes a case study in analyzing the adaptation features of the English version of the Grand Canal poems. The subjects of this study are 32 Grand Canal poems in Chinese and paralleled English versions.

3.2 Research Tools

The tools used in this study include a bilingual parallel corpus, an online alignment tool-Tmxmall, WordSmith Tools version 4, and the adaptation analysis framework. The bilingual parallel corpus is used to analyze the Grand Canal poems of Chinese and English versions. Tmxmall is used to align the collected data of the Grand Canal poems of Chinese and English versions. WordSmith Tools version 4 is used to check the lexical usage of the linguistic choices in the Grand Canal poems of Chinese and English versions. The analysis framework for adaptation features is used to explore the linguistic and non-linguistic choices of the English versions of the Grand Canal poems. And the research framework is as follows.

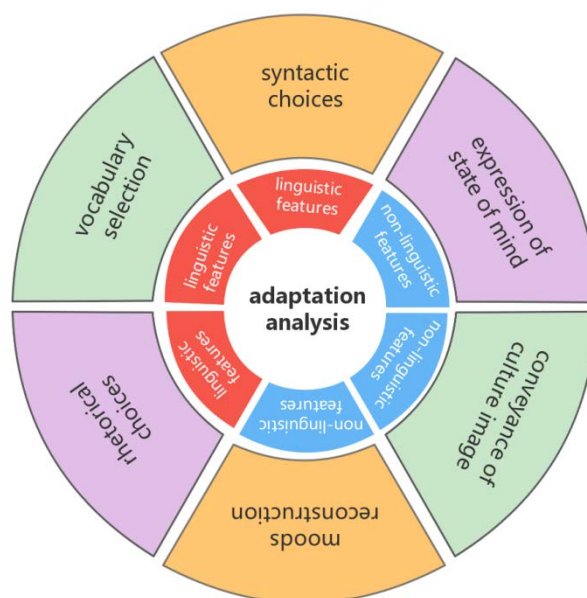


Figure 1. The Analysis Framework for Adaptation Features

3.3 Research Process

The study firstly collects and selects 32 Grand Canal poems in Chinese and the corresponding English versions from classical works by both Chinese and foreign translators. Then, the study aligns the data with Tmxmall, an online alignment tool, and then conducts analysis on the data with WordSmith Tools version 4 to explore the linguistic choices of the English versions. At the same time, the adaptation rates and adaptation features of Grand Canal poems both in Chinese and English are explored within the analysis framework of adaptation features. And finally, the study concludes how to reconstruct English text with consideration of the adaptation features.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Adaptation Features of Linguistic Choices

Language choice is a tangible tool for the reconstruction of a translation text. The handling of language choices decides whether the translation can realize the reconstruction of the source text at the linguistic level and whether the readers of the translation version can find the linguistic appeal of the source text in the translation versions.

4.1.1 Adaptation to Vocabulary Selections of Source Texts

Vocabulary is the smallest unit that can be used in the process of language use. The assessment on the quality of poetry translation lies in the entire translation of the poem, but the basic unit of translation is sentence, while the greatest difficulty lies in the vocabulary. The different English translations of Grand Canal poems are able to realize a greater degree of adaptation in terms of vocabulary selection. The following line is used here as an example.

Line 1. 京口瓜洲一水间。

Version 1 a. Beyond the River lies Jingkou.

- b. Between Jingkou and Guazhou, one stretch of water.
- c. Between Jingkou and Guazhou a mere strip of water lies.
- d. A river severs Northern shore and Southern land.

