



A Study on Textless Back Translation of *China Boy* From Acculturation Perspective

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Abstract

Textless back translation refers to the kind of back translation in which the translator retranslates China-themed works written in English language back into the Chinese language. Based on English-Chinese bilingual corpus and acculturation theory, this paper attempts to probe into language features and translation strategies of the textless back translation of American Chinese writer Gus Lee’s novel *China Boy*. The paper holds that, compared with the original work, the diction of the textless back translation is not richer and less diverse; that the syntactical structure is briefer, making it easier to understand; that the translators attach great importance to the reproduction of the theme of the original while exerting their subjectivity at the textual level; and that the contents, foreword and preface, notes and interview with the author are inserted as its paratexts so as to help the target readers better understand the translators’ thoughts and subjectivity. As to translation strategies, the textless back translation as such, guided by integration and assimilation strategies, tends to adopt domestication in order to restore host cultural elements, which is of significance to the cultural feedback; the translation of this kind, guided by separation strategy, is inclined to employ foreignization in order to emphasize the preservation of guest cultural elements but weaken the

reproduction of host cultural elements; the translation, guided by marginalization strategy usually gives rise to mistranslations, in which translators usually need to refer to domestication as so to correctly convey their connotations.

Key words: Acculturation; *China Boy*; Textless back translation; Language features; Translation strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Back translation refers to “re-translate the translation text back into the source language” (Fang, 2011, p.97). It includes two kinds, that is, back translation and textless back translation. Back translation means the source text is available for translators to draw on while textless back translation means the source text is unavailable and the translation is actually the cultural return rather than the language return (Wang, 2015, p.2). In other words, “textless back translation” refers to the kind of back translation in which translators retranslate China-themed literary works written in foreign languages (such as English) back into Chinese and resell the translated texts to the Chinese readers. According to searchable statistics, there are some researches on back translation while textless back translation is seldom dealt in the western academia. Among Chinese scholars, researches on the textless back translation mainly focus on the range, perspective and methodology in recent years. Liu (2005), based on the novel *The Joy Luck Club* and its Chinese version, makes an analysis of the textless back translation of Chinese culture-specific items. Zhou (2008), based on the novel *The Joy Luck Club*, probes into its language

features, full-sense translation strategies and linguistic and cultural differences. Wang and Jiang (2012) study *Moment in Peking* and its three Chinese versions, and analyze the restoration of the format of ancient novels in the textless back translation. Guo and Ge (2014), based on the adaption theory and by means of the parallel corpus, justify that choices of language mainly aim at adapting to the target language. Wang (2015) reiterates foreign language creation and the textless back translation. He explores the types of writers and texts in foreign language creation. Wang (2016) elaborates on ideal translators and criteria for the textless back translation on the case study of *A Judge Dee Mysteries*. Jiang (2017) studies the textless translation and its translation strategies based on the foreign language creation *A Judge Dee Mysteries*. Huang (2017) elaborates on the features of the textless translation of *The Bone Setter's Daughter* from perspectives of language, narration and culture. Based on English-Chinese bilingual corpus and acculturation theory, this thesis attempts to analyze the textless back translation of *China Boy*.

1. CHINA BOY AND ITS TEXTLESS BACK TRANSLATION

China Boy is an autobiographical novel written in 1911 by Gus Lee, one of the top four writers of Chinese American literature. The novel is mainly about a seven-year-old boy Kai's experience and his fighting in the colliding between Chinese and American cultures. It is a China-themed novel written in English, so its retranslation back into Chinese belongs to the textless back translation. Few of such researches on *China boy* have been done among western scholars. Chritine (1996) elaborates on the ethnic conflicts between China and the West by describing the humor caused by linguistic and cultural differences in the novel *China Boy*. Malcolm (2004) describes the resistance of ethnic culture against mainstream culture. In fact, researches on *China Boy* have been attentive in recent 10 years among Chinese scholars. Guo and Song (2006), from the perspective of literature, point out the methods of self-salvation by analyzing different attitudes towards cultural conflicts. Feng (2008), from the perspective of intertextuality, elaborates on the influence of novels written by Xun Lu, a famous Chinese writer on the writing of *China Boy* in terms of spiritual resources and language styles. Zheng (2009), based on the space theory of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, explores the living state and power relations of characters in different places, and finds out the underlying reasons for position and race behind cultural differences.

