Learning Chinese Ancient Poems from the Perspective of English--Take Tianjingsha as an Example

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Abstract: Nowadays an increasing number of people choose to learn Chinese, as the language has progressively become an international language. This paper is concerned with ancient Chinese poetry. First of all, it mentions the theory of poetry. After that, the example of the ancient poem Tianjingsha is given. While translating the ancient poem, the author realized that it is not easy to express the mood of Chinese poetry properly in English. Chinese expression, especially in poetry, is different from that of English. This article is characterized by the author's translation of Tianjingsha in two ways of his own as well as his appreciation of it.

1. Introduction

Chinese poetry has been a favorite literary genre for thousands of years. Chinese ancient poetry is still being read and practiced. [1]In recent years, deep learning has become the main-stream approach and it considers the poetry generation as a sequence-to-sequence.[2]The importance of creativity in poetry may be best understood in the exploration of expert-level poets as opposed to studying a layperson's journey through what would be considered everyday poetry creativity.[3]Poetry is a major part of language learning in traditional Chinese. I once worked as a secondary school traditional Chinese language teacher and studied many ancient poems in which numerous wonderful scenes were portrayed. I realized that many children just recite the poem instead of understanding its deeper meaning while I was teaching them. In this paper, I use Tianjingsha as an example to explain how to interpret the ancient poem. On the basis of the theory of 3.1, I would like to clarify how to interpret Chinese poetry tactfully. Above all, it is necessary to understand the author's purpose of writing. This paper may be instructive to readers who are interested in ancient poetry.

2. Theories

Firstly, when writing poems, Chinese ancients emphasized rhyming, and each sentence has the same number of words. These are the basic formats for writing poems. Moreover, excellent poetry usually contains a lot of rhetoric, while talented poets make good use of allusions and are rich in imagery.

Ancient poetry also has a remarkable characteristic: the pursuit of mental realm. As the saying goes: Speech has an end but its meaning has no end. It is difficult to express the same semantic

meaning if it is not the same poet. When they write poetry, they focus on creating artistic conception. Chinese poetry is both rational and emotional. Rationality means that the composition of poetry is structured, and emotional refers to the pleasure obtained from the sense organs. The building blocks of a poem are based on its auditory qualities. When writing a poem, it is not necessary to write the next line first, but the rhyme for the whole poem is already done in the previous line.

Generally, the methods are similar, when it comes to learning poem.

2.1 Combination of Senses and Feelings

Appreciating scenery requires different senses. A scene like the sky depends on the eyes; a scene like the wind - on the ears; a scene like a flower - on the nose. The eyes, ears and nose are what we call sense organs, which we use to perceive the environment around us.

The sensation is when one sees the sky and thinks of freedom; when one touches the wind and thinks of spring; when one smells the flowers, and the sound of applause and love comes to mind. Different landscapes remind a different kind of memories. This is the case with Tianjingsha mentioned below. The following table shows a list of scenes in the poem to which the feelings correspond.

Scenery	Sense organs	Feelings
Withered vines and trees	(surroundings)by eyes	death, sad, autumn
crow	(sounds)by ear	death, ominous
bridge, brook, household	(surroundings)by eyes	vitality, warm
quaint road, quaint road thin horse	(surroundings)by eyes (wind)by ear	sad, lonely, homesick

Figure 1. The senses and sensations corresponding to the scenery in Tian Jingsha.

2.2 Refined Language

While each poem contains only around one hundred words or so, the meaning of the poem is profound. In writing a poem, the poet would conceal his or her views in the lines. Just like the lines in *a hundred years of loneliness*, *the past was a lie, that memory has no return, every spring gone by could never be recovered, and that the wildest and most tenacious love was an ephemeral truth in the end.* This sentence is in chapter twentieth, the last chapter of the novel.

A single sentence can sum up the story of a novel, and so can an ancient poem. Poetry can also tell a story in a few generalized words. For example, boy, girl and rose; with three words like these, a romantic story can already be conjured up. It's the same with poems, telling a long story in a short length, which is the characteristic of poetic language.

2.3 Flexible Time and Space Shift

The main character grew up in an instant after a simple change of scene inside the movie. In fact, only one minute has passed. Time is flexible to switch, and so is space. For example, while

watching a movie, the main character is getting up to brush his teeth, and in the next scene, he is already in the company suddenly. The change of scenery is the same in poetry. Time can be spanned by ten thousand years between the first and second lines, while the site may be switched from China to the United States in an instant.

3. Discourses

Chinese ancient poetry is still being read and practiced, and many famous ancient Chinese poets are honored and adorned. The author of this poem is Ma Zhiyuan, and this poem is his masterpiece. When he wrote the poem, he was far away from his hometown. The season was autumn at that time. He was wandering in the autumn dusk, in search of a place to have his meal, when he saw the withered tree trunk, the old vine, and a crow. He continued to walk forward. He was standing on a bridge with a gurgling stream running underneath. Not far away from here, there was a farmhouse, in which people were making a fire to cook, while in contrast, he was standing outside and brought a very skinny horse.

It is a very short poem with only five lines of twenty-eight words, without a word "autumn" in the whole poem, whereas the season can be seen from the words "withered trees" and "vines". This one always comes to mind when people talk about poems about autumn.

Poets like Ma Zhiyuan are good at combining scenery with emotions. Chinese classical poetry was extremely concerned with the creation of artistic conception. The key to the artistic conception is whether emotion and scenery can be blended into one. In Ma's poetry, the first four sentences are all about scenery. These scenery words are emotional. The words "withered", "old", "faint" and "thin" render the autumn day more melancholy. The scenery in Tianjingsha was what Ma Zhiyuan saw during his journey, it was also his inner self. Ma employs an intensive imagery to convey the sadness of autumn, bringing a profound significance to the poem.

Classical Chinese poetry is rich in imagination and often employs artistic conception to portray the author's emotions. Many poets often arranged numerous images in their poems. The same is true of Ma Zhiyuan's poems. In just twenty-eight words, the poem contains ten kinds of images. These images are not only the real environment in which protagonist lives, but also the reflect of his heavy sorrow and sadness. If not for these images, this poem simply would not be so splendid.

poetry also becomes a resonant method that allows one to merge different subjectivities and express pluriversal worlds.[4]Tianjingsha embraces both imagination and reality. Poems usually do not have a specific individual, but the emotions conveyed by poems are often connected. In other words, an identical scene can convey the same emotion of different authors. In order to express his loneliness, the author chooses scenery such as roads, withered trees, and homes. These imageries combine emotions and scenery with the connection of the author's vision.

The combination of sense and imagery is an essential component of the poem. The arrangement of images in classical poems is often characterized by distinct levels.

There are ten scenery in the whole poem, the first nine scenery are divided into three parts. The first part of the scene goes from a low view to a high one. The vines are wrapped around the trees, the crows fall on the trees. The second part of the scene from a close view to a distant one; on the ancient post road, a thin horse was walking on it. The third part is arranged from past tense to present tense. Although the tense has changed, last part was related to autumn. 'Setting sun' is the background if the poem was compared to an oil painting. From the old tree to the flowing water, from the old road to the sunset, the author's field of vision widens progressively, which lies in the charm of this poem.
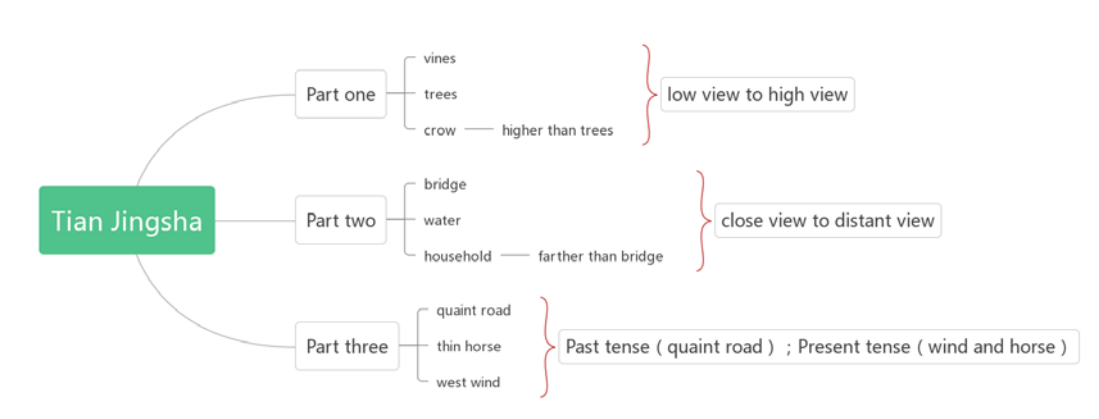
Fig.2 Mind Map about Tian Jingsha.

