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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Application of Foreignization Strategy in Chinese Translation of Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Taking Zhou Jianxin's Translation *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson: 601-900* as an Example**

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**ABSTRACT**

Poetry is the perfect combination of form and content. Therefore, poetry translation should faithfully translate the original form and content. In other words, foreignization could be the best translation strategy for poetry translation, especially for those poems with distinctive formal characteristics, such as the poems of Emily Dickinson, a 19th-century American poetess. Currently, there have been 17 Chinese translations of Dickinson's poetry published in China, with few of them using a foreignization strategy; most of these translations fail to faithfully reproduce the original flavor of Dickinson's poetry. This study takes the only version of the current 17 translations that adopts the foreignization strategy, Zhou Jianxin's translated book, *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson: 601-900*, as a research object to investigate Zhou's translation of poetic form and vocabulary through data statistics and textual analysis. It is found that Zhou has basically reproduced original punctuation marks and lexical connotations and achieved equivalence of lexical function and meaning in lexical translation. Zhou's translation shows no traces of translation. That is, it reads natural and fluent. It retains original thought-provoking content and form and is a successful example of adopting a foreignization strategy to translate Dickinson's poems into Chinese, which justifies that the application of foreignization strategy in the Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry is not only necessary but also feasible, which is the purpose of this study. It is expected that this study should encourage more Chinese translators to apply the foreignization strategy in translating Dickinson's poetry in the future so as to further enhance the quality of Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry and present a truer and more authentic image of Dickinson's poetry in the Chinese world.

**KEYWORDS**

Foreignization strategy; Emily Dickinson's poetry; Chinese translation; Zhou Jianxin's translation

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### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Study Background**

Poetry is the perfect unity of form and content, each of which is indispensable and equally important. In other words, poetic form is as important as poetic content. Therefore, poetry translation should be faithful not only to original content but also to original form. However, due to the differences between the source language and target language, the translator's special translation purpose, translator's translation competence, and other reasons, there are cases of unfaithful translation in poetry translation, especially the unfaithfulness in poetic form. China's renowned poetry translator, Jiang Feng (1929-2017), believes that "the essence of a poem lies not in what it says, but in how it says. Poetry, as a literary genre, apart from its feature of musicality in a general sense, must be a unity of form and content to a high degree." (Li & Jiang, 2020:127-134). Therefore, it is necessary and important to faithfully translate poetic form and content in order to ensure that the translation is equally a reproduction of the original unity of form and content.

Foreignization lays emphasis on faithful reproduction of the original. Foreignization puts it as a key in translation to retain unique original form and style so that target readers can taste the original in its purest and most faithful way. Put in plain, the translator should try his best to present to the target readers the most faithful translation. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) once expressed the basic meaning in "On Different Methods of Translation" that there are two translation methods: the translator should either try not to disturb the author and bring the reader closer to the author or try not to disturb the reader as much as possible, but make the author close to the reader. (Schleiermacher, 1992:149). Schleiermacher himself, together with others, such as Francis Newman (1805-1897) and William Morris (1834-1896), attach great importance to foreignization in translation (Venuti 99-148). In modern Chinese translation history, the great Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881-1936) was the first to advocate literal translation (which is quite similar to that of foreignization) in an era when free translation (i.e., domestication) was the mainstream translation strategy used in China (Wu 63). Lu Xun emphasizes that all translations must take into account two points, for one thing, striving to be easy to understand, for another, maintaining the essence of the original (Lu 365). There are also a number of Chinese translators who attach great importance to foreignization strategy and advocate foreignization in translating foreign literature into Chinese. With respect to poetry translation, especially to the translation of poetry with distinctive forms, translators should adopt a foreignization strategy to reproduce original characteristics so as to present to target language readers the original flavors of foreign poetry to the greatest extent.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) is a legendary poet of the 19th century United States. Harold Bloom (1930-2019), a famous American critic, believes that the basic meaning among the western poets since Dante, Emily Dickinson is the most cognitive and original poet except Shakespeare. (Bloom, 1994:272). Dickinson's poems startled the world with their characteristics of broken grammar, jumping thinking, fantastic images, and its unique form, such as extensive use of dashes, etc., which is rare in English poetry, becomes one of the most prominent features of her poetry. Therefore, it is very important to adopt a foreignization strategy in the translation of Dickinson's poetry, which will help to maintain the essence of Dickinson's poetry for target language readers. Taking Zhou Jianxin's Translation, *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson:601-900* (Zhou, 2021) as an example, through data statistics and textual analysis, the writer of this paper will showcase the successful practice of foreignization strategy in translating Dickinson's poetry into Chinese to demonstrate that adoption of foreignization in translating of Dickinson's poetry into Chinese is not only necessary but also feasible, by which to expect that more Chinese translators be inspired to explore their way of applying foreignization strategy in translating Dickinson's poetry into Chinese, thus improving quality of Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry and displaying a truer image of Dickinson's poetry in the Chinese world.

## 2. Literature Review

Emily Dickinson was introduced to Chinese readers as early as 1949, the founding year of the People's Republic of China (Zhou, 2012: 50-52). In 1984, Jiang Feng (1929-2017), a renowned Chinese poetry translator, published the first Chinese translation of Dickinson's Poetry (Zhou, 2010: 102-106). So far, there have been 17 Chinese translated versions of Dickinson's poetry published in China (Zhou, 2012: 50-52). Each of these translated versions has its own characteristics. Some are concise and compact, some are smooth and easy to read, some are fresh and elegant, some are lyrical and beautiful, some are fluent and clear, and some have the characteristics of modern vers libre, etc. (Zhou, 2004:95-98; 2011:77-88).

None of these translated versions adopts a foreignization strategy except Zhou Jianxin's translation. Of the classic translated versions, such as the most popular version translated by Jiang Feng, alteration of original punctuation verse lines can be found in his translation from time to time (Zhou, 2004: 95-98; 2011: 77-88); although the translator says that he pays much attention to the likeness of both form and spirit (Jiang, 2001: 203-208), and the translation of Mu Yu, a publishing house editor, has obvious deficiencies in content translation (Zhou, 2021: 175-187); While the recent translations, such as translation by well-known Chinese translator, Tu An (Zhou, 2020: 1975-1991), translation by modern Chinese poet Shi Li (Zhou, 2021: 177-192), translation by Dr. Xu Chungang (Zhou, 2022: 364-373), and translations by Kang Yanbin and Wang Jinhua (Zhou, 2022: 22-40), do not show distinctive traces of foreignization.

Dickinson's poems have been translated into Chinese and have enjoyed huge circulation and fame for decades; some of her poems in Chinese translated versions have been anthologized and appeared in coursebooks of Chinese primary schools, secondary schools, and colleges for years, resulting in a great popularity among Chinese students and with great influence in China (Zhou, 2011: 58-60). Therefore, it is necessary and important to restore a real Dickinson in the Chinese world by adopting a foreignization strategy in translating Dickinson's poetry into Chinese. This paper takes Zhou Jianxin's *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson:601-900*, the only one of the many current Chinese translated versions that follows foreignization strategy, as an example to analyze the effect of foreignization strategy and highlight its success of it. The purpose is to demonstrate that the application of foreignization strategy in translating Dickinson's poetry into Chinese is completely feasible, and hope that the finding may facilitate wider popularity of foreignization strategy in the Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry in the future.

