

# An analysis of Chinese prose translation strategies based on cross-cultural aesthetics -- A case study of Zhang Peiji's English translation of prose *Before the Rain*

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**Abstract:** Chinese modern prose is a cultural treasure with unique artistic value and charm. However, due to the influence of the ideological and cultural differences between China and the West, many western people often fail to fully understand the mystery of Chinese literary works when they appreciate them. Therefore, based on the cross-cultural aesthetic perspective, it is very necessary to strengthen the study of Chinese prose translation strategies. In this regard, this paper takes Zhang Peiji's prose *Before the Rain* as an example to carry out relevant analysis and research on its translation strategies, aiming to help more readers understand how Mr. Zhang Peiji reproduces the beauty of the original prose in the translation, for reference only.

**Key words:** Cross-culture; Aesthetic; Chinese prose; Translation strategies; English translation of prose

Under the background of the new era, cross-cultural communication is becoming more and more frequent in the world, so many excellent Chinese literary works have gone abroad. As an important school of Chinese literature, prose tends to be loose and free in form. It not only has rich images, but also profound artistic conception, and its spiritual core can always run through the whole text, and the ideological connection is close. In fact, in essence, both Chinese and Western literary works have certain similarities in the creation of artistic conception and the expression of ideas. However, due to the influence of cultural differences, when people read and appreciate each other's literary works, there will often be some misunderstanding, which makes them unable to fully feel the beauty in the works. As a result, literary translation comes into being, and whether it can reproduce the beauty of the original text is an important criterion to evaluate the translation results. The *Anthology of Modern Chinese Prose* compiled by Zhang Peiji, a famous translator in China, contains many excellent literary works by outstanding writers, including *Before the Rain*. In this regard, this paper analyzes the English translation of the prose "Before the Rain" from the perspective of cross-cultural aesthetics, in order to fully show Mr. Zhang Peiji's aesthetic understanding and reproduction process in the translation of this prose.

## 1. Overview and analysis of prose

### 1.1 Concept

Prose is a descriptive literary genre that records people's true emotions. It first appeared in the form of prose in the Shang Dynasty, then gradually matured in the late Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States period, and finally finalized in the May Fourth Movement. Specifically, prose can be divided into broad sense and narrow sense. On the one hand, from a broad perspective, prose is a literary genre different from poetry, fiction, drama, etc., with distinct literary character. In addition to the prose that can express the author's emotions, there are many other types of genres, such as some records in memories, some essays written in essays, biographies and so on. Nowadays, with the continuous development and changes of the social era, many genres have also begun to exist independently, which leads to people's definition of the scope of prose more and more detailed. On the other hand, in a narrow sense, prose refers to a literary genre that describes and reflects social life through certain themes and artistic techniques. However, on the whole, the essence of prose is actually a genre to express the author's real feelings, thoughts and will, which can play a certain role of lyrical freehand and express one's aspirations, and can be juxtaposed with poetry and drama.

### 1.2 Characteristics

Prose has its unique characteristics, although its "shape" scattered, whether it is material or expression techniques will not be limited, relatively casual, and even allow the author to carry out some processing of the plot or express some of his own views and remarks according to his subjective will, but its "God" is always not scattered, that is, the intention and theme are always clear. Not only that, the artistic conception of prose expression is relatively profound. In short, in fact, it means that prose can express the author's sentiment and understanding of life more fully. When writing essays, authors can entrust their emotions to things through association, so that readers can feel their thoughts and emotions step by step from shallow to deep. In addition, in terms of language expression, the prose language is beautiful, lively and flexible, and the language structure is relatively simple and refined, only a few words can describe a vivid picture and mood for the reader, but also can express the author's own emotions.

### 1.3 Translation principles

In the translation of prose literary works, first of all, we should be loyal to the original text and correctly translate the meaning, emotion and content of the original text. This is the first and most basic principle. Secondly, prose emphasizes the expression of "beauty", which not only pays attention to the emergence of various aesthetic effects, such as the creation of artistic conception and the expression of interest, but also pays attention to the flexible use of rhetorical devices, phonology and rhythm. Although the materials and forms of prose are not fixed,

the translation of prose cannot completely ignore its original form, otherwise it will not be able to fully show the “beauty” of the original text. Moreover, in the process of translation, we should also take into account the differences in language and culture. We should not copy all the elements of the original text into the target text, so as to preserve the original form of the prose as much as possible. Finally, in the process of translation, we must overcome cultural barriers, such as language habits, language styles and other differences in language culture as well as historical and cultural differences, so as to shorten the cultural distance between the original translations as much as possible, so as to better help the target readers to understand the original.