To sum up, it's not hard to see that the previous studies on *China Boy* are interdisciplinary, but the research methods are not multiple enough and researches on the Chinese translation of *China Boy* can hardly be found.

Therefore, based on English-Chinese bilingual corpus and acculturation theory, this paper attempts to make an in-depth analysis of its textless back translation.

2. ACCULTURATION THEORY

Acculturation theory is initially applied in the sociological field and later in anthropological and psychological fields. In 1921 Parks and Miller put forward single dimensional model of acculturation theory. They hold the view that for an individual who is new to the cultural environment, the final result of acculturation is definitely to be assimilated by the mainstream culture (Yu & Zheng, 2005, p.837). With its development, Berry puts forward the double dimensional model, that is, it emphasizes not only maintaining their cultural identity but also seeking daily interactions with other cultures (Berry, Poortinga, & Segall et al., 2002, p.354). Based on the double dimensional model, four acculturation strategies are put forward—integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. Integration means individuals have an interest in both maintaining their original culture and having daily interactions with other groups. When individuals seek daily interactions with other groups but refuse to maintain their cultural identity, the assimilation strategy is defined. When individuals attach great importance to hold on to their original culture but wish to avoid interactions with others, the separation strategy is defined. However, marginalization means individuals have little interest in maintaining their cultural identity and having relations with others. The process of the textless back translation is actually the interaction between the host culture and the guest culture. As the cultural conflicts are inevitable, cultural acculturation is in great need. A study on Gus Lee's *China Boy* guided by these four strategies can not only promote the literary translation and cultural transmission, but also help to check their outcomes.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTLESS BACK TRANSLATION OF CHINA BOY

3.1 Linguistic Features of the Textless Back Translation *Zhina Zai*

Seen as linguistic features of the target text, linguistic universals refer to the common characteristics between the source text and the target text. Apart from it, linguistic features of the target text can be reflected on the levels of words, sentences, collocations, semantic prosody and narrative techniques (Hu & Mao, 2012, p.384). Analyses of different levels are presented as follows.

3.1.1 Lexical Features

Lexical features can be analyzed in terms of Mean Word Length, TTR, standardized frequency of notional words

with high frequency. Mean Word Length is a signal of the difficulty and complexity of wording. TTR refers to the ratio between words without repetition and total number of words in the text. The degree of TTR is in direct proportion to the lexical richness and variety (Baker,

2000, p.250). Due to different text capacities, it is more rational to compare them by means of Standardized TTR. With the help of WordSmith Tools 6.0, the basic corpus data for *China Boy* and its Chinese version can be obtained as follows.

Table 1
Comparison of Basic Data Between the Source Text of *China Boy* and Its Target Text

Text type	Token	Type	STTR	Mean word length
Source text	114,056	13,221	49.25	4.36
Target text	132,320	12,327	48.46	1.47

According to Table 1, we can see the following: First, STTR of the target text is a little lower than that of the source text, indicating that the source text is richer and more various in wording; second, the mean word length of the target text is much shorter than that of the source text, showing that there are fewer long words in the target text, which is easier to read.

