Translating Nonverbal Behaviour in Literature: With *Pai-tzu* as An Example

LIU Jing[a],*

[a]International Business College, South China Normal University, Guangzhou, China.
*Corresponding author.

Abstract

Nonverbal behavior plays an important role in literary work but receives little attention in literary translation. Different use of linguistic devices by translators in representing nonverbal behavior of the source text would portray different images of characters. This paper, taking Chinese writer Shen Congwen's short story *Pai-tzu* as an example, compares the translation of nonverbal behavior in its two English versions (by Ching Ti and Hsu Kai-yu). It firstly reviews definition and category of nonverbal behavior by scholars in diverse fields, as well as related theories in literature and translation. It then compares the two versions in dealing with the paralanguage and kinesics of the two characters, and explores how the differences between them lead to different features of the characters. This paper comes to the following conclusion: Ching's version, by the choice of material or behavioral process and illocutionary verbs indicating voice quality, shapes a louder and more dynamic image of the woman, in contrast with a static image in Hsu's version; the image Pai-tzu is vividly portrayed by Hsu due to the use of marked vocabulary and addition of chronemics and proxemics elements, in contrast with core vocabulary and word omission in Ching's version; in dealing with body parts as agent metonyms, Ching's version is closer to the style of the original due to the choice of agent metonyms and material process, while Hsu opts for mental process with human agent.

Key words: Nonverbal behavior; Paralanguage; Kinesics; *Pai-tzu*

INTRODUCTION

People in daily life communicate with each other through both verbal and nonverbal means. More often than not nonverbal communication is more important and reliable than verbal communication. People can lie with what the say, but can rarely lie with what they do. As in real life situation, nonverbal behaviour also plays a crucial role in literary text. Extralinguistic communicative features of fictitious characters may indicate the author's intention, or, shed light on their personality or the relationship between interacting persons. Ignorance of nonverbal features when translating a literary text may result in the inconsistency of the character or misunderstanding of the reader. Therefore, translators of literary text should be acutely aware of the nonverbal elements in the text. However, different translators, due to gap in culture or life experience, may understand and translate the nonverbal elements in their own ways. So characters in the original text would show different personalities or qualities in different versions. This paper, with Chinese writer Shen congwen's short story *Pai-tzu* as an example, compares its two English versions in dealing with nonverbal communication and looks at how different approaches to nonverbal signs render different features of characters.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN LITERARY WORK AND TRANSLATION

Nonverbal communication is defined and categorized in diverse ways by scholars of different disciplines.

From the perspective of cross culture communication, Samovar, Porter and Stefani (2000，p.149) define it as "all those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver." They categorize it into four types: body behaviour (kinesics and posture, dress, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, smell and paralanguage), space and distance, time and silence. Functions of nonverbal communication include repeating, complementing, substituting, regulating and contradicting. The theory above, although usually applicable in real life communication, is also conducive to an insightful analysis of literature work, as well as its translation.

As far as literary, or rather, narrative text, is concerned, Nord (1997, p.108), altering some of Poyatos' words, pinpoints the nature of nonverbal communication in literature: "the multisensory and intellectual world imagined by the writer is reduced to morphologico-syntactical representation which is the written text --- a visual form of expression." Slightly different from Samovar and Porter, Poyatos (1993) gives an even detailed classification of the nonverbal behavior of the characters in narrative text, which can be concluded in Table 1.

Table 1
Forms of Nonverbal Communication in Literature

Forms of nonverbal communication	Definition	Example
Paralanguage	the way people speak: aspects of an utterance such as tone, voice quality, tempo, manner of speech and onomatopoeia ·alternants	*"No." he said, <u>in a low voice</u>.*
Kinesics	the way people move, including body-language, gestures, manners, postures, etc.	*He <u>pounded his fist</u> on the door.*
Proxemics	the distance between interacting characters	*She <u>squeezed herself up</u> closer to his side as he spoke.*
Chronemics	the perception or concept of time	*<u>For some minutes</u>, it puffed away <u>without speaking</u>.*
Chemical and dermal reactions	physical reactions like blushing, sweat, tears, etc.	*His <u>face grew quite pale</u>.*
Object-mediated or bodily generated sounds	environmental sounds like slamming of a door ·sound of footsteps, or sound of biting, chewing, crunching on solid food	*She never <u>wolf</u>, or <u>gulp</u> or <u>gobble</u> or talk with her mouth full.*

