

An Analysis of Rhetorical Devices in the English Version of Fortress Besieged from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

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Abstract: Based on the Relevance Theory, this paper discusses the interpretive function of Gutt's Relevance Translation Theory to the translation of rhetorical devices. Relevance Theory can provide a powerful explanation of the formation of rhetorical patterns and the cultural contexts in which they are produced from a pragmatic and cognitive perspective. Relevance Theory views translation as a communicative process of explicit reasoning in which contextual effects are important and in which the communicative parties pursue the best possible association in a particular cognitive context. This paper reviews rhetorical devices used in the English version of *Fortress Besieged* the Relevance Theory and analyzes their strengths and weaknesses of them to enlighten translators.

1. Introduction

Rhetorical devices are one of the most common expression and interpretation methods in literary works. It is the most effective and direct way for the author to arouse the emotional resonance of the readers with more vivid and appealing language. As a small branch of rhetoric, figures of speech are like a drop of water that can reflect thousands of worlds. *Fortress Besieged* is a highly successful work by Mr. Qian Zhongshu that combines various rhetorical languages and has infected generations of readers with its humorous language and artistic style. The use of rhetorical devices in *Fortress Besieged* reproduces Mr. Qian Zhongshu's superb command of the language, and the use of various rhetorical patterns has reached a state of perfection. The English version of *Fortress Besieged* is written by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao. This paper explores the translation of rhetorical devices from the perspective of relevance theory.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory was introduced by linguists Sperber and Wilson in their book *Relevance: Cognition and Communication*. Relevance Theory regards language communication as an ostensive - inferential process. Explicit and inferential are two sides of the same communicative process. From

the speaker's point of view, the process of “expressing oneself clearly with the intention of expressing something clearly [1]” is explicit, that is, when we want to speak, communicate, speak, and communicate, we first have an idea in mind, which is the intention of the speaker, and then the process of expressing is a process in which the speaker tells the other party his or her intention. This process is also not easy. In many cases, expressiveness also contains the speaker's expression skills and other language arts, and these language arts ultimately reflect the communicator's inner intention. There are two kinds of intention in the speaker's expression process: informational intention and communicative intention. Informational intention refers to the literal meaning of discourse, that is, the most direct surface meaning without any thought processing. The communicative intention is implied meaning, which is the speaker's true inner intention. Therefore, the expression process includes not only the language itself but also a lot of external attachments, such as the most important concept the context, in addition to the speaker's voice tone, expression, posture, body language, and so on. From the perspective of the listener, communication is a process of reasoning [2]. According to the speech content provided by the speaker which is the literal meaning, after thinking and processing, the listener analyzes and deduces the literal meaning of the speaker, and finally gets the implicit meaning of the speaker which is the communicative intention.

Linguists Sperber and Wilson (1995) put forward the view of context -- cognitive context under the framework of relevance theory[1]. The traditional context is regarded as the regular item that has been determined by the two parties in communication, which usually refers to the external environment, such as the environment factor, the knowledge factor, the cultural factor, and so on. According to Relevance Theory, the cognitive context has two characteristics: subjectivity and dynamics. Firstly, context is part of the assumptions about the world made by both parties in communication. Cognitive context is the conceptual representation of the world, and its connotation is a psychological entity, a collection of a series of hypotheses. Secondly, the operation of cognitive context is a dynamic process. In the process of communication, the listener puts the speaker's new information into his cognitive context for processing and obtaining the communicative meaning. Therefore, in the process of constant communication and input, the cognitive context hypothesis is like a psychological product deep in the mind, which constantly changes according to the changes of external information. For example, previous discourses, expectations of the future, scientific hypotheses, religious beliefs, cultural perceptions, etc. These subjective or objective factors constantly penetrate the listener and influence the changes in his cognitive contextual assumptions. Therefore, in Relevance Theory, cognitive context is a dynamic process of cognitive change.