Zhou Jianxin's *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson:601-900*, published by South China University of Technology Press in 2021, contains 300 English texts and 300 Chinese translated texts. The English texts are selected from *The Complete Poems of Emily*

Dickinson (Emily, 1960), edited by Thomas H. Johnson, and originally numbered 601-900. Each of Dickinson's poems is marked with Arabic numerals by the editor in the complete edition since Dickinson's poems generally have no title. Professor Zhou Jianxin, a well-known Emily Dickinson expert in China, has studied Dickinson for 30 years, published dozens of Dickinson research papers, and translated all 1775 Dickinson poems into Chinese. Of the many Chinese translated versions of Dickinson's poetry, Zhou's translation is unique in its faithfulness (Wang, 2012:190-194; Dou, 2013:199-200; Li, 2013:45-48). This paper analyzes the effect of foreignization in Zhou's translation in two aspects: reservation of original poetic form and equivalent translation of original vocabulary. Poetic form here refers to punctuation marks, which include dash, comma, period, question mark, exclamation mark, parentheses, and double quotation marks.

### 3. Preservation of Original Poetic Form

Preservation of poetic form refers to the reservation of original punctuation marks in translation. The following table is a statistic of the number of punctuation marks both in original and translated texts.

**Table 1. Statistics of Number of Punctuation Marks in Source Text and Zhou's Translation**

Punctuation Version	exclamation mark	comma	Double quotation marks	dash	question mark	period	parentheses
Original	65	339	45	3330	54	144	2
Translation	65	342	46	3331	54	144	2
Deviation	0	3	1	1	0	0	0

It can be seen from the statistical results that there is little difference in the number of punctuation marks between the original text and Zhou's translation. Through examination of the original and the translation, it is found that the position of these punctuation marks in the translation is basically the same as that of the corresponding punctuation marks in the original text, and the deviation of a small number of punctuation marks, namely, some commas, dashes and double quotation marks, is mainly caused by expression difference between English language and Chinese language. Taking commas as an example, the three extra commas in the translation are mainly due to the need for Chinese expression habit, that is, only commas be added can the meaning be clearly expressed and without ambiguity; The same is true for an extra double quotation mark in the translation. To be specific, when the original last line of poem 884 ( i.e., The Track called Land.) is translated into Chinese (i.e., 那被称为"陆地"的轨迹.) , double quotation marks should be added to the translation (i.e."陆地") of the original word "Land" according to requirements of Chinese expression habits, in order to make the translation (i.e."陆地") have the same prominence and emphasis effect as the original word "Land" with a capitalization of the initial letter. It can be seen that Zhou's translation obviously adopts a foreignization strategy in the formal translation of Dickinson's poetry. The following is a brief analysis of its foreignization translation effect.

#### 3.1 Preservation of dash

English dash has only functional connotation without expressive semantic meaning, while the Chinese dash also has similar characteristics. In the second edition of *the English-Chinese Dictionary*, edited by Chinese scholar Lu gusun, the English dash is defined as: "1. It indicates a sudden interruption of speech, a sudden change of meaning, or hesitation. 2. It brings the following emphasized words. 3. It separates non-limiting modifiers, appositions, or words of additional explanation. 4. It introduces general words. 5. It indicates the source of the citation. 6. It is used between two place names or two time names, which means" to "(Lu, 2007:2386)." Obviously, like conjunctions and hyphens, a dash is an important means for a translator to construct grammar and logic, express the author's ideas and correctly reproduce the original text in the process of translation. (Zhu, 1999: 77-80). *The 19 Lectures on Standardized Use of Punctuation*, published by Peking University Press in 2016, pointed out that a dash is used when the explanation part brought by a dash is important and is a part of a sentence and needs to be read together with the main body of the sentence to fully express the sentence meaning without damaging the language coherence (Guo&Ding, 2016:172), which shows that Chinese dash functions similarly as English dash. The extensive use of dashes is the most eye-catching formal feature of Dickinson's poetry. Translation with an inadequate representation of this feature can hardly be called faithful translation.

According to statistics, in Zhou Jianxin's *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson:601-900*, there are 3330 original dashes and 3331 translated dashes, which indicates that Zhou's translation basically restores the unique form of Dickinson's poetry and achieves loyalty of translation to the extent that is incomparable for domestication strategy. If it is true that the application of domestication strategy results in transferring "beauty in meaning" of the source language poem to the target language poem, then the application of foreignization strategy may result in reproducing "beauty in form" and "beauty in sound" of source language poem(Guan,

2012:118-121). The extensive dashes in Dickinson's poetry are not only common punctuation marks but also an important part of a unique poetic form with special significance.