## 2. The theory of aesthetic reference dimension

Eliot Deutsch put forward four “aesthetic reference dimensions”, which has important guiding significance for the study of this paper. Specifically, these four dimensions mainly refer to: First, culture -- the writer’s worldview, which is an important dimension that must be understood when translating literary works from a cross-cultural aesthetic perspective. This is because, in essence, every literary work is a concrete expression of the author’s worldview. However, under the influence of various factors such as personal growth experience and national culture, different authors will form their own views on people, nature and society (that is, world views), which will affect other people’s understanding and appreciation of different cultures to a certain extent. Therefore, in order to clarify the worldview expressed in each literary work, the first task is to fully understand the context in which it was created. Secondly, culture -- the writer’s aesthetic preference, which is also a dimension to be understood when translating literary works from a cross-cultural aesthetic perspective, is mainly related to the author’s aesthetic choice. Among them. The first dimension mentioned above is the source of the author’s personal aesthetic preference. Third, the formal content, which mainly refers to the composition, design and the inherent vitality of the art form presented in the works, is an important carrier and basis for readers’ aesthetic experience. From a certain point of view, this dimension is essentially the same as the above two dimensions. Fourth, the expression of symbolic value, which is an important dimension in the translation and appreciation of literary works based on the cross-cultural aesthetic perspective, is also the carrier of meaning in literary and artistic works, and is an important sign for people to recognize. All in all, on the whole, the above four dimensions are actually four successive sequences, and the closer they get to the works of art themselves.

## 3. An analysis of Chinese prose translation strategies based on cross-cultural aesthetics

### 3.1 Translation from the perspective of cultural writers’ world view

Before the Rain is a literary work written by He Qifang in the spring of 1933. At that time, Japan was stepping up its attack on our country, and the national and national crisis was worsening, but the Kuomintang decided to compromise externally and repress the people internally. Therefore, He Qifang, a patriotic youth, created “Before the Rain” in this context, wanting to express his worry, depression and desire for the victory of the Anti-Japanese War. In the article, He Qifang wrote an extremely vivid image of his nostalgia for the spring rain in his hometown in the south. Comparatively speaking, his description of the scenery in the north is in sharp contrast, revealing his strong nostalgia, dissatisfaction with the current situation and yearning for a better future. Mr. Zhang Peiji’s translation of this work mainly reappears these thoughts and emotions of the author by giving full play to the advantages of “target language”, so that the majority of the translated readers can better appreciate the ideological theme and spiritual connotation of the original text, and better show He Qifang’s cultural world view. Specifically, “rain” in a sense actually represents He Qifang’s strong desire for hope and desire. In this regard, Mr. Zhang Peiji accurately translated “Praying for the Rain” into English, which represents the strong expectation of all the people in the world for “rain”, so as to help the English readers deeply appreciate the author’s strong hope for the stability of the country and the happiness of the people. All in all, although these translations seem very simple, they can fully express He Qifang’s strong desire for social reform and helplessness to the social reality at that time, and fully and profoundly understand the author’s cultural worldview.

### 3.2 Translation from the perspective of cultural writers’ aesthetic preference

In the process of translation, we mainly reproduce the image and artistic conception of the original work through certain rhetorical devices, language and artistic techniques. In order to achieve this, the translator must translate the essence of the original text on the basis of mastering the rhythm and thoughts and emotions of the whole text, so as to fully show the author’s aesthetic preference. In his translation, Mr. Zhang Peiji’s words are very appropriate, which can fully show the original rhyme. thunderstorm and rain in the original text were not directly translated, but thunderstorm. This translation technique and method is more in line with the aesthetic habit and expression of English readers. When Mr. Zhang Peiji translated the verbs such as vibration, awakening and rage in the original text, he chose to combine the active voice and the passive voice to clarify the logical relationship of these words in a concise way, so that the English readers can fully feel the vivid picture of the bud of spring budding from the soil after being awakened. There are many phonemes ending in /i/ in Mr. Zhang’s translations, such as leisurely and leisurely, which enable readers to feel a strong sense of rhythm while reading, with a great sense of picture and phoneme. In addition, Mr. Zhang Peiji’s translations also better demonstrate the artistic conception that the original author wants to express. For example, pigeons have also gone out of sight, The last flock of pigeons have also gone out of sight, which reproduces the lonely feeling in the original text.

## 4. Conclusion

To sum up, in the study of modern literary works, there is a very close relationship between cross-cultural aesthetic communication

and translation. In order to further explore the practical significance of Zhang Peiji's translation of "Before the Rain" to the translation of Chinese prose, this paper takes Eliot Deutsch's theory of "aesthetic reference dimension" as the basis, and makes a careful reading of this translation from four dimensions. Through the comparison and analysis of the classical words and phrases in the original text and the translated text, it can be found that Mr. Zhang Peiji's translation is first carried out on the basis of understanding the ideological core and creative characteristics of the original text, and not only retains the original phonology characteristics as much as possible, but also uses appropriate language styles and sentence patterns to express the emotion and tone of the original work. This undoubtedly provides a good reference for our subsequent translation of literary works.

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