# A Comparative Study of Environmental Settings in Two Chinese Versions of Jamaica Inn from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory

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**Abstract:** *The core concept of Naida's theory is functional equivalence, which means reproducing the source language in the most appropriate and equivalent language, focusing on the style and spirit of the source language from its linguistic form to its cultural connotations, so as to achieve the theory of functional equivalence between the translated text and the original text. Jamaica Inn, is a novel with highly gothic style, rich in environmental descriptions under dark and dreary tone. This paper takes the original text of the gothic novel JAMAICA INN by Daphne Du Maurier and the relevant excerpts of settings from the corresponding translations as the corpus, and analyzes the Chinese translations of Wang Dongfeng and Liu Guowei through the methods of case analysis and comparative study, in terms of lexical equivalence, sentence equivalence and textual equivalence, so as to demonstrate the guiding significance of functional equivalence theory in literary translation.*

**Keywords:** Functional equivalence; Jamaica Inn; literary translation; the comparative study.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since its publication, *Jamaica Inn* has been translated into multiple editions, especially the translations by Wang Dongfeng and Liu Guowei. Based on the original text,Wang Dongfeng's translation is known for its completeness and enjoys a high reputation in the field of translation studies in China. Liu Guowei's translation, on the other hand, is widely circulated in the market and well-received by the general readers. Both translators' distinctive translations are worthy of study and our exploration. As a classic gothic novel, *Jamaica Inn* employs rich and bold rhetorical techniques to create a horrible and mysterious atmosphere. Hence, it is crucial to follow the theory of functional equivalence so as to subtly restore its gothic style in the translation.

In this paper, based on the methods of case analysis and comparative study, excerpts from *Jamaica Inn* that showcase its gothic-style environmental descriptions will be selected as the corpus. And the Chinese translations of Wang Dongfeng and Liu Guowei will be explored and analysed in terms of lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence and textual equivalence, with a brief summary of thecharacteristics and tendencies in translation of two translators, in order to demonstrate the strategies for translating literary works under the guidance of the theory of functional equivalence.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the functional equivalence theory proposed by Naida, translators should fulfill the equivalence between the source text and the translated text in terms of lexical, syntactic, textual and stylistic aspects in the translation of literary works, so as to make the translated text more readable and approximate to the connotation of the source text. In the book *Explorations in the Science of Translation*, Naida puts forward the concepts of *formal equivalence* and *dynamic equivalence* in translation. *Formal equivalence* means that the formal features of the original text are reproduced unchanged in the target language text (Nida and Taber, 1969:201). *Dynamic equivalence* includes four aspects: lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence, and stylistic equivalence.

Lexical equivalence requires that the translator should not be limited to the accurate excavation of the connotation of the words, instead, need to analyse and infer the real meaning of the words according to the specific cultural background in combination with the context;

Syntactic equivalence demands that the translator must deal with the conflicts between the source text and the translated text in terms of syntax, grammar and expression to achieve syntactic equivalence;

Textual equivalence means that it is important for translators to not only focus on the original text, but also consider the specific sentences and context in order to convey the emotions of the original text.

## 3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Environmental Settings

A successful description of the natural environment can create the suitable atmosphere for the whole novel. The setting excerpt is taken from the beginning of the novel, the harsh and changeable weather, the wagon rattling in the mud, the complaining passengers, the dangerous moors and marshes... The Gothic opening creates an intriguing atmosphere of mystery and horror. Generally, both translators' translations seem to be faithful to the original text and follow the principle of functional equivalence, with their own styles and strategies of vocabulary and syntax.

3.1.1 Lexical Equivalence

*a) **It** was a **cold grey** day in late November.*

这是十一月下旬**寒冷而灰暗**的一天。（王译）
那是十一月末，一个**阴冷**的日子。（刘译）

1) Demonstratives

The use of English demonstratives is greatly influenced by the actual distance between the speaker and the referent, while Chinese demonstratives are closely associated with the psychological distance of the user. In the passage, the word ***it*** is used as a narrative marker to begin the story, and it is often translated as "*那是*" from the perspective of the narrator's recollection.

2) Synaesthesia

The author skillfully evokes the reader's senses with a poignant touch, associating ***cold*** with the sense of touch, ***grey*** with visual perception, and ***mizzling*** with auditory perception. This vividly portrays a cold and grey afternoon in November, allowing the reader to immerse themselves in the setting. According to the theory of "functional equivalence," translating it as "*阴冷*" may deviate from the visual imagery conveyed in the literary work and fail to accurately capture the author's intended meaning. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to translate it as "*灰暗阴冷*" or "*灰冷*".

*b) when a backing wind brought a **granite** sky and a mizzling rain with it,*

呼啸的逆转风挟来一方**花岗岩似的**天空和一片迷迷蒙蒙的细雨。（王译）
风向逆转，天空呈现一种**花岗岩般的**灰色，细雨蒙蒙。（刘译）

1) literal translation

The original meaning of ***granite*** is ***a common type of felsic intrusive igneous rock that is granular and phaneritic intexture.*** In this context, the term ***granite sky*** is used as a metaphor, with no explicit structural diction. Both translators use a literal translation, which can provude the readers room for imagination and speculation and correspond to lexical equivalence.

*c) the gray of a winter evening seemed to have closed upon the **hills**,*

冬夜的苍白似乎已锁住绵绵的丘陵，给**群山**披上了雾织的坡风。（王译）
冬日青白的暮色似乎已经笼罩了**山丘**，把**它们**裹在迷雾之中。（刘译）

*The wind came in **gusts**,*

风**一股一股地钻进来**，（王译）
劲风**阵阵**，（刘译）

1) Amplification

In the two sentences where ***hills*** and ***gusts*** appear, it can be observed that the translator has employed the translation method of amplification to achieve a better equivalence. In order to accurately convey the meaning of the original text, when it is necessary to translate into the plural form, the use of expansion or overlapping construction methods can help to express the complete meaning. In this case, the words "*群*" and "*阵阵*" were added as limiting words to enhance the atmosphere and visual imagery.

