



ON POETRY TRANSLATION FROM COGNITIVE CONSTRUAL PERSPECTIVE: *Tian Jing Sha•Qiu Si* IN ENGLISH



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ABSTRACT

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This paper is to explore the deviations in four English versions of Chinese ancient poem *Tian Jing Sha•Qiu Si* written by Ma Zhiyuan from the perspective of construal theory in cognitive linguistics. The deviations of the translations are measured from four dimensions within the principles of cognitive construal, namely scope and ground, perspective, prominence, and specificity. Since translation is a dynamic construal of meaning, it has found that the deviations mainly result from the mistranslation of the poem title, the different directions and positions of viewing images, and the special syntactic and grammatical features of Chinese and English. Besides, the subjectivity of each translator and the lack of background knowledge together exert a great influence on different linguistic choices in the translation. With different translation purposes and strategies, the focus of the translators on reproducing the same images will inevitably be different. It is argued that cognitive construal theory can provide a reasonable basis and perspective for revealing and explaining the deviations and the deviations in translations will lead to the misunderstanding of the theme of a text and the deficiency in presenting culture traditions.

Contribution/ Originality: This paper contributes to the related literature of Chinese poetry by applying the construal theory in cognitive linguistics into the study of the deviations in translations, not only considering the translation purposes and strategies under the translator's subjectivity, but also discussing the possible consequences and contextual factors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tian Jing Sha•Qiu Si (天淨沙·秋思) is a masterpiece created by Ma Zhiyuan (馬致遠, 1250-1321), a representative Chinese poet of *Yuanqu* (a type of verse popular in the Yuan Dynasty). "*Tian Jing Sha*" is called *qupaiming*, the *qu* tunes to which a poem is composed; while *Qiu Si*, the autumn thoughts, is about the theme. This *Yuanqu* is praised as the ancestor of all the poems that demonstrate a traveler's loneliness and desolation in autumn, and regarded as the best "*Xiaoling*" (a short lyric or a single song) in the author's time by Wang Guowei, a famous Chinese scholar with a keen eye for art, whose comments on *Tian Jing Sha•Qiu Si* goes as "it sounds like the voices from Heaven and reaches the summit of quatrains" (Wang, 2007).

This famous poem is written free from grammar as all the images are placed together in nouns without any verbs. Therefore, it leaves great room for readers to imagine and for translators to bring their own subjective

initiatives into translation. Due to different cultural and linguistic traditions, readers or translators may have various understandings of this poem. As a result, different versions of translations appear. In terms of Google scholar, the previous studies in these years of *Tian Jing Sha-Qiu Si* and its translations are mainly from the translation strategies—domestication or foreignization, functional equivalence, or reception theory, skopos theory, eco-translatology; or from cognitive linguistics perspective to explore the deviations under figure and ground theory, conceptual blending theory and so on.

As cognitive linguistics is “an approach to language that is based on our experience of the world and the way we perceive and conceptualize it” (Ungerer and Schmid, 2001) this study tries to present a cognitive account of the deviations in different English versions of *Tian Jing Sha-Qiu Si* under the theory of construal as a new perspective in practice. Cognitive linguistics holds that language ability is part of general cognitive abilities, and the cognition of human beings bridges the languages and the world (Wu, 2015). Construal, a core concept of cognitive linguistics (Langacker, 1987) is also one kind of human cognitive ability, which means that people with their own subjectivity tend to see the same images or scenes in different ways.

Drawing on the construal theory, this paper seeks to explore the deviations in four translations of *Tian Jing Sha-Qiu Si*, respectively Wayne Schlepp’s *Tune to “sand and sky”--Autumn Thoughts* (Schlepp, 1970) Weng Xianliang’s *Autumn* (Weng, 1985) Ding Zuxin & Burton Raffel’s *Tune: Tian Jing Sha* (Ding and Raffel, 1986) Xu Yuanchong’s *Tune: Sunny Sand Autumn Thoughts* (Xu, 2004) and the four dimensions within the principles of construal theory in cognitive linguistics will be taken into considerations, namely scope and ground, perspective, prominence, and specificity. There are two questions to be answered in this study:

1. What are the deviations of the four translations from the original poem?
2. What are the cognitive motivations that might lead to the deviation phenomena?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Construal, a very important theoretical notion in cognitive grammar, was firstly put forward by Langacker and defined as the ability that human beings construe the same scene conceived in alternate ways. It appeared as the term “imagery” in the very beginning, with three dimensions of selection, perspective and abstraction (Langacker, 1987). Later, Langacker (1991) further classified the dimensions of construal as specificity, scope, background, perspective, and salience. Wang Yin, a Chinese scholar, has discussed with Langacker face-to-face several times, and pointed out that there were some overlaps existing in these five elements as scope and background should be combined into one (Wang, 2008). This opinion was soon confirmed by Langacker. Therefore, Langacker (2008) again developed it into specificity, focusing (scope and ground), prominence and perspective.

As Wang Yin mentioned in his paper, when Langacker defines these five dimensions, he doesn’t consider about the order of people’s cognition, so Wang firstly combined the scope and figure-ground, and then arranged them from macro to micro, from big to small level so as to make it more consistent with the law of human cognition. This study follows this view to discuss and analyze the four translations, and the four dimensions, of which in this order, are scope and ground, perspective, prominence, and specificity.

Langacker takes “scope” as the context required to describe a situation and related to the relevant cognitive domains that are activated for understanding an expression, or it can be background knowledge connected to the specific concept (Lee, 2001) or any language structure that provides context for the conceptualization of semantic units (Taylor, 2002) and ground means the encyclopedia knowledge of an expression, including the speech event, its participants and settings, which means that people’s conceptualization of a scene relies on something related to themselves or the situations at that moment. For example, “Bob was fined as he smoked in the room.” If there is no background information or being at the situation of “smoking here will be fined”, it’s hard to understand why Bob was fined.

As for perspective, it refers to the point of view or position chosen by the cognitive subject when observing an object. Langacker (2008) deems that perspective means the distribution of attention, so the perspective can reflect the correlative relationship between the subject and object. Wang (2006) divides “perspective” into time, spatial, absence of mention perspective, visual and mental scanning, and subjective and objective observations. When it comes to translating, the different options of perspectives imply the conceptualization of the cognitive subject, thus the meanings of the originals will differ, and it can be found in the linguistic structures. Like in a transaction, it can be said either “A borrowed some money from B” or “B lent A some money”. The former perspective is the borrower A, while the latter perspective is the lender “B.

Prominence is connected to the concept of figure and ground, which is ubiquitous in conceptual structure and of significance to semantic and grammatical structures (Langacker, 1987). In other words, the figure is endowed with particular prominence to become the center as the cognitive subject has the ability to determine the focus of attention. Talmy (2000) thinks figure has syntactic precedence relative to ground, and the differences in prominence suggest the changes of focus and meaning, which leads to different forms of language expressions. For instance, in a same event, we can say either “A killed B” or “B was killed by A” as their semantic contents are the same, but the figure-ground relationship is reversed. The former prominence (or the figure) is A, while the latter is B.

Specificity goes with prominence and refers to the levels of accuracy and precision that the cognitive subject conceives and portrays an entity or event (Langacker, 2008). Specificity can be expressed at the lexical or syntactic level, like if we pay more attention on one aspect of an entity or event, that aspect will be expressed with more details, and the less important aspects will be ignored so as to foreground the prominent aspect (Wang, 2013). The typical examples are about superordinates, such as the specificity level of “fruit”: fruit>apple>red apple, or the color: color>red>pink>pale pink.

Langacker (1987) states, “constructing a proper expression for a scene may involve transformations among alternate ways of construal, transformation of one construal to another, and possibly a series of such transformations. The resulted expressions are often functionally equivalent but nonetheless different in meaning by virtue of the contrasting images they convey”. In the process of translation, “the translator may trace the process of conceptualization guided by an expression at first, but while meeting a different target language cultural convention, and a different situation, he may realign the construal or transform the images associated with the former conceptualization, to guarantee optimal relevance” (Tan, 2008). Therefore, with different cognitive focuses, the same experience can be construed in different ways, making translational shifts accountable without changing the content of one thought, but at the same time bringing about the deviation phenomena in translations.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Like other Chinese classical verses, *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* is well-known in different translations, which are mainly translated from native translators and non-native sinologists. Being as a precious treasure both for national and international literature world, *Yuanqu* is essentially valuable for rendition as the commencement of *Yuanqu* translation is relatively late and the quantity is less than Tang poetry and Song verse, but among the translations (not only in English, but also in French, Japanese, German and so on), the amount of *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* is the most (Tang, 2016). The source text *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* itself is a *Yue* tune, a variety of lyric songs, total in five lines and 28 words. *Tian Jing Sha* is the matrix pattern (like the number of words in each line is six/six/six/four/six), and *Qiu Si* is the thematic topic, which should be paid attention to. The rhyming word that ends a line of verse is the same “a” with all the scenes or images displaying as noun phrase juxtapositions to form a complete artistic whole.

Look through the translation versions of this poem, different translators have different translation styles. Some tries to be equivalent to the source text, and some are free as a prose. In accordance with the translators’ identities, translation styles, purposes and strategies, the four English versions are selected (see Appendix): firstly, Canadian

sinologist Wayne Schlepp's *Tune to "sand and sky"--Autumn Thoughts* (Schlepp, 1970) who has published the earliest monograph on *Yuanqu* and been known as the earliest scholar on *Yuanqu* translation in the English-speaking world; secondly, native translator Weng Xianliang's *Autumn* (Weng, 1985) who prefers a creative translation of Chinese ancient poems and gets used to translating a poem as a prose; thirdly, a co-translation version--*Tune: Tian Jing Sha* (Ding and Raffel, 1986) written by native scholar Ding Zuxin and American sinologist Burton Raffel, who are both professors in universities; and lastly, *Tune: Sunny Sand Autumn Thoughts* (Xu, 2004) from famous Chinese translator Xu Yuanchong, who is the first Asian translator winning "FIT Aurora Borealis Prize for Outstanding Translation of Fiction Literature" and puts forward the influential translation theory of "Three Beauties" (beauty of sense, sound and form).

It's worth mentioning that the Chinese version and the first three English versions are quoted from Huang (2003) and Xu's translation is from his updated version in the book *300 Yuan Songs* published by Beijing Higher Education Press in 2004, not his first version in the book of *Songs of the Immortals: An Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry* published by Penguin Group in 1994. With different translation subjectivity of the translators, the data to be analyzed in the following part will focus on the discussion of the deviations in these four translations, and they're classified and analyzed firstly in terms of the sentence structures and the images appearing in each line, and then discussed from four dimensions of construal theory, like the cognitive domain and background knowledge in "scope and ground", direction and point of viewing in "perspective", syntactic and linguistic features of the figure and ground in "prominence", and amplification and omission in "specificity".

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Scope and Ground and Deviation

In construal theory, the scope is related to cognitive domains activated by an expression and ground refers to the background encyclopedia knowledge or related experiences for correctly understanding the meaning of an expression. Thus, in the process of understanding and translating the source text, the translator will be bound by the scope and use their own knowledge and experience to reproduce the meaning. The scope in *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* is the title, which plays an important role in understanding the theme of the whole contents, and it can be a window for readers to know what a poem is about and what the poet wants to express. If the translator fails to fully present and activate the related cognitive domains, deviations will appear.

Example (1)

Source text: 天淨沙·秋思 (*Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si*)

Target text:

Schlepp : *Tune to "sand and sky"--Autumn Thoughts.*

Weng: *Autumn.*

D & R: *Tune: Tian Jing Sha .*

Xu: *Tune: Sunny Sand Autumn Thoughts.*

As mentioned above, *Tian Jing Sha* is the tune pattern and *Qiu Si* (autumn thoughts) is the theme. Weng translated it as *Autumn*, while Ding & Burton translated it as *Tune: Tian Jing Sha*. This deviation will firstly result in translator's change of the theme and secondly the reader's deficiency in interpreting it. In Weng's translation, the theme was mistranslated and related to a topic about autumn as all the images in the translation like "rotten vine", "rugged old trees" are connected to the scenes in autumn, and its last sentence "the traveler, farther and farther away from home" cannot represent all the emotions of a traveler's loneliness and desolation. Instead, it recreates a traveler leaving home in autumn at a bleak scene. However, this, to some extent, reflects the translator's

subjectivity because Weng advocates a creative or flexible translation in Chinese ancient poems and attempts to get rid of the formal constraints of the original poem.