Hatim (1997), as a scholar of translation study, defines nonverbal communication as "graphically representational" language. By this definition, he encompasses the ways people use language vividly to represent reality or non-verbal experience. According to him, people verbalize in two ways: a typical and normal way and a rather extraordinary way. The extraordinary graphic use of language means "the utilization of multifaceted linguistic resources that utterance and silence are captured, and movement and stillness combine in subtle and highly intricate ways while constructing meaning" (Hatim, 1997, p.51). To make a contrast, he draws on the concept of "lexical coreness". Core vocabulary, also known as "ordinary" language, refers to those unmarked elements in the lexical network of a language. It consists of the most normal, basic and simple level of expression available to a language user. Hatim (1997) points out six criterion to identify core vocabulary, to name a few, they usually do not carry specific connotations; they are often superordinate and have a clear antonym. Hatim's definition of nonverbal communication and core vocabulary provides a creative angle from which translated versions of literary texts are evaluated.

Because of its linguistic representation in nature, nonverbal elements in text world could only be "perceived" by the reader via mentally bringing them back to life and turning the written words into imagined sensory experiences. When talking about the experiential meaning of text, Eagleton (1983) distinguishes meaning from significance: significance is something that changes with time, while meaning is constant; authors produce meanings, whereas readers add significance. In the process of translation, the translator, also as reader of the original text as well as the author of the translated text, would assign significance, consciously or unconsciously, according to his/her life experience or understanding of the text. Different translators add different significance. And this would, in turn, lead readers of translated text to experience different text world. This is especially true when translators deal with nonverbal behaviors.

According to functional systemic linguistic, ideational function of language refers to that people use language to construct experience by referring to entities in the world and the ways those entities interact with each other. In doing so people can use six process types(material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioral and existential) involving participants and certain circumstances (Thompson 2008). In this sense language is a connection between linguistic signs and objective world. However, in literary text, there is no absolute "objective world". When talking about the objectivities represented in literary work, Ingarden (1973) suggested that each literary work is somewhat incomplete, which always requires further supplement. What lies in the source text is meaning potential. It is the translator's experience, or rather, its relevance with the author's experience, that determines what s/he extracts from the

source text. Context is also an important factor. Sperber & Wilson (1995) take context as a psychological construct, and the receiver's supposition about the world, but not the actual state of the world. It is these supposition that affects the interpretation of an utterance. Difference in translators' mental construct of nonverbal communication in source text would inevitably result in its representation in translated text.

Scenes and frames theory provides a useful tool in analyzing the translation of experiential meaning, or rather, nonverbal expression. According to Fillmore (1977), scenes refer to not only visual scenes, but any kind of human beliefs, actions, or experiences, while frames include any systems of linguistic choices that can get associated with prototypical instances of scenes. Vermeer (1992) adopts "scene-and-frame" in analyzing nonverbal expression in literary and concludes: scene captures our mental representation, frame its verbalization. In translation, which is also cross-culture communication activity, what a translator receives is not only words, but also the "scenes" conjured up by those words. The target text is verbalization of those "scenes". During the process of translation, the scene in translator's mind triggered by source text may be different from the one in the author's. The translator can only get "cognitive resemblance", but never "realistic sameness". Therefore, which elements of a scene the translator dwells on more than others or verbalizes in more detail should be a significant matter in the study of literary translation.

