

Chinese Adversative *Bèi* Passive and Its English Translations in Literary Texts

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Abstract

This research aims at finding the commonalities and distinctive features of translating *bèi* (被) passive into English in the context of literary texts and investigating different approaches translators adopt. Twelve English translation in the Spring 2015 edition of *Pathlight* will be analyzed as a way to develop translation resources. The main approaches to translation are: (1) retaining the original passive sentences and/or passive construction, (2) changing to corresponding active sentences, (3) changing into active sentences with the same narrative perspective, and (4) paraphrasing the original passives. Translation of adversative *bèi* passive sentences is evaluated from the perspectives of semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect in order to investigate whether they effectively and successfully express the original adversative meaning and represent the original aesthetic effect. Reasons for ineffective and unsuccessful semantic equivalence are analyzed, that include translators failing to recognize the adversative expression of *bèi* passive, and not paying sufficient attention to preserving the original lexical terms which express the adversative connotation and present the literary effect and adversative resultative compounds in *bèi* passive.

Keywords: adversative *bèi* passive, aesthetic effect, semantic equivalence, translation evaluation

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Introduction

Aims, Objectives and Significance of the Research

This research investigates how translators deal with the adversative meaning associated with the *bèi* passive, which is considered as a distinctive feature in Chinese language (Chao, 1968; Chappell, 1984, 1986, 2016; Cook, 2013; Li & Thomson, 1981; Wang, 1985; Wang, 2010; Xiao, McEnery, & Qian, 2006). It aims to find the commonalities and distinctive features of translating *bèi* passive into English in the context of literary texts. While abundant research and academic papers have been produced on *bèi* passive, there has not been much literature on the translation of adversative *bèi* passive into English (Chao, 1968; Chappell, 1984, 1986, 2016; Cook, 2013; Li & Thomson, 1981; Wang, 1985; Wang, 2010; Xiao, McEnery, & Qian, 2006). In spite of the fact that “passive voice in Chinese in its various forms, marked and unmarked, does occur widely and, as such, may be just as frequently encountered in Chinese (both in speech and in writing) as in European languages” (Yip & Rimmington, 2004, p. 209). Therefore, in order to address the lacunae in the research as well as provide advice and suggestions to translators who are interested in translating adversative *bèi* passive, this research conducts a preliminary investigation of the different approaches translators adopted in dealing with adversative *bèi* passive. More significantly, this research will be used as a basis for developing translation resources for dealing with adversative *bèi* passive in literary texts and evaluating their translation from the perspective of semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect.

For this purpose, the English translated version of twelve literary works in the Spring 2015 edition of *Pathlight* have been chosen as the source for textual analysis. The source texts consist of representative works in standard modern Chinese literature (novellas and prose), and were translated by eleven different English translators, as such demonstrating a variety of writing features and characteristics of translation. Therefore, these twelve literary works and their English translation provide a comparatively objective arena for analysis of translating Chinese passives into English. The basic information of the target texts and source texts is shown in the Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. The basic information on the TTs and STs

No	Target Texts (TTs)		Source Texts (STs)		
	Title in <i>Pathlight</i>	Translator	Original Title	Author	Published Year
1	<i>Death is a Tiger Butterfly</i>	Darryl Sterk	《死亡是一只桦树蝶》	吴明益 (Wu Mingyi)	2003
2	<i>Wolves Walk Atwain</i>	Cara Healey	《狼行成双》	邓一光 (Deng Yiguang)	1997
3	<i>The Nightjar at Dusk</i>	Roddy Flagg	《黄昏夜鹰》	黑鹤 (Hei He)	2014
4	<i>Apery</i>	Nicky Harman	《猴者》	孙一圣 (Sun Yisheng)	2014

