
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Application of Specification in the Translation of *Three Hundred Tang Poems*—— Cases Study of the Xu Yuanchong's Version and Witter Bynner & Kiang Kang-Hu's

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ABSTRACT

Three Hundred Tang Poems is a treasure trove of ancient Chinese wisdom that has become a world treasure through skillful translation. In rendering these poems for international readers, the translator must not only accurately convey their artistic conception and bridge emotional nuances, but also reconstruct their cultural connotations. To achieve such a translation effect, the proper application of specification—a strategy of representing the original ideas or concept in a more concrete or explicit way—becomes quite necessary. This paper, taking the English translation of *Three Hundred Tang Poems* made by Xu Yuanchong and Witter Bynner & Kiang Kang-Hu as examples, makes a comparative analysis of their application of specification in poetry translation, focusing on three dimensions: context, emotion and culture. It tends to reveal the use of different degrees and types of specification on the effect of translation, with a view to offer some insights for the translation of Chinese poems.

KEYWORDS

Three Hundred Tang Poems; Comparative research; specification

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Prepositions, Arabic Learner Corpus (ALC), British Academic Written English (BAWE), Saudi EFL learners, corpus-based method

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1. Introduction

As a splendid cultural treasure and crystallization of wisdom of the Chinese nation, *Three Hundred Tang Poems* carries a millennium of historical depth and artistic essence. To introduce this traditional Chinese cultural heritage to international readers, an increasing number of translators have made significant contributions. Given the richness and complexity of the content of Tang poetry, as well as considerations regarding the reception of Chinese culture among international readers, translators have employed a combination of multiple strategies rather than relying on a single approach, such as amplification and specification, with specification being the most frequently employed in the English translation process. Currently, there are three widely circulated English versions of *Three Hundred Tang Poems*: the first is *The Jade Mountain: Three Hundred Tang Poems* jointly translated by Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu in 1929; the second the version translated by Xu Yuanchong in 1988; and the third version translated by Tang Yihe in 2005. Among these three versions, the co-translated version adopts a Western cultural perspective, flexibly utilizing literal translation and specification to interpret Chinese culture. In contrast, the other two versions by Chinese translators predominantly employ free translation and specification, approaching the text from a Chinese worldview with the aim of promoting Chinese culture to the outside world. This article selects the earliest co-translated version of *Three Hundred Tang Poems* by Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, as well as the most widely circulated and influential version by Xu Yuanchong for comparative study. (Hu, 2014, p118-124) Both translations employ a common translation method: specification, but they are grounded in different cultural backgrounds. The former is deeply influenced by Western cultural traditions, while the latter is firmly rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese culture. A comparative analysis of these two versions can not only reveal the

subtle distinctions in the application of the same translation strategy (specification) by Chinese and Western translators in their practice but also illuminate how such differences shape distinct translational effects of the translations.

2. Specification in Translation

Translation often involves dealing with vague, abstract or ambiguous words, phrases and sentences in the source text. To ensure readers can clearly understand the intended meaning of the author, it is often necessary for the translator to render them in a more concrete and explicit manner, thereby aligning the meaning of the translation with that of the original. This is known as specification in translation. (Feng, 1991, p108-111) "Specification refers to the practice of translating abstract or relatively abstract words, phrases, idioms, or sentences in the source text with concrete or relatively concrete counterparts in the target language, thereby minimizing the loss caused by linguistic differences and ensuring the translation achieves the same effect as the original." (Feng, 2002)

In translation practice, the conversion between Chinese and English must comply with the cultural context of the original work and the linguistic habits of the target readers, which poses challenges for translators due to the differences between Chinese and Western linguistic cultures. The core distinction between Chinese and Western linguistic cultures lies in the fact that China represents a high-context culture, whereas the West is predominantly low-context. (Ye, 2013, p167-168) In high-context cultures, emphasis is placed on the use of context to supplement and refine information that language alone cannot fully convey. This mode of communication relies heavily on pre-existing, deeply ingrained mental programs, such as unwritten traditional customs, widely accepted and implicit values, and commonly recognized behavioral norms within society. In contrast, the communicative style of low-context cultures is markedly different. It tends to favor direct and straightforward expression, where information is primarily conveyed explicitly through language. Low-context cultures prioritize rationality and logic, employing logical methods within a rational framework to derive conclusions. (Liu, 2011, p234-237) For example, consider the Chinese saying "吃亏是福." Taken literally, this phrase may seem confusing, as "吃亏" typically means suffering a loss or disadvantage, while "福" signifies good fortune or happiness—apparently contradictory concepts. However, in a high-context culture, this expression carries profound philosophical and life wisdom. It implies that in certain situations, while one may appear to suffer a superficial loss, they may actually gain greater benefits or avoid more significant losses as a result. Such benefits or avoided losses are often not immediately obvious but rather require contextualized interpretation and discernment on the part of the recipient. If translated literally into another language without explanatory adaptation that incorporates contextual understanding, the original meaning is liable to be distorted or lost entirely due to contextual discrepancies between the source and target cultures, making it difficult for target readers to capture the speaker's true intent and emotional nuances. Therefore, in bridging the gap between high-context and low-context languages, the application of specification in translation serves as an effective strategy to address this challenge.

The types of specification in translation are diverse, including the specification of abstract concepts, the specification of generalized or vague notions, the narrowing down of broad lexical meanings, and other forms of specification. (Wang, 1990, p5) The specification method is also applicable to various texts and can be refined at different levels depending on the text type. For instance, in poetry translation, it often involves situational, emotional, and cultural dimensions. Translators typically approach these three dimensions to accurately interpret the meaning of abstract terms within the poetic context and convey them in a detailed and specific manner in the translation. This approach aims to achieve the following effects: (1) enabling target readers to gain a deeper understanding of the specific meanings of abstract nouns in the poetry; (2) ensuring the translation more clearly conveys the emotions the original author intended to express; and (3) helping readers of the translation better comprehend the background of the original work.

While specification is widely used and yields many positive outcomes, it should not be applied indiscriminately in poetry translation. Blindly rendering specific expressions from the source text in an overly concrete manner, without grounding the translation in contextual realism, may result in the effect of "gilding the lily." That is, rather than enhancing the expressive power of the translation, it risks distorting the spiritual essence and aesthetic charm of the original poem.

3. Motivations for Applying Specification in English Translations of *Three Hundred Tang Poems*

Tang poetry, as an elevated form of literature, possesses unique imagery, emotional depth, and aesthetic value. These characteristics render the translation of Tang poetry particularly complex and challenging. In the field of English translation, multiple renditions of the same text are commonplace, and the English translations of *Three Hundred Tang Poems* are no exception. This literary classic contains numerous unfilled spaces and ambiguities; the poems often sketch only the framework of a world-picture, leaving vast room for imagination and interpretation—that is, realms of indeterminacy. (Wang, 2001, p52-54)

The aforementioned various areas of indeterminacy also provide the necessity for applying the specification strategy in the English translation of *Three Hundred Tang Poems*. The motivations can be primarily divided into the following aspects: First, at the level of cultural background differences. In the process of cross-cultural translation, due to disparities in language structures, cultural backgrounds, and aesthetic habits, certain artistic conceptions and subtle emotions in the original poem may be difficult for target-language readers to directly understand or perceive. This makes the application of specification highly necessary. Second, at the level of the translator's pursuit of the original poem's artistic conception. During the reading process, translators, by utilizing their own experiences, cultural literacy, aesthetic sensibilities, and other specification techniques, can help fill in and define the gaps and uncertainties across various domains of the text, thereby fully preparing for the English translation of the work. (Lv, 1994, p51-55) Finally, considerations regarding the readability of the translation. In the practice of translation, translators can transform implicit and ambiguous information in Tang poetry into more intuitive and concrete expressions by adding specific details, clarifying imagery, and explaining cultural allusions. This approach aims to help target-language readers overcome cultural and linguistic barriers and grasp the meaning and aesthetic appeal of the original poem more accurately. This method not only aids in preserving the core essence of the original poem but also creates an aesthetic experience in the target language that is similar or equivalent to that of the original.

