Localization of Free Verse in China: A Case Study of Bing Xin's Short Poems*

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Intercultures play an important role in localization of translation. They are the essential reference resources for those who are translators as well as writers in their literary translation or creation. Translators contribute to the extension of source culture and in target culture by means of intercultural to form new localized cultural paradigms. Bing Xin's creation of the short free verse in the vernacular Chinese was influenced by Hu shih's new literature ideas and Zheng Zhenduo's translation of *Stray Birds*, a famous poetry anthology of Tagore. Through her translation, she borrowed new literary paradigms from foreign languages and successfully converted them into more acceptable ones in Chinese new literature. The paper, from the perspectives of Localization and Intercultures by Anthony Pym, explores the effects which Hu Shih and Zheng Zhenduo made upon Bing Xin's poetry translation and creation in the trend of poetry localization in the May Fourth Movement, and analyzes the interactions between Bing Xin's poetry creation and her poetry translation.

Keywords: localization, intercultural, poetry translation, poetry creation, Bing Xin

Introduction

Xie Wanying (1900–1999), better known by her pen name Bing Xin (literally “Ice Heart”), is one of the greatest poets, writers, essayists, translators in China. She has written thirty-five collections of literary works including *Fanxing* (繁星, *A Maze of Stars*, 1923), *Chunshui* (春水, *Spring Water*, 1923) and *Ji xiao du zhe* (寄小读者, *To Young Readers*, 1926). She had translated many Tagore's poems and Gibran's essays which, in turn, greatly influenced her literary creation. This paper, from the perspectives of localization and intercultural by Anthony Pym, explores the effects which Hu Shih and Zheng Zhenduo made upon Bing Xin's poetry translation and creation in the trend of poetry localization in the May Fourth Movement, and analyzes the interactions between Bing Xin's poetry creation and her poetry translation.

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Localization and Intercultures

Anthony Pym applied sociology into his translation studies and put forward the concept of “intercultures”. Also, he used globalization of translation to present his idea of “localization”.

Pym wrote in *Method in Translation History* that “... Beliefs and practices found in intersections or overlaps of cultures, where people combine something of two or more cultures at once... Interculturality is not to be confused with the fact that many cultures can be found within the one society or political unit, nor with the fact that things can move from one culture to another... An unspecified number of translators can be seen as members of intercultures or as having some degree of interculturality” (Pym, 2007, p. 177). He thought that “In this very practical sense, localization is the adaptation and translation of a text (like a software program) to suit a particular reception situation” (Pym, 2004, p. 1). In *Exploring Translation Theories*, Pym treated localization as one of paradigms of translation theories and thought translation is a part of localization, so he wrote: “Localization can involve a wide range of tasks; it usually concerns information technology and marketing, as well as language skills” (Pym, 2010, p. 121).

Localization and intercultures cannot be separated from each other. Intercultures, based on the multi-cultural environment, stressed the important role of translators in cultural translation. Translators localized the foreign works by combining them with the target culture during the translation. In the New Culture Movement of China, the translators localized the foreign literary works to provide new literary forms and genres for Chinese literature. The paper analyzes the influences of Bing Xin's literary translation and creation with the help of PowerConc 1.0 beta 25b, a corpus software by Beijing Foreign Studies University.

Cultural Heterogeneity in Localization of Free Verse

Localization in translation provided opportunities to learn new poetic paradigms from different cultures. Hu Shih and Zheng Zhenduo pioneered translating literary works with localization methods and retained Western poetic paradigms on the basis of cultural heterogeneity. Their attempts encouraged Bing Xin to make progress in her literary creation of short poems.

Hu, influenced by English free verse, launched New Poetry Movement in China. He published free verse poems in vernacular Chinese in 1917-1920. His poem *Over the Roofs* was treated as the beginning of free verse translation in vernacular Chinese.

Example (1) *Over the Roofs* (关不住了 trans. by Hu Shih, 1919)

[ST]... That Love may starve therein ...

... The wet new wind of May, ...