5	<i>A Village of One</i>	Joshua Dyer	《一个人的村庄》	刘亮程 (Liu Liangcheng)	1998
6	<i>Thoreau and I</i>	Eleanor Goodman	《我与梭罗》	苇岸 (Wei An)	1998
7	<i>Heat Island</i>	Ken Liu	《热岛》	夏笳 (Xia Jia)	2011
8	<i>The Great Whale Sings</i>	Canaan Morse	《巨鲸歌唱》	周晓枫 (Zhou Xiaofeng)	2013
9	<i>Illusory Constructions</i>	Dave Haysom	《错觉建筑物》	邱雷 (Qiu Lei)	2012
10	<i>Pigeon</i>	Rachel Henson	《鸽子》	刘庆邦 (Liu Qingbang)	2005
11	<i>Rain and Snow</i>	Eric Abrahamsen	《下雨下雪》	张炜 (Zhang Wei)	1990
12	<i>The Hot Springs on Moon Mountain</i>	Canaan Morse	《月亮的温泉》	叶弥 (Ye Mi)	2006

Research Questions

The first and foremost research question will investigate how adversative *bèi* passive is dealt with in English by translators specializing in the field of modern Chinese literature, i.e. to categorize approaches and strategies translators used to retain passives or change passives into other grammatical structures. The second research question will focus on assessing how closely the translation express meaning equivalent to the passives of the source texts, especially in expressing the original adversative meaning. If the original adversative meaning is not exactly expressed in target texts, the reasons giving rise to such translation will be examined. The last research question will evaluate whether the translation can satisfy target readers as literary works and aesthetic effects produced by different strategies of translating Chinese passives.

Bèi passive

The *bèi* passive construction is one of the most representative passives in Chinese. Example [1] illustrates the prototypical syntactical construction of *bèi* passive construction:

Noun Phrase₁ – BEI – Noun Phrase₂ – Verb Phrase (hereafter NP and VP)

[1] Zhangsan bei Lisi da le

Zhangsan BEI Lisi hit PFV/CRS

Zhangsan was hit by Lisi. (Huang, 1999, p. 3)

NP₁ is the “patient” in the position of grammatical subject, and NP₂ is the “agent” who acts upon and affects the “patient”. Those passive constructions with agent are defined as “long passive” (Biber et al., 1999, p. 935, as cited in Xiao, McEnery, & Qian, 2006, p. 113). Besides the

prototypical syntactical construction, “short passive” (Biber et al., 1999, p. 935, as cited in Xiao, McEnery, & Qian, 2006, p. 113), also known as agentless passive construction, is widely accepted in *bèi* passive construction, i.e. “agent” can sometimes be omitted in *bèi*-passive construction. It is illustrated by the following example.

[2] Zhangsan bei da le
 Zhangsan BEI hit PFV/CRS
 Zhangsan was hit. (Huang, 1999, p. 3)

Bèi passive has two significant semantic characteristics: adversity and disposal (Chao, 1968; Cook, 2013; Li & Thompson, 1981).

Adversity

The semantic origin of *bèi* is derived from *shòu* (受: suffer or cover) (Sun, 1996). Influenced by the classical usage of Chinese, the most prominent and essential semantic characteristic of *bèi* passive is to express adversative meaning (Chao, 1968; Chappell, 1984, 1986, 2016; Cook, 2013; Li & Thomson, 1981; Wang, 1985; Wang, 2010; Xiao, McEnery, & Qian, 2006). In other words, mishaps and misfortune are always implied in *bèi* passive construction. The following two examples quoted from Li and Thompson can directly reflect this adversative feature of *bèi* passive construction (1981, pp. 493-494):

[3] jiaozi bei (gou) chi diao le
 dumplings BEI (dog) eat down PFV/CRS
 The dumplings got eaten up (by the dog).

Both examples involve events which are unfortunate, unfavorable and undesirable for the patient. It clearly shows that *bèi* passive construction is utilized with its superficial and subtext meanings to express traumatic or unpleasant and upsetting experience to the “patient” (Chappell, 1986; Wang, 2010).

It should be noted that adversative meaning is not achieved or expressed through the lexical choices in Chinese passive constructions, i.e. even neutral verbs in *bèi* passive construction can still convey the adversative meaning (Li & Thompson, 1981). Chappell also mentions that “adversity is not a lexical function of the verb type” (1986, p. 1028). The following example demonstrates this language feature:

[4] Zhangsan bei ren kanjian le
 Zhangsan BEI person see CRS
 Zhangsan was seen by people. (Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 496)

In this example, *kanjian* (see) is a neutral verb. However, combining with *bèi* passive construction, the implication and interpretation of “being seen” in this sentence is that Zhangsan did not want to be seen by people, or it is surprising/shocking that Zhangsan was seen by people. The event described is undesired and unexpected for Zhangsan.

It should also be pointed out that in the written language of modern China, the connotation of adversity in *bèi* passive construction has been declining after the May 4th Movement in 1919. Influenced by European languages such as French, German, and in particular English and Russian, *bèi* passive alters to express non-adverse meaning (Chao, 1968; Chappell, 1986; Li & Thompson, 1981; Norman, 1988; Xiao, McEnery, & Qian, 2006, as cited in Cook, 2013, p. 132).

Even in spoken Chinese which naturally expresses adversative meaning in passive construction, the frequency of non-adverse meaning occurring in *bèi* passive is increasing. This language phenomenon shows the influence of non-adverse usage of *bèi* passive in written language to spoken usage (Chao, 1968; Chappell, 1986; Li & Thompson, 1981; Norman, 1988; Xiao, McEnery, & Qian, 2006). This phenomenon always “occurs with verbs representing usages borrowed or introduced into the language during the modern age, such as *xuanju* (elect), *jiefang* (liberate) and *fanyi* (translate)” (Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 497). A term “*jiefang* (liberate)” will be used here as an example:

[5] sheng cheng bei jiefang le
 province capital BEI liberate CRS

The provincial capital has been liberated. (Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 497).

As the above illustration shows, a reciprocity evolves in the written and spoken language with special reference to the modernity of passive usage and its semantic connotation.

Cook (2013, p. 140) states that nearly 25% of the predicates in her corpus on spoken *bèi* passive construction express neutral or positive meaning, and the much more commonly used non-adverse predicate collection with *bèi* is “*gandong* (move/touch) and *kandao* (value; see good prospects for)”. In the following table (Table 2), Xiao, McEnery & Qian (2006, p. 136) present that the usage rate of the adversative meaning conveyed by *bèi* passive in written and spoken Chinese is dominating. Nonetheless, it is approximately equal to the sum total of the percentage of positive and neutral meaning. The most common collocation with *bèi* includes verbs with adversative meaning such as “*bang* (truss up), *jie* (rob), *pian* (cheat) and *sha* (kill)”; and those with positive meaning include “*pingwei* (choose...as), *yuwei* (honor...as), *tisheng* (promote) and *feng* (confer (a title))” etc.; and those with neutral meaning such as “*chengwei* (call/become), *renming* (appoint) and *anpai* (arrange)” etc.

Table 2. Chinese passive markers across meaning categories (Xiao, McEnery, & Qian, 2006, p. 136)

Passive Type	Passive marker	Negative		Positive		Neutral	
		Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
Syntactic passive	<i>bei</i>	670	51.5%	139	10.7%	491	37.8%
	<i>wei...suo</i>	13	18.9%	27	39.1%	29	42.0%
	<i>gei</i>	27	67.5%	3	7.5%	10	25.0%
	<i>jiao</i>	2	50.0%	1	25.0%	1	25.0%
	<i>rang</i>	10	66.7%	4	26.7%	1	6.6%
Lexical	<i>ai</i>	30	100.0%	0	-	0	-
Passive	<i>shou</i>	269	65.0%	100	24.1%	45	10.9%
	<i>zao</i>	91	100.0%	0	-	0	-

In short, the adversative connotation of *bèi* passive remains essential. But it should be noted that in the recent development of *bèi* passive construction, non-adversative meaning appears much more frequently than before. In the non-adversative *bèi* passive construction, verbs collocating with *bèi* keep expanding and as such are not limited to the words borrowed or introduced from European languages.