In Ding & Raffel’s translation, the title only remains the tune pattern, losing the topic. On the one hand, it will add difficulties for readers to understand the poem, but on the other hand it may create a kind of strangeness or freshness, leaving enough imagination space for readers, or the translators’ students. Thus, being lack of the theme-
-autumn thoughts, it gives rise to different understanding of this poem both for translators and readers. Like the last sentence “the lovesick traveler is still at the end of the world”, it tends to be understood as a lonely traveler miss her beloved one, not so much about his home, or his own situation. However, if we put this translation at a class of university in western countries, it may arouse the interest of students and be accepted by them, which also demonstrates the translator’s own subjectivity and the considerations for target or implied readers. Although there are no deviations in Schlepp and Xu’s translations, it only helps readers to better understand the theme, and whether there are some other deviations depicted in background knowledge influencing the understanding, it still needs to further explore.

Example (2)

ST	Schlepp	Weng	D & R	Xu
枯藤	dry vine	rotten vine	withered vines	rotten vines
古道	ancient road	this ancient road	a worn path	ancient road
西風	west wind	the west wind	the west wind	western breeze
天涯	at the sky’s edge	farther and farther away from home	at the end of the world	far, far from home

As illustrated above, there are some culture words demanding some background information to understand. If the translator fails to imply the knowledge of different culture traditions, as a result the deviations of “ground” will appear. For example, “枯” (kū) in Chinese means a plant withered or dried, or dead, but both Weng and Xu translated it as “rotten”. Even though the translator may want to highlight the bad environment in autumn, but it goes against the western culture tradition as “rotten” is often used together with egg or weather without the meaning of being withered or dried, and due to the deficiency of this background knowledge, it probably makes readers be confused in the beginning (Huang, 2004). However, if the readers are Chinese, the situation may differ. “古道”(gǔ dào) in ancient China is usually as wide as the main road that links two places and harbors a sense of grandness in history, which can also be understood as the traveler’s trace on road with loneliness or the perseverance to go farther and farther. Not similarly, Ding & Raffel translated it as a worn path, not being in line with the culture of “ancient road”, but recreating one kind path built in narrow pass like in hills with some regional characteristics.

As for “西風”(xī fēng) , it often appears in Chinese ancient poems and is relevant to some geographical knowledge. China is situated in East Asia, facing the Pacific Ocean that brings warm, humid wind in spring as “east wind”, while “west wind” is related to cold and desolate autumn or winter. However, the situation may be completely different in other countries. Here, Xu translated it as “western breeze”, which is usually gentle and soft, while others remain this special culture connotation. Obviously, it is a deviation of ground, which fails to introduce the special geography of China and to create the cold and cheerless scene. “天涯” (tiān yá) in Chinese has the connotation of being single and alone in a far place. Schlepp and Ding & Raffel translated out this term, while Weng and Xu lost this connotation, only laying stress on “far from home” to express homesickness, which cannot deliver the meaning of having a wandering life and being tired in rushing about. But, it can be noticed that with different subjectivity, Weng and Xu prefer a translation strategy of domestication to emphasize the mental distance, while

Schlepp and Ding & Raffel, the literal translation to underline the spatial distance, which are both in accordance with their own culture backgrounds.

4.2. Perspective and Deviation

Different people have different perspectives when observing an object or one scene, thus resulting in different understandings of the same thing, which will be reflected in the linguistic expressions. The deviation of perspective in *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* mainly lies in the perspective point and the direction of viewing. The shifts of perspective point will inevitably lead to the changes of the semantic values or present various images.