[TT]... 叫爱情生生的饿死...

... 一阵阵五月的湿风,...

Hu retained the original format in his translation; at the same time, he used reduplicated words like “生生的、一阵阵” to make it readable.

Bing Xin used Hu's literary devices into her poem translation and creation. For instance:

Example (2) *Yingxiang* (影响, *Influence*, Bing Xin, 1920; ed by Zhuo Ru, 2012)

...接着漾出无数重重叠叠的圈儿...

... 漾不出圈儿,...

The writing style and format were unrestricted by sentence patterns, rhymes and number of words. Bing Xin also used reduplicated words “重重叠叠的” and colloquial words “圈儿” to increase the music of the poem. It's obvious that she has come to use the localized poetry paradigm in her poetic writing.

Zheng translated *Stray Birds*, a famous poetry anthology by Tagore to introduce short free verse into China in 1922. While preserving the original poetic forms and structure, he attempted to make some changes for better localization.

Example (3) *Stray Birds* No.132 (飞鸟集, trans. by Zheng Zhenduo, 1922)

[ST]...The stillness of the sea stirs in waves.

[TT]...静止的海水荡动时变成波涛。

Example (4) *Stray Birds* No.208 (飞鸟集, trans. by Zheng Zhenduo, 1922)

[ST]...become untroubled in its depth of peace...

[TT]...不受骚扰地沉入安静深入吧...

In his translation, Zheng converted the word class of a noun “stillness” into an adjective “静止的” in accordance with the traditional Chinese word usage. And he used modal particle “吧” to make poem colloquial. More examples can be found and we reach a statistic of expressions (see Table 1) by PowerConc 1.0 beta 25b.

Table 1

Statistic of Expressions in Stray Birds (Zheng Zhenduo's translation version)

No.	Expressions	Number	Percentage	Note
1	Premodification (...的)	749	7.03%	
2	Rhotic accent (...儿)	13	0.12%	
3	Modal particles	93	0.87%	Including: 呀、啊、呢、呵、吧

Attracted by Zheng's translation, Bing Xin began to imitate this new paradigm to create short poems in Chinese. For instance:

Example (5) *Fanxing* No.57 (Bing Xin, 1923)

... 都能建立了更深微的世界。

Example (6) *Chunshui* No.114 (Bing Xin, 1923)

... 我的心灵之灯

只照自己的前途呵!

Bing Xin accordingly used an adjective “深微的” and a modal particle “呵” to make her poems literal and popular. In her poetry creation, she combined different poetic formats and sentence patterns which she learned from Hu and Zheng to acquire her own localized paradigm.

Interactions Between Short Poetry Translation and Creation in Localization

Interactions between translation and creation played an important role in the localization of foreign literary paradigms. Bing Xin wrote in *My Opinion about Translation* that “translations provide opportunities for people who are not familiar with foreign literatures to read and understand”, “translators should make translations easy to understand” and “translators should change orders of original texts slightly for readers' convenience” (Zhuo, 2012, pp. 127-128). Hence, she made some new attempts in diction and rhetoric. For instance:

Premodification (“.....的”)

Example (7) *Poetry Anthology of Tagore* No.48 (泰戈尔诗集, trans. by Bing Xin, 1958)

[ST] My heart that had grown weary and old
 Answers to the call of the marching clouds,
 Overcome with the sudden rush of life's turbulence.
 [TT] 我的变成忧倦衰老的心响应了奔云的呼唤,
被生命的突起的忧乱压倒了。

Bing Xin often translated English subordinate clauses into Chinese premodifications. Premodifications have gradually become a stereotype in translating subordinate clauses. The expression like this has been applied into her short poem creation as well. For instance:

Example (8) *Comfort*: 1 (Bing Xin, 1922; ed by Zhuo Ru, 2012)

...因着遗留的深重的悲哀, ...
 ...因着相形的浓厚的快乐, ...