Disposal

Bèi passive construction conveys the meaning that “the entity or person is dealt with, handled, or manipulated in some way” (Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 501), i.e. the predicates should have disposal meaning as well as expressing adversative meaning. Thus, some verbs in *bèi* passive construction are not accepted, such as *ai* (love), *qi* (anger), *taoyan* (be sick of), *hen* (hate) (Chappell, 1986; Li & Thompson, 1981). For example, the following sentences are not widely accepted in Chinese:

[6] *Xiaomei bei Zhangsan ai le
 Xiaomei BEI Zhangsan love COM
 Xiaomei was loved by Zhangsan (Chappell, 1986, p. 1029).

However, based on Cook’s (2013, p. 143) analysis of *bèi* passive, verbs with adverse meaning without disposal factor can be found in spoken Mandarin, such as *hushi* (ignore; overlook), *wuhui* (misunderstand; misconstrue) and *wujie* (misunderstand; misread). These are “not deliberate, controllable and forceful actions” to the “patient”.

Chappell (2016, p. 482) also mentions that it is commonly found that “a resultative or directional verb compound” is used in the predicate of *bèi* passive sentences. Those compounds will help predicates to achieve the function of disposal, e.g. the examples utilized by Chappell (2016, p. 482) as follows.

[7] 他...被问烦了。

He BEI question annoyed LE
He was asked questions to the point of annoyance.

The verb phrase 问 (asked questions) describes the event and 烦 (annoyance) presents the result of the event, their combination shows how the persona was dealt with by *bèi* passive. Furthermore, the result can express the adversative meaning by itself.

[8] 情书 都被退回来了!
Billets-doux all BEI send back LE
The love letters were all sent back! (Chappell 2016, p. 482)

The directional verb 回来 (back) locates the “patient” towards a new direction, as the result of the action 退 (send). The combination of 退 (send) and 回来 (back) identifies in what way the entity is handled or manipulated to express disposal.

Besides adversity and disposal, there are two features worth discussing as follows:

Firstly, the scope of “agent” is not limited to animate beings. In *bèi* passive construction, an inanimate noun phrase which can cause an action on their own can be acted as an “agent” to convey the adversative meaning only (Li & Thompson, 1981), such as *feng* (wind), *huo* (fire), *shui* (water), i.e. “forces of nature” (Cook, 2013, p. 135).

[9] qiqiu bei feng chui zou le
balloon BEI wind blow away PFV/CRS

The balloon was blown away by the wind (Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 505)

Feng (wind) causes the action of “blow away”, and it is undesirable for the narrator or speaker that the balloon was blown away by the wind.

According to the statistics of Cook’s research (2013), nearly 8% of the “agents” in *bèi* passive construction in the corpus are found to be inanimate. It shows that inanimate “agent” seems to be widely used and grammatical in modern Mandarin.

However, for the noun phrase “used by a person or an animate being to carry out an action”, i.e. the instrument, it cannot act as an “agent” in *bèi*-passive (Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 504). Thus, the following example is not an acceptable usage in Mandarin.

[10] *men bei yaoshi da kai le
door BEI key make open PFV/CRS (Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 504)

Because the “*yaoshi* (key)” cannot take effect or action on its own, it is just an instrument used by the unmentioned “agent”.

The following example taken from Cook’s study states the contrary to Li and Thompsons’ instrument:

[11] 我 见 过 有 人 被 啤 酒 瓶 砍 到 头,
Isg see-EXP some PASS beer-bottle cut-RES head,
I’ve seen someone get cut on the head with a beer bottle, (Cook, 2013, p. 144)

Therefore, the usage of instrument as an agent in *bèi* passive construction does not seem to be strictly forbidden.

Secondly, based on the corpus-based study from Xiao, McEnery & Qian (2006, p. 142), “Chinese passives can only occur in dynamic events.” This statement illustrates the pragmatic context of Chinese passives, i.e. dynamicity. This dynamic nature is also supported by Chappell’s point of view (2016), i.e. some cognitional and/or emotional verbs can exist in *bèi* passive as an activity verb, rather than a usually used stative verb, such as *zhidao* (know) in the following example:

[12] 可 惜 ， 这 一 切 都 被 巫 婆 知 道 了 。
kexi, zhe yiqie dou bei wupo zhidao le
Pity this everything all BEI witch know LE
Unfortunately, all of this was found out by the witch (Chappell, 2016, p. 479).

