

Rational Means and Ends: Translator's Creative and Protective Communication of Endangered Tui Opera

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Abstract: Amid the globalization, the cultural exchanges among countries are gaining momentum. The frequent cultural communication is also a natural selection and elimination of cultural elements of human beings. Due to many reasons, some local traditional cultures might be marginalized and extinct. As crystallized form of human culture and civilization, operas in modern society really need efforts for protection and inheritance. The international communication of operas, especially the endangered ones, demand the translator's wisdom and dedication. The translator's efforts should be made with rational means and ends. Located in relatively underdeveloped region, Tui Opera is struggling for survival. Its translation and international communication require adaptation and selection by translators, placing the translator at the center of translation activities and granting him more autonomy in translation. Based on the theory of translator's purpose and behavior, this paper discusses the rational purpose of the opera publicity and creative behaviors at different levels to secure the survival and growth of endangered local operas.

Keywords: Endangered Operas; Tui Opera; Translator's Purpose; Translator's Behavior; Communication

1. Introduction

With rapid economic growth, China now attaches great importance to the protection and revitalization of its local cultures. However, the real effect of the international communication of local Chinese cultures still remains obscure. The efficiency of the publicity work is far from satisfactory^[1]. There are many reasons leading to this disappointing phenomenon. One important but invisible cause is that the role of translator has been undervalued in the undertakings of global popularization of Chinese culture. Among different cultural types, local operas, rich in both visual and audial information, are a vital record of regional civilization. China is a vast country with a long history of operas. However, in modern society, operas fall behind the fast pace of social progress. Some of those operas are almost on the verge of extinction. For example, in 1950s, there are over 370 operas all over China, but a decade later only 320 were left. By 2010, the number shrank to around 250^[2].

Due to language constraints and limited number of translators interested in opera translation, Chinese operas make weak voice on the international stage. The related academic research on the international of local operas is also very limited. The previous research neglects explorations on the rational purpose and behaviors of the translators. Most of opera-related studies are focused on some mainstream operas like Beijing opera. The weak ones, especially those endangered ones, have remained beyond attention for long. This paper rivets its focus on the international communication of the endangered opera and takes Tui Opera as an example. It aims to find out some intrinsic features on the rational purpose and behaviors of the translator through literature review and case analysis. The discussion part in the paper can offer some guidance on the protection and inheritance of local operas from the perspective of translation and communication. Meanwhile, the paper itself also enriches the current research fruits of the translator's purpose and behavior by extending the research scope to opera translation.

2. Endangered Operas and their Inheritance

Since the last decade of 20th century, influenced by the cultural turn of translation studies, researches on the translation strategies of local cultures have become a trend. Opera translation was a minor branch of cultural translation studies. Up to now, some scholars and researchers have made

explorations on definition and features of endangered operas from different perspectives. For example, some scholars proposed criteria to identify and determine the endangered operas. The endangered opera should be long enough in history and rich in cultural connotation. The threat confronting the opera must be real and imminent. The opera should also be alive, which means that it is still supported by at least one or two troupes^[3]. Besides, the endangered opera also features the potential risk of the opera's extinction and the constant influence of the opera on people's life, thoughts and values are major features of the endangered opera^[4]. In 2021, the Ministry of China and Tourism issued a Notice on Protective Work of Performance of Local Endangered Operas and released a list of 170 endangered operas^[5]. The past forty years witnessed the rapid rise of China and also the fast decline of Chinese operas. Many Chinese local operas have lost their living space and gone extinct during the globalization. Fortunately, thanks to intensified consciousness of cultural heritage protection, urgent calls for immediate protection and inheritance of local operas, especially endangered ones, have been made, and concrete work has been done. As some scholars pointed, translation is a good and efficient way to protect the local culture. For underprivileged cultures, the international communication might be a good choice when squeezed by the mainstream culture in its mother country^[6]. In the process of the translation for the sake of international communication, the value of endangered operas could be rediscovered; its connotation could be further enriched and its influence could be extended. The international communication might lead to its revitalized craze at home. In some sense, the rejuvenation of endangered operas greatly depends on the efforts and intention of the translator instead of the original writer^[7].

The most common and efficient way of protecting and inheriting endangered operas is performances by local troupes^[8]. However, incomplete historical accumulation, unclear aesthetic features, unrealistic design and development plan as well as inappropriate publicity measures have seriously checked the development of local endangered operas. What's worse, lack of theoretical guidance, insufficient intelligent support, imperfect inheritance mechanism and fading social memory have also contributed to declination of endangered operas^[9].