The essence of Relevance Theory is that “every explicit communicative act should be assumed to have the optimal relevance itself” [3]. For optimal relevance, the speaker will ask the listener to make as little effort as possible in information processing to obtain the sufficient contextual effect, $\text{relevance} = \text{contextual effect}/\text{cognitive effort}$. Therefore, the principle elaborated by Relevance Theory is that in the mode of cognitive context dynamics, the speaker aims at the optimal relevance, and conveys the information intention and communicative intention to the listener by expressing this process [4]. On the premise of constructing their dynamic cognitive context, the listener receives the speaker's information intention and communicative intention and uses certain efforts to achieve the best correlation.

2.2 Relevance Translation Theory

Relevance Translation Theory is put forward by Gutt (2004) according to the basic principles of Relevance Theory [5]. The basic mode of translation consists of two rounds of communication. The first round is the communication round from the author to the translator. In this communication process, the original author uses the source language works as the medium to express his

communicative intention to the readers, including the virtual body of the cognitive context hypothesis of the original author, and we should take full account of the non-real-time nature of the original author. Since one of the sources of such communication is objective books or works, which cannot be updated in real-time or take into account the situation of the readers and change the verbal content. It is clear that this communication process puts high requirements on the translator in the translation process, requiring the translator to be familiar with the cognitive context of the source language. It is also expected that the translator can maximize the optimal relevance in the mind of the original author. Inference is a process in which the translator, as the recipient of both parties, deduces the author's informational intention and communicative intention by using the cognitive context hypothesis. In the second round of communication, the translator needs to change his/her identity from the original reader to the new communicator (i.e., the speaker) and deliver the information obtained in the first round to the target reader in the target language through a new round of express-one reasoning process. The translator plays a role as a bridge in the whole two rounds of communication. Therefore, whether the three parties (source author, translator, and target reader) can achieve communicative success depends entirely on whether the translator can find the best correlation between the source author and target reader.

3. Rhetorical Devices

3.1 Metaphor

With the development of metaphor research in recent years, metaphor has long been more than just a rhetorical device, and people regard metaphor as a way of thinking from a macro level. Linguist Shu Dingfang (2000) believes that “metaphorical thinking is the only way for humans to understand things and establish conceptual systems. [6]” As a rhetorical device, metaphor not only constructs a new cognitive mode on the level of thinking but also deeply contains cultural connotations. *Fortress Besieged* uses a large number of metaphors, from which we can see how metaphor as a figure of speech is interpreted from the perspective of relevance theory.

The word metaphor comes from the Greek "metaphora", which refers to a specific linguistic process. Some aspect of one object is transferred to another object, which is considered similar to the first object [7]. Relevance Theory has a strong explanatory power to metaphor. It regards cognitive context as a process of psychological construction, which is the collection of partial assumptions of the author about the world. In order to study metaphor and its translation more clearly, it is necessary to elaborate on the cognitive context in which metaphor occurs. For translators, the cognitive context means that they must fully comprehend the metaphorical figures of speech in the source text. At the level of cognitive context, translators should cross the cultural gap to understand the deep meaning rooted in culture. Secondly, the translator needs to find the best correlation between the original works of rhetoric in a strong bilingual cultural background. If the translator can achieve the dual resonance of the cognitive context and the best correlation, the effect will be the best [8]. Therefore, in this level of communication, translators should first have a high level of linguistic and cultural literacy and strong bilingual cultural communication ability. When the translator transfers the cognitive context that is faithful to the original text to his mind and establishes the optimal relevance, the role transformation should be carried out. The translator becomes the communicative subject to convey the translated content. At this level, the translator should first consider the cognitive context. The problem is the reconstruction of the cognitive context hypothesis in the target language. The first thing he should consider is whether the cognitive context derived from the text can be replaced in the target language, or whether it is a similar cognitive hypothesis. Therefore, the reconstruction of the cognitive context involving the cultural level is particularly important. Then the translator should look for the best correlation and express the ideological content and culture to the target language

readers with the target language as the carrier. Therefore, we can see that translation, especially the translation of literary works, has very high requirements for translators.