TRANSLATING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN *PAI-TZU*

Shen Congwen is one of China's most prominent modern writers. Famous for the use of lyrical realism, most of his work depict the rurality and traditions of West Hunan, and the pure, untained human nature, as well as the unenlightened folks there. Due to his contact with people from all walks of life in his childhood and early adulthood, he is particularly good at portraying people

from the bottom of the heap. Boatmen and prostitutes are among them. They had a hard life. Boatmen, usually with no permanent residence, made a living on the boat going up and down the river for business but earned only a minimum wage. It was such a dangerous job that it was not uncommon to hear some boatman lost his life to the river. Meanwhile, some women in West Huan, because of their lower social status, had no choice but to be prostitute to support themselves, and boatmen were their regular guests. Despite of their tough life, the time they spent together seemed to be a consolation that offset all the sufferings on earth. Unconscious of, and not twisted by the misery of life, they spared no effort to enjoy every night they spent together, to pursue the pure, original human happiness.

Written by Shen Congwen in the 1920s, *Pai-tzu* is one of the stories between a boatman and his lover, a prostitute. It is a rather simple story. Each time the boatman, Pai-tzu, came back from business with the money he earned, he would spend it on sleeping with the woman or buying some gift for her. This short story depicts one of those nights they spent together. As one of Shen's most translated work, the story has three English versions: by Edgar Snow (collected in *Living China: Modern Chinese Short Stories*) (1936), Ching Ti and Robert Payne (collected in *The Chinese Earth: Stories by Shen Congwen*) (1947), and Hsu Kai-yu (collected in *Modern Chinese Stories and Novellas 1919-1949*) (1981) (Xu, 2010). Given that the original text has undergone enormous adaptation in Snow's version, this paper only compares the relatively faithful translations of Ching and Hsu, and deals with the nonverbal behavior concerning the interaction between Pai-tzu and the woman, instead of the whole text.

A Dramatic Woman V.S. A Static Woman

Most of the woman's utterances in the original text are direct speech without verbs like "say" or other illocutionary verbs. Only a few ones are accompanied by paralanguage indicating the pitch, quality or manner of speech. Translators of the two versions show different choices in dealing with them.

Table 2
Nonverbal Behavior of the woman

Form of nonverbal behaviour	Original	Ching's translation	Hsu's translation
Paralanguage	女人挣扎着，口中骂道："...."	She *exclaimed* ... she tried to release herself from his grasp.	She wiggled, and *scolded* him "..."
	搜出的东西便往床上丢，又数着东西的名字："......"	Each time she pulled something out and threw it on the bed, she *shouted* its name "..."	She said, one hand busy searching his pockets, tossing everything she found onto the bed, *naming* them one by one "..."
	妇人一边烧烟，一边唱《孟姜女》给柏子听	While she twirled the little greasy ball of opium, which he would smoke later, she *sang* songs for him.	She deftly rolled the opium paste on a stick, while softly *humming* the folk song "Meng Chiang's Lament at the Great Wall".
	妇人说着便稍稍生了气	She *answered*, slightly offended.	She *was getting angry*.
Kinesics	妇人望着他傻笑	The women stood by his side, *simpering*.	She *looked at* him, with an *adoring smile*.
	妇人望到他这些行为发笑	The women ... *laughed at* the tricks he was playing.	She watched his every motion, a *satisfied smile* on her face.
	妇人嘴一扁，	She *made a wry face* ...	With *a grimace*, she ...

Paralanguage of the woman is chronologically listed in the table. In the first example, the woman's utterance is introduced by "骂" (literally translated as curse). This is a verb commonly seen in Shen Congwen's work. For most of the time it does not indicate spiteful intention, instead, that is how local people talk with each other. Given the context of the story, the women had waited for a long time until she met her lover. She was expecting about this gathering very much. On the other hand, based on what she said later, she was not sure whether the man had slept with other women while he was away on business. She was both excited and jealous, maybe a little angry. "Exclaim" means shout something suddenly because of surprise, fear or pleasure. The translation into "exclaimed" by Ching indicates both voice quality (pitch) and manner of speech. In comparison, "scold" in Hsu's version is more expressive of anger, with no indication of loudness. Such difference could also be found in the second example "数" (literally as enumerate). Once again, Ching chooses a much "louder" word to produce a more dramatic effect. Compared with "naming", the word "shouted" is more likely to conjure up readers' auditory sense. In the third one, "唱" (literally as sing) in the original text is not accompanied with any adverbs indicating pitch or loudness. But in Hsu's translation, he chooses "humming" with "softly" as modifier. The graphically representational vocabulary "humming", as hyponym of "sing", usually indicates a lower volume than its superordinate. In the last example, we find an unmarked verb "说着" (literally as say) together with a paraverbal expression "悄悄生了气" (literally as get angry to herself). From the perspective of transitivity, Ching chooses a verbal process, indicated by an illocutionary verb "answered", with "slightly offended" as circumstance. This version emphasizes the verbalization of nonverbal behaviour of the character. Instead, Hsu opts for a mental process, which amplifies the inner world of the character rather than its verbalization. It can be concluded that the woman in Ching's version speaks louder than Hsu's version due to different ways in translating paralanguage.