Notional word can reflect the information capacity and degree of difficulty of the text. But a consensus needs to be reached among scholars for the classification of notional words and functional words. According to Wang (2012, p.94), noun, verb and adjective are classified as notional words while adverb, pronoun, preposition,

conjunction, auxiliary word and interjection as functional words. In order to be in line with a unified standard, we also take Wang's classification in English. The process for obtaining notional words is as follows. First, obtain the wordlist of the source text (English original) by applying AntConc3.3.5w, and then its high frequency notional words by means of lemmatization and stoplist. Second, obtain wordlist of the target text (Chinese version) by applying AntConc3.3.5w, and then its high frequency notional words by means of stoplist. In order to save space, the top 20 high frequency notional words are to be listed in Table 2. Then, their high frequency ratios are standardized so that they are comparable.

Table 2
Comparison of Notional Words of Standardized High Frequency Between the Source Text of *China Boy* and Its Target Text

Rank	Source text		Target text	
	Standardized high freq. ratio (per thousand words)	High freq. notional words	Standardized high freq. ratio (per thousand words)	High freq. notional words
1	6.72	Say	7.31	说
2	5.53	Like	6.77	人
3	3.40	Look	4.07	到
4	3.08	Mother	3.35	先生
5	2.70	Know	3.13	给
6	2.69	Father	3.08	想
7	2.45	Go	3.05	看
8	2.41	Man	2.79	好
9	2.12	Get	2.77	来
10	2.09	See	2.66	去
11	2.06	Kid	2.57	知道
12	2.03	Make	2.56	母亲
13	1.99	Edna	2.54	拳
14	1.91	Face	2.47	打
15	1.91	Leave	2.35	孩子
16	1.87	Boy	2.35	大
17	1.80	China	2.32	父亲
18	1.76	Hand	2.23	头
19	1.69	Big	1.82	中国
20	1.69	Take	1.75	艾德娜

Table 2 shows that high frequency notional words in both texts are mainly nouns and verbs which are bound up with characters and plots in the story. High frequency notional words in the source text such as “mother, father, man, kid, Edna, boy” are corresponding to those of “母亲, 父亲, 人, 孩子, 艾德娜, 孩子” in the target text. It's the

same case with high frequency notional words concerning conversations in developing plots such as “说, 看, 知道, 去, 到” in the target text and “say, look/see, know, go, take” in the source text. What's more, ratios of “China” and “中国” are almost the same, suggesting that there are quite a lot of Chinese elements in both texts, so they accord

with characteristics of the foreign language creation and textless back translation. Furthermore, for the two texts, high frequency notional words are a little different in terms of sorting, but on the whole they are of great similarity. To sum up, during the translation, the translators convey the meanings of the source text quite faithfully and lay emphasis on the restoration of Chinese cultural elements.

3.1.2 Syntactic Features

Mean sentence length refers to the average length of sentences. It is the yard stick for the complexity of sentences. With the help of AntConc3.3.5w, the total number of sentences in both texts can be obtained, by which the mean sentence length can be worked out as in Figure 1.

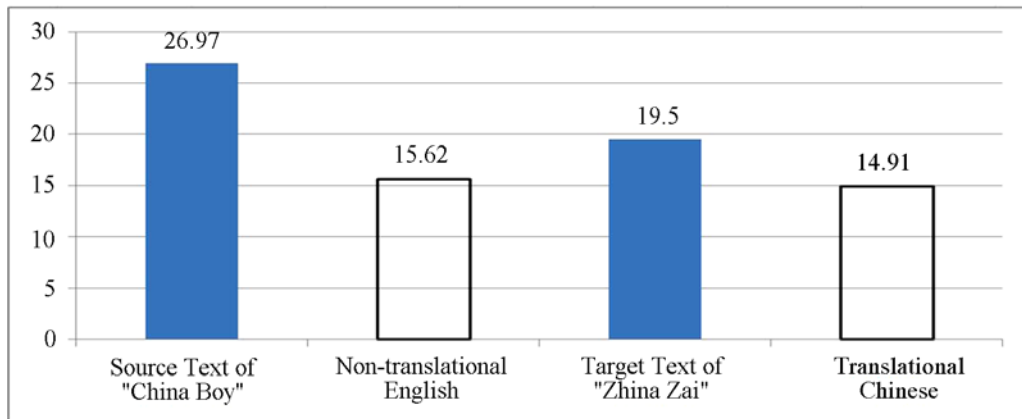


Figure 1
Comparison of Mean Sentence Length Between the Source Text of *China Boy* and Its Target Text