The English translation of Tang poetry is a complex and intricate process, in which the application of specification plays a crucial role. It not only reflects the translator's subjective agency but also ensures that the translated work remains faithful to the spirit of the original while transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries, thereby gaining new vitality.

4. Applicability and Limitations of the Specification Strategy

As a translation strategy, specification narrows the scope of referential objects of specific words within a given context and deepens their connotations, allowing readers to clearly grasp their precise meanings. It indeed plays a pivotal role in translation practice. (Fang, 2004) The applicability of specification includes the transmission of cultural imagery and the clarification of ambiguous semantics. For example, in Du Fu's "*Spring View*," the phrases "感时" and "恨别" are both semantically vague and open to interpretation. "感时" could mean lamenting the times or being emotionally moved by them, while "恨别" could signify resenting separation or the sorrow caused by parting—the emotional connotations are broad. In the English translation, "Moved to tears by the scene of the times; Parted from friends, I'm startled at the birds' cries," the phrase "感时" is concretized as "moved to tears by the scene of the times," explicitly indicating that the poet is brought to tears by the current state of affairs. Similarly, "恨别" is concretized as "parted from friends, I'm startled at the birds' cries," clarifying that the shock at the birds' cries stems from the pain of separation from friends. Such translation enables English readers to more intuitively understand the specific emotions evoked in the poet by the times and parting.

However, the use of specification is not without limitations. In the translation process, when a word in the source text lacks a direct, precise equivalent in the target language, especially when its meaning is relatively ambiguous in the original and could be interpreted in multiple ways within the target language context—the translator must exercise great caution before deciding to employ specification (i.e., translating a broader or more abstract term into a more specific and explicit one). Take the Chinese proverb "不尝黄连苦, 怎知蜂蜜甜" as an example. In Chinese, both "黄连" (goldthread) and "蜂蜜" (honey) are concrete objects, but the saying is metaphorical, conveying the idea that one cannot appreciate happiness without having experienced hardship. If these terms are excessively concretized—as in the translation "Who has never tasted Chinese goldthread which is bitter will never know honey is sweet" (Feng, 2002)—the result is not only verbose and likely confusing to foreign readers, but it also loses the metaphorical depth and cultural resonance of the original. This is because Chinese goldthread, a medicinal herb whose rhizome contains bitter alkaloids, is deeply embedded in Chinese culture, as reflected in sayings like "哑巴吃黄连, 有苦难言" (A mute person tasting goldthread—unable to speak of the bitterness), which vividly expresses both its intense bitterness and the ineffable nature of suffering. Similarly, honey, produced from nectar, symbolizes not just sweetness in taste but also life's joys and fulfillment, as captured in the folk expression "戴花吃蜂蜜, 甜甜美美" (Wearing flowers while eating honey—sheer sweetness and bliss). Both items represent sensory extremes and are culturally loaded; without relevant background, foreign readers may miss their implied meanings. In contrast, a translation that avoids excessive concretization—such as "Who has never tasted bitter knows not what is sweet" (Feng, 2002)—renders "黄连苦" simply as "bitter" and "蜂蜜甜" as "what is sweet." This approach objectively conveys the contrast between bitterness and sweetness while omitting potentially distracting cultural specifics. By preserving the original's metaphorical and abstract quality, this version allows readers greater freedom to interpret and connect with the core message, aligning more closely with Western linguistic tendencies and fostering broader emotional resonance.

