

# An Analysis on English Versions of “The Yueyang Tower”

Ping Zhang<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> College of Culture and Tourism, Sichuan University of Culture and Arts, Mianyang 621000, China  
\*Corresponding author

**Abstract:** “The Yueyang Tower” is one of the outstanding representatives of ancient Chinese prose. There are various English versions with their own characteristics. However, “truthfulness”, that is, reproducing the source text and correctly conveying the author’s meaning, should be given the first priority. This paper analyzes how the two English versions of “The Yueyang Tower” translated by Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie, and Luo Jingguo realize the culture equivalence from the perspective of “truthfulness”. It’s found that the two translations have their own advantages and disadvantages. This paper will provide a reference material to help foreigners comprehend Chinese classics.

**Keywords:** “The Yueyang Tower”; Yang Xianyi; Luo Jingguo; “truthfulness”

## 1. Introduction

“The Yueyang Tower” is an ancient masterpiece written by Fan Zhongyan, an outstanding writer in the Northern Song Dynasty. According to incomplete statistics, there were about 220 academic papers published on this topic between 1960 and 2014 (Gong Fanny, 2014), and its research value can be reflected. There are also many translations of Yueyang Lou Ji. This paper selects two English translations of Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Yang) and Luo Jingguo (Luo), and analyzes the translation from the perspective of the “truthfulness” of “truthfulness, goodness and beauty” by Zhang Jin’s *Principles of Literary Translation*.

“Truthfulness” serves as the foundation of “goodness” and “beauty”, that is, it is necessary to ensure that the translation should be faithful to the original text, so that the readers of the translation can truly understand what the original author wants to convey. What is the “truthfulness” of “truthfulness, goodness and beauty”? The authenticity of literary translation is mainly manifested in the unity of social truth, detail truth and artistic truth. In literary works, social authenticity mainly has two levels, namely, the objective level to reflect the reality of social life and the subjective level to express the original author’s understanding and evaluation of social life. Social reality, detailed reality and artistic reality complement each other, and the original style reflected in social reality also demonstrates the artistic reality to a certain extent. (Zhang Jin, 1987)

## 2. The Comparison between Two English Versions

The text of “The Yueyang Tower” covers narration, depiction of scenery, and emotion expression. Therefore, this paper will be based on “truthfulness, goodness and beauty” respectively to discuss these three levels.

### 2.1 About Narration

The background of this article is that in 1044, Teng Zijing, who was in the same year as Fan Zhongyan, was relegated to the position of magistrate of Yuezhou due to being falsely accused. There, Teng Zijing presided over the reconstruction of Yueyang Tower and asked Fan Zhongyan to write a note for it (Zhang Yue, 2015). In terms of this background, it is translated into different versions. “In the spring of the fourth year of the reign of Qingli, Teng Zijing was banished from the capital to be governor of Baling Prefecture.(By Yang) ”, “In the spring of the fourth year of Qingli, Teng Zijing was exiled to Baling Prefecture to be the prefect there.(By Luo)”

In the original text, Fan Zhongyan explained the background of the creation in one sentence. It can

be clearly seen that the time and details of “Teng Zijing’s suffering” are explained in the two translation versions. However, there are somewhat difference between the two versions of the translation of “Balingjun”. “perfect” refers to a local administrative area (in France, Italy, Japan, etc); the province, which equals to “the governor of some Prefecture”, so the translation of “Balingjun” into “the governor of Baling Prefecture” is advised. In the principle of “truthfulness, goodness and beauty”, social reality is required, not only to reproduce the social life of the original text, but also to reveal the essential characteristics of the social life of the original work. Both Yang’s and Luo’s translations faithfully reproduce the social background of the original works.

## 2.2 About Depiction of Scenery

In the source text, cloudy and sunny scenery is described with some short sentences of antithetical parallelism.

Table 1 The Description of Rain and Shine in Two English Versions

Title	Yueyang Pavilion	The Yueyang Tower
Translator	Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie	Luo Jingguo
The Scenery of Rain	incessant rain; bad weather; angrily; hurl; collapse; splinter; darkens;	wet weather; Chilly; scarcely; collapsed; broken; dark; cry
The Scenery of Shine	mild and bright; azure; above and below stretches before your eyes for myriads of li; glimmering silk; luxuriant and green; vast expanse and bright; gold and silent shadows; glimmer like jade; sheer joy	azure; a vast expanse of blue; merrily; sweet-smelling; lush and green; glorious; brightness glistening with golden light; jade; delightful

In terms of sentence pattern, Yang’s translation uses parallel sentences to outline the scenery of rain or shine with four “when” in succession. Thus, the sentence pattern has a strong sense of rhythm and is full of momentum, which is more in line with the writing style of the original text. However, Luo’s translation is just spreading out, which is rather weak. In terms of scenery description, Yang’s translation is the closest to the original one. For example, Yang describes the weather with “incessant rain” and “bad weather” to have a vivid sense of image, allowing people to be personally on the scene of terrible environment. In this way, the bad mood is shown in the writing. By contrast, “wet weather” is only used to make people feel the humidity of the weather, but can not deeply experience the unhappiness caused by the bad weather. What’s more, regarding the shining scenery, the choice of words in the two translations is quite similar, which expresses the pleasure that the bright scenery brings to people. “Above and below stretches before your eyes for myriads of Li” is closer to the exaggerated expression in the original text. Let the reader can not help but produce a kind of immersive feeling, a clear sky, a good mood. Therefore, Yang’s translation version shows the style of the original text.