Example (3)

ST	Schlepp	Weng	D & R	Xu
老樹	old tree	rugged old trees	old branches	old trees
小橋	low bridge	a tiny bridge	a narrow bridge	a small bridge

“老樹” (lǎo shù) here in Ding & Raffel’s translation is “old branches”, while others are “old trees”, which is not only related to the “specificity” of construal, but also connected to “perspective point” as it was translated in a more detailed and specific way—“withered vines hanging on old branches” with much more about the translator’s imagination in order to form a logic direction of viewing the images in next lines. “小橋” (xiǎo qiáo) has different adjectives to modify in translations, which illustrates the different position or distance the subject stands in. A higher position of perspective point that the subject is located at will result in a low bridge in sight; a distant place the subject is in will bring about the “tiny” or “small” bridge; or being in a close place near to bridge, the subject will clearly see it is narrow. With a move of sight from “枯藤老樹昏鴉” (kū téng lǎo shù hūn yā) and the traveler’s steps, the sight of “小橋” (xiǎo qiáo) will go from far to near. But about how far or how near, it is not certain, thus leading to the deviations. Besides, the direction of viewing in the source poem also has a great influence. Unlike the deviation of perspective point, it doesn’t alter the distance or position between the subject and object. The direction of viewing is a matter of shift of the focus of one’s attention. Generally, in the process of viewing, it changes from point and line to plane in a scene in each line of the poem so as to draw a vivid picture, and the direction of viewing may be from small to big, from far to close, or from bottom to top.

Example (4)

Source text: 枯藤老樹昏鴉

Target text:

Schlepp: *Dry vine, old tree, crows at dusk.*

Weng: *Crows hovering over rugged old trees wreathed with rotten vine—the day is about done.*

D&R: *Withered vines hanging on old branches, Returning crows croaking at dusk.*

Xu: *Over old trees wreathed with rotten vines fly evening crows.*

In this picture of “枯藤老樹昏鴉” (kū téng lǎo shù hūn yā), the viewing “point” is “枯藤”(kū téng), the “line” is “老樹”(lǎo shù) and “昏鴉”(hūn yā, possibly in the sky) links the point and line to “plane”. Each of the image or object is ranged from bottom to the top and the picture as a whole depicts from small point to big scene. However, in translations, the deviations are noticeable. Schlepp takes a translation strategy of formal equivalence, so the arrangement of objects is the same as the source poem; while Weng’s picture established is from top to bottom, from small to big as the phrase “crows hovering over” appears in the beginning; Ding & Raffel’s translation follows the original style, too; Xu’s translation is totally different as “old trees” being as the point with the preposition “over” functioning in the beginning, and “rotten vines” being as the line, so the whole is from big to small, from

bottom to top. This deviation firstly illustrates the different translation strategies or subjectivity of the translators, secondly reflects logical relationship of each object in a sentence if we take together the next lines to have a look, and lastly supports translators' different cognitive ways to observe the same things.

4.3. Prominence and Deviation

In the process of translating, the translator will always try to give the same prominence (figure and ground) appearing in original poem which contains the poet's intention and focus, but it's unavoidable to fail to reproduce them due to different linguistic habits or culture traditions in English and Chinese. Thus, the deviation in translations can be explained and found by syntactic elements, like the prominent "figure" of the sentence structure in each line.

Example (5)

Source text: 古道西風瘦馬

Target text:

Schlepp: *Ancient road, west wind, lean nag.*

Weng: *But the traveler has to go on down this ancient road, the west wind moaning, his bony horse groaning.*

D&R: *Down a worn path, in the west wind, A lean horse comes plodding.*

Xu: *On ancient road in the west wind a lean horse goes.*

From the syntactic level, firstly the prominent "figure" in source text is about the noun phrase juxtaposition, and the first three lines are the same in this way. For example, in the third line, the "古道"(gǔ dào), "西風"(xī fēng), "瘦馬" (shòu mǎ) are all noun phrases in Chinese. Generally, it's known that the ordinary expression of the sentence structures in both English and Chinese is "SVO", and the logical relationship between sentences is realized by some conjunctive words. Here, the original poem writes in "OO", which is totally different from people's conventional cognitive ways and psychological expectations of a sentence structure, thus producing a kind of strangeness and adding boundless charm into works (Liu, 2008). This is possibly the reason why this poem is so famous and highly praised by many scholars at home and abroad. Secondly, with no other type of words, especially like verbs, there are no specific actions happening, thus the pictures created belong to static scenes, which will attract special attention and become the focus of attention. Thirdly, the first object or image in each line can also become the figure while the rest are the ground as it can be read or seen by readers in the very beginning.

