On Translation of Nonverbal Behavior in *The Husband*

LIU Jing[a],*

[a]International Business College, South China Normal University, Guangzhou, China.
*Corresponding author.

Abstract

Nonverbal communication is an indispensable part in literary text, since it usually indicates the identity and personality of characters. It is also the part that may cause misunderstanding due to cultural differences, therefore, translators should be extremely careful when dealing with nonverbal elements. As one of Shen Congwen's most popular, and also most translated works, *The Husband* is such a short story with diverse nonverbal behaviors. This paper compares its three English versions (by Ching Ti, Gladys Yang and Jeffrey Kinkley) in translating nonverbal communication including appearance, silence and body language. It finds that, in terms of appearance and silence, Yang and Kinkley make explicit character's personality or identity by choosing certain agent or process type. When translating culture-bound body language, Ching prefers literal translation, while Yang and Kinkley convert it to the nearest equivalence in target language.

Key words: *The Husband*; Nonverbal behavior; Silence; Body language

1. INTRODUCTION

Nonverbal behaviour, as in real life situation, plays an equally significant role in literary text. Extralinguistic communicative features of characters are usually intended by the author to indicate their personality, or, the relationship between participants in a communication context. These features, if ignored or misunderstood by the translator, may lead to the inconsistency of the character or misconception of the reader. Despite of those nonverbal behaviors with shared understanding, it is often the culture-bound ones that pose a difficulty for many translators. When dealing with these nonverbal behaviors, translators employ different strategies, resulting in the variance of the character's personality in different versions.

The Husband, written by Shen Congwen in the 1930s, is such a short story which features a variety of nonverbal communication. Those nonverbal elements, including clothes, body movements, and facial expressions, etc., are of great importance in indicating and enriching the characters' identity and personality. As one of Shen's most popular short story, it has three English versions, translated by Ching Ti, Glays Yang and Jeffrey Kinkley at different times. This paper explores the differences among the three versions in translating nonverbal communication and the effects achieved by different strategies.

2. TRANSLATING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN LITERATURE

Nonverbal communication is categorized in diverse ways by scholars in different fields. Samovar, Porter and Stefani (2000), from the perspective of cross-culture communication, divide it into four types: 1) body behaviour (kinesics and posture, dress, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, smell and paralanguage), 2)space and distance, 3)time, and 4) silence. Poyatos (1993), when specifying nonverbal communication in literary, or rather, narrative text, gives an even detailed classification. In addition to the six types of paralanguage, kinesics, proxemics, chronemics, chemical and dermal reactions, and object-mediated or bodily-generated sounds, he also

includes punctuation symbols. Hatim (1997), the scholar of translation study, provides another perspective viewing nonverbal communication. He defines it as "graphically representational" language. According to him, people verbalize in two ways: a typical and normal way, or, a rather extraordinary way. He also draws upon the concept of "lexical coreness" to distinguish from the "extraordinary graphic use of language." These perspectives are complementary in analyzing nonverbal communication in literary translation.

Poyatos (1997) concludes four ways by which the author transmits nonverbal behavior to the reader: 1) describe the paralinguistic or kinesic behaviors and also explaining its meaning; 2) describe the behavior, but not its meaning; 3) identify the meaning but not the behaviour; 4) give only the verbal expression which is always accompanied by a specific kinesic behavior that completes the message, but which, not being described. However, each way comes with a certain problem for the translator to decode. For example, the translator may misinterpret the meaning of certain behavior due to the cultural difference, or leave it out due to the lack of equivalence in target language.

When it comes to the translation of body language, in particular, between Chinese and English , the sinologist and translator Pollard (1993) pinpoints the difficulties in translation by exploring the differences between Chinese and Anglo-saxon culture, as well as their literary tradition. He then, by taking a hand gesture as an example, concludes some strategies employed by translators when dealing with body language. These strategies include: to give a bald translation; to elaborate; to leave out the gesture; and to convert it to the nearest equivalence in target language. These strategies could also be found in the English versions of *The Husband*.

Aside from cultural difference, linguistic form is also an important factor that should be taken into consideration in translating nonverbal behavior. "A basic property of language is that it enables its user to formulate a mental picture of reality and to make sense of and express what goes on around and inside them" (Hatim, 2001, p.179). This experiential meaning could be represented by the system of transitivity, which includes six process types (material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioral and existential). As the source text could be translated into different linguistic forms, transitivity provides a perspective to compare the nuances between them. "A key idea is 'representation': how something is represented affects what it is understood to be and mean" (Toolan, 2008, p.xix). Transitivity analysis could reliably articulate "whether a character is represented as a conscious and controlling agent, or a victim, or 'possessed' by some compulsion that renders them not really responsible for their own actions" (Toolan, 2008, p.xix). The translator's choice of one process, or participant, over another,

consciously or unconsciously, either complies with or distort the author's intention.