The following is a brief analysis of the translation of dashes in Poems 623 and 706.

<b>Poem 623<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Translation</b>
It was too late for Man --	对于人类已经太迟---
But early, yet, for God --	但, 对于上帝, 还早---
Creation -- impotent to help --	创世---也无助益---
But Prayer -- remained -- Our Side --	但至少---我们还可---祈祷---
How excellent the Heaven --	天堂多令人心仪---
When Earth -- cannot be had --	当尘世---无法居停---
How hospitable -- then -- the face	那时---我们的旧邻---上帝
Of our Old Neighbor -- God --	他的脸---多热情---

<b>Poem 706</b>	<b>Translation</b>
Life, and Death, and Giants --	生命, 死亡, 巨人---
Such as These -- are still --	诸如这些---已然静默---
Minor -- Apparatus -- Hopper of the Mill --	较小的---物件---磨坊的料斗---
Beetle at the Candle --	蜡烛上的甲虫---
Or a Fife's Fame --	或横笛的声名---
Maintain -- by Accident that they proclaim --	则依然故我---根据他们公布的动静---

The original 14 dashes (in poem 623) and 10 dashes (in poem 706) are retained in translation, with each of which situated in the same position as that in the original text, thus keeping the function of original dashes basically intact in translation. For example, the original second line of poem 706, "Such as These -- are still --" is divided into two meaning groups by dashes, i.e., "Such as These --" and "are still --", the Chinese translation, "诸如这些---已然静默---", also uses dashes to divide the translation into two meaning groups accordingly, i.e., "诸如这些--" and "已然静默--". This exact reproduction of original meaning group division and poetic meaning may guarantee the same feeling of target language readers when reading translation as those of source language readers when reading the original text. Preservation of original dashes is a requirement of foreignization translation but not at all the purpose. The aim of duplication of original dashes is to convey and reproduce the specific function of the original dashed in translation. Chinese poetry translator Jiang Feng (1929-2017) once pointed out that the famous Taiwanese poet Yu Guangzhong (1928-2017) did not translate Dickinson's poem 303, "The Soul selects her own Society---" into Chinese successfully because Yu did not understand "why a poem is a poem" (Jiang, 2019: 127-134). According to Jiang Feng, if a translator does not understand the essence of poetry and does not pay adequate respect to the original form, his translation must be a failure. Theoretically, anyone can translate poetry, while good translation depends on the translator's capability and pursuit. Only by faithfully reproducing the original form can the translation vividly retain original information and aesthetic significance (Li&Jiang, 2019:127-134). Instead of preserving original dashes, Yu Guangzhong "over-created" in his translation. On the contrary, Zhou's translation is exactly in line with Jiang's point of view. Zhou's translation is faithful to the original without losing its own elegance.

### 3.2 Preservation of other punctuation marks

As mentioned earlier, the statistical results show that the number of punctuation marks in Zhou's translation is very close to that of the original, with only minor deviation, showing obvious characteristics of foreignization translation. The foreignization translation of punctuation is not only to retain original punctuation but to restore the meaning expressed by punctuation, which is the ultimate goal of foreignization translation.

Taking Zhou's translation of poems 608 and 678 as examples, the following analysis showcases the effect of the foreignization strategy in translating the punctuation of Dickinson's poetry.

<b>Poem 608</b>	<b>Translation</b>
Afraid! Of whom am I afraid?	害怕! 我害怕谁?

<sup>1</sup> The original Dickinson's poems and their Chinese translations quoted in this paper are all from: Zhou, Jianxin. trans. *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson: 601-900*. Guangzhou: South China University of Technology Press, 2021. The following is no longer marked one by one.