Many examples can be found in her short poems, such as “深思的人的窗外” (*The Goddess of the Poem*, 1921; ed by Zhuo Ru, 2012), “仰望天空的深黑的双眼” (*Recording Events*, 1922; ed by Zhuo Ru, 2012), “命运的神的手里” (*Fanxing*, No.20, 1923) and “攀摘的人的嗔恨” (*Fanxing*, No.32, 1923), etc. Here we reach a statistic of premodifications in her poetic translation and creation (see Table 2).

Table 2

Statistic of Premodification in Bin Xing's Poetry Translation and Creation

Titles of works	Number	Percentage	Note
Poems in 1920-1923	247	4.89%	Published on Newspaper
<i>Fanxing</i> , 1923	390	7.80%	
<i>Chunshui</i> , 1923	380	6.17%	
<i>Gitanjali</i> , 1946	614	6.79%	Translation
<i>Poetry Anthology of Tagore</i> , 1958	1399	8.69%	Transaltion

The data above indicate that premodification is used more frequently in the middle and later periods of her literary creation, which shows more influences upon her writing by her own and Zheng's translations (see Table 1).

Rhotic Accent (...儿)

Zheng Zhenduo made the first attempt to use rhotic accent (...儿) in his translation of Tagore's poems.

Example (9) *Poetry Anthology of Tagore* No.21 (泰戈尔诗集, trans. by Bing Xin, 1958)

[ST] ..he is with the ship that carries all.
 [TT]...他是和负载一切的船儿同在。

Due to the effects of Zheng's translation, Bing Xin began to use rhotic accent in her poetic translation and writing.

Example (10) *Chunshui* No.14 (Bing Xin, 1923)

...”将你的笔尖儿
 浸在我的海里罢! ...

The rhotic accent in her poems is one of the results in interactions between translation and creation., which can strengthen the rhythm of her poems and make them more readable. We can find many rhotic accents in her short poems: “琴儿, 月儿, 风儿” (*Sounds of Nature*, 1920; ed by Zhuo Ru, 2012), “笔儿, 纸儿” (*A Sick Poet: Three*, 1922; ed by Zhuo Ru, 2012), “琴儿”, “调儿, 鼓儿” (*Poetry Anthology of Tagore*, No.42, No.71, 1958), “叶儿”, “网住些儿” (*Chunshui* No.35, No.57, 1923), etc. Here we reach a statistic of rhotic accents in her poetic translation and creation (see Table 3).

Table 3

Statistic of Rhotic Accent in Poetry Translation and Creation

Titles of works	Number	Percentage	Note
Poems in 1920-1923	4	0.64%	Published on Newspaper
<i>Fanxing</i> , 1923	48	0.96%	
<i>Chunshui</i> , 1923	54	0.88%	
<i>Gitanjali</i> , 1946	9	0.1%	Translation
<i>Poetry Anthology of Tagore</i> , 1958	23	0.08%	Translation

The data indicate that Bing Xin used the rhotic accents much more frequently in her short poems writing than in her poetic translation. Though affected by Zheng's translation, Bing Xin had her own literary thoughts in the localization of foreign literary paradigms.

Modal Particles

For the completion of Tagore's poems, Bing Xin retained the modal particles of the original in her translation.

Example (11) *Gitanjali* No.12 (吉檀迦利, trans. by Bing Xin, 1946)

[ST]... The question and the cry 'Oh, where?' ...

[TT]... 这句问话和呼唤“呵”在哪儿呢? ...

The practice of retaining modal particles has been borrowed from her translation into her short poems writing. Many modal particles can be found: “残荷呵”, “母亲呵” (*Chunshui* No.48, 97, 1923), “骄傲些吧”, “后头呢”, “耐人寻味呢” (*Fanxing*, No.48, 58, 149, 1923). Here we reach a statistic of modal particles in her poetic translation and creation (see Table 4).