The literal meaning of *zhidao* is “know”, a stative meaning commonly used in English. But in this *bèi* passive construction, the meaning of *zhidao* is interpreted as to “find out” as an intentional action to present the dynamic nature and adversative result of the event.

Data Analysis

The followings are detailed analysis of adversative *bèi* passive sentences and their translation from the twelve chosen English translation of *Pathlight* Spring edition 2015. Both the STs and TTs are shown, in order to make a parallel comparison and critical study with specific reference to the usage and effect of adversative *bèi* passive. The main purpose is to look into the preservation of the original passives, and/or whether there are divergences in meaning from the original passives. Most importantly, the different approaches translators used to deal with adversative *bèi* passive will be examined in order to investigate and highlight the effects of differing translation methods on target texts and target readers.

Passives with adversative meaning

As reviewed above, the adversative meaning contained in *bèi* passive depends mainly on lexical choice, i.e. verbs or resultative compounds with unfortunate meaning. *Bèi* passive *per se* can express adversative meaning as it is its main characteristic. In other words, the first focus will

be on examining the semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect of the *bèi* passive translation to see whether it can effectively and successfully preserve the original adversative meaning. The second focus will look into how *bèi* passive *per se* can retain the adversative meaning and aesthetic effect after translation. If the translation cannot successfully preserve the adversative meaning, the reasons will be analyzed. As such, all sentences are divided into in two groups: (i) effective and successful translations; and (ii) less effective and successful translations. They are respectively discussed as follows with specific examples provided.

(i) Effective and successful translations

Example 1:

ST: 牠们展示何谓生命这样的秘语，然后带着秘语的锁匙被生命离弃，牠们留下卵后，才丧失飞行的冲动。(Wu, 2003)

TT: They revealed the riddle of what life is, before leaving with the key to the riddle. For they were soon to be **discarded by life**: once the monarch mothers lay their eggs they lose the impulse to fly. (Sterk, 2015)

In the original example, “离弃” literally means “leave” and “abandon”. The diction obviously describes the unfortunate consequence towards the event described, i.e. adversity of the original sentence. The translator chooses the word, *discard*, from the same semantic domain of “leave” and “abandon”, to express similar meaning and emotional intensity. It retains the original adversative meaning and represents the original aesthetic effect, and also keeps the passive construction even though used as a modifier in the TT. It is worth noting that the agent here is an abstract inanimate concept, *life*.

Example 2:

ST: 童年时养的一笼十姐妹夜里被老鼠袭击。(Wu, 2003)

TT: A cage of society finches I raised as a child **was attacked by a rat** one night. (Sterk, 2015)

In Example 2, the original adversative meaning is also expressed. The meaning of “被...袭击” is fully represented by “was attacked”, a passive sentence with the word implying adversative meaning. The semantic equivalence and same emotional intensity are achieved here. It is interesting to note the number of the agent in the TT. Because Chinese does not have inflection to clearly express single or plural form of a noun. In this context, it cannot be identified whether the rat is one or at least two, and the translator decides to use singular form to represent the original dynamic tableau.

Example 3:

ST:那只落水的老鼠每回奋力游到登岸处，就被观看的民众用长棍棒再次戳下水里。(Wu, 2003)

TT: Badly wounded, the rat swam to the bank and tried to climb up, but **got caught on the rocks**, and all the while a rickshawman and a few children were chucking stones at it. (Sterk, 2015)

In Example 3, the translator uses *get* passive to deal with the original passive sentence. The translator keeps the same narrative perspective of source text. “The rat” still remains the topic of the sentence. However, the translator recreates nearly all the other information of the source text. The translator gives up representing the original image of describing what happened to the rat, such as being knocked into river by passengers with long sticks, whereas the translator rebuilds a situation for the rat, i.e. *got caught on the rocks and children were chucking stones at it*. The “agent” is translated from a new narrative perspective, i.e. from the original passive to its corresponding active sentence; more interestingly, it is described in more detail in translation, i.e. *rickshawsman* and *children* became subject and represented the “agentivity”. Although the literal meaning is changed completely, the adversative meaning is well retained, and the target audience can receive the adversative meaning of the rat being prevented from going back to the bank by being hit again and again. Furthermore, the *get*-passive used here is more dynamic than the *be*-passive in describing this kind of situation. It is more vivid for the target audience to see what the rat is facing. Therefore, for target readers, the aesthetic effect of building a dynamic tableau and the semantic equivalence of adversity is well achieved in the TT because the original stative result was replaced by full action in translation.

Example 4:

ST: 但当阿波罗决定以火焚处死科罗妮斯时，看到她的美丽面容逐渐**被火焰吓得扭曲**，他忆起了美好的回忆。(Wu, 2003)

TT: But in the end, Apollo decided to burn Coronis alive. As he watched her beautiful face **contort with fear of flame**, he remembered the beautiful moments they’d shared together, until he heard an infant crying. (Sterk, 2015)

In Example 4, although the passive construction is not followed – rather it is translated into an active sentence – the narrative perspective of describing the event is kept, i.e. her beautiful face. Similar lexical terms are used, e.g., *contort* for 扭曲; *fear* for 惊吓. They not only express the original adversative meaning but represent the original frightening emotion. Example 4 is effective and successful in semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect.

Example 5:

ST: 在追逐一只蛮狗未能得手之后，她竟然昏头昏脑地去攻击一只鬣狗，结果**被对方咬伤了脖颈**。(Deng, 1997)

TT: After chasing a wild dog unsuccessfully, she had gone so far as to dazedly pursue **a hyena, which had bitten her on the neck**. (Healey, 2015)

In Example 5, the passive construction of the original is totally changed. The translator uses a clause with active voice, rather than keeping the original passive voice. The literal translation of the original “被对方咬伤了脖颈” should be “(she) was bitten on the neck by the hyena”, but the translator uses an active clause, *(a hyena) had bitten her on the neck*, resulting in changing the

narrative perspective in the clause to emphasize the “agentivity” of the action, but downgrade the “affectedness” of a passive voice. The aesthetic effect of a literary work is quite similar. Furthermore, all the information remains the same. Therefore, the original adversative meaning of being bitten by a hyena is retained.

To briefly review those effective and successful translations of adversative *bèi* passive sentences, there are several main approaches, including retaining passive construction as modifiers (Example 1) and passive sentences (Examples 2, 3), changing into the active sentence with the same narrative perspective, i.e. the view of the “patient” (Example 4) and changing into the corresponding active sentence (Example 5). After examining of STs and TTs, it is found that all original sentences of effective and successful translation express adversative meaning by lexical terms, and those effective and successful translations can achieve the semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect by choosing similar lexical terms in target language. It is concluded that choosing similar adversative lexical terms with in the target text is a sound translation strategy for the translator who wishes to express adversative meaning and represent the aesthetic effect of the source text.

(ii) *Less effective and successful translations*

There are still some less effective and successful translation dealing with adversative *bèi* passives in the database. They are analyzed as follows:

Example 6:

ST: 然而，最重要的是，我会记得这些大桦斑蝶，记得这些纤小翅膀不疾不徐的飘流，一只接着一只，每一只都被某种看不见的力量推向前去。(Wu, 2003)

TT: But most of all I shall remember the monarchs, that unhurried westward drift of one small winged form after another, each drawn by some invisible force. (Sterk, 2015)

In Example 6, although “推” is a neutral word in Chinese, in the given context, it indicates that the future of monarchs is not chosen by themselves, but controlled and forced by fate. “每一只都被...推向前去” in the original context actually implies the more adversative meaning that monarchs are flying to the end of their lives. However, it is simply translated into “drawn by the invisible force”, a passive construction as a modifier. The translation does not express or imply the uncontrolled and tragic ending of monarchs like the ST does. Thus, the semantic adversative meaning is significantly less achieved in TT than in ST. As for the aesthetic effect, the original Chinese “被...推向前去” means “being pushed forward”. However, in English translation, the word “drawn” signifies a reverse directional change from the original Chinese meaning. Compared with the ST which emphasizes the dynamic tableau of monarchs being controlled by fate, the TT strengthens the irresistible power of the “invisible force” to achieve another aesthetic effect. This reverse in translation results in a different description of “monarchs” and “invisible force” between the source- and target readers. Moreover, the directional compound 向前去, as the consequence of the activity is totally omitted in the TT. As a result, the TT does not fully express disposal

expressed in the ST, i.e. how specifically the monarchs are dealt with by the invisible force. Thus, considering the semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect, Example 6 is less effective and less successful.

Example 7:

ST: 只有你的命运被改变了, 莫名其妙地落在另一个地方。(Liu, 1998)

TT: When it's gone it's like nothing ever happened. Except **your fate has changed**. (Dyer, 2015)

In the above example, the adversative meaning of the originals are not achieved by lexical terms, but by the *bèi* passive *per se* in the contexts. “改变” is a natural word in Chinese, referring to “change”. In Example 7, “命运被改变了” conveys that the persona’s fate is radically changed. More significantly, based on the context, the change is negative, resulting even in the persona’s death. Therefore, in the original, the writer uses “命运被改变了”, rather than “命运改变了”. The *bèi* passive used here clearly expresses an adversative meaning. However, the translator does not retain the passive construction, but chooses to use an active sentence in the TT. The adversative meaning is totally lost. Even in the context, the active sentence cannot imply the adversative meaning. In the context of the translation, the interpretation of *fate* could be changed into better or worse direction. Therefore, the semantic equivalence is less achieved here.

Example 8:

ST: 即使桦斑蝶小心翼翼地只产下六七枚卵, 我盆栽里的马利筋还是毫不意外地注定被啃食殆尽。(Wu, 2003)

TT: Just six or seven carefully placed eggs doom a potted milkweed **to be eaten alive**, which comes as no surprise. (Sterk, 2015)

In Example 8, the literal meaning of “啃食殆尽” is “to gnaw at and eat all up”. In English translation, “to be eaten alive” keeps the passive construction as a complement of milkweed but it loses the kind of woeful and unfortunate meaning that the original expresses. As the resultative compound of the predicate, “啃食”, the interpretation of “殆尽” is also omitted in the TT. Furthermore, the tableau of “啃食殆尽” is dynamic and the original has a kind of gruesome and bloody effect to describe the result of the potted milkweed. The original imagery is not dynamically represented by the simple translation of “to be eaten alive”. Thus, the semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect cannot be kept in the TT.

Example 9:

ST: 一大群娃娃嚷叫着跳到水深处, 又被大人吆喝上来。(Zhang, 1990)

TT: A crowd of children clamored to jump into the deeper parts of water, but **were called back up by the adults**. (Abrahamsen, 2015)

As for Example 9, the original Chinese “被吆喝” means “being yelled back”. It is commonly used in the context of children doing something dangerous, and so, parents reproach them, in particular with anger or in fear of accident. It is a typical adversative passive usage in Chinese.

Although the English translation retains the passive sentence, the English translation has turned it into “called back”, which loses the emotional and adversative connotation and instantly reduces the force of the original action and fails to produce semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect.

Example 10:

ST: 大海被一个冬天折腾得黑乌乌的。(Zhang, 1990)

TT: The winter had turned the sea dark. (Abrahamsen, 2015)

The original expresses an adversative meaning. The original Chinese can be literally translated into “the sea was tortured to black by the winter”. The lexical term, “折腾” has clearly shown the unwillingness of the original. “Black” is the adversative result of affectedness “the sea” received from “the winter”. However, the English opts not to follow suit a passive sentence, but applies active voice with the narrative perspective of “winter” to emphasize the “agentivity”, i.e. what the winter initiates to the sea. The original adversative meaning is totally lost by using a neutral, “turned”, replacing “折腾”. From the perspective of semantic equivalence, the adversity is missing in the target text. Furthermore, such a personification effect of describing the “agentivity” of winter has not been reproduced, and the negative connotation has been lost as well. Thus, the emotional intensity is weakened and the aesthetic effect falls short.

Example 11:

ST: 蚊子都已经被冷雨打得找树洞隐藏。(Hei, 2014)

TT: the mosquitoes would be in hiding after the rain. (Flagg, 2015)

The original sentence of Example 11 is an adversative *bèi* passive. The literal meaning of the original sentence should be “are hit by the cold rain to find tree holes to hide”. It describes that the rain is cold and heavy, and even mosquitoes have to find somewhere to hide. It vividly shows the unfortunate affectedness from the “agent” to the “patient”. The English translation does not retain the passive construction, but chooses to use a preposition phrase, *after the rain*, to paraphrase the ST. It changes the time from “during the rain” to “after the rain”. As for adversative meaning, the English translation cannot express the adversity the mosquitoes experience during the rain. It loses the original description of predicament and urgency due to the adversative affectedness initiated by the cold rain. Furthermore, it changes the dynamic tableau to stative description, omitting the image of “hit”, and even the image of “cold”. Those images clearly present the bad circumstances of the mosquitoes. Thus in both semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect, the translation is less forceful.

As can be seen from the examination of unsuccessful TT examples of the translation of passive sentences with adversative meaning, the main approaches observed are the same as those used in effective and successful translation; including retaining the passive constructions as modifiers (Examples 6, 8) and passive sentences (Example 9), changing passives into the active sentence with the same narrative perspective, i.e. the view of the “patient” (Example 7) and changing into the corresponding active sentence (Example 10). Besides these approaches, some sentences are paraphrased, but are less effective and successful in creating semantic equivalence

and aesthetic effect (Example 11). To be specific, some translated versions are effective and successful in achieving semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect, while some are less effective and successful, despite using the same translation approach. Based on the detailed analyses conducted above, the three reasons can be seen as follows:

The first significant reason could be that translators do not realize the important characteristic of *bèi* passive: *bèi* passives themselves can express adversative meaning, not via adversative lexical terms. Like Examples 6 and 7, although the predicative verb is neutral in Chinese, but associated with *bèi*-passive, the adversative meaning is implied from the context. As a result, their translation cannot express exactly the original adversative meaning.

The second reason is that the translator ignores the effect of resultative compound in the original *bèi* passives. By reviewing Example 8, it is found that the adversative meaning and emotional intensity are expressed and the connotation of disposal achieved as a result of the activity. However, they are all omitted in the target texts. The adversity and disposal, therefore, cannot be expressed and the emotional intensity is inevitably lessened as well.

The last reason lies in the lexical terms. Lexical terms, especially verbs with negative connotation, help to express adversative meaning and build a dynamic tableau, such as Examples 9, 10, 11. However, some translators choose stative words with neutral meaning to deal with them, resulting in the original adversative meaning not being retained in the TTs and the aesthetic effect of the originals being lost.

Conclusion

As a way to develop translation resources, this research makes a contribution for translators, by providing some objective investigation and offering suggestions and reference for when he or she comes to dealing with the translation of Chinese adversative *bèi* passives into English. This research identifies and analyses different approaches translators adopt in dealing with Chinese adversative *bèi* passives when translating into English in literary context, by analyzing translations of adversative *bèi* passive sentences in twelve English translations in the Spring 2015 edition of *Pathlight*. The main translation approaches are: retaining the original passive constructions, changing into the corresponding active sentence, changing into active sentence with the same narrative perspective and paraphrasing the original passives.

The translation of passive sentences is evaluated from the perspective of semantic equivalence and aesthetic effect, to investigate whether they effectively and successfully express the original adversative meaning and represent the original aesthetic effect. Reasons for ineffective and unsuccessful semantic equivalence are analyzed, and include the translator not being aware of the adversative expression of *bèi* passive, and not paying sufficient attention to preserving the original lexical terms which express the adversative connotation and present the literary effect and adversative resultative compounds in *bèi* passive.

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