The above-mentioned line is extracted from “Anchoring at Guazhou”, a representative poem of Grand Canal by Wang Anshi of the Song Dynasty, expressing the poet’s deep feelings of missing his hometown while looking at the south of the river. Jingkou is today’s Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province, and Guazhou is in the south of Yangzhou City, Jiangsu Province, where the Grand Canal enters the mouth of the Yangtze River. During the Northern Song Dynasty, the waterway from Jiangning to Bianjing was usually dominated by the canal. This line means that Jingkou and Guazhou are on the two sides of the Yangtze River respectively. In terms of lexical choice, the three English versions translate the word “京口” as “Jingkou”, in which the lexical meaning and part of speech are both in line with the lexical choice of the original text. Version 1a omits the word “瓜洲”, which cannot fully express the lexical meaning of the source text at the vocabulary level. The phrase “一水间” in the original text is derived from “一衣带水” in “The Southern History—The Chronicle of Lord Chen (《南史·陈后主纪》)” (Wang, 2020). “间” here is used as a verb, pronounced as jiàn (Wei, 2021), which means “to separate...”. In versions 1a, 1c, and 1d, “lie” and “sever” are used to express the meaning of “间”, whose part of speech are both verbs, achieving adaptation in lexical level. However, the word “lie” cannot reflect the meaning of “to separate” which is expressed in the source text, so it cannot adapt to the lexical meaning. The use of “sever” in version 1d, which means “to put or keep apart”, can express the meaning of “间” in the source text and achieve adaptation in lexical level.

From the bilingual corpus, the study calculates the adaptation rates of vocabulary choices to source text, which are shown in the following table.

Table 1. The Adaptation Rates of Vocabulary Choices

Part of speech in English versions	nouns	verbs	adverb	adjective	preposition	numeral	conjunction
Adaptation rates of Chinese translators %	78.8	58.3	66	82.1	32.7	7.8	32.2
Adaptation rates of foreign translators %	76.4	60.2	78.2	80.3	26.7	6.5	34.2
Adaptation rates of Chinese and foreign translators %	82.6	60.9	77.4	80.9	34.2	6.6	34.9

From the above table, it could be found that the adaptation rates of adjectives, nouns, adverbs and verbs in English versions are comparatively high, which are all higher than 50%, while the adaptation rates of numerals, prepositions and conjunctions are comparatively low. It reflects that in translating Grand Canal poems, it is comparatively easy to achieve adaptation in vocabulary choice in terms of notional words, and hard in terms of function words. Secondly, from the calculation, it is found that, mostly, the adaptation rates of the English versions by Chinese and foreign translators are higher than that by Chinese translators and foreign translators solely. It reflects that the English versions by Chinese and foreign translators together could achieve high level adaptation in vocabulary choices in translating Grand Canal poems into English.

4.1.2 Adaptation to Syntactic Choices of Source Texts

In terms of adaptation to syntactic choices of source text, this study explores whether the choices of word order and sentence structure in English versions could adapt to the corresponding line of the source text of Grand Canal poems.

From the corpus, the adaptation features of word order and sentence structure are complicated. Sometimes, they could adapt to the source text and sometimes could not. The followings are two of the examples.

As for sentence structure, the line “京口瓜洲一水间” means “Between Jingkou and Guazhou a mere strip of water lies” literally, and uses a sentence pattern of postposition of the predicate, and version 1c chooses “Between Jingkou and Guazhou a mere strip of water lies”, a predicative postposition. This is in adaptation to the syntactic features of the poem in the source language. The other three versions choose “Between Jingkou and Guazhou, one stretch of water”, “Beyond the River lies Jingkou” and “A river severs Northern shore and Southern land”, which all fail to reflect the syntactic feature of the postposition of the predicate in the source text. The following is another example.

Line 2 春风又绿江南岸

Version 2 a. Now that the spring breezes have reverdur'd the south bank.

- b. Spring wind of itself turns the south shore green.
- c. Spring breezes have once more greened the land south of the river.
- d. The vernal wind has greened the Southern shore again.

In the source text, “春风又绿江南岸” is an imperative sentence. “绿” in the original line means “to make the south of the river green”, and the English versions choose “have reverdur’d”, “turn...green”, “have once more greened” and “has greened...again”, which could adapt to the syntactic features of the source text. And the study calculates the adaptation rates in terms of the syntactic features in Table 2 and 3.