In summary, due to differences in cultural traditions, way of thinking, and modes of expression between source-and target-language readers, it is sometimes necessary to transform general expressions into more concrete and vivid ones in the target language through specification. This can convey the original's essence and achieve "functional equivalence" as much as possible. (Li, 2010) However, when dealing with words or expressions that are not culturally specific and are open to multiple

interpretations, translators must be exceptionally prudent in applying specification. They need to carefully balance clarity and accuracy in the target language while preserving the original's unique tone, style, and semantic range. Moreover, if equivalent expressions exist between the source and target languages, it is often wiser to adopt these rather than overusing specification strategy.

5. Application of the Specification in Two English Translations of *Three Hundred Tang Poems*

As the pinnacle of classical Chinese poetry, *Three Hundred Tang Poems* is characterized by its profound and far-reaching artistic conception, refined emotional expression, and rich cultural connotations. Consequently, translators are required to employ specification at the contextual level in alignment with the poetic setting to accurately convey the original meaning; to undertake specification at the emotional level by inferring the poet's inner thoughts to refine the emotional expression of the original poem; and to implement specification at the cultural level through a thorough understanding of Chinese allusions to precisely transmit the cultural essence of the original work.

5.1 Specification at the Contextual Level

Specification at the contextual level requires the translator to deduce the true meaning of certain abstract nouns based on the context within the Tang poem and express them in a concrete manner. These abstract nouns include terms whose meanings have shifted from ancient to modern usage or words with specialized meanings. In such cases, applying specification can better assist target readers in comprehending the essence conveyed by the Tang poetry.

Example 1:

Original Text:

故人西辞黄鹤楼，烟花三月下扬州。(Xu, 2021a, p424)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

My friend has left the west where the Yellow Crane towers,
For River Town green with willows and red with flowers. (Xu, 2021a, p425)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation Version:

You have left me behind, old friend, at the Yellow Crane Terrace,
On your way to visit Yang-chou in the misty month of flowers. (Bynner & Kiang, 1929, p87)

In delving deeper into this poetic line, we cannot overlook the ingenious use of the term “烟花” within the poem. Rather than directly referring to the dazzling fireworks in the night sky, it borrows the imagery of their brilliant colors to depict a vibrant and flourishing spring scene in Yangzhou, where all things awaken and thrive. Both Xu Yuanchong and Witter Bynner, through their distinctive artistic approaches, have concretized this abstract imagery, yet each has its own merits. Xu Yuanchong's translation, “green with willows and red with flowers,” skillfully captures the essence of spring. Through the tender green of “willows” and the bright red of “flowers,” he constructs a vivid and richly layered springtime scene. Here, “green” and “red” are not merely direct depictions of natural colors but also embody a strong visual contrast and harmonious coexistence, immersing readers in a Yangzhou spring scape where willow catkins dance lightly and flowers bloom in clusters. This evokes the vigorous vitality and boundless energy of spring. In contrast, the term “flowers” in the co-translation by Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, while pointing to the iconic element of spring—blossoms—comes across as comparatively monotonous. Though this specific reference can evoke readers' associations with spring flowers, it falls slightly short of Xu Yuanchong's translation in terms of scene construction and emotional resonance.

Example 2:

Original Text:

娉娉袅袅十三余，豆蔻梢头二月初。(Xu, 2021b, p404)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

Not yet fourteen, she's fair and slender,
Like early budding flower tender. (Xu, 2021b, p405)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation Version:

She is slim and supple and not yet fourteen,
The young spring-tip of a cardamom-spray. (Bynner & Kiang, 1929, p177)