Not Death -- for who is He?      不是死神---谁知他是谁?  
The Porter of my Father's Lodge      我父亲小屋的看门人  
As much abasheth me!      同样使我羞愧!

Of Life? 'Twere odd I fear [a] thing      害怕生命?真奇怪我会害怕这东西  
That comprehendeth me      它将我纳于  
In one or two existences --      一种或两种存在在里---  
Just as the case may be---      一如情况所示---

Of Resurrection? Is the East      害怕复活?难道东方  
Afraid to trust the Morn      会害怕给予黎明  
With her fastidious forehead?      它精致的前额?  
As soon impeach my Crown!      那我才会质疑我的王冠!

#### Poem 678

#### Translation

Wolfe demanded during dying      沃尔夫临终前问  
"Which obtain the Day"?      "那天获胜是哪一边"?  
"General, the British" -- "Easy"      "将军,是英国人"---"这下"  
Answered Wolfe "to die"      沃尔夫答"可以放心去了"

Montcalm, his opposing Spirit      蒙特卡姆,他对面的幽灵  
Rendered with a smile      脸上堆出笑的模样  
"Sweet" said he "my own Surrender      "亲爱的"他说"我自己臣服的  
Liberty's beguile"      原是自由的假像"

There are three exclamation marks, three dashes, and five question marks in the translation of poem 608, which are the same as the original, and the position of each punctuation mark is correspondingly consistent with the original. The translation of poem 678 has two exclamation marks, six double quotation marks, and one dash. The number and location of punctuation marks corresponding to the original text remain unchanged. The exclamation mark in the opening line (i.e., *Afraid! Of whom am I afraid?*) of poem 608 conveys the speaker's strong tone, and the question mark, as if questioning the reader, makes the reader feel the speaker's firm will, thus reader has a strong emotional resonance. The Chinese translation (i.e. *害怕!我害怕谁?*) retains the same punctuation marks as the original text and produces the same emotional resonance effect.

The double quotation marks in the last two lines (i.e., *"Sweet" said he "my own Surrender / Liberty's beguile"*) of original poem 678 are designed to enhance the effect of dialogue. When reading Dickinson's original text, the reader seems to feel that two persons are talking with each other. The Chinese translation (i.e. *"亲爱的"他说"我自己臣服的/原是自由的假像"*) retains the original double quotation marks, making Chinese reader feel the same occasion as in the original text. The translator's retention of original punctuation marks helps the translation convey the most subtle connotation of Dickinson's poetry. Thus, retaining the punctuation marks of Dickinson's poetry in translation is a correct strategy in Dickinson's poetry translation. In other words, the foreignization strategy is the best approach to translating Dickinson's poetry.

#### 4. Lexical equivalence

Foreignization translation focuses not only on retaining original form but also on retaining original meaning and connotation. One of the key points of foreignization translation lies in that translators should faithfully translate original words and transmit their original meanings. Liu Chongde (1914-2008), a famous Chinese translation theorist, believes that when translating the semantic meaning, the level of the translator's expression should be the same as that of the original. The translation should not be over expressive in order to guarantee faithfulness of the translation in respect of semantics (Liu 358-371). After a close reading of Zhou's translation, many examples of equivalence in function and meaning between the translated words and the original words can be found, but it is impossible to cite them one by one.

##### 4.1 Equivalence in lexical function and meaning

The following takes the lexical translation of poem 730 and the second stanza of poem 620 as examples to explore the foreignization strategy used in Zhou's lexical translation.

**Poem 620, 2<sup>nd</sup> Stanza****Translation**

Wild flowers -- kindle in the Woods -- 野花---红遍了山林---  
 The Brooks slam -- all the Day -- 溪水欢戏---整日里---  
 No Black bird bates his Banjo -- 没有一只黑鸟会调低琴音---  
 For passing Calvary -- 当经过耶稣受难地---

**Poem 730****Translation**

Defrauded I a Butterfly -- 我欺骗了一只蝴蝶---  
 The lawful Heir -- for Thee -- 那法定的继承人---为了你---

The foreignization strategy requires faithfulness to the source text, which could be, first of all, reflected in the lexical translation. To be specific, firstly, foreignization translation emphasizes the equivalence of lexical function between the source language and target language; secondly, foreignization translation strives to actualize the equivalence of lexical meaning between the two languages. In the above examples, the phrase "wild flowers" is composed of the adjective "wild" and noun "flowers", which is a noun phrase; while the translation "野花" is composed of the adjective "野" and noun "花", which is also a noun phrase meaning "野外生长的花"(flowers growing in wildness); The phrase "Brooks slam" is composed of noun "Brooks" and transitive verb "slam". The translation "溪水欢戏" is also composed of noun "溪水" and verb "欢戏". Both these two examples reflect the equivalence of lexical function and meaning between original words and translated words.

The original first line of poem 730, "Defrauded I," is an inverted structure, which cannot be translated into an inverted structure due to the restriction of norms of Chinese expression, so it can only be translated into "我欺骗了" ( I defrauded ). In addition, the Chinese translation of this poem is a completely literal translation in terms of lexical function and meaning, as well as grammar and sentence patterns, which is almost a perfect model of foreignization translation, faithfully reproducing the original style basically in all aspects of form and semantics.

The renowned poetry translator Jiang Feng (1929-2017) once made a specific elaboration on the translation of poetry vocabulary: "The so-called language form should include all media and means that make poetry an aesthetic object, especially linguistic components, structures and rhetorical means that are closely related to the creation of poetic image and artistic conception. All of the language materials on which a poem depends all belong to the category of language form and should be reproduced or transplanted in translation as much as possible." (Li&Jiang, 2019:130) Zhou's translation, by use of foreignization strategy, successfully restores the original content, including lexical function and connotation, related structure, and rhetoric, thus reproducing the soul of Dickinson's poetry in Chinese translation. Consequently, it can be seen that it is possible to realize the equivalence of lexical function and meaning in the Chinese translation of Dickinson's poetry by employing the foreignization strategy.

**5. Conclusion**

Based on data statistics and textual analysis of Zhou Jianxin's translation of Dickinson's poetry, it is found that it is completely feasible to retain Dickinson's poetic form and restore lexical function and meaning in Chinese translation by use of foreignization strategy. Zhou Jianxin's translation is a successful example of using the foreignization strategy to translate Dickinson's poetry into Chinese. His use of foreignization strategy is very mature and delicate. His translation not only vividly and perfectly restores the original charm of Dickinson's poetry but also has strong readability. The author of this paper suggests that the foreignization strategy is the best translation strategy to be used in translating Dickinson's poetry into Chinese.

Restoring the charm of the source language is a basic requirement for a translator. Although there have been currently more than ten Chinese translations of Emily Dickinson's poetry, the focus of most of these translated versions are not on restoring the original form and content of Dickinson's poetry but rather on the readability of translation and transmission of particular emotions, that is, particular thoughts and emotions sensed by translator after reading original poems.

In the view of the author of this paper, Zhou Jianxin's translation of Dickinson's poems plays its unique role in that it renders the purest and truest version of Dickinson's poems, retaining the most beautiful features of her poems. This is also a reflection of Zhou's respect for readers and the original author as much as possible, which are worth studying and learning from other translators.

However, it is not easy to carry out a foreignization strategy in poetry translation. Only real poetry talents are most advantageous in translating poetry into genuine poetry. In addition, Dickinson's poetry has always been difficult to read, let alone to translate. Only when the translator has a thorough understanding of Dickinson's life, poetry, and era in which she lived can he reproduce

Dickinson's poetry in translation with original flavor. The author of this paper hopes that this study can inspire more translators to adopt a foreignization strategy in translating Dickinson's poetry into Chinese. My study is not comprehensive enough to conclude other countries' translations of Dickinson's poetry, but I hope scholars in other countries can adopt a foreignization strategy to show the beauty of Dickinson's poems.

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