Table 4

Statistic of Modal particle in Poetry Translation and Creation

Titles of works	Number	Percentage	Note
Poems in 1920-1923	21	0.42%	Published on Newspaper
<i>Fanxing</i> , 1923	65	1.30%	
<i>Chunshui</i> , 1923	83	1.35%	
<i>Gitanjali</i> , 1946	36	0.40%	Translation
<i>Poetry Anthology of Tagore</i> , 1958	66	0.24%	Translation

The data indicate that the number of modal particles is greatly increased after 1922 when she read Zheng Zhenduo's translation, where many modal particles has been retained. Influenced by Zheng's translation, Bing Xin began to use this new devices into her short poems writing.

Repetition

Repetition is frequently used in free verse to emphasize the ideas of the gist. Bing Xin, in her translation,

retained the poetic device to greatest extent. showed that; it also showed cultural relations in intercultural.

Example (12) *Poetry Anthology of Tagore* No.56 (泰戈尔诗集, trans. by Bing Xin, 1958)

[ST] ... He breaks open thy door. ...

He breaks open thy door. ...

He breaks open thy door.

[TT]...他闯进你的门来。...

他闯进你的门来。...

他闯进你的门来。

The new rhetoric device has been borrowed from her translation into her short poem creation.

Example (13) *Love is like wind* (Bing Xin, 1931; ed by Zhuo Ru, 2012)

惊爱如同一阵风，

在车中，他指点我看

西边，雨后，深灰色的天空，

有一片晚霞金红！

...

惊爱如同一阵风，

在车中，他指点我看

西边，雨后，深灰色的天空，

有一片晚霞金红！

To stress emotions of poet, Bing Xin used repetition, which she learned from the localization of free verse. Here we reach a statistic of repetitions in her poetic translation and creation (see Table 5).

Table 5

Statistic of Repetition in Poem Translation and Creation

Titles of works	Number	Percentage	Note
Poems in 1920-1923	17	11.04%	Published on Newspaper
<i>Fanxing</i> , 1923	2	0.42%	
<i>Chunshui</i> , 1923	2	0.56%	
<i>Gitanjali</i> , 1946	9	2.69%	Translation
<i>Poetry Anthology of Tagore</i> , 1958	39	4.60%	Translation

The data indicate that in the early period Bing Xin used many repetition in her short poem writing because of the influence of Zheng's translation. But she came to shape her own literary style and reduce the repetition in her later period.

Parallelism

Parallelism is a popular rhetoric device frequently used in English poems. Bing Xin retained parallelism to completely show the rhythm of the original poem.

Example (14) *Gitanjali* No.3 (吉檀迦利, trans. by Bing Xin, 1946)

[ST] ... The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on.

[TT] 你的音乐的光辉照亮了世界。 你的音乐的气息透彻诸天。 你的音乐的圣泉

冲过一切阻挡的岩石，向前奔涌。

Repetition has been borrowed by Bing Xin in her short poems writing.

Example (15) *Fanxing* No.123 (Bing Xin, 1923)

天上的玫瑰，
红到梦魂里；
天上的松枝，
青到梦魂里；
天上的文字，
却写不到梦魂里。

Here we reach a statistic of parallelisms in her poetic translation and creation (see Table 6).

Table 6

Statistic of Parallelism in Poem Translation and Creation

Titles of works	Number	Percentage	Note
Poems in 1920-1923	10	6.50%	Published on Newspaper
<i>Fanxing</i> , 1923	29	6.03%	
<i>Chunshui</i> , 1923	14	3.93%	
<i>Gitanjali</i> , 1946	21	6.27%	Translation
<i>Poetry Anthology of Tagore</i> , 1958	38	4.49%	Translation

In fact, parallelism is popular both in English and Chinese poems, so the data indicate small distinction of her use of parallelism between her translation and short poem writing.

Conclusion

Localization and intercultural influence each other in literary translation and creation. Translators render literary works on the basis of intercultural influence and then build new valuable literary paradigms in their localization. Bing Xin first used the poetic paradigms she learned from localized poems of Hu Shih and Zheng Zhenduo in her poetic translation, and then used these localized poetic paradigms she learned from her translation into her short poem creation. In this way, Bing Xin came to develop her distinctive short poems which contributed a lot to the New Literature in China.

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