Moreover, a similar difference could also be found in translating the woman's body language, or rather, facial expression. Ching depicts a more dynamic image, while Hsu a static one. Both of the first two examples of kinesics deal with "笑" (literally as smile or laugh). For "傻笑" (literally as smile in a silly way) in the first example,

Ching finds an equivalence in English ---"simpering" as non-finite verb and puts it in behavioral process, whereas, Hsu puts it into noun phrase as circumstance in the clause, which downplays the character's action. The same effect could also be perceived in Hsu's translation of "发笑" in the second example, where "a satisfied smile" works as circumstance. In contrast, Ching chooses finite verbal group "laughed at" in a material process clause, highlighting the woman's activeness as Actor. What's more, compared with "smile", which usually strikes readers as quiet and static, "laugh at" produces a more dramatic effect with indication of voice quality and manner of speech. The third example is interesting. The original text concerns the movement of mouth, which shows dissatisfaction, unhappiness or other unpleasant emotion depending on context. However, the English equivalence to this facial expression describes the whole face rather than just mouth, thus translators use "a wry face" and "grimace" respectively. The difference still lies in the process type, with behavioral process in Ching's version while circumstance in Hsu's. In translating the three examples of kinesics, Ching prefers to use material or behavioral process, while Hsu leans towards turning the body language into circumstance indicating manner in clause.

Based on the short analysis above, we can see that the woman in the original text shows different features in two versions resulting from the linguistic resources used by different translators in dealing with paralanguage and kinesics. With the help of illocutionary verbs conveying volume, and, body language represented through material or behavioral process, readers of Ching's version see in their minds a much louder, and more dynamic and lively woman. This is a sharp contrast with the the woman in Hsu's version, which is a quieter and static image, due to the understatement of her nonverbal behavior by "reducing" it into prepositional or noun phrases as circumstance in a clause.

A "vivid" Pai-tzu V.S. A "plain" Pai-tzu

Unlike the woman, nearly all of Pai-tzu's utterances are not accompanied by any paraplanguage. Instead, body language is frequently used in describing this character. Although the two versions show no distinct differences in some kinesics, but for other gestures or movements, there are still obvious differences worth of attention. This section will deal with those body language, which is listed in Table 3.

Table 3
Nonverbal Behavior of Pai-tzu

Types of nonverbal behaviour	Original	Ching's translation	Hsu's translation
Kinesics	先打门，以一个水手通常的章法，吹着哨子	(Pai Tzu)...*knocked,* after the manner of sailors everywhere, and *whistled loudly.*	He *pounded* his fist on the door and, in a boatman's habit, *whistled* at the same time.
	他把嘴一歪，便找到了一个湿的舌子了，他咬着。	He *moved* his face and *met* her wet tongue.	It was only a swift moment before he *turned* and *caught* a wet tongue between his lips. He *nibbled* on it.
	便擒了妇人向床边倒下去......	He ... seized her in his arms and *lifted her to the bed.*	He ..., grabbing the women, *rolled with her onto the bed.*

