

“Regulated Transformation” of Languages between Texts: An Intertextual View of Translation

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Abstract: *In the context of globalization, translation as a bridge between languages has become increasingly complex and multidimensional. Inspired by the insufficient attention given to cultural and historical factors in existing research on translation processes, this paper adopts the methodology of intertextuality and views the translation process as a dialogue and negotiation between texts. The aim is to explore the language transformation and cultural mediation in the translation process through the theory of intertextuality. By introducing the methodology of intertextuality, translation is understood as an interaction between texts. Language is regarded as the 'trace' of translation process, and how translation achieves adjustment and conversion at the language level is discussed. The perspective is expanded to include translated texts in cultural systems, examining the role of translation in cultural inheritance and communication. An analysis of historical translations is conducted to validate the theoretical viewpoints. As part of the cultural system, translated texts are influenced by both the source language culture and the norms of the target language culture. Through the analysis of historical translations, we observe the changes and developments of translation in different historical periods, further confirming the applied value of the theory of intertextuality in translation studies.*

Keywords: *Regulated Transformation; Languages; Texts; The view of intertext; Translation*

1. Introduction

This paper is intended to study translation from the viewpoint of “intertextuality”. In the present post-modernism culture context, the turning of thinking paradigm and the initiation of the theory “intertextuality” will throw more light on translation studies. The author believes that translation is a type of transforming activity intertextualized with language, text, culture, history, and thinking. Viewed from this perspective, it is deemed that any translated text is a tissue in an immense network of complex, