

Translating Cognitive Metaphor in Fairy Tales: A Corpus-based Study of *The Nightingale and the Rose* and its Chinese Translations

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Abstract:

This study approaches the metaphorical language in Oscar Wilde's *The Nightingale and the Rose* and its two Chinese translations from the perspective of cognitive metaphor, by means of a corpus-based approach. Statistical analysis assisted by the corpus tool Sketch Engine reveals that the writer uses nine types of metaphor-related words (MRWs), with indirect metaphors mainly manifest in the form of personification, as well as diverse metaphor flags that create various similes serving as direct metaphors. In the two target texts, the two translators primarily employ strategies of direct metaphor to direct metaphor and indirect metaphor to indirect metaphor, thereby largely maintaining and reproducing the types and expressions of metaphors in the source text, which reflects their understanding of and respect for Oscar Wilde's cognition. This research offers a brand new standpoint to the analysis of this literary work and its translation and provides some new theoretical and methodological insights for the field of translation studies on fairy tales.

Keywords: cognitive metaphor studies; metaphor in translation; corpus-based translation studies

1. Introduction

With the development of cognitive metaphor studies (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), metaphor in literature studies have been embarked on from a cognitive linguistic perspective (Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Semino, 2008). Some scholars have devoted themselves to applying contemporary cognitive metaphor theory to the interpretation of metaphor translation, fostering an interdisciplinary study of metaphor translation. Translation studies can absorb the theoretical and methodological insights from contemporary metaphor studies, and then feed back to that discipline (Shuttleworth, 2014).

This study will examine the cognitive metaphor and its Chinese translation in Oscar Wilde's *The Nightingale and the Rose* by means of a corpus-based approach and will shed light on the writer's



metaphorical language use in his fairy tale and the way in which the translators deal with this cognitive linguistic phenomenon. We will choose the two Chinese translations of this fairy tale – one by Ba Jin and the other by Zhu Chunshen – as the research materials, focusing on the metaphors within the two translated texts.

2. Research Questions and Methodology

2.1 Research questions

Research on translating *The Nightingale and the Rose* lacks analysis from the perspective of cognitive metaphor. In addition, most of the existing studies of the translation of this fairy tale remain qualitative analysis, with little application of quantitative approaches.

Based on the above research gaps, we propose two questions for investigation:

- 1) What metaphorical language does the writer employ in the literary text?
- 2) In what ways do the two translators render the metaphors in their target texts?

2.2 Metaphor identification

For the purpose of metaphor identification, close reading and Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen et al., 2010) will be adopted in this study. In particular, the procedure will begin with a close reading of the source text to identify potential metaphor-related words (MRWs), which will then be checked against the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online to assess whether their contextual use is metaphorical. Subsequently, such MRWs in the narrative will be categorised, following MIPVU's identification guidelines, into four types: direct metaphor, indirect metaphor, implicit metaphor and metaphor flag. We will then implement the aforementioned steps of this procedure again in the target texts. Slightly differently, we will check the digital version of *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* (现代汉语词典) to verify whether this Chinese word is metaphorical in the context.

Direct metaphors are metaphorical expressions that appear in context in a relatively straightforward form without any additional modification, characterised by a higher degree of conventionalisation and a relatively lower degree of metaphoricity (e.g. *life is a journey*). Indirect metaphors, by contrast, are expressions that are less easily perceived or require modifiers in order to be manifested in co-text, marked by a higher level of metaphoricity and a comparatively lower level of conventionalisation (e.g. *time flies* so quick). Implicit metaphors are metaphorical utterances in which certain lexis or grammatical structures are omitted or substituted, or which have to be interpreted through cross-domain mapping in context (e.g. *they* said that let there be light). Metaphor flags are a kind of metaphor signal words, which serve to indicate the presence of metaphorical language in a given context (e.g. *as, like*). The occurrence of a metaphor flag usually indicates that there is a metaphor here. In other words, metaphor flags are usually found in conjunction with direct metaphors. But because of the modifying effect of these metaphor flags, such direct metaphors (e.g. *her smile is like a flower*) become more salient and explicitly found and identified than ordinary direct metaphors (Steen et al., 2010).