A glance at the table would notice that marked verbs are frequently used in Hsu's version while core vocabulary in Ching's. For instance, "pounded", "nibbled", "rolled with" and "puffing", compared with "knocked" "lifted" and "smoked". The first example is about the way he knocked the door. After a long time separation, he could not wait to see his lover, thus he was arguably exciting and rejoiced. This emotion could also be perceived by his behavior "吹着哨子" (whistle), an action usually indicating one's good mood. Both translators recognize it, but represent it in different ways. It could be said that "knocked" is more like an unmarked verb, while "pounded" together with "fist", in comparison, adds intensity to the behaviour. This intensity indicates his passion and eagerness. In Ching's version, this emotion could be felt in the adverb "loudly" which modifies the verb "whistled", though, it is actually absent in the original. It could be seen that the implicit emotion of the character is reflected either in body movement or in voice quality. The two translators select different elements from the same behaviour based on their own experience or imagination, and highlight them in different aspects of body language. Another difference concerns regional culture. In Ching's version "the manner of sailors *everywhere*" would trigger different mental pictures in the minds of readers from different cultures. For example, American sailors may differ from European or Japanese sailors in doing this, but here, the author only refers to sailors in West Hunan. "Everywhere" seems to blur cultural differences.

As for the next two examples, the difference lies in chronemics and proxemics. These two elements are not explicitly mentioned in the original text, so the two translators show different interpretation of this scene. The author describes their kissing with three verbs, namely "歪""找"and"咬", without any other nonverbal elements. But Hsu adds a chronemics element--- "a swift moment" in his version to show the speed of the move. Except that, his version is more faithful to the original by employing the equivalences of the three verbs in target language: "turned" "caught" and "nibbled". The marked verb "nibbled" stands out as graphic expression by indicating frequency and strength of the behaviour. In contrast, Ching uses core vocabulary like "move"and "met", and omits the last verb "咬" (literally as bite). Both translation of the third example faithfully render the meaning of the original text but still show difference in proxemics. With expression "lift her to the bed", readers could visualize it either as lifting the women over his shoulder and throwing her onto bed , or, as carrying her in his arms and putting her in bed. It is all up to the readers' imagination. However, in Hsu's version, it is a totally different scene by depicting it as rolling with her onto the bed. The two conjure up different scenes in readers' mind due to the difference in proxemics.

Body Parts as Agent Metonyms

What is also worth our attention is the paragraph depicting the moment when Pai-tzu entered the women's house.

Original: "门开后，一只泥腿在门里，一只泥腿在门外，身子便为两条胳膊缠紧了，在那新刮过的日炙雨淋粗糙的脸上，就贴紧了一个宽宽的温暖的脸子。" (Shen, 2019, p.004)

Ching's version: The door opened, and his body was tightly girdled by two arms, although only one of his muddy legs had been thrust through the door and the other was still outside the threshold. And now another face was laid against his newly-shaved rough face, which had been burnt by the sun and washed clean by the rain. (Ching & Payne, 1947, pp.17-18)

Hsu's version: The door loosened. With one of his muddy legs still outside the threshold, Pai-tzu found himself clutched in a pair of bare arms, and a cheek, warm and wide, pressed itself against his sun-burned but newly shaven face. (Lau, Hisa & Lee, 1981, p.224)

Reading the original text makes one feel like watching a scene in a film. The camera, shooting from bottom up, moves from the door to his legs, then to his waist, and finally his face. From the perspective of systemic functional linguistic, it is the thematic structure, with body parts as theme in each clause, that creates such an effect. The thematic progression of the original text follows the order: the door→his leg→the other leg→his body→his face, which are all from inanimate point of view. Toolan (2008), drawing on Halliday's theory, identifies four kinds of "do-er" in material process: agent, force, instrument, and medium-initiator, with agent being the most powerful, active and controlling. But what makes the original text special is that body parts are not like typical intentional human agent, thus he defines it as "agent metonyms". When discussing body parts as agent metonyms, Toolan (2008) proposes two main motivations: to moderate the responsibility of someone for how their own body is acting, and, to detach or alienate between one and his or her physical faculties. The latter is the case in this text. Since they had not seen each other for a long time, both of them were craving for an amazing night. Just as the old saying goes "absence makes the heart grow fonder". At this moment, the innate, original, primitive human need overwhelmed their mind. The body parts as agent metonyms, to some extent, downplay the consciousness of the characters. All their behaviors are human instinct, without any thought. The author's intentional use of the body parts as theme and agent metonyms is a type of foregrounding, worth closer attention of the translator.