The demise of a local opera will trigger the collapse of local identity among local residents and also lead to the shattering of cultural diversity, bringing about unfathomable risks to local culture as a whole. As for the declination of local operas, there are many reasons. It is not a scientific attitude to attribute the regression to loss of vitality. The strength and influence of local operas is largely related to the local economies. Besides, some endangered operas might be disconnected to the internet and social media, and gradually lost their living space in this competitive world. The protection and inheritance of the endangered opera means a lot of work on different fronts. From the perspective of translation study, the international communication of endangered operas through translation is a wise option, since translation is a process of the revitalization of the source language text and source language culture. The theory of translator's behavior and purpose has emancipated the translator and entrusted him with great autonomy. Guided by the theory, the translation as an activity will inject new life into the decaying local operas.

3. Tui Opera: An Endangered Local Opera in the Huai River Valley

Tui Opera, initially named as "four-line Tuizi", is one of traditional local operas in Anhui Province. Born in Fengtai county and nurtured along the Huai River, Tui Opera used to function as the back-stage opera performance for Huagudeng(Flower Drum Song) and later grew as an independent opera incorporating folk songs, dramas and folk art forms^[10]. The opera gained its foothold in the market in 1930s and reached a boom in 1970s. However, in 1990s impacted by the surge of modern entertainments like gala and TV programs, the opera, like its peers nationwide, started to decline. Fortunately, in recent years, scholars and researchers have redoubled their explorations on Tui Opera from the perspectives of melodies, lyrics, the plot design, the rhyme as well as the intonation^[11]. With the advent of the 21st century, revival of traditional cultures and salvation of endangered ones have garnered more attention from all walks of life; redoubled efforts have been paid to publicity and communication of Tui Opera^[12]. In November 2011, Tui Opera was added into the protection list of local operas at the 25th session by the 9th Anhui NPC Standing Committee. In 2009, Tui Opera research institute was established in Huainan Normal University, marking a milestone in systematic and specialized study on the opera. One year later, the running of China Tui Opera website initiated its large-scaled popularization at home and abroad. According to Baidu, a popular Chinese online search engine, the search result of Tui Opera amounts to 7,720,000^[13], while that of Peking Opera reaches 100,000,000 at the same time^[14]. Therefore, despite of much protection work done, Tui Opera is still

very weak, struggling on the verge of extinction. Up to date, the opera is supported by just one state-funded troupe and the performance of the opera remains irregular^[15]. As mentioned above, there are few researches on the protection and publicity of Chinese endangered operas from the angle of language and cultural translation, let alone Tui Opera.

4. Translator's behavior

Christine Nord once defined translation as an intentional interaction to change the existing state of affairs. The translator's intention might differ from those of the original sender or producer of the text^[16]. Meanwhile, translation as a purposeful act is also influenced by many uncertainties, which makes the translation study meaningful and sensible. Those uncertainties challenge, and, at the same time, empower the translator, making translation an art as well as an accelerator of social progress. According to Mark Shuttleworth, translation action is a systematic and purposeful deed, covering word-to-word transferring, paraphrasing and reediting. Furthermore, the role of the translator is also diversified. The translator can be the target text writer, the coordinator among stakeholders of the translation, the manipulator of cultures and the marketer of the target text. A successful translation activity hinges on the wise execution of the translator's social roles. On the contrary, if he abuses his power, the translation can be used as a tool to meet the translator's personal desires^[17]. The translation activity might end with a loss or even a disaster.

From the beginning of this century, Chinese scholars have also made some studies on the translator's action. Some scholars argue for a holistic study between the translator and the ecological environment of the translation, holding that translation should be purposeful and meaningful. The purposeful act can be comprehended from two angles: firstly, before the translation, a purpose at the macro-level predicts the final result of the translation and regulates the operation. In this sense, the purpose also reflects the intention of other parties engaged in the translation; secondly, at the micro-level, the specific translation tactics adopted are guided by the translator's purpose though it might also be influenced by others^[18]. Some scholars also focus on the differentiation of translation action, arguing translator's behavior might be the best word to describe the translation process. The translation behavior can be understood in both broad and narrow senses. The former covers both traditional translation in linguistic sense and translation-related acts with some social roles and beyond the linguistic act. The latter is restricted to the translation act in conventional sense which means the translator only takes care of the information transfer between two languages^[19]. Obviously, previous researches on the translator's purpose and his behavior send a clear signal that the translator in this information age should undertake more tasks than his predecessor and correspondingly, more freedom has been granted to the translator for greater creativity and larger roles in social development.