2.3 The compilation of the corpus



A parallel corpus called “The Nightingale and the Rose and its Chinese Translations” will be self-established by an online corpus analysis tool Sketch Engine, incorporating the scanning versions of the original and the two Chinese translated texts of this fairy tale. The hard copies of the original and its two translations will be scanned into electronic versions by the mobile app I Love PDF and then extracted by the OCR website 诚华 OCR. The proofreading will be manually undertaken. After this step, the two documents will be imported into the software ABBYY Aligner for aligning the English and Chinese texts at the sentence level. After that, all the metaphors and their Chinese translations will be manually annotated. A manual proofreading for the alignment and annotation will be conducted in order to further ensure accuracy. The aligned and annotated files will then be imported into the parallel corpus for statistical analysis.

3. Results

3.1 Findings from the source text

By quantifying the identified metaphors and the statistics of the word frequency of the MRWs in the self-built corpus, the number of the four different annotated metaphor types in the original is clearly demonstrated in the following table:

Table 1. The Statistics of Each MRW Type in *The Nightingale and the Rose*

Type	Frequency	Example	Total Number
Human and Human Body	16	feet, lips	94
Animal body	2	wings	
Plants	6	hyacinth-blossom	
Tool and Machine	7	chariot, jar	
Money	2	price, pay	
Force	3	bubbling, shot	
Natural Landscape	7	river, sky	
Personification	29	leaned down, hang over	
Colour	3	flame-coloured, rose	
Food	1	honey	
Metaphor Flag	18	as, like	



From the table outlined above, we observe that the original text contains a total of 94 metaphorical utterances, classified into nine types. The last type is relatively special but not a kind of MRW, consisting of 18 metaphor signal words. Metaphorical utterances accompanied by such metaphor flags are relatively explicit in the text, appearing in the form of 18 similes. In the light of identifying personification, we notice that these metaphors are predominantly indirect in form.

3.2 Findings from the target texts

Moving on to the target text, the number of each MRW type in Ba Jin and Zhu Chunshen's Chinese versions, along with the number of translation strategies use by him, are quantified and clearly calculated by Sketch Engine, as shown in the following four tables:

Table 2. The Statistics of Each MRW Type in the Chinese Version by Ba Jin

Type	Frequency	Example	Total Number
Human and Human Body	12	脚 (feet), 嘴唇 (lips)	93
Animal body	2	翅膀 (wings)	
Plants	6	风信子 (hyacinth), 蔷薇 (rose)	
Tool and Machine	5	银罐子 (silver jar), 银镜 (silver mirror)	
Money	2	换 (trade)	
Force	3	沸腾 (boil), 散布 (spread)	
Natural Landscape	5	雾 (fog), 晨光 (dawn light)	
Personification	32	躲藏 (hide), 俯下头 (lower head)	
Colour	5	火焰 (flame), 红 (red)	
Food	1	蜜 (honey)	



Metaphor Flag	20	像 (like), 跟…… 一样 (as...as)	
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Table 3. The Statistics of Each Metaphor Translation Strategy used by Ba Jin

Type of Translation Strategy	Number
Direct Metaphor ---> Direct Metaphor	34
Indirect Metaphor ---> Indirect Metaphor	52
Direct Metaphor ---> Indirect Metaphor	3
Indirect Metaphor ---> Direct Metaphor	0
Metaphor ---> Non-metaphor	2
Non-metaphor ---> Metaphor	1
Adding Metaphor	2

Table 4. The Statistics of Each MRW Type in the Chinese Translation by Zhu Chunshen

Type	Frequency	Example	Total Number
Human and Human Body	12	双脚 (feet), 嘴唇 (lips)	91
Animal body	2	双翼 (wings)	
Plants	4	风信子 (hyacinth), 玫瑰 (rose)	
Tool and Machine	6	银壶 (silver teapot), 银镜 (silver mirror)	
Money	2	换 (trade)	
Force	4	涌上 (well up), 穿透 (pass through)	

Natural Landscape	9	雾霭 (foggy mist), 朝霞 (rosy dawn)
Personification	26	俯下身 (bend down), 流连 (linger)
Colour	3	红 (red)
Food	1	蜜 (honey)
Movement and Direction	1	东方 (the East)
Heat	1	炽烈 (blazing)
Metaphor Flag	20	像 (like), 宛如 (as if)