Table 2. The Adaptation Rates of Word Order and Sentence Structure

Items	Word order	Sentence structure
Adaptation rate of Chinese translators %	69.2	62.3
Adaptation rate of foreign translators %	56.3	30.6
Adaptation rate of Chinese and foreign translators %	60.2	50.8

From Table 2, it could be found that the adaptation rate of English versions by Chinese translators is 69.2%, higher than that by foreign translators solely and the teamwork by Chinese and foreign translators together. And the adaptation rate of sentence structure in English versions are in general low in comparison with that of word order ($62.3\% < 69.2\%$, $30.6\% < 56.3\%$, $50.8\% < 60.2\%$).

When syntactic features are explored, the choice of verb is a significant element to be considered. And the choices of tense, aspect and voice could reflect the adaptation level of verb.

Table 3. The Adaptation Rates of Verb

Items	tense	aspect	voice
Adaptation rate of Chinese translators %	78.8	24.3	66.7
Adaptation rate of foreign translators %	76.4	25.2	78.2
Adaptation rate of Chinese and foreign translators %	82.6	25.9	77.4

From Table 3, it could be seen that the adaptation rates of tense are 78.8%, 76.4% and 82.6%, which are the highest, and the adaptation rate of aspect are 24.3%, 25.2% and 25.9%, which are the lowest. Besides, the adaptation rates of tense and aspect in the English versions of teamwork by Chinese and foreign translators are higher than that by Chinese translators ($82.6\% > 78.8\%$ $25.9\% > 24.3\%$) or foreign translators ($82.6\% > 76.4\%$, $25.9\% > 25.2\%$). And in terms of voice, the adaptation rate of English versions by foreign translators is the highest.

4.1.3 Adaptation to Rhetorical Choices of Source Texts

Rhythm and rhyme are the characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry. Adaptation features to rhetorical choices of source text could contribute to the reconstruction of the English versions of Grand Canal poems.

The rhythm of “泊船瓜洲” in source text can be divided into the following patterns with the vertical symbol “|”: 京口瓜洲一水间，钟山只隔数重山。春风又绿江南岸，明月何时照我还？ For the first line, the rhythms of the English versions can be analyzed as follows, “Between Jingkou and Guazhou,| one stretch of water” and “Between Jingkou and Guazhou | a mere strip of water | lies”, which are basically the same as that of the source text, reflecting rhythmic adaptation; for the second line of the source text, the rhythms of the following English versions can be understood as “Mount Zhong | right there | beyond a few folded hills”, “Only a few hills away | lies| Zhongshan” and “Between my home and me|but a few mountains | stand ”, which could also achieve adaptation in terms of rhythm.

As for rhyme, the end rhyme of the poem “泊船瓜洲” in source text is “an” in phonetic sense, and most of the English versions choose end rhyme, in spite of different end rhyme from the source text, as reflected by the following words: “Zhongshan”, “away”, “bank” and “way”, and “land”, “stand”, “again”, and “when”; while in some English versions, they have no rhyme with the last words of each line as “water”, “hills”, “green” and “home”, and “lies”, “Zhongshan”, “ river” and “again”. Therefore, at the rhyme level, different English versions achieve different level of adaptation.

The study also makes calculation of the rhythms and rhymes of the English versions, and the results are shown in the following table.

Table 4. Adaptation Rates of Rhetorical Choices

	rhetorical choices	rhythm	rhyme
adaptation rates			
of Chinese translators %		36.2	40.2
of foreign translators %		23.6	25.9
of Chinese and foreign translators %		33.3	28.4

It can be found from Table 4 that the adaptation rates of rhetorical choices are comparatively low for all three kinds of translators, less than 40% with one exception, which is 40.2%, the rhyme adaptation rate of English versions by Chinese translators, and the adaptation rate of rhythm is lower than that of rhyme. Besides, the adaptation rates of English version both of rhythm and rhyme of the Grand Canal poems by Chinese translators are higher than that by foreign translators and the teamwork by Chinese and foreign translators.

4.2 Adaptation Features of Non-linguistic Choices

Non-linguistic choice means the expression of state of mind, mood and the cultural image conveyed by the source text, and is an important tool through which the readers of the English versions could experience the psychological and emotional feelings of the authors of the source poems (Jiang, 2014).