3. EXAMPLES IN *THE HUSBAND*

3.1 *The Husband* and Its English Versions

As one of China's most prominent modern writers, Shen Congwen is famous for bringing into sight the people and life in the far-flung countryside in West Hunan. Most of his work depict the rurality and traditions there, and the pure, untained human nature, as well as the unenlightened folks. *The Husband* is one of them. The short story unfolds the custom of flesh trade in West Hunan, or rather, Huangzhuang village. At that time, the newlywed wife of a family usually became the bread earner by working as a prostitute in the city, while her husband took care of domestic chores and farm work in the countryside. She sent money back home, and he went to the city to see her every now and then. This story tells the experience of Seventh Maid's husband, a timid restrained farmer whose sense of dignity was awakened by the humiliation he suffered during his visit to his wife. When his wife "entertained" her guests in the boat, he could do nothing but hid in the after-hold. When his wife's godfather ---- the river warden talked to him, though in a fatherly way, he still felt daunted by his overwhelming presence. When his wife was forced to sleep with the drunken soldier to stop him making trouble, the old procuress, showed indifference to this insult but only cared about how much money she got. All these made the young man feel hurt as a husband, also as a man. His dignity came alive and he could not stand this any more. In the end, he and his wife left the city and went back home in the countryside.

The story, also one of Shen's favourite, stands out in many ways. The title per se is interesting. As protagonist of the story, also the one to whom the title refers, the man does not even have a name, only referred to as "the young man" or "the husband". But *husband* is the last role he could live up to. Moreover, the custom of flesh trade, which seems incredible today, is described with "surprising moral neutrality" (Kinkley, 1995, p.29). Prostitution is amoral but a natural way of life, and "the husband's rejection of it not a moral, modern or progressive choice but the result of repressed passions and resentment that can be damned no longer" (Kinkley, 1995, p.29). So are other characters like the river warden, the old procuress, and Wuduo. They are good people in nature, only corrupted by city values. This human subtlety is, partly, presented by their nonverbal communication, like appearance, body language, facial expression and even, silence. These nonverbal behaviors make another feature of the story and also the focus of this paper.

As one of Shen's most popular story, *The Husband* is also one of his most translated work with three English versions. The first one was translated by Ching Ti, and

published in *The Chinese Earth: Stories by Shen Congwen* in 1947. The book was then reprinted by Columbia University Press in 1982. The second version was translated by Gladys Yang, and published in *The Border Town and Other Stories* in 1981. The latest one was translated by Jeffrey Kinkley, and published in *Imperfect Paradise* in 1995 (Xu, 2010). Each version is distinctive in its own way and differs with each other in many aspects.

3.2 Translating Appearance

In this short story, the character's appearance, such as the clothes or accessories, is described to indicate his or her identity. For example, the following paragraph describes how the river warden looked like in the eye of the young man when they met each other for the first time.

"先是望到那一对峨然巍然似乎是为柿油涂过的猪皮靴子，上去一点是一个赭色柔软麂皮抱兜，再上去是一双回环抱着的毛手，满是青筋黄毛，手上有颗其大无比的黄金戒指，再上去才是一块正四方形象是无数橘子皮拚合而成的脸膛。"(Shen, 2007, p.168)

The detailed description of the river warden's clothing shapes a sharp contrast with that of the young man, who wore only "starched clothes". This description is intended to show his richness and power, and more importantly, his superiority to the young man. Such superiority is also indicated by how his appearance is presented. Reading the source text resembles watching a film, with the camera shooting from bottom to top --- just as the husband, who crouched in a lower cabin, looked up to the river warden, who stood in the higher prow. It seems to be an indication of the difference between their social status.