However, in translations, the prominence differs. Schlepp completely follows the style of source text, so all the figures can be realized; Weng translated with a complete sentence in a form of "SVO" and wrote with "-ing" verbs like "moaning" and "groaning", which presents a dynamic picture, and the figure in the line becomes "the traveler", not the "ancient road", totally going away from the original one; Ding & Raffel's was also in the form of "SVO", but differently, with some prepositions like "down a worn path, in the west wind" as semi-inverted sentence, it will lead to the changes of the viewing, and "a lean horse comes plodding" again creates a dynamic picture; while in Xu's translation, not similarly, prepositional phrase juxtaposition serves as semi-inverted sentence, which can attract readers' attention to focus on the first image, and then "a lean horse goes" produces a semi-dynamic and static picture as "go" has less action motivated than "groaning" or "plodding". Besides, the first three lines of Xu's translation are the same patterns in semi-inverted sentences with prepositional phrases in the head, which helps to draw attention on the structure or the figure of first three lines as they are important images to create a bleak environment, and it can be considered as a kind of equivalence to the original poem, corresponding to his translation principle of "beauty of form".

These deviations in translations in fact demonstrate the big difference of language-using habits in various countries and cultural traditions. Chinese language tends to give prominence to parataxis, while English hypotaxis

(Nida, 1982; Lian, 1997). By nature, it results from the different modes of thinking between Chinese and western people. Chinese are influenced by the philosophy of “the unity of Heaven and Man” in traditional culture, thus laying emphasis on integration and pursuing harmony through the semantic associations between words and sentences; while western people, affected by the idea of “separation of Heaven and Man” in ancient Greece, focus on the use of logical grammar to express the logical relationship between sentences and within sentences (Yang, 2011). Therefore, it can be noticed that in the English versions of *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* except for Schleppe’s, the logic relationship between word and word, or sentence and sentence is made more specific and clearer with lots of conjunctive elements.

4.4. Specificity and Deviation

When describing the same object, the subject has the ability to portray it at different levels of specificity, either in detailed way or not, which may be concerned with amplification and omission in language expressions, and the translator’s correct grasp of specificity in source text will help to understand the theme of the work. Since *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* is a Chinese classic poem, some terms in the text may find no equivalences in English, the deviations are unavoidable.

Example (6)

ST	Schlepp	Weng	D & R	Xu
昏鴉	crows at dusk	crows hovering	returning crows croaking at dusk	evening crows
流水	stream running	a sparkling stream	a quiet creek running	a stream flows
人家	cottages	a pretty little village	a few houses	a cottage
瘦馬	lean nag	his bony horse	a lean horse	a lean horse
斷腸人	one with breaking heart	the traveler	the lovesick traveler	The heart-broken one

“昏鴉” (hūn yā) in original poem has rich meanings and leaves a lot of room for imagination. “昏” (hūn) here firstly indicates the time of dusk, secondly refers to the color of crows—black or deep gray, implying the darkness of the situation, the environment and the poet’s life and future. In translations, Schleppe and Xu directly translated it into “crows at dusk” or “evening crows”, losing the detailed information about the poet’s state of mind; Ding & Raffel translated it as “returning crows croaking at dusk”, which creates a dynamic picture and leads to some hateful feelings as crows can make harsh and low sounds, but helping to understand the low mood of the poet; while Weng’s “crows hovering” expresses one kind of “hesitation” in a dynamic scene, promoting to understand the poet’s current situations. From this deviation of the term, it can be seen, a more detailed description helps readers to have chance to see and imagine a vivid scene, and know more about the poet’s emotions and situations.

Moreover, different translations of “流水” (liú shuǐ) give rise to various pictures, as “sparkling” in Weng’s is the most dynamic than “running” in Schleppe and Ding & Raffel’s versions, and “flow” in Xu’s. And “人家” (rén jiā) in ancient Chinese means the cottages, or a household live in a place. Weng amplified it as “a pretty little village”, which is inconsistent with the bleak environment of the whole poem, and Ding & Raffel’s “a few houses” conveys a sense of modernization as house can refer to office buildings or restaurant, unlike cottages usually appearing in the countryside. As for “瘦馬” (shòu mǎ), the word “瘦” (shòu), Schleppe, Ding & Raffel and Xu all translated it as “lean”, while Weng translated it as “bony”. “Lean” refers to being “thin and fit”, looking “strong and healthy”, which goes far from the “poverty” in original poem, while “bony” only means “thin with very little flesh covering bones”, especially from disease or hunger or cold, even conveying the meanings of hardship, suffering and troubles, which fits in with the original text and can be an indicator of the poet’s life.