In the principle of “truthfulness, goodness and beauty”, the details are required to follow the “sameness”, that is, to realize the identity of image content and logic content from the original text to the translation. In the above comparison, the two versions maintain the identity with the original.

## 2.3 About Emotion Expression

In “The Yueyang Tower”, there is a pair of contrast about “*bei* (sorrow)” and “*le* (happiness)”.

Table 2 The Description of “*bei* (sorrow)” and “*le* (happiness)” in Two English Versions

Title	Yueyang Pavilion	The Yueyang Tower
Translator	Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie	Luo Jingguo
<i>bei</i> (sorrow)	a longing for home; nursing a feeling of bitterness; agitation; despair	nostalgia for the imperial court and his home; fears; pain
<i>le</i> (happiness)	freedom; ease; delighted	spiritual uplift; greatest happiness

In the comparison of the translated versions, we need to accurately grasp the so-called “*bei*” and “*le*” in the original work. What is “*bei*”? What is “*le*”? On Yang’s translation of “a longing for home”, nursing a feeling of bitterness, pain or despair, etc., conveys different kinds of pain. As to the translation by Luo, it exhibits “the memory of the imperial court and home, the fear of slander, the pain caused by the scene”. According to *Notes of Proses of the Past Dynasties*, “it explains the theme of this

prose that “this article expresses the sorrow and the happiness, showing that he still adheres to the ideal and cares about the state of politics in the case of being slandered. This is not only to spur himself on, but also to encourage Teng Zijing.” (p.606) Meanwhile, according to historical records, Teng Zijing was condemned to Yuezhou for embezzlement of public funds. However, he did not get depressed and rebuilt the Yueyang Tower instead. (Wang Juyan, 2015) With the basis of this analysis, for one thing, Teng Zijing and Fan Zhongyan are not the ones who are afraid of slander. Second, they are concerned about the world and state affairs, so their emotions will still have sentimentally attached to the imperial court, hoping to realize their lofty ideals here. Therefore, both Yang’s and Luo’s version both have their own strengths. Yang’s “sorrow” does not show feelings for the court, and Luo’s “fear” brought about by slander may be incomplete. With regard to “le (spiritual uplift)”, Yang’s translation version means “freedom” and “ease”, while Luo is translated into “spiritual uplift”. The emotion of “le” comes from the beautiful scene. “uplift” means “a feeling of hope and happiness”, which couldn’t totally exhibit the author’s emotion of “freedom” and “ease”.

The faithfulness of art requires the translator to follow the description of the original text and mobilize the senses to feel the emotions of the original work. In “The Yueyang Tower”, there are several interjections, and the translation of interjections also varies from Yang to Luo. In Yang’s translation, the interjection are not translated. Should the interjection be translated or not?

Interjection is used to express the feelings of joy, anger, sorrow and others when expressing feelings. It has no practical meaning, but it can make the audience feel their inner voice and achieve emotional resonance. According to Liu Quanfu’s *Comparative Study of Chinese and English Interjections* (Liu Quanfu, 1996), Fan Zhongyan aims to express that “If there were no such person, who would have the same mind with me?” with the aid of the interjection. Therefore, Luo Jingguo translated these interjections into “Ah!” and “Alas!” which also express a variety of emotions, such as excitement, joy, astonishment, surprise, disgust, ridicule, annoyance, sigh, dissatisfaction, and complaint, etc. Therefore, the English version by Luo Jingguo makes foreign readers easier to accept and understand the emotions the author was intended to convey. “Alas!” also contains a sigh of regret in the source text that he worried about the bosom. If there is no bosom friend when the sigh just coincide. Therefore, it is necessary to translate the interjection in this text, as a way to create an emotional response.

### 3. Discussion

From the “truthfulness” of “truthfulness, goodness and beauty”, this paper analyzes Yang’s and Luo’s translation versions of “The Yueyang Tower” in terms of narration, depiction of scenery and emotion expression, and it can be seen that each version has its own advantages from different perspectives of understanding. Therefore, for the foreigner who have deep love for the Chinese culture, especially the Chinese classics, it is advised to refer to different English versions as a way to fully and deeply explore the source text.

### References

- [1] Gong Fanni. Review of “The Yueyang Tower” since the 20th Century [J]. *Journal of Jixi University*, 2014, 14(11), p. 104.
- [2] Zhang Jin. *Principles of Literary Translation* [M]. Henan: Henan University Press, 1987, p. 52.
- [3] Zhang Yue, Zhang Ling. Appreciation of the English Translation Version of “The Yueyang Tower” by Luo Jingguo [J]. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, (11), 2015, p.50.
- [4] A S Hornby. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s English - Chinese Dictionary (Seventh Edition)* [M]. London: Oxford University Press, p. 1348, 1946.
- [5] Beijing Normal University. *Notes of Proses of the Past Dynasties* [M]. Beijing: Beijing Press, 1979, p.606.
- [6] Wang Juyan, Su Sihan. Review of “The Yueyang Tower” [J]. *Journal of Suihua University*, 2015, 35(9), p. 59.
- [7] Liu Quanfu. *Translation of English and Chinese Interjections* [J]. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, 1996, (4), 96-73.