As far as translation is concerned, the three versions show little difference in rendering the appearance and the sequence it is presented. What distinguishes them is

the point of view and transitivity. Ching chooses animate point of view, with "he"as the subject of a transitive action predicate. In contrast, Yang and Kinkley opt for intransitive process predicates with an inanimate actor. According to Toolan (2008), "his eye", which is body part, could be categorized as "agent metonym". The use of body parts as agent mytonyms, according to him, derives from two motivations: to moderate the responsibility of someone for how their own body is acting, and, to detach or alienate between one and his or her physical faculties. "His gaze" in Yang's version, though not body part, also serves the purpose. Given the context of the story, the husband, not familiar with the surrounding, was hesitant and nervous before he went out of the cabin. He did not come out until he had to, for the river warden got some angry when nobody answered him. Timid and restrained as he was, the sight of the warden made him even nervous and somewhat "powerless". "His eye" or "his gaze" as agent metonym downplays the character's action. Also, the intransitive structure also plays a part in relaying an atmosphere of "helplessness". He seems to be a passive participant in this situation, which, to some extent, denotes his tentative, reserved and timid personality.

All the three versions faithfully render the elements in the character's appearance. Compared with Ching's translation, the other two versions bring out more literariness of the story by resorting to linguistic devices which indicate the character's personality.

3.3 Translating Silence

Silence, just as activities of movement and sound, plays an important part in narrative text. In this short story, the young husband's emotion, such as his repressed anger and protest, is expressed by his silence, or lack of answer when talking to others. Table 1 shows some examples and their translation.

Table 1
Examples of silence

Examples	Ching Ti	Gladys Yang	Jeffrey Kinkley
男子摇头不语。(Shen, 2007, p.178)	But *he did not reply.* (Ching & Payne, 1982, p.57)	He *shook his head but said nothing.* (Yang, 1981, p.139)	The man *shook his head in silence.* (Kinkley, 1995, p.49)
男子留在后舱不出来，大娘到门边喊过了二次不答应，不明白这脾气从什么地方发生。(Shen, 2007, p.178)	Meanwhile the husband remained in the after-hold, and he refused to come out. The old woman called twice, but *there was no answer,* and she had no idea why his temper had suddenly been aroused. (Ching & Payne, 1982, p.57)	Seven's husband stayed in the back. Madam went to call him a couple of times, but for some reason unknown to her *he ignored her*. (Yang, 1981, p.139)	But the husband refused to come out of the afterhold. The madam twice went to the door and tried to get him to join them, but *he ignored her*. They couldn't understand what had got him so mad. (Kinkley, 1995, p.50)
"……" 摇摇头不作答。 "人家特意为你办了酒席！" "……" "戏也不看看么？" "……" "满天红的荤油包子，到半日才上笼，那是你欢喜的包子。" "……" (Shen, 2007, p.180)	*He made no reply.* *Again there was no reply.* *Again there was no reply.* (Ching & Payne, 1982, p.59)	He *shook his head by way of answer.* "..." "..." "..." (Yang, 1981, p.142)	*He just shook his head.* *He didn't reply.* *He remained silent.* (Kinkley, 1995, p.52)

Examples in the table above are in the second half of the story, when the husband began to feel his dignity hurt and could not stand this insult any more. Instead of venting his rage and dissatisfaction by losing temper,

most of his emotion is conveyed by silence or the body movement of shaking head. The translators show different strategies in dealing with this aspect. In example 1 and 3, the husband just shook his head when others talked to

him. Ching Ti leaves out the head movement, whereas Yang and Kinkley keep the head-shaking behavior. But none of them make explicit the refusal implication of shaking head. Part of the reason may be the shared social conventions between Chinese and Anglo-Saxon culture.

A more salient example would be the second one in the table. The young man's wife had to sleep with the drunken soldier in order to stop him making trouble in the boat. After the soldier left, the old procuress tried to get the young man out of the after-hold to join their talk. But he did not answer ("不答应"). His silence here conveys more than verbal expression does. "The silence that occurs naturally after an emotional statement is not a vacuum or a signless gap, just as the appropriately provided silence at certain points while reading a story is not a vacuum"(Poyatos, 1997, p.36). Although he knew that what his wife did was regular business and even their source of income, the young man, whose dignity began to come alive, could not help feeling insulted and angry. Sadly he could do nothing but remained silent, as a way to show his attitude. In Ching's translation, this nonverbal behavior is literally translated into a relational process ("there was no answer"). The marked silence is retained in the translation, leaving the readers to savor the emotion between lines. Instead, both Yang and Kinkley make explicit this emotion by employing material process with "he" as human actor. As a result, the readers' attention are likely to be shifted to the action of the young man, rather than the silence, which is downplayed here. Moreover, according to Toolan's (2008) ranking of participant-role in material process, agent (here as human actor) is the most active, powerful and controlling. It highlights the activeness of the husband, in contrast with his timidity at beginning, thus indicating his awakening human dignity.