The last word “斷腸人” (duàn cháng rén), Weng simplified it as “the traveler”, which fails to express the complex feelings and consciousness flows of the man in the poem or just the poet; Ding & Raffel expanded it as “the lovesick traveler”, which may highlight the emotions of missing someone, but “lovesick” is often about the yearning between lovers, being off the original theme; while Schlepp’s “one with breaking heart” and Xu’s “heart-broken one” contribute to presenting the sad feelings of a lonely traveler. These deviations of specificity show that the omission in translation is apt to lose the implications of a word, and amplification sometimes may help to better understand the theme, but if we don’t translate properly and accurately, it will also cause misunderstanding; and about whether to describe one thing in detail, it depends on the translator’s subjectivity.

5. CONCLUSION

This study is the application of construal theory of cognitive linguistics towards poetry translation in four English versions of Ma Zhiyuan’s *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si*. Based on Langacker and Wang Yin’s classification of the dimensions in cognitive construal process, it focuses on the deviations in translations from scope and ground, perspective, prominence, and specificity. These four dimensions seem to be independent, but are closely related to each other. Because of the differences in culture background knowledge, it will result in different perspective points and directions of viewing the same text and its images or scenes so as to give rise to the different prominence in figure and ground from the focus of the translator’s attention, and in the same way, the description of the same objects in specificity will also differ. By analyzing and discussing the deviations in translations, it shows that the subjectivity of the translator plays an important role in the process of translation. With different translation strategies, domestication or foreignization, and considerations for readers, various linguistic choices are presented in the translations; and due to the deficiency of background knowledge and the particular grammar in English and Chinese, deviations are hard to avoid.

It should be noted that the focus of this comparative study is on the deviations in translations projected through the linguistic choices and clues, not equivalent to the deviations actually formulated in the mind of the implied readers, which may be of interest for further studies. Since translating is a process of making choices, and the translator needs to select “among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives” (Levý, 2012), this study only lays stress on the options of translators causing the deviations and possible influences without making comments on which one is good or not. As the translation act is “the dynamic construal of meaning” (Croft and Cruse, 2004), cognitive linguistics can provide a reasonable basis and perspective for revealing and explaining the deviations between different versions of a same text. It is hoped that through this study, more attention can be drawn to the application of construal theory to text analysis.

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Appendix *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* and four translations

Chinese Version

天淨沙·秋思

馬致遠

枯藤老樹昏鴉，

小橋流水人家，

古道西風瘦馬。

夕陽西下，

斷腸人在天涯。

English Versions

Tune to "sand and sky"--Autumn Thoughts

Dry vine, old tree, crows at dusk,
Low bridge, stream running, cottages,
Ancient road, west wind, lean nag,
The sun westering
And one with breaking heart at the sky's edge (Schlepp, 1970).

Autumn

Crows hovering over rugged old trees wreathed with rotten vine—the day is about done. Yonder is a tiny bridge over a sparkling stream, and on the far bank, a pretty little village. But the traveler has to go on down this ancient road, the west wind moaning, his bony horse groaning, trudging towards the sinking sun, farther and farther away from home (Weng, 1985).

Tune: Tian Jing Sha

Withered wines hanging on old branches,
Returning crows croaking at dusk.
A few houses hidden past a narrow bridge,
And below the bridge a quiet creek running.
Down a worn path, in the west wind,
A lean horse comes plodding.
The sun dips down in the west,
And the lovesick traveler is still at the end of the world (Ding and Raffel, 1986).

Tune: Sunny Sand Autumn Thoughts

Over old trees wreathed with rotten vines fly evening crows;
Under a small bridge near a cottage a stream flows;
On ancient road in the west wind a lean horse goes.
Westward declines the sun;
Far, far from home is the heartbroken one (Xu, 2004).

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