The treatment of non-linguistic choices directly affects the quality of the construction of the translation, so they are key points in the process of translating Chinese poems into English versions.

4.2.1 Expression of State of Mind

It is a characteristic of ancient Chinese poetry that poets express their thoughts by describing the scenery that represents their state of mind at that very moment. The last line of “泊船瓜洲” in source text expresses the poet’s state of mind at the time of writing this poem. If readers take into consideration of the historical context when the poem was created, it is easy for them to realize that the poet expressed his love or longing for the beautiful landscape of his hometown, as well as his longing to return to his official position, his confusion about the unknown future and his lament about the unknown life by “明月何时照我还”. Therefore, the English versions of “When will the bright moon see me on my homebound way?”, “When will the bright moon see me home again?”, or “But what bright moon will light me home?”, which are translated literally, could not adequately reconstruct the state of mind that the source text originally intended to express; while the expression of “When will the moon shine bright on my return? O when?” highlights the meaning of “何时” in the source text and conveys the poet’s confusion and lamentation about the unknown future, which could further emphasize the poet’s inner feelings and adapts to the original poet’s state of mind.

This study also conducts calculation in terms of the adaptation rate of state of mind. The results are that the rates are about 13.7% and 16.8% with foreign translators and Chinese translators respectively, which is rather low, and the rate is 16.3% with Chinese and foreign translators together.

4.2.2 Reconstruction of Moods

It is extremely common in ancient Chinese poetry to describe scenes by which poets expressed their moods, which reflects the implicit characteristics of Chinese literary language and is also a challenge for the reconstruction of the translating versions. The feelings and moods conveyed by the translated versions are indispensable for the target readers to fully appreciate the poems of the source language. Whether the translated version could convey the feelings and moods of the poems in the source texts or not is one of the criteria that determine whether the translated version could realize the reconstruction of poems. Through corpus analysis, this study finds that adaptation rate of reconstructing mood in translated texts is rather low with about 6.7%. the following analysis is one of the examples.

Wang Anshi used “春风又绿江南岸” to describe the coming of the spring breeze again and the coming of spring in the south of the river, emphasizing the sense of time and the connotation of the passing of time, and expressing the poet’s disappointment of leaving his hometown. The poet lamented that time flew and another year had passed, but the poet’s political ambition had not yet been realized. The English version of “Spring wind of itself turns the south shore green” could not express the lament of “time is like a flying horse” expressed by “又” in the source text. And in the English versions of “Now that the spring breezes have reverdur’d the south bank”, “The vernal wind has greened the Southern shore again” and “Spring breezes have once more greened the land south of the river”, the prefix “re-”,

the word “again” and the phrase “once more” are used to express the meaning of “又” in the source text, which could convey the implied lament of “time flies” in the original text. However, since the information focus in English is usually located in the front of the sentence, it is better to place the prefix “re-”, the word “again” and the phrase “once more” at the beginning of the sentence to highlight the meaning of “又”, and the reconstructed sentences should be “Reverdur’d the south bank the spring breezes have”, “Again the vernal wind has greened the Southern shore” and “Once more spring breezes have greened the land south of the river”, which are more effective in highlighting the mood expressed by the source text.

4.2.3 Conveyance of Cultural Image

Ancient Chinese poetry is a reflection of ancient Chinese culture, and reading ancient poetry provides an understanding of ancient Chinese culture. Culture and poetry are complementary to each other. The successful conveyance of cultural image in translating the Grand Canal poems can help the understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture. The study takes “泊船瓜洲” as an example to illustrate this point. The poem “泊船瓜洲” was written in February of the eighth year of the Xining reign (1075), before the poet was attacked by the opponents and forced to dismiss from his post, and at the same time his political proposal failed. While writing this poem, The poet was on his way to the capital for the second time. Chinese readers of the source text in Chinese are generally aware of this cultural background or have access to it. For readers of the English versions, it is not easy to truly understand the cultural background of the poem unless they have a good understanding of ancient Chinese culture. However, most of the current English versions does not mention the relevant cultural background knowledge, resulting in the confusion of the target readers when constructing the cultural images of the source text if they know nothing about the Chinese historical event of Wang Anshi. From the bilingual parallel corpus and statistic analysis, the adaptation rate of conveyance of cultural image in English versions is 4.8%, which means the English versions could not successfully convey the cultural image by text reconstruction.