According to Figure 1, the mean sentence length in the source text of *China Boy* is the longest, indicating that it is comparatively difficult to read as the source text enjoys the most complicated sentence structures. But the mean sentence length in the target text of “Zhina Zai” is shorter than its source text, showing that the translated text is easier to read and conforms to the fact that the Chinese translation tends to be briefer. Compared with non-translational English¹ and Translational Chinese, the mean sentence length of “Zhina Zai” in the target text is longer. Probably because of their bi-cultural identity of Chinese American authorship and the special features of textless back translation, the translators add some necessary explanations during the cultural return from the guest culture to the host culture so that the sentences are that long.

3.1.3 Textual Features

Textual features of literary works can be reflected on the narration and the way the story plots develop. In literary works, narration is often showed in the first-person and the third-person (Li, 2016, p.88). With the aid of AntConc3.3.5w, the data concerning different pronouns can be retrieved as follows.

Table 3
Comparison of Pronoun² Frequency Between the Source Text of *China Boy* and Its Target Text

Type	Source text		Target text	
	Freq.	Ratio	Freq.	Ratio
First-person pronouns	6,453	46.69%	6,004	47.75%
Second-person pronouns	1,064	7.70%	1,504	11.96%
Third-person pronouns	6,305	45.61%	5,065	40.28%
Total	13,822	100%	12,573	100%

According to Table 3 and Figure 2, as far as the source text of *China Boy* is concerned, the percentage of first-person pronouns is the highest; third-person pronouns the second and second-person pronouns the third. Besides, third-person pronouns are very close to first-person pronouns in number. As for the target text of *Zhina Zai*, it is of great similarity to the source text. As it is generally acknowledged that the first-person narration tends to be more subjective while the third-person narration tends to be more objective, it is not hard to find out that during the textless back translation, translators attach great importance to the reproduction of the theme in the source text and at the same time exerts their own subjectivity to make it more readable.

¹ The following four corpora—Source text of *China Boy*, Target text of *Zhina Zai*, Non-translational English and Translational Chinese are comparable with regard to their text typology and publication time. The corpus of non-translational English is from TEC Narrative Prose which comprises 3 autobiographies and 15 novels published from 1983 to 1994 with the word count of 100,000,000. The corpus of Translational Chinese is from LCMC(N) which includes five types of novels with word count of 100,000,000. Those novels are published from 1989 to 1993, of which novels published in 1991 are in the majority (Wang, 2012, p.94).

² In Table 3 there are the first-person pronouns, the second-person pronouns and the third-person pronouns. The first person pronouns in English include “I, we, me, us, my, our, mine, ours” and in Chinese comprise “我, 我们”. The second person pronouns in English include “you, your, yours” and in Chinese comprise “你, 你们”. The third person pronouns in English include “he, she, they, him, her, them, his, their, hers, theirs” and in Chinese comprise “他, 她, 他们, 她们”.

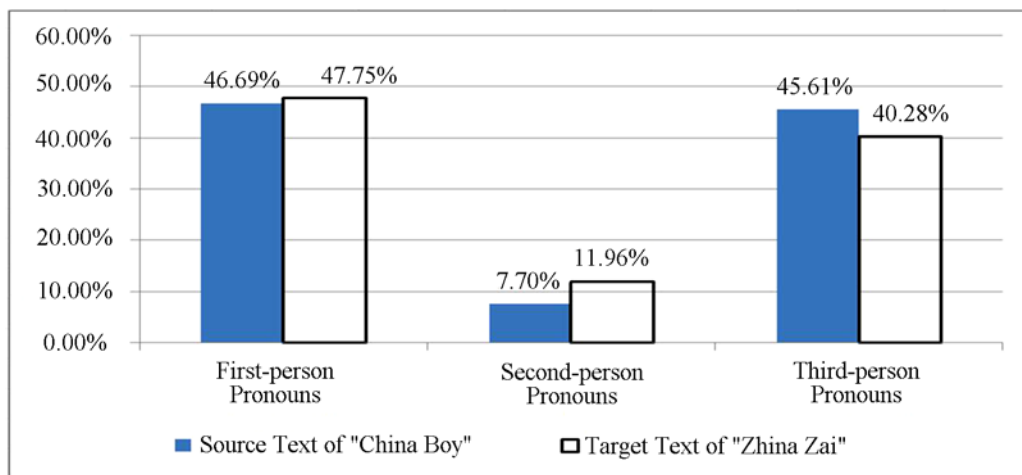


Figure 2
Comparison of Pronoun Frequency Between the Source Text of *China Boy* and Its Target Text

In the literary works, main factors such as character, time, place and event contribute to the plot development. As a result, retrieving these data, especially the data of main characters, from corpora can help probe into similarities and differences of the plot development in both the source text of *China Boy* and the target text

of *Zhina Zai*. In this novel, main characters include Kai Ting, his stepmother Edna, and Big Willie who often bullies Kai (They may be named differently). They serve as the dominant storytellers. By applying AntConc3.3.5w, the results are as follows:



Figure 3
Comparison of Plot Maps of Main Characters Between the Source Text of *China Boy* and Its Target Text

Figure 3 shows that the plot maps in both source text and target text have much in common, indicating that the narration and plots in both texts develop almost in the same way. It proves once again that the translators are quite faithful to the source text. According to the novel, story develops from the first-person narrator "I". The occurrence frequency of "I" and "我" is almost the same, indicating that, in the target text, the translators retain the first-person narration. In the source text, the occurrence of "Kai" is more frequent than that of "China boy" and the occurrence of "China boy" is more frequent than that of "Kai Ting". And it is the same case with "凯", "支那崽" and "丁凯" in the target text, indicating that the translators faithfully restore this character in the textless back translation. When Kai's mother is still alive, Edna was a stranger to him. So there is no plot map of "Edna" and

"艾德娜" in both texts at the very beginning. Then there comes a very high occurrence frequency of "Edna" and "艾德娜" in the plot maps of both texts. The reason lies in the fact that after the death of Kai's mother, Edna became his stepmother and carried out a series of measures to ill-treat him. So Edna appears frequently during that period of time. Later, Kai was sent to learn boxing in Y.M.C.A. and reduced his staying at home. As a result, the conflicts between Kai and Edna are not that frequent, so Edna's occurrence frequency decreases. That can be seen in the sparse plot maps of "Edna" and "艾德娜" in both texts. Needless to say, the changes in the plot maps of "Edna" and "艾德娜" in both texts are almost the same, showing the translators' faithful restoration of this character in the target text. As for the occurrence frequency of "Willie/Big Willie" and "威利/大个子威利", their changes in the

plot maps of both texts are quite similar. In the concluding part of the story, Kai and Willie fought with each other for several times and there came a duel between them, which pushed the story to its climax. After quite a lot of hard practice, Kai finally defeated Big Willie and gained his confidence. That can explain the increasing occurrence frequency of “Willie/Big Willie” in this part. The similar plot map of “威利/大个子威利” in the concluding part of the story in the target text indicates that the translators put emphasis on the restoration of “Willie/Big Willie” and his plot development. In a word, the similarities of plot maps in both source and target texts are greater than their differences, suggesting that the translators play a positive role in the translating process by adding or deleting some elements in order to translate the story back into the Chinese culture.

3.1.4 Features of Paratexts

Paratext refers to linguistic or non-linguistic elements which build a bridge between text and readers (Genette, 1997, p.1). Paratexts can be further divided into peritexts and epitexts according to their spatial location.

Generally speaking, peritexts include the cover, back cover, publishing time, title and subtitle, introduction of the book or author, notes, dedication and appendixes, etc. Epitexts comprise advertisements of publishing house and the interview of the author, etc. In terms of peritexts, compared with the source text of *China Boy*, the target text makes a change on the cover and adds the content, general preface, preface and notes. To be more specific, the original picture on the cover is replaced by the picture of a dragon, thus adding more Chinese elements to the target text. The table of contents is added and designed in the form of chapter titles. The appended general preface occupies 41 pages and mainly focuses on various writers and works of Chinese American literature, providing readers with the social and cultural background of the age. The preface introduces the background information and the main idea of *China Boy* to help the Chinese readers to better understand the story. What's more, lots of notes are inserted by the translators to help readers better understand cultural elements and the writer's thoughts. Apart from peritexts, epitexts also contain a lot of information and facts. The interview of the author is attached to the target text, revealing the fact that the novel is actually the writer's autobiography, which can help the target readers better appreciate its discourse patterns and language features.

In short, paratexts build a bridge among the writer, the translator and the reader, contributing to the understanding of the translator's ideas and subjectivity (Wang & Huang, 2015, p.85).

3.2 Translation Strategies

Translation strategies refer to a collection of principles and methods which are used to achieve certain purposes during the translation (Xiong, 2014, p.83). The choices

of the translation strategies are closely related to the translator's cultural positions such as host cultural preference and guest cultural preference. The textless back translation of *China Boy* is the return from the guest culture to the host culture. Since there are cultural differences, cultural conflicts are inevitable. Consequently, acculturation strategies such as integration, assimilation, separation, marginalization are to be applied as follows to compare *China Boy* and its Chinese translation.

3.2.1 Integration

Integration means that individuals have an interest in both maintaining their original culture and having daily interactions with other groups. When it comes to the textless back translation, the translator lays emphasis on the restoration of host cultural elements and pays attention to the maintenance of guest cultural elements as well.

Example (1) She carried an unpaid debt of shiao, piety to parent, in her breast, as heavy and as foreboding as the rock of Sisyphus (Lee, 1994, p.11).

Chinese version: 她负了一笔没有对父亲尽孝的感情债, 这笔债比西西弗斯往山上推的那块石头更沉重, 更凶险。(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.10)

西西弗斯(Sisyphus)是希腊神话中的暴君, 死后堕入地狱, 被罚推石上山, 但石在接近山顶时又滚下, 于是重新再推, 如此循环不息。—译者(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.10)

The Chinese people attach great importance to honor the parents in the traditional Chinese filial piety, and Kai's mother is not an exception. In the source text, Kai's mother felt guilty to her father as she failed to fulfill her filial obligations. In the guest culture, the writer uses the allusion of “the rock of Sisyphus” to reflect her sadness and guilt. Considering that not all the Chinese readers are familiar with the allusion, which is to transmit the cultural message of the guest culture properly, it is necessary to make appropriate compromise and compensation in the process of the textless back translation. Therefore, the writer adds a note as further explanation for the story about Sisyphus: —“He was a tyrant in the Greek mythology. After he was dropped to hell, he was punished by doing the everlasting menial work of pushing huge rock up the hill.” In this way, the guest cultural elements are maintained and at the same time the host cultural elements are successfully restored without bringing any difficulties to the readers.

Example (2) Father had understood the present moment of China's history. He knew that the Sheng-Yu, the Sacred Edict of Master Confucius, could not provide the answer (Lee, 1994, p.31).

Chinese version: 父亲理解中国的历史现状, 他知道孔夫子似的《圣谕》不能解决问题。(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.32)

这里指的是清朝钦定四库全书子部 —《圣谕广训》儒家经典。—译者(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.32)

In the source text, the writer uses the Chinese Pinyin “Shen-Yu” followed by its further explanation of the Chinese culture-specific item “圣谕”, which enriches English expressions and helps the western readers to better understand the Confucian elements in the guest culture as well. In the process of returning to the host culture, it is not proper to translate “the Sheng-Yu, the Sacred Edict of Master Confucius” into “孔夫子似的《圣谕》”. The reason lies in the fact that Shen-Yu is actually the imperial edict of admonishing ministers in the ancient times rather than the title of a book. So the translators make compensation by inserting the note “Sheng-Yu refers to Confucian classics ‘Sheng-Yu Guang Xun’, the branch of the King Si Ku Quan Shu.” In this way, the guest cultural message is maintained and appropriately transmitted into the host culture as well.

3.2.2 Assimilation

Assimilation means that individuals seek daily interactions with other groups but refuse to maintain their own cultural identity. To achieve it, in the process of the textless back translation, domestication is often applied to make the guest cultural elements adaptable to the target culture.

Example (3) Her five-feet-and-seven-inch frame was usually in dynamic motion, her delicately featured pale oval face, framed in thick black hair, was quick and precise in its expressiveness (Lee, 1994, p.17).

Chinese version: 她身高一米七零, 风致娟好, 苍白的鹅蛋脸, 头发浓密乌黑, 五官清秀, 表情丰富细腻。(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.16)

Measurement system is different between China and the west. In the Chinese culture, measurement units such as “meter” and “centimeter” are usually used to measure a person’s height. However, in the western culture, “feet” and “inch” are their choices for measurement. In the source text, the writer uses the expression “five-feet-and-seven-inch” to describe the stepmother Edna’s height, which is acceptable to the readers of the guest culture. But in the Chinese culture, such an expression does not meet the expectations of host cultural readers and may lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, domestication is adopted here by replacing the western measurement units with Chinese ones so as to cater to the reading habit of the host cultural readers.

Example (4) She refused obsequiousness, rejected submission, and exchanged restraint for spontaneity, stating the contents of her mind at the moment of the thought, however transient. She acted as if she were an enfranchised male (Lee, 1994, p.18).

Chinese version: 她刚正不阿, 百折不挠, 化险为夷, 不管沉思的时刻多么短暂, 她总能想出计策。她的行为举止俨然是个享有权利的须眉。(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.16)

In the guest culture, the writer employs alliteration like “refused, rejected, restraint” to create the rhythmical

and infective effect, while in the host culture, there are no such figures of speech. Under the circumstances, to appropriately transmit the similar effect in the guest culture, domesticating strategy is a choice. Chinese four-character idioms are Chinese culture-specific, rhythmical, concise and comprehensive, the effect of which is often realized by way of free translation (Wang, 2017, p.102). So the translators continuously use three Chinese four-character idioms “刚正不阿、百折不挠、化险为夷” to achieve the similar effect as is shown in the source text.

3.2.3 Separation

Separation means that individuals attach great importance to hold on to their original culture but wish to avoid interactions with others. In the textless back translation, translators lay emphasis on maintaining the guest cultural elements and tries to avoid maintaining the host cultural elements.

Example (5) In making our family a victim of her cultural chauvinism, she administered a self-inflicted wound and denied herself the love and affection that could have been the sustenance of her life (Lee, 1994, p.69).

Chinese version: 当她使我们的家庭成为她的文化沙文主义的受害者时, 她给自己造成了创伤, 并拒绝接受本可以维持她的生命的爱心。(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.77)

According to the source novel, Kai’s stepmother Edna is bigoted and merciless. The writer adopts the phrase “cultural chauvinism” to describe her cruelty. Here, translators directly translated “cultural chauvinism” into “文化沙文主义” without any explanations. In this way, the separation strategy as such not only maintains the guest cultural element but also infuses neoteric expressions into the target culture.

Example (6) If you’ve got the blood, we’ve got the fists. It’s Alpo time (Lee, 1994, p.62).