Ching reproduces this effect by turning it into passive voice of material process clause, such as "his body was tightly girdled" or "another face was laid against his...". The thematic progression in Ching's version is "the door→his body (one leg→the other)→another face". It corresponds with the thematic progress and agent

metonyms of the original, though not following the exact order. A very prominent difference in Hsu's version is the lack of body parts as agent metonyms, and instead, employment of human agent in mental process clause. Animate medium filling the subject position indicates a more active intending medium than the inanimate medium in transitive clauses which is assumed to be going through the process unintentionally. From this point, Ching's version is much closer to the style of the original.

CONCLUSION

Due to the morphologico-syntactical nature of nonverbal communication in literature, it would conjure up different scenes in the minds of different translators. The linguistic devices chosen by different translators would amplify some aspects of the nonverbal behavior or downplay others, resulting in distinct images in various versions. This paper takes Shen Congwen's *Pai-tzu* as an example, and compares its two English versions in dealing with nonverbal behaviors including papralanguage and kinesics. Both of them are in general faithful to the original, but inevitably, different understandings of the nonverbal elements lead to different qualities of characters. Ching's version shows a dynamic and lively woman by resorting to material or behavioral process and voice quality-indicating verbs, while Hsu depicts a quiet and static image. As for the man, Pai-tzu, his body language is represented by core language with some omitted in Ching's version, and by marked vocabulary with supplement of proxemics and chronemics in Hsu's. In dealing with body parts as agent metonyms, Ching chooses the same process type and thematic progression as the original while Hsu opts mental process with human agent filling the subject position. All these combined contribute to different effects of the two versions.

As an indispensable element in shaping fictitious characters, nonverbal language sometimes conveys more information than verbal language. Translators, acting as the mediator between different cultures, should pay special attention to this important yet often ignored element in their work.

REFERENCES

Ching, T., & Payne, R. (1947). *The Chinese earth: Stories by Shen Congwen*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary theory: An introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Limited.

Fillmore, C. J. (1977). *Scene-and-frames semantics*. Amsterdam: N. Holland.

Hatim, B. (1997). Discourse features in non-verbal communication: Implications for the translator. In F. Poyatos (Ed.), *Nonverbal communication and translation: New perspectives and challenges in literature, interpretation and the Media* (pp.49-66). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Ingarden, R. (1973). *Cognition of the literary work of art*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Lau, S. M., Hsia, C. T., & Lee, O. F. (Eds.) (1981). *Modern Chinese stories and novellas 1919-1949*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Nord, C. (1997). Alice abroad: Dealing with descriptions and transcriptions of paralanguage in literary translation. In F. Poyatos (Ed.), *Nonverbal communication and translation: New perspectives and challenges in literature, interpretation and the media* (pp.107-129). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Poyatos, F. (1993). Aspects of nonverbal communication in literature. In J. Holz-Mänttäri and C. Nord (Eds.), *Traducere navem. Festschrift für Katharina Reiss zum 70. Geburstag* (pp.137-152). Tampere: Universitätsverlag.

Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., & Stefani, L. A. (2000). *Communication between cultures*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press / London: Hodder Arnold.

Shen, C. W. (2019). *Xiao Xiao: Selected works of Shen Congwen* (萧萧：沈从文小说精选集). Nanjing: Jiangsu Phoenix Literature and Art Publication LTD.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Thompson, G. (2008). *Introducing Functional Grammar*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press / London: Hodder Arnold.

Toolan, M. (2008). *Language in Literature: An Introduction to Stylistics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press / London: Hodder Arnold.

Vermeer, H. J. (1992). Describing nonverbal behavior in the Odyssey: Scenes and verbal frames as translation problems. In F. Poyatos (Ed.), *Advances in nonverbal communication: Sociocultural, clinical and esthetic perspectives* (pp.285-299). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Xu, M. H. (2010). A survey of the English translations of Shen Congwen's novellas and short stories. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, *42*(3), 220-225.