5. Text Reconstruction in Translating Grand Canal Poems

In the process of reconstructing translation texts of the Grand Canal poems, translators need to continuously make linguistic and non-linguistic choices and adjustments to adapt to the features of the source texts and the needs of the target readers of the English versions, so as to realize the effective communication needs of the English versions of the Grand Canal poems. Based on the analysis above on the linguistic and non-linguistic choices, the following aspects should be considered in reconstructing the translation texts of the Grand Canal poems.

The reconstruction of translation texts of the Grand Canal poems requires adaptation first of all on the level of language choices, which involve the choices of vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric forms. Due to language differences between Chinese and English, it is impossible for the translation texts to fully

adapt to the source language in terms of language choices. However, the translation texts need to be reconstructed on the basis of an accurate understanding of the language features of the source texts. Firstly, in order to demonstrate the lexical charm of Chinese poetry, during translating process, translators need to consider the lexical choices and achieve the greatest degree of adaptation in terms of lexical meanings and part of speech, to present the lexical features of the source texts. Secondly, in order to convey the syntactic features of the source texts of the Grand Canal poems and the conciseness of the source texts, the translation texts need to adapt to the syntax of the source texts as much as possible and strive for syntactic adaptation, especially in the aspect of aspect. Thirdly, the most important feature of Chinese poetry is hidden in rhetoric. In the process of reconstructing the translation texts, translators should try to adapt to the rhetorical features of the source texts in terms of rhythm and rhyme in order to show the charm of rhythms and rhymes of the ancient Chinese poetry. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that there exist differences between the two languages, so in achieving lexical adaptation, translators should bear in mind the language rules of Chinese and English and not impair the language charm inherited in the language.

The reconstruction of a translation cannot be separated from the expression of the spirit of the poetic texts and the inner world of the poets. When reconstructing translation texts, translators are recommended to ponder the culture background, the poets' biography and the times when poems were created while making non-linguistic choices concerning the state of mind, moods and cultural image expressed in the original texts. The non-linguistic choices of the translated texts of the Grand Canal poems should be in accordance with the inner spirit of the source texts and the poets' psychological and mental world, in order to help the target readers better understand the Chinese history and culture hidden in the ancient poems of the Grand Canal, and to facilitate the communicative purpose of conveying the inner world of the Grand Canal poems.

6. Conclusion

It is necessary to grasp the adaptation features in both linguistic and non-linguistic levels of the English versions, which could directly affects readers' understanding and judgment of the Chinese language and the profound culture of the Grand Canal, and further the realization of the communication of Grand Canal culture. It is recommended firstly that translators should take into consideration the adaptation features in linguistic level including vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric, in the process of reconstructing the English versions. Secondly, it is recommended that in reconstructing the English texts of the Grand Canal poems, careful thought should be given to the adaptation to the non-linguistic level, which is hard to be achieved but is necessary for the understanding of the source texts. Thirdly, it implies that in translating Grand Canal poems, a higher level of adaptation rate could be achieved when the translation in conducted with the cooperation of both Chinese translators and foreign translators.

Besides, in further exploration of the text reconstruction of Grand Canal poems, the adaptation features of momentum and imaginative space at the non-linguistic level could be studied in order to make a useful contribution to truly conveying the inner culture of the poems and the inner spirit of the poets. Secondly, efforts could be made in constructing bilingual parallel corpus of Chinese poems. And thirdly, further studies could be carried out in exploring the underlying reasons why the adaptation rates are different concerning linguistic and non-linguistic levels for translators with different language background.

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