The term “豆蔻” in this poetic line does not simply refer to an herbaceous plant. From the preceding phrase “十三余” (just over thirteen), it is evident that “豆蔻” here alludes to “豆蔻年华(the age of a cardamom blossom)”, signifying a girl of thirteen or fourteen years old. Like a flower beginning to bloom, she is brimming with vitality and limitless future potential. The poem aims to convey admiration for the beauty of youth and tender affection for a young girl. Accordingly, in Xu Yuanchong's translation, specification is applied by rendering the phrase as “early budding flower tender.” Here, “budding” not only depicts the delicate state of a flower just opening but also metaphorically suggests the girl's youthful, vibrant stage of growth. The word “tender”

further reinforces this sense of delicacy and softness, while subtly conveying the poet's deep affection and protective care for the young girl. In contrast, in the co-translation by Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, the translators show a limited understanding of the idiom “豆蔻年华” and merely translate “豆蔻” literally as “cardamon-spray,” which only conveys the image of an unopened flower bud. This overly narrow interpretation fails to effectively establish the intrinsic connection between “豆蔻” and the young girl of “十三余,” nor does it fully capture the poet's complex and nuanced emotional attitude toward the girl. Consequently, it introduces a certain deviation and regrettable loss in the conveyance of the poetic meaning.

Example 3:

Original Text:

海内存知己，天涯若比邻。(Xu, 2021a, p176)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

If you have friends who know your heart, distance cannot keep you apart. (Xu, 2021a, p177)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation Version:

And yet, while China holds our friendship, and heaven remains our neighbourhood. (Bynner& Kiang, 1929, p220)

In this poetic line, the term “天涯” refers to a distant place. Neither translator rendered it literally. In Xu Yuanchong's version, the word is concretized as “distance,” accurately recreating the scenario envisioned in the original poem: the bond between the poet and his friend remains unbroken regardless of physical separation. This simple yet precise term not only conveys the idea that friendship transcends distance but also makes the meaning of the Chinese verse more intuitive, thereby helping readers better grasp its intent. In the co-translation by Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, the term is rendered as “heaven.” In Western culture, “heaven” often symbolizes a faraway realm, and thus the translator uses it to convey the notion of “remoteness,” making the translation more aligned with a Western cultural context. Compared to “heaven,” the term “distance” represents a deeper and more precise level of specification. The word “distance,” paired with “apart” in the following line, allows readers to immediately comprehend the poem's meaning. In contrast, “heaven” is a relatively vague term with multiple layers of meaning and lacks specificity, which may lead to interpretive ambiguity. It does not directly evoke the connection between “heaven” and the subsequent word “neighbourhood,” potentially hindering readers from seamlessly grasping the intended relationship.

5.2 Specification at the Emotional Level

Specification at the emotional level requires the translator to understand the poet's truest inner thoughts and use concrete expressions to clearly convey the emotions intended in the original poem, which can be applied, for instance, when the emotional expressions are incomplete, vague, or abstract. In such cases, the concretization strategy should be employed to refine the expression of the poet's emotions.

Example 4:

Original Text:

别有幽愁暗恨生，此时无声胜有声。(Xu, 2021b, p672)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

Still we heard hidden grief and vague regret concealed,
Then music expressed far less than silence revealed. (Xu, 2021b, p673)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation Version:

Into a depth of sorrow and concealment of lament,
Told even more in silence than they had told in sound. (Bynner& Kiang, 1929, p160)

In this poetic line, the first half expresses the poet's emotions at that moment, with the phrase “幽愁暗恨” encapsulating the essence of the poet's feelings. Both translators chose not to render this phrase literally but instead inferred the poet's genuine emotions through their understanding of the poem. Xu Yuanchong concretizes the phrase as “hidden grief and vague regret,” where the term “regret” particularly conveys the poet's conflicting and sorrowful sentiments. In the co-translation by Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, “幽愁暗恨” is translated as “sorrow and concealment of lament.” Here, “lament” serves as the central emotional tone, reflecting the poet's lament over his own unrecognized talent as well as his indignation on behalf of the lute-playing woman who likewise goes unappreciated. Among the four characters in the original Chinese phrase, the term “恨” is the most nuanced and challenging to interpret, as it can imply hatred, resentment, or remorse. However, neither translator opted for such direct equivalents. Instead, based on their understanding of the poet's true emotions, they rendered it as “regret” and “lament” respectively. This approach avoids a one-dimensional interpretation of the emotion, bringing the translation closer to the poet's inner world and enabling readers to grasp the emotions conveyed in the original poem more accurately.