The automatic generation of poems from images is a classic task in natural language processing.[5]The imagery in "Tianjingsha" was not novel, with the word "ancient road" first appearing in a poem by Li Bai. There is no doubt that Ma Zhiyuan was inspired by Dong Qu when he created "Tianjingsha". He did not imitate straightforwardly, instead he recreated the piece based on his own experience. In order to strengthen the miserable emotions, he selected ten images that reflect desolate scenery and feelings of travelers loneliness. He chose ten bleak scenes in order to intensify the miserable mood, which constitute the theme of the whole poem. He did not pick warm scenes as that would not match the emotion he wanted to express.

The first three lines of eighteen characters were all nouns and adjectives, without a verb. This kind of writing style was rarly seen in ancient times. In Wen Tingyun's "early trip to Shangshan", "Chicken sound Mao shop month, people trace Banqiao frost" is similar to the words employed by Ma, yet less so than Ma's. It can also be said that Ma is able to express a wealth of emotions with a minimum of words. This is one of the reasons why the piece "Tianjingsha" is such an artistic success.

Autumn loneliness is something that people experience when faced with homesickness. Autumn is very cold, gloomy and dark, often accompanied by twilight and sunset, fallen leaves and dead branches, and the demise of all things. While the autumn scene creates a physical chill in people, it can also evoke all kinds of sadness in people's hearts.

As mentioned above, the "Tian Jingsha" is a particularly mature piece of ancient poetry that in many ways features the artistic characteristics of classical Chinese poetry.

The following table is a translation of English.

English version of Tianjingsha
At dusk,Withered vines and trees,which a crow stands on
There is water flowing under the bridge,and farmhouse in the distance
Cold wind was blowing on the quaint road a thin horse is walking on the road
Sunset falls from the west
A desperate person in the end of the world

Fig.3 Sentence Translation of Tian Jingsha

Chinese poetry can actually omit verbs. It does not require the grammatical integrity of the sentence, and sometimes it can even change the position of words. The poem is highly consistent in content and all of them involve sceneries. As for Chinese version, the author just concatenates these nouns directly, without verbs in between. When reading the poem in terms of its words, it becomes

clear that the poem merely puts images of objects together, such as

Wines, trees, a crow
Bridge, farmhouse, water
Quaint road, wind, thin horse
Sunset, a desperate person

Without any verb, a picture can still be imagined and a story can be made up. The tables are translated by content, while the text is translated according to the format. Personally, the second translation method is preferred because it retains the meaning of the Chinese. In addition, these words are rhyme in Chinese, which no longer rhyme once they are translated into English. This is also a problem that cannot be avoided at present. If one wishes to appreciate the charm of ancient Chinese poetry, this writing style can be adopted with a focus on rhyme.

4. Conclusion

First of all, Chinese ancient poems are very antithetical, which means that the upper and lower stanzas have the same number of words. Secondly, rhyming is needed at the end of poems, in the ancient times, poems were accompanied by music. In this way, poems are like lyrics. Many young people are fond of copying lyrics as did the ancients copying poems. In the poem, there are still trees, flowing streams, standing crows, and the setting sun. A good poet will combine moving scenes with static things. For example, "the bright moon shines among the pine, the clear spring stone flows up"; The moon is a stationary thing, while the spring water is flowing, such that the moon and water form a distinct contrast. There are also poets who use various colors to depict landscapes, such as "The flowers in the river are redder than fire at sunrise, and the water in the river is as green as blue in spring", where the green and blue make the picture more colorful. The contrasting colors of blue flowing water and red sunset and black crows in Tianjingsha stand out as well. In the late autumn, the author wore thin clothes and was still wandering around at night with no place to eat. These experiences were not mentioned in the poem by Ma Zhiyuan directly, however, the scene he depicted shows that he was sad, lonely and miserable at this time, so the scenery under his pen is also desolate and sad. That is what people say: "All words of scenery are words of feelings".

Referecnce

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