The third example concerns punctuation, an important but often ignored nonverbal element in literary translation. Parkes (1992) concludes the function of punctuation as both a resolution to structural ambiguities, and as a signal of nuances of semantic significance which might otherwise not be conveyed, or be difficult for readers to figure out. Here the young man's silence is represented by the punctuation of ellipsis.When dealing with punctuation in literary translation, translators should "be extremely conscious of the extent to which they should be aware of the presence and location of the punctuation symbols they are translating, as they should constantly help the more sensitive readers not just to 'hear' but to 'see' the persons in the story" (Poyatos, 1997, p.21).

The ellipsis in the third example is a case in point. At the end of the story, the young wife offered his husband many treats in order to make him stay. But he insisted going home, not by giving a verbal refusal, but keeping silent each time she offered. The silence is represented by ellipsis in quotation marks, which appear four times as the dialogue goes on. This intentional repetition by the author should serve some purpose. On the one hand, ellipsis itself leaves much room for imagination. It says more than words do. On the other, it is in consistency with the husband's reserved, reticent personality throughout the story, and more importantly, the recurring ellipsis symbolizes his growing grievance and anger. The pent-up emotion requires outlet ---- he finally burst into tears at the end of story. The three versions differ greatly in dealing with this regard.Yang in her translation keeps intact the ellipsis in direct speech. Without any paralaugange or illocutionary verbs, the readers could not be able to "see" or "hear" the character, but only imagine how the man looks like and how he feels at that time. In contrast, both Ching and Kinkley change the direct speech into the third person omniscient, but they choose different process types. Ching chooses a relational process and retains the rhetorical effect by repeating it twice. Instead, Kinkley abandons the repetition and translates them into two verbal process clauses.

3.4 Translating Body Language

Not only the protagonist, other characters are also enriched by their body languages. Some of their body languages are common across cultures, while others are peculiar to Chinese culture. Table 2 are examples of body languages and their translation.

Table 2
Examples of body languages

Examples	Ching Ti	Gladys Yang	Jeffrey Kinkley
她悄悄回到前舱，看前舱的事情不成样子，伸伸舌头骂了一声猪狗。(Shen, 2007, p. 178)	She went back stealthily into the cabin, *pulled out her tongue* at the two soldiers and returned to the after-hold. (Ching & Payne, 1982, p.57)	She tiptoed to the front cabin *pursed her lips* at the sight of the disgraceful scene there,and swearing "swine". (Yang, 1981, p.138)	She crept back to the froward cabin and *made a face* at the unseemly tangle there, calling the soldiers swine and dogs *under her breath* before returning to the afterhold. (Kinkley, 1995, p.49)
大娘弄慌了，把口张大合不拢去。(Shen, 2007, p.177)	The old woman was so frightened that she *opened her mouth wide open* and could not shut it again. (Ching & Payne, 1982, p.56)	The proprietress panicked, *gaping in consternation*.(Yang, 1981, p.137)	The madam's *jaw dropped open* with fright. (Kinkley, 1995, p.48)
为了不使人拘束，水保取得是做父亲的平和样子，望到这年轻人。(Shen, 2007, p.168)	He asked, gazing at the man *with fatherly kindness*, lest he be uneasy. (Ching & Payne, 1982, p.47)	He asked *in a fatherly way*, to put the young fellow at east. (Yang, 1981, p.127)	The river warden asked in a *soft, fatherly tone of voice*, to put the young man at ease. (Kinkley, 1995, p.37)

The examples above describe how the old procuress and the young wife reacted after the drunken soldier made a fuss on the boat. In the first example, the facial expression and paraplanguage of the old procuress (伸

伸舌头骂了一声猪狗), which is peculiar to Chinese culture, is described without any explanation. This allows for the translator's different interpretation. Such facial expression, although easily understood by Chinese readers as indication of one's feeling of disgust, is rarely seen in English literature works, thus lacking equivalence in target language. Ching opts for bald translation into "pulled out her tongue" without elaborating, and omits the behaviour of swearing. He leaves it for the readers to explore the meaning and emotion indicated by these body movements. In contrast, Yang and Kinkley choose to make it more explicit. As native speakers, they employ expressions which are commonly used in English, though transferring the movement of tongue to lips and face. As for the verbal expression "骂了一声猪狗"，Yang changes the third person narrative in sour text into direct speech "Swine!"and leaves out "dog". Kinkley, instead, not only faithfully renders all the elements in the source text, but also enriches the behavior by adding paralanguage indicating voice quality---"under her breath". Although lack in source text, this addition seems to make sense for it is in consistency with the way the woman behaves in this context --- "悄悄回到前舱". Moreover, compared with the exclamation mark ---- which indicates the woman's anger in Yang's translation, Kinkley, by virtue of paralanguage (under her breath), adds more meaning to this anger. It is the repressed anger of the nonentity.