Example 5:**Original Text:**

无人信高洁，谁为表予心。(Xu, 2021a, p92)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

Who would believe its spirit high, could I express my grief in word? (Xu, 2021a, p93)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation Version:

Who knows if he be singing still, who listens any more to me? (Bynner& Kiang, 1929, p135)

This verse was composed by the poet Luo Binwang while he was wrongfully imprisoned. “表予心” literally means “to express my innermost feelings.” In his translation, Xu Yuanchong does not confine himself to the literal meaning of the phrase but instead conveyed the poet’s emotional state based on the context of the poem. The term “grief”—a poignant and emotionally charged word—appropriately encapsulates the poet’s intertwined emotions of conflict, helplessness, and profound sorrow. In the co-translation by Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, the line “who listens any more to me” is used to depict the poet’s predicament: no one believed in his innocence, and no one was willing to listen to his plea. This formulation skillfully outlines the poet’s state of isolation and helplessness. Both translators have concretized this emotional undertone, thereby vividly and fully conveying the poet’s sense of grievance, enriching and deepening the expression of his emotions.

Example 6:**Original Text:**

蜡烛有心还惜别，替人垂泪到天明。(Xu, 2021b, p406)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

The candle grieves to see us part, it melts in tears with burnt-out heart. (Xu, 2021b, p407)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation Version:

Even the candle, feeling our sadness, weeps, as we do, all night long. (Bynner& Kiang, 1929, p210)

This poetic line expresses the poet’s reluctance to part with his friend. The term “垂泪” is originally an emotional act performed by humans, but in this line, personification is employed by attributing the act of weeping to a candle. In Xu Yuanchong’s translation, this line is not directly rendered using personification. Instead, it concretely describes how the candle “sheds tears” and what follows this action: “it melts in tears with burnt-out heart.” The “melt” illustrates the physical process of the candle melting as it burns, visually representing the image of the candle “shedding tears.” Meanwhile, the phrase “burnt-out heart” poignantly reveals the exhaustion and heartbreak of the candle—and by extension, the poet’s inner self—at the moment of parting, as if every drop of melted wax flows from its (his) emotions. This creates a dense and sorrowful atmosphere, allowing readers to deeply feel the poet’s ineffable reluctance and grief. In the co-translation by Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, the line is also not translated as the candle literally shedding tears. Instead, it is rendered together with the preceding line as “the candle, feeling our sadness, weeps.” The use of “sadness” and “weeps” here more directly conveys the emotional tone of the poem.

5.3 Specification at the Cultural Level

Specification at the cultural level requires the translator to understand the cultural background of the original author and convey the most accurate meaning in a manner most accessible to the target readers. This is particularly relevant in the translation of Chinese cultural allusions.

Example 7:**Original text:**

旧时王谢堂前燕，飞入寻常百姓家。(Xu, 2021b, p454)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

Swallows which skimmed by painted eaves in days gone by, are dipping now in homes where humble people occupy. (Xu, 2021b, p455)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation Version:

Where once they visited great homes, dip among doorways of the poor. (Bynner& Kiang, 1929, p133)

This line of poetry contains a classical allusion. “王谢” is not merely a simple reference to two surnames, but profoundly alludes to the illustrious Wang and Xie families, who enjoyed immense prestige and influence during the Eastern Jin Dynasty. In Xu Yuanchong’s translation, he does not explicitly name these families. Instead, he employs a specification strategy, using the specific image of “painted eaves” namely, those exquisitely carved and lavishly decorated roof overhangs to metaphorically suggest the former glory and prosperity of these clans. In the co-translation by Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, the families are also not translated directly. The meaning of the allusion is conveyed concretely through the phrase “great homes,” which is intentionally contrasted with the word “poor” later in the line. This contrast effectively highlights the central themes of the passage of time and the impermanence of worldly fortune.

Example 8:

Original Text:

二十四桥明月夜，玉人何处教吹箫。(Xu, 2021a, p242)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

Twenty-four fairies on the bridge steeped in moonbeams, are they still playing on the flute now as before? (Xu, 2021a, p243)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation:

And clear in the moon on the Twenty-Four Bridges, girls white as jade are teaching flute-music. (Bynner& Kiang, 1929, p303)
This line of poetry also contains an allusion: “二十四桥明月夜”. Regarding the allusion of the Twenty-Four Bridges, historical lore suggests that the bridge was named after twenty-four beauties playing flutes upon it. In Xu Yuanchong's translation, this allusion is concretely rendered as “Twenty-four fairies on the bridge,” which accurately reproduces and conveys the cultural essence of the allusion. In contrast, the Western translator Bynner, lacking deeper cultural insight into this allusion, translates it literally as “Twenty-Four Bridges.” While this rendering aligns literally with the original text, it fails to capture the core of the allusion and cannot evoke the reader's association or imagination regarding the story behind the Twenty-Four Bridges. More notably, it lacks direct resonance with the imagery of “playing the flute” in the following line, “玉人何处教吹箫” (Where are the fairies now teaching the flute), resulting in a fragmented interpretation of the poem's cultural meaning.

Example 9:

Original Text:

阳月南飞雁，传闻至此回。(Xu, 2021a, p256)

Xu Yuanchong's Translation Version:

In the tenth moon wild geese south fly; They will turn back at this peak high. (Xu, 2021a, p257)

Bynner & Kiang Kang-hu's Co-translation:

They say that wildgeese, flying southward, Here turn back, this very month. (Bynner& Kiang, 1929, p167)
The allusive term “阳月” in this poetic line originates from “*The Erya*”, which designates the tenth month as “阳月.” This term represents a traditional nomenclature for months in ancient China. In ancient Chinese thought, people often interpreted natural phenomena through the framework of yin-yang and the five elements, and months were accordingly assigned corresponding yin or yang attributes. Xu Yuanchong's translation renders “阳月” as “the tenth moon,” explicitly referring to the tenth month of the lunar calendar. This approach is direct and concrete, accurately conveying the temporal meaning of “阳月” and enabling readers to quickly grasp the temporal setting within the poem. Meanwhile, the phrase “peak high” may appear slightly exaggerated, yet here it can be interpreted as a high point or turning point along the wild geese's southward migration. This resonates with the phrase “传闻至此回” (They will turn back at this peak high), together evoking the imagery of the geese turning back at a specific time and place—no longer flying further south—while the poet himself must continue his journey southward, accentuating his inner solitude and helplessness. In contrast, the co-translation by Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu translates “阳月” as “this very month,” which is relatively vague and does not specify the tenth lunar month. However, within the contextual framework of the poem, readers can still infer that it refers to a particular month during the wild geese's southward migration.

6. Conclusion

In poetry translation, the specification strategy demonstrates positive effects in helping readers comprehend the poetic context, bridging the emotional gaps left by the poet, and facilitating cultural exchange between China and the West. As a crystallization of Chinese culture, *Three Hundred Tang Poems* plays a significant role in making Chinese culture known by the world through its translations. In view of its English translations, the versions by Xu Yuanchong and Witter Bynner each exhibit distinct strengths in their use of specification. Xu Yuanchong, deeply rooted in the rich soil of Chinese culture, employs specification with notable fluency and insight. In contrast, Bynner, working within a Western cultural framework, also utilizes specification in his co-translation with Kiang Kang-hu, though he occasionally overlooks certain culturally nuanced elements and does not always delve deeply enough into their specific implications. Nevertheless, both translators, through their application of specification, manage to preserve, to varying degrees, the unique and profound meanings of the original texts. Therefore, in poetry translation, a thorough understanding and appropriate application of the specification strategy can significantly enhance the effectiveness of cultural transmission through translated works.

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