5. Means and Ends: Translator's Creative Behavior in the International Communication of Tui Opera

5.1 Translator's Creative Behavior on Motivation

In translation, motivations behind a translator's behavior can be divided into two types: active and passive. However, the active motivation can not always guarantee the successful performance of the translator and a satisfactory result of the translation. For instance, if the translator's motivation goes against the reality, the translation can hardly be smooth or successful. To be specific, if the translator ignores the receptivity of the target language receivers or neglects the nature of translation and communication of operas, the international publicity and communication of local operas will be obstructed and the revival of endangered operas will be impossible. What is more, in terms of loyalty to the source language text, the translator's motivation also matters. When he stays too close to the source text, the translated version might be too far for the target language receivers to understand. On the contrary, if the translator blindly caters to the target language receivers, the translated opera might be distorted and lose its original flavor. On the international communication of Tui Opera, the very purpose of the communication is to spread the opera afar and ensure its revival on a world stage, since, in the midst of globalization and acculturation, its growth and popularity across the world can lead to a new round of development at home. Actually, in recent years, governments, NGOs and research institutions have recognized the urgency and necessity of globalization of Tui Opera and taken actions to achieve the goal. In the process of translation, the translator should be very careful in selecting the operas to be translated. The selected operas should respond to the target language receivers' interest and

taste, making them feel their needs to be met and their voice to be heard. Meanwhile the selection of translated operas should also be executed in steps. At the very beginning, operas with long history and rich culture can be selected as the first batch. When the target receiver base reach to a certain scale, the operas with modern theme and complex concepts can be selected for translation and communication.

The motivation is also reflected on the translator's judgement on the text type of the opera. According to the text typology theory by Katharina Reiss, the text type and the translation are intricately connected. For the translation of informative text, the content is the focus; for expressive text, the highlight of the translation should fall on creative composition and aesthetics, while the translation of vocative text intends to encourage the target readers to take actions. Later, Reiss supplemented a fourth category, audio-visual texts, which can include all the other categories and heavily rely on audio-visual forms of expression for full realization. Reiss further used the term multi-medial to substitute audio-medial so that those visual materials without acoustic features can be incorporated [20]. As typical audio-medial text, the translation of operas should depend on the possibilities of expression inherent in the human voice. The translator can adopt interplay, rhythm, antithesis and other rhetorical devices to make the target text vivid and enticing [21].

5.2 Translator's Creative Behaviour on Culture

As we all know, Chinese and English differ greatly not only phonetically, lexically and syntactically, but more importantly in language sense and culture. Those language and cultural differences are magnified in the opera translation, since the opera is rich in culture and diversified in linguistic expression. As a result, in the opera translation, the translator should take some creative tactics to overcome language barriers and ensure the communication goals achieved. To make it more specific, this study selects some examples and illustrates the translator's purposeful and creative behaviors from the angle of language and culture.

5.2.1 Deletion

Language as a carrier of its culture is used to convey messages. The words, phrases, sentences are identities of a culture. Sometimes, we have to admit that translation challenges seemingly caused by linguistic difference between two languages can be attributed to untranslatable cultural differences. In those cases, if those differences do not play a major part in information communication, and the deletion of the corresponding words, phrases and structures do not cause major meaning loss or misunderstanding, the deletion will be a good choice for the translator.

5.2.2 Supplementation

In opera translation, the source language text is mainly presented via subtitles. Due to language differences, the text meaning complete in one language might seem to be short of sense in the other and additional words and phrases should be added to make the target text more understandable. In such cases the translator's purposeful addition seems to be necessary and helpful.

5.2.3 Replacement

Replacement occurs when the original language expression in the source language text can not be literally translated into the target language and the corresponding expression in the target language can be found. Such cases are often found in idioms where the original image and words, if literally translated, will cause confusion and low efficiency. However, since idioms reflect the general concepts of a culture and those common concepts are shared between cultures, and it is very possible to find the counterpart of those idioms in the target language.

5.2.4 Annotation

Unlike other types of translation, opera translation often involves intersemiotic transferring, which means the translator should take great care in dealing with the visual messages conveyed through body movements like gestures and facial expressions. Therefore, the cultural connotation of those visual messages, if not fully revealed, might block the understanding of the audience. To explain and translate those visual information, annotation should be added behind the translated line to offer the additional cultural information for the audience.

5.2.5 Translation with Explanation

Different from addition, translation with explanation happens when the cultural gap can not be bridged by the word-to-word translation. To solve the problem, the translator should give up the

attempt to seek word-level equivalence and offer additional information to help the target audience better understand the cultural information.

6. Conclusions

Opera is the crystallization of human civilization, and reflects the history, the custom and the culture of a certain region. Its protection and inheritance are of great significance to the development of regional culture. The communication and publicity are by no means a single task for translators alone, but translators will play an essential role in the process. Opera translation, different from other types of translation, calls for great care and thorough consideration of the translator. At present, there are scarce research and practice on this field. The mature experience and strategies collected from literature translation and non-literature translation might not be 100% applicable to opera translation. The Tui Opera, together with other local endangered operas, carries rich cultural and historical elements, which will pose challenges for both translation and communication. The translator must give full play to their autonomy and creation, orientate his motivation towards the reality of the translation and communication, take purposeful acts on adjustment and selection, and inject vitality into endangered operas to secure its revitalization and popularity worldwide.

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