The same difference could also be found in the second example in the table. When dealing with the nonverbal behavior "把口张大", Ching literally translates it into "open her mouth wide" , retaining the movement of mouth. However, Yang and Kinkley make different choices. Yang employs a non-core vocabulary "gaping", while Kinkley opts for a more conventional expression in English which transfers the movement of mouth to jaw.

The third example describes the way the river warden talked with the young man. By "做父亲的平和样子", the author identifies the meaning but not the behavior. It poses a problem for the translator as he or she will not always "hear" it or "see" it (Poyatos1993). It thus may trigger different paralinguistic features in the translators' mind, just as the three versions show. Ching's translation is closest to the source text by keeping "fatherly kindness" in his version. Yang puts it into a more general one as "in a fatherly way". By leaving out "平和的", her version leaves it for the readers to imagine how a father looks like when he talks with a young man. "Fathers" from different cultural backgrounds feature distinctive communication styles. In contrast, Kinkley makes it more specific by focusing on the voice quality of the man, thus making the readers "hear" the soft tone of the river warden.

Based on the short analysis above, it could be noticed that when dealing with body language, Ching prefers bald translation without explanation, while Yang and Kinkley transfer it to the nearest equivalence in target language.

Also, compared with the first two versions, the latest one by Kinkley is even detailed by including more features, though some of which may not be in the source text.

4. CONCLUSION

The Husband is a finely crafted story rich in nonverbal behaviors. This paper compares its three English versions in translating nonverbal elements including appearance, silence and body language. Translators show different strategies in rendering those aspects thus resulting in different effects. In translating appearance and silence, Yang and Kinkley would choose linguistic resources which are indicative of characters' personality. In terms of body language peculiar to Chinese culture, Ching prefers to retain the image in source text by literal translation, whereas Yang and Kinkley would transfer it to the counterpart in English. In general, Ching's version is more focused on narrative of the story, while Yang and Kinkley bring out more literariness of it.

REFERENCES

Ching, T., & Payne, R. (Trans.). (1982). *The Chinese earth: Stories of Shen Ts'ung-wen*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hatim, B. (1997). Discourse features in non-verbal communication: Implications for the translator. In F. Poyatos (ed.). *Nonverbal communication and translation: New perspectives and challenges in literature, Interpretation and the Media.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 49-66.

Hatim, B. (2001). *Communication across cultures: Translation theory and contrastive text linguistics*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Kinkley, J. (Ed.). (1995). *Imperfect paradise: Twenty-four stories*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Parkes, M. B. (1992). *Pause and effect: An introduction to the history of punctuation in the west*. Aldershot: Scholar Press.

Pollard, D. (1993). Body language. *Perspectives*, *1*(1), 31-38. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.1993.9961197

Poyatos, F. (1993). Aspects of nonverbal communication in literature. In J. Holz-Mänttäri and C. Nord (Eds.), *Traducere navem. Festschrift für Katharina Reiss zum 70* (pp.137-152)*. Geburstag.* Tampere: Universitätsverlag.

Poyatos, F. (1997). Aspects, problems and challenges of nonverbal communication in literary translation. In F. Poyatos (Ed.), *Nonverbal communication and translation: New perspectives and challenges in literature, interpretation and the media*, (pp.17-47)*.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Samovar, Larry A., Porter, Richard E. & Stefani, Lisa A. (2000). *Communication between cultures*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press / London: Hodder Arnold.

Shen, C. W. (2007). *A collections of Shen Congwen's novels* (沈从文集). Guangzhou: Huacheng Press.

Toolan, M. (2008). *Language in literature: An introduction to stylistics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press / London: Hodder Arnold.

Xu, M. H. (2010). A survey of the English translations of Shen Congwen's novellas and short stories. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, *42*(3), 220-225.

Yang, G. (Trans.). (1981). *The border town and other stories*. Beijing: Chinese Literature.