Table 5. The Statistics of Each Metaphor Translation Strategy used by Zhu Chunshen

Type of Translation Strategy	Number
Direct Metaphor ---> Direct Metaphor	29
Indirect Metaphor ---> Indirect Metaphor	52
Direct Metaphor ---> Indirect Metaphor	2
Indirect Metaphor ---> Direct Metaphor	0
Metaphor ---> Non-metaphor	7
Non-metaphor ---> Metaphor	5
Adding Metaphor	3
Omitting Metaphor	1

In Ba Jin's translation, there are 93 MRWs, because one metaphor was removed via the metaphor to non-metaphor procedure. It should be emphasised that the total number of MRWs listed in the above two tables also includes metaphorical expressions generated in two ways: non-metaphor to metaphor and adding metaphor. Although we also count the use of the strategy of metaphor to non-metaphor, such instances are not included in the total number of MRWs or in the overall number of metaphor translation strategies used, as they are no longer metaphorical in context. Therefore, the number of

translation strategies employed by Ba, after statistical calculation, is consistent with the number of MRWs, amounting to 93. The explanation described above applies to the second translator too. Discrepancies arise as Table 4 lists examples of omission and metaphor to non-metaphor.

In accordance with Tables 2 and 4, the type and number of MRWs in Ba Jin's and Zhu Chunshen's translations are generally consistent with those in the source text. Interestingly, in contrast to the source text and Ba's version, Table 4 shows that Zhu's translation contains two additional types: heat and movement and direction metaphors. The other types within his version remain the same as those in the source text and Ba's translation. Similarly to the source text, the largest number of MRW type identified in both Ba's and Zhu's translations is indirect metaphor, followed by metaphor flag, and then direct metaphor. The most frequently used metaphor found in both versions is personification, followed by metaphor flag. The number of metaphor flag is identical in both translations, but Ba's version contains slightly more instances of personification. Moreover, personification in both translated texts is predominantly identified as indirect metaphor. Further, in each translation, 20 metaphors are accompanied by various metaphor flags, which shape them into 20 similes and help them more directly and saliently to be identified in the translated context. We do not identify any implicit metaphors in Zhu's translation either.

In terms of analysing the use of translation strategies, we find that the most frequent strategy used in both target texts is indirect metaphor to indirect metaphor, with the second most common being direct metaphor to direct metaphor, as demonstrated in Tables 3 and 5. Neither translated text contains the strategy of indirect metaphor to direct metaphor. Notably, in his translation, Ba Jin renders two original metaphorical expressions into non-metaphorical utterances. Interestingly, Ba adds three metaphors in the translated text. That is, he converts such non-metaphorical expressions in the source text into metaphorical ones and also adds two new metaphors in the translated text, one of which is a personified expression and the other of which is a colour metaphor. By contrast, in employing the strategies of metaphor to non-metaphor and non-metaphor to metaphor, Zhu Chunshen makes more frequent use than Ba, with 7 and 5 instances respectively. Differently from Ba, Zhu adds three metaphors – two colour metaphors and one personified utterance – in his translated text. Furthermore, there is an omission of a natural landscape metaphor in Zhu's translation.

4. Conclusion

This corpus-based study conducts a relatively systematic and comprehensive quantitative examination of metaphorical language in *The Nightingale and the Rose* and its two Chinese translations from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. In the light of analysing MRWs' occurrence frequency within the source and target texts, it indicates that nine types of MRWs are identified in the source text. Oscar Wilde primarily employs direct and indirect metaphors in his work. Indirect metaphors are mainly presented through personification. In addition, various metaphor flags are used to shape versatile similes as more prominent and explicit direct metaphors in the text. In the two Chinese translations of this fairy tale, both translators mainly adopt strategies of direct metaphor to direct metaphor and indirect metaphor to indirect metaphor, extensively preserving and reproducing the types and expressions of MRWs found in the source text and thereby apprehending and respecting the writer's cognition.



Through this case study, we also attempt to provide a fresh research angle and methodology for the fields of literary studies and translation studies of this fairy tale and offer a more well-grounded literary analysis alongside translation research, supported by a robust theoretical framework and solid empirical data across the text.

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