Here we will take the English version of *Fortress Besieged* as an example to explore some examples of metaphorical figures of speech translation. The title of "W éi Ch éng" translates as Fortress Besieged, which is a metaphor in itself. An English saying that "Marriage is like a gilded bird cage. The birds outside want to get in and the birds inside want to fly out. "When Mr. Qian Zhongshu wrote the title "W éi Ch éng", it contained a bitter irony [9]. Whether it is a birdcage or a fortress under siege, they all have one common characteristic, which is the endless desire for life.

In *Fortress Besieged*, when Mr. Qian Zhongshu describes the appearance of Miss Bao, he uses this paragraph in Table 1:

Table 1: The Examples of Metaphor

Example 1	SL: Yǒu rén jiào tā" shú shí pù zi", yīn wèi zhí yǒu shú shí diàn huì bǎ nà xǔ duō yán sè nuǎn rè dē ròu gōng kāi chén liè; Yòu yǒu rén jiào tā "zhēn lǐ", yīn wèi jù shuō"zhēn lǐ shì chì luǒ luǒ dē". Bào xiǎo jiě bìng wèi yī sī bú guà, suǒ yǐ tā mén xiū zhèng wéi "jú bù dē zhēn lǐ". [10]
	TL: Some called her a charcuterie- a shop selling cooked meats - because only such a shop would have so much warm-colored flesh on public display. Others called her "Truth" since it is said that "the truth is naked". But Miss Pao wasn't exactly without a stitch on, so they revised her name to "Partial Truth".[11]
Example 2	SL: Yīn méi yī dù pí dē jǐu, jī hū quán chéng le suān cù. [10]
	TL: The wine in Hsin-mei's stomach turned to sour vinegar in his jealousy. [11]

As the example 1 in Table 1 shows, the most famous description and is often quoted by later generations. The implicit metaphor is "charcuterie" [12]. Mr. Qian did not describe Ms. Bao's dress with a color-coded vocabulary or detail. But a charcuterie alone paints Miss Bao's character and dress beautifully, and in some ways, subtly conveys the author's irony. How can a charcuterie relate to a well-groomed lady returning from overseas? In fact, we find that the two have sensory and visual similarities. The charcuterie displays a variety of deli meat products to attract customers, while Miss Bao has been extremely exaggerated in her grooming, making herself sexy for no other reason than to attract men's attention and desire. There is a proverb in English that goes like this: "A woman's beauty is such a feast to the eye", so we can see the metaphor of beauty as a feast in both Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds [13]. Therefore, when translating this metaphor, the translator first realizes that there is no cultural barrier in the cognitive background contained in the metaphor. Therefore, the translator builds the best correlation in the target language based on the common cognitive background and finally achieves a vivid and ironic communicative effect with profound implications.

In example 2, Hsin-mei saw that Miss Su had smeared essential oil on Hung-chien and a jealous instinct came over him. Mr. Qian writes that "the wine in one belly is almost vinegar". The metaphor here is like the metaphor of Hsin-mei's jealousy as sour vinegar. In Chinese culture, jealousy stands for jealousy, which is a common-sense cultural metaphor. However, in Western culture, people are not familiar with this cultural image, so the translator adopts the foreignizing translation strategy to translate it into the wine in Hsin-mei's stomach turned to sour vinegar in his jealousy. When Western readers read here, it is certainly not difficult to appreciate its cultural connotation through the reconstitution of contextual assumptions and reasoning efforts. However, it is not as vivid and direct as the original text gives readers subjective feelings. In order to make it more culturally acceptable to readers in the context of the target language, we may consider another translation method. In Western

culture, the feeling of wine comes from the temperature, which keeps people warm and warm. At the same time in Western culture, we also see such expressions: "That fire of jealousy eternally and chastely burning." Here we see jealousy burning like anger. Therefore, the link between alcohol and jealousy is a subjective feeling of anger. We may consider changing the above sentence to "The considerable amount of wine Hsin-mei had consumed earlier was burning inside and made him sick with jealousy." In the absence of the cultural image of vinegar, we have a new best link between wine and jealousy. Therefore, the reconstruction of new context cognition can achieve the same communicative effect.