*d) and there must have been a small **crack** in the roof*

车顶上**肯定有**小裂缝（王译）
车顶**肯定有**一道小裂隙（刘译）

1) Conversion of Words

Conversion is a method of transforming one part of speech into another. Among all the parts of speech, verbs are particularly favored. Providing that the word "**crack**" is translated into **"缝隙"** as a noun, it may appear rigid. Instead, if it is used as a verb, **"爆了道缝隙",** action and sound effects will be created. The clever use of the method can allow readers to better sense the context of instability and unease, and reflect the use of verbs in literature to create a specific form and fully embody the theory of functional equivalence.

*e)* Domestication and Foreignization

Wang Dongfeng tends to adopt the method of foreignization in translation, like skillfully personifying verbs, giving **"风"**,**"冬夜的苍白"** human actions and postures. Liu Guowei, on the other hand, is prone to use concise language and four-character words and reduplicated words that are more acceptable to Chinese readers, such as **"风向逆转"**,**"细雨蒙蒙"**,**"劲风阵阵".** The four-character structure has a strong sense of elegance and rhythm, which not only faithfully expresses the content of the novel in the translation, but also enhances the atmosphere of the novel. In a word, it fully embodies the balanced characteristics of the Chinese language structure and further strengthens the language effect.

3.1.2 Syntactic Equivalence

*a) It **would be** dark by four.*

**如此看来**, 四点钟天就要黑了。（王译）
**到了**四点，天就会黑下来。（刘译）

*there **must have been** a small crack in the roof,*

车顶上肯定有小裂缝,（王译）
车顶肯有**一道**小裂隙（刘译）

These two sentences both use the virtual voice to expresse speculation. Consequently, both sentences should be avoided extremely certain. Remarkably, it should be translated as **"看来，不到四点天就要黑了",及"想必车顶上肯定爆了条细缝",** so as to achieve the syntactic equivalence.

*b) when a **backing wind brought** a granite sky and a mizzling rain with it,*

**呼啸的逆转风挟来**一方花岗岩似的天空和一片迷迷蒙蒙的细雨。（王译）
**风向逆转**，天空呈现一种花岗岩般的灰色，细雨蒙蒙。（刘译）

In English, a word may have different collocation characteristics, an the method of literal translation can sometimes result in vague sentences. Nevertheless, if the word is broken down and forms an independent component in Chinese, it can make the sentence more fluent. In terms of language expression, English tends to use abstract nouns such as adjectives and nouns, while Chinese tends to use verbs and adjectives. Both translation methods have their own characteristics. Wang advocates adopting the method of alienation for expressions in the original text that do not conform to the Chinese expression habits but have specific aesthetic and cultural values, in order to reflect the original flavor as much as possible (Wang Dongfeng, 2001). Liu, on the other hand, focuses on reader comprehensibility and uses sentence structures that are in line with Chinese habits.

3.1.3 Textual Equivalence

*The wind came in gusts, at times **shaking** the coach as it traveled round the bend of the road, and in the **exposed places** on the high ground it blew with such force that the whole body of the coach **trembled and swayed**, **rocking** between the high wheels **like** a drunken man.*

风**一股一股地钻进来**,每每在车子驶经弯道时**摇撼着车身**。行至无遮无掩的高处,马车会在狂风的吹打下,**哆哆嗦嗦**,**跟跟跄跄**。车厢在高高的车轮之向像醉汉一样摇摇晃晃。（王译）
**劲风阵阵**，马车拐弯时，风时而将马车吹得**摇晃**起来。在高地无遮无拦的地方，大风吹得整个车身**震颤**、**摇摆**，在高高的轮子上晃动，活像一个醉鬼。（刘译）

This chapter fully embodies the theory of functional equivalence, in which the translation does not seek a rigid correspondence between the textual surfaces, but rather a functional equivalence between the two languages. In the original text, the author used several verbs that are close in meaning but slightly different in specific connotations. Both translators use different words to depict their English translations clearly and completely convey the meaning of the original text, with more concise statements, which is a perfect presentation of Naida's theory of equivalence.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Guided by Naida's theory of functional equivalence, this paper presents a comparative analysis of two Chinese translations by Wang Dongfeng and Liu Guowei.

It is found that both translators have successfully achieved functional equivalence by adopting different translation strategies. Wang Dongfeng makes the best use of foreignization and maintains the original translations of many slang terms, such as "耗子强"-"有猫腻", to encourage readers to embrace the differences between English and Chinese cultures, and his expressions are more appropriate to the beauty of form. Liu Guowei translator tends to naturalise, translating the original text into expressions familiar to the target readers and in line with the reading habits of contemporary young readers, such as four-word idioms, with easy to read, natural and concise language style.

Through the case analysis on the functional equivalence of the environmental portrayal of *Jamaica Inn*, we can grasp the role of the functional equivalence theory in enhancing the quality of literary translation, which is also critical for boosting the readers' understanding of the translated text. Different translation strategies also have a certain impact on the translation effect.

Due to the limitation of space, only a few typical examples of *Jamaica Inn* have been selected in this paper. And owing to the author's professional knowledge and time constraints, some of the analyses are not detailed or accurate enough, which may not be able to draw a truly scientific and convincing conclusion. Hence, in the future research, if time permits, it is hoped to have a more detailed and comprehensive study.

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