

Essay Translation from the Perspective of Translation Ethics—A Comparative Study of Two English Versions of ‘Cong Cong’

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Abstract: Translation Ethics was first mentioned by Anthoine Berman in 1980s. Apart from the traditional four translation ethics models, representation, service, communication and norm-based, Andrew Chesterman proposed the fifth, commitment, in a paper named *Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath* in 2001. ‘Cong Cong’ is a famous essay written by Zhu Ziqing, a writer, essayist and democracy fighter in China. This paper tries to make an analysis of the two English versions of ‘Cong Cong’ from the perspective of Chesterman’s translation ethics, to find out what translation techniques did the two translators use to show translation ethics, so as to provide a new perspective of essay translation.

Keywords: ‘Cong Cong’; Translation Ethics; Chesterman

1. Introduction

1.1 ‘Cong Cong’

‘Cong Cong’ is a famous essay written by Zhu Ziqing with a great reputation, this essay is a quintessential one when it comes to the introduction of essay. In addition, it is selected as the Chinese sixth-grade students’ textbook. The whole article is closely related to its title, ‘Cong Cong’, which means the haste of time. With exquisite description of the fleeing time’s trace, this article expressed the writer’s forgiveness of the passing time.

This essay is finished in March 1922, during which the May Fourth Movement is in its fall. Facing the upset reality, the youngsters with new knowledge are still busy working for their business of saving the country and asking for progression. They didn’t stop their pace though with great pressure from both politics and the old thoughts. So as Zhu Ziqing. The grim reality upset him but he didn’t give way to the reality.

1.2 Zhu Ziqing

Known as China’s famous essayist, poet and educator, Zhu Ziqing (November 22, 1898 - August 12, 1948), originally named Zhu Zihua, was a pioneering literature figure in pushing forward the country’s modernism in the early 20th century. His widely acclaimed essays include *The Back Sight of My Father*, *Moonlight over the Lotus Pond* and *Green*, some of which are excerpted in students’ textbooks.

Zhu is always regarded as a patriotic scholar, who strongly opposed the country’s Civil War (1945-1949) and refused to receive the relief food distributed by the United States. He died in serious illness and poverty at the age of 50.

2. Translation Ethics

2.1 Andrew Chesterman

Andrew Peter Clement Chesterman (born in 1946) is an English scholar based in Finland. He is best known for his work in Translation Studies and was Professor of Multilingual Communication at the University of Helsinki from 2002 to 2010.

Chesterman was CETRA Professor in 1999 (Catholic University of Leuven), a member of the Executive Board of the European Society for Translation Studies (EST) from 1998 to 2004, and a member

of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Center of Translation Studies (University of Vienna) from 2007 to 2010. He has been a member of the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters since 2005 and a Knight, First Class, of the Order of the White Rose of Finland since 2008.

2.2 Translation Ethics

Translation Ethics was first mentioned by Anthoine Berman in 1980s. Antony Pym and Lawrence Venuti had made great contribution to its development. Apart from the traditional four translation ethics models, representation, service, communication and norm-based, Andrew Chesterman proposed the fifth, commitment, in a paper named *Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath* in 2001. This part will mainly explain the five models of translation ethics in view of Chesterman.

2.2.1 Ethics of representation

This model of translation ethics goes way back to the ideal of the faithful interpreter, and to the translation of sacred texts. The ethical imperative is to represent the source text, or the source author's intention, accurately, without adding, omitting or changing anything.

2.2.2 Ethics of service

This very different kind of approach is based on the concept of translation as a commercial service, performed for a client.

The word 'client' is interesting here, for this word in dictionary has three meanings: a person or organization using the services of a lawyer or other professional person or company; in computing it means (in a network) a desktop computer or workstation that is capable of obtaining information and applications from a server; and in ancient Rome, it means a plebeian under the protection of a patrician. And it comes to the question that to whom does the translator be responsible for? From the first explanation, we can take it as the common reader and the translation-asking organization. From the second explanation, we can take it as the subject on the other side of the computer (in modern netting world) with the need of translation. From the third explanation, we can take it as the weaker side in our society who need the help from the group with more financial competence, like the translation firm or the group with better translation ability, like the translators.

This is the kind of ethics that underlies (usually implicitly) much of the thinking on functional models of translation, especially those of Holze-Manttari and the skopos theorists.

2.2.3 Ethics of communication

The emphasis is not on representing the other but on communicating with him/her. In translation theory, the focus is naturally on communicating across linguistic or cultural boundaries.

2.2.4 Norm-based ethics

This model of translation ethics has arisen either explicitly or implicitly from descriptive translation studies. The norms represent expectations, mainly in the target culture, about what translations are supposed to be like in that culture at that time.

2.2.5 An ethics of commitment

Chesterman take commitment to be the glue that binds practitioners to the values of the practice. It is also a virtue, supporting the striving for excellence, the wanting to be a good translator. In addition, Chesterman imitated *The Hippocratic Oath* and proposed a *Hieronymic Oath* as a similar oath for professional translators.

3. An Analysis of the Translation Ethics in 'Cong Cong'

3.1 Ethics of Representation

In this section, there will be two parts of the comparative analysis of the two version translations of 'Cong Cong', one is the common part, which means that the translation of a certain sentence or phrase is to a great extent the same; the other is the translations of a certain phrase or sentence which have different forms.

3.1.1 *Translations of similar results*

Source text 1: 像针尖上的一滴水滴在大海里，轻轻悄悄地挪移了

Zhu's version:

Like a drop of water from the point of a needle disappearing into the ocean

Zhang's version:

Like a drop of water falling off a needle point into the ocean

Source text 2: 我掩着面叹息

Zhu's version:

I bury my face in my hands and heave a sigh.

Zhang's version:

I heave a sigh, my head buried in my hands.

From the two examples above, we can see that the notional words used in the two examples are almost the same, the difference just exists in the order of the expression, like the second example. While in the first example, the difference just lies in the verb 'disappearing', Zhu's version shows the process of '滴' with a verb, while Zhang used a preposition to show that.

3.1.2 *Different translations*

Source text 3: Cong Cong

Zhu's version: Rush

Zhang's version: Transient Days

Source text 4: 我不知道他们给了我多少日子；但我的手确乎是渐渐空虚了。

Zhu's version:

I do not know how many days I have been given to spend, but I do feel my hands are getting empty.

Zhang's version:

I don't know how many days I am entitled altogether, but my quota of them is undoubtedly wearing away.

Source text 5: 我的日子滴在时间的流里，没有声音，也没有影子。

Zhu's version:

My days are dripping into the stream of time, soundless, traceless.

Zhang's version:

My days are quietly dripping into the stream of time without leaving a trace.

The three examples selected from the source text are of different kinds and the translation techniques are also different. Example 3 is the title of this essay, while Zhu's version 'rush' means 'move with urgent haste', which gives emphasis on the speed; while Zhang's version 'transient days' means the haste of time, apart from the emphasis on the speed of loss, it restricts the range into the time of us human life.

There are two differences of the translation. The first is the translation of '我不知道', which seems pretty easy to explain, Zhang just give us the literal meaning of the four Chinese characters, while Zhu used 'do' to emphasize the extent of the writer's loneliness and hesitation, which shows the perplexity of the youngsters of that special time.

In the fifth example, the difference lies in the translation of '声音', Zhu's version is completely in accordance with the order of Zhu Ziqing, while Zhang puts '声音' forward, making it part of the 'stream of time', which made '没有声音', which means 'soundless', as the adverbial to modify the condition of 'dripping'. In the source text, '没有声音' is used to describe the passing time, not the verb, there seems to be a little difference as a result of this manipulation.

3.2 Ethics of Service

As mentioned above, the service refers to the relationship between the translator and the receiver, which may stand for a diversified group, from the reader to the one who pays for the translator's work. In this part, the analysis will focus on the receiver. The receivers of the two versions may be a little different, Zhu's version is mainly towards the academic scholars, which is published in *Chinese Translators Journals*, Zhang's translation is mainly to the students or the public, published in *Selected Modern Chinese Essays*, which is widely used as the reference book for the students who are preparing for translation exams.

Source text 6: 去的尽管去了, 来的尽管来着; 去来的中间, 又是怎样地匆匆呢?

Zhu's version:

Those that have gone have gone for good, those to come keep coming; yet in between, how swift is the shift, in such a rush?

Zhang's version:

What is gone is gone, what is come keeps coming. How swift is the transition in between!

Source text 7: 太阳他有脚啊, 轻轻悄悄地挪移了; 我也茫茫然跟着旋转。

Zhu's version:

The sun has feet, look, he is treading on, lightly and furtively; and I am caught blankly, in his revolution.

Zhang's version:

The sun has feet too, edging away softly and stealthily. And, without knowing it, I am already caught in its revolution.

The sentence selected as the sixth example is elegant. If a Chinese is asked to explain the meaning of this sentence, it would not be easy either, let alone a foreigner. To the translators, the first task is to make out the real meaning of this expression. In Zhu's version, he used 'for good' and 'keep coming' to show '尽管' in the source text, while Zhang didn't use any certain word or phrase to show '尽管'. The implied reader of Zhu's version is the academic scholars or the students who need the material for further academic research, so his translation emphasizes more on gracefulness and the accuracy of the translation. In Zhang's version, his translation tends to give emphasis to the accuracy of the translation. The implied reader of his work is the group who is mostly in the need of the preparation for translation tests, so the accuracy and the technique of translating accurately is his main pursuit.

The two translations in source text 7 are of great resemblance. Zhu's version added a 'look' in the translation, which makes it more vivid. Zhu and Zhang both chose the word 'revolution' to express the '旋转' in the source text. 'Revolution' mainly contains two meanings: a forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system; and an instance of revolving. This can be seen as a pun, apart from the literal meaning of the source text, this word also expressed the situation of that special period, during which the youngsters were in great depression.

3.3 Ethics of Communication

As Chesterman mentioned in his *Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath*, the emphasis of ethics of communication is not on representing the Other but on communicating with him/her. In translation theory, the focus is naturally on communicating across linguistic or cultural boundaries. The examples selected here are related to the translation of the cultural differences.

Source text 8: 于是—洗手的时候, 日子从水盆里过去; 吃饭的时候, 日子从饭碗里过去; 默默时, 便从凝然的双眼前过去。

Zhu's version:

Thus—the day flows away through the sink when I wash my hands, wears off in the bowl when I eat my meal, passes away before my day-dreaming gaze as I reflect in silence.

Zhang's version:

Thus the day flows away through the sink when I wash my hands; vanishes in the rice bowl when I

have my meal; passes away quietly before the fixed gaze of my eyes when I am lost in reverie.

In the eighth example, the translation of ‘饭碗’ is different. Zhu’s version is ‘bowl’, from the literal meaning, it is in accordance with the western expression. In Zhang’s version, he translated it into ‘rice bowl’, which added the cultural factor. As we all know, the staple food of the west is oats, bread and beef or something else, while in China, the rice is one of the staple foods which are frequently presented on our desk, to show the cultural difference, Zhang made a compensation.

3.4 Norm-based Ethics

As a great essay, this article has two difficulties. One is the style of this article, the other is the time, or the language. This essay is finished in 1922, almost one hundred years ago, even the modern Chinese is not so familiar with the language, let alone the foreigners. The translators should take these two factors into consideration in the process of translation.

Source text 9: 燕子去了，有再来的时候；杨柳枯了，有再青的时候；桃花谢了，有再开的时候。

Zhu’s version:

Swallows may have gone, but there is a time of return; willow trees may have died back, but there is a time of regreening; peach blossoms may have fallen, but they will bloom again.

Zhang’s version:

If swallows go away, they will come back again. If willows wither, they will turn green again. If peaches shed their blossoms, they will flower again.

Source text 10: 我不禁头涔涔而泪潸潸了。

Zhu’s version:

Already sweat is starting on my forehead, and tears welling up in my eyes.

Zhang’s version:

At the thought of this, sweat oozes from my forehead and tears trickle down my cheeks.

In the ninth example, there are three classical parallelism sentences. The techniques used here is different. In Zhu’s notes, he said that these three parallelism sentences are of great momentum. As a result, in the process of translation, he used the same sentence pattern. But the last one is changed in the case of monotony with too much repetition. In Zhang’s version, he also used the same sentence pattern to make the form resemble. Besides, he imitated Shelley’s sentence ‘If Winter comes, can Spring be far away’ to build the aura in source text.

In the tenth exam, the expression is literary, seldom do we speak in this way in the modern world. Zhu’s version is word-by-word translation, but his expression is more like the starting part of the sweat and tears. Zhang’s version contains some compensation. Zhang added ‘at the thought of this’ to make the logic more fluent.

3.5 Ethics of Commitment

The ethics of commitment is considered by Chesterman as the glue that binds practitioners to the values of the practice. It is also a virtue, supporting the striving for excellence, the wanting to be a good translator. It asks for the loyalty of the original text and the translator’s personal pursuit.

Source text 11: 在逃去如飞的日子里，在千门万户的世界里的我能做些什么呢？只有徘徊罢了，只有匆匆罢了；在八千多日的匆匆里，除徘徊外，又剩些什么呢？过去的日子如轻烟，被微风吹散了，如薄雾，被初阳蒸融了；我留着些什么痕迹呢？

Zhu’s version:

What can I do, in this bustling world, with my days flying in their escape? Nothing but to hesitate, to rush. What have I been doing in that eight-thousand-day rush, apart from hesitation? Those bygone days have been dispersed as smoke by a light wind, or evaporated as mist by the morning sun. what traces have I left behind me?

Zhang’s version:

Living in this world with its fleeting days and teeming millions, what can I do but waver and wander

and live a transient life? What have I been doing during the 8,000 fleeting days except wavering and wandering? The bygone days, like wisps of smoke, have been dispersed by gentle winds, and, like thin mists, have evaporated by the rising sun. what have I left behind?

Zhu's translation used more daily words while Zhang's translation is more elegant, there are more poetic expressions and more punctuations. No matter what the translation is, two translators both achieved the accuracy, and from the words, we readers can feel their pursuit of the elegance and better presentation of the work.

4. Conclusion

By using Chesterman's five translation models, this paper analyzed the techniques used in the two translations of 'Cong Cong'. The translation ethics contains five aspects: representation, service, communication, norm and commitment. In Chesterman's *The Proposal of Hieronymic Oath*, the initial purpose of the oath is to conclude the problems in translation studies about ethics, this theory also solves some problems in the practical translation. In this paper, this theory is used to analyze the translation techniques in the essay 'Cong Cong'.

This paper is just a small step to the study of translation ethics in essay translation, it would be a great honor if it could provide any inspiration to the scholars.

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