3.2 Pun

In a certain language environment, the polysemy and homonym of words are used to intentionally make the sentence have a double meaning, which is a rhetorical device called a pun. Puns are very important and clever figures of speech, which can make the expression of language implicit and humorous. Moreover, puns can deepen the meaning and make an impression. In ancient Chinese poetry, especially folk songs, the pun is used to express the love between men and women, which is both vivid and lively, forming a special style. In addition, puns can also play the role of cryptic language, satire, and humor. Such as Li Shangyin's poem "Chūn cán dào sǐ sī fāng jìn, là jù chéng huī lèi shǐ gān", "Sī" is meaning as "miss" to express the love between men and women.

Pun is a rhetorical device commonly used in Chinese and foreign literary works. It is difficult to interpret and translate puns, although some puns can be translated directly. But most puns can't be translated literally. The author will analyze the translation of puns from the perspective of relevance theory.

In order to achieve the purpose of communication, people usually express their information and intentions accurately, but sometimes people deliberately say some vague words in order to achieve a certain communicative intention or communicative effect. Puns are the verbal means used deliberately by the speaker to achieve the desired communicative intention or communicative effect. Relevance theory points out that the purpose of communication is to obtain the best relevance and the effect of the communicator's intention. Therefore, the author believes that the most important thing in pun translation is to express the effect or intention of the pun. Pun translation is also a double express expression -- inference communication, but this kind of reasoning is more complicated than other translations. According to the literal meaning of the pun, the translator should first select a context as the premise, with minimal effort to obtain the contextual effect of the pun and introduce the only intention of the pun. The second step is to convey the effect and intention of puns to the target readers through the literal meaning of the target text according to the understanding of the first step, the context of the target readers, and the expectation of the target readers. Taking *Fortress Besieged* as an example, the author analyzes how to translate puns with relevance theory.

Table 2: The Example of Pun

Example 3	SL: Hóngjiàn zhǐ zhē nà xiē tǔ mán tou wèn: " Sūn xiǎo jiě, nǐ xiāng xìn bù xiāng xìn yǒu guǐ? "[10]
	TL: "Pointing to the coarse steamed bread, Hung-chien asked, "Miss Sun, do you believe in ghosts?" [11]

In example 3 of the Table 2, "tǔ mántou" here is a pun, literally meaning steamed bread made of soil, but according to the context, it can be concluded that " tǔ mán tou " refers to the "grave" in Chinese burial custom [14]. Therefore, the translator didn't understand the connotation of this culturally loaded word, and the translation is "coarse steamed bread", which is far from the author's meaning. In order to convey the connotation and meaning of " tǔ mán tou ", and establish the best

correlation between " tǔ mǎn tóu " and "tomb", readers can speculate the meaning of the original text. The author thinks that the meaning of " tǔ mǎn tóu " is "grave" and should be inferred according to the source language, which can be added in the following so that the translation readers can understand the meaning here. Another way is to use the domestication translation method to translate it as "grave".

4. Conclusion

Through the analysis of rhetorical devices in the English version of *Fortress Besieged* by Relevance Theory, we find that some parts need to be modified so that the readers of the translation can truly understand the meaning that the original author wants to convey. It is a new pragmatic approach to exploring translation studies from the perspective of relevance theory. Relevance Theory, starting from the internal mechanism of language communication, provides new and powerful explanatory power to translation studies at the communicative level. At the same time, Relevance Translation Theory can better guide translation practice. As long as the communication is at the level of linguistic and cultural communication, Relevance Theory can be resorted to and solutions can be found. Moreover, the combination of Relevance Theory and translation, and can guide translators to take the "optimal relevance" in the process of communication as their goal and construct new images in new contexts, which undoubtedly also involves the issues that should be discussed in translation standards and provides a thinking direction for the establishment of translation standards in the future. In the exploration of rhetorical devices translation, Relevance Theory also plays a powerful interpretive function. Furthermore, we will no longer be restricted by various translation strategies and principles in Relevance Theory, because a good translation depends on whether the optimal relevance can be built after the reconstruction of cognitive context in order to achieve the same communicative effect as that derived from the text.

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