Chinese version: 如果你是火性子, 我们就有拳头。这是艾尔珀时代。(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.68)

In the Chinese culture, “dog” is often used in derogatory sense. As a result, the Chinese people often use dog-related phrases to express their disgust and hatred. Here, the dog-related word “Alpo” in the source text is supposed to achieve the above effect. The translators transliterate “Alpo” into “艾尔珀”, maintaining the guest cultural element and evoking people’s curiosity, but it is not clear enough. In order to avoid host cultural readers’ misunderstandings, the translators make the explanation: “‘Alpo’ is a famous dog food brand. In the context it means that a person is beaten so hard that his face just looks like dog food, beyond recognition.” In short, under the strategy of separation, the sense of disgust in the source culture is

successfully transmitted by the expression of “艾尔珀” into the target culture.

3.2.4 Marginalization

Marginalization means that individuals have neither interest in maintaining their cultural identity nor interest in having relations with others. Translation guided by this strategy tends to produce obscure language expressions and is most likely to result in the unsuccessful acculturation.

Example (7) Sometimes I felt a mindless, uncontrollable rage, a consumption that ran through my chest to my hands (Lee, 1994, p.82).

Chinese version: 有时候我感到有一种难以控制的无名怒火,一种从胸窜到手的消耗。(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.270)

In the above example, “a consumption that ran through my chest to my hands” is translated into “一种从胸窜到手的消耗”, making no sense to the host cultural readers. Actually in the source text, the first-person narrator Kai wants to show his great anger. Due to cultural differences, expressions for anger are different between English and Chinese. As a result, this kind of direct translation without considering the cultural differences is doomed to fail and leads to unsuccessful acculturation. Therefore, this sentence may as well be translated into “有时候我感到有一种难以控制的无名怒火,简直要气炸了”, which is the idiomatic way of expressing anger in Chinese.

Example (8) Chinatown was like its host city—small and compressed in physical dimensions, boundless and ephemeral in spirit (Lee, 1994, p.242).

Chinese version: 唐人街跟它的寄主城市一样—面积狭小, 浓缩, 精神无限地短暂。(王光林、叶兴国, 2004, p.286)

In the novel, Chinatown links the leading character Kai with the Chinese culture. On the one hand, Chinatown is the epitome of the Chinese culture and provides Kai with experiencing the Chinese way of life. On the other hand, Chinatown is inevitably influenced by the western culture. The Chinese culture and the western culture are usually in resistance, with the Chinese culture sometimes prevailing over and sometimes lagging behind. Therefore, it is ambiguous to translate “boundless and ephemeral in spirit” into “精神无限地短暂 (meaning ‘spirit is infinitely short’)”. It fails to transmit the guest cultural element and causes difficulty to the host cultural readers. Therefore, such a kind of translation guided by marginalization is an unsuccessful acculturation. It may as well apply domestication to convey its connotations “唐人街跟它的寄主城市一样—面积狭小, 浓缩, 中国元素时隐时现 (meaning that the Chinese cultural elements are sometimes prevailing over and sometimes lagging behind the western cultural elements)”.

CONCLUSION

As is discussed above, the paper holds that, compared with the source text, the diction of the textless back translation is not richer and less diverse; that the syntactical structure is briefer, making it easier to understand; that the translators attach great importance to the reproduction of the theme of the source text while exerting their subjectivity at the textual level; and that the contents, foreword and preface, notes and interview with the author are inserted as its paratexts so as to help the target readers better understand the translators’ ideas and subjectivity. As to translation strategies, the textless back translation, guided by integration and assimilation strategies, tends to adopt domestication in order to restore the host cultural elements, which is of significance to the cultural feedback; the translation of this kind, guided by separation strategy, is inclined to employ foreignization in order to emphasize the preservation of guest cultural elements but weaken the reproduction of host cultural elements; the translation, guided by marginalization strategy usually gives rise to mistranslations. In this case, it is usually a must for translators to refer to domestication so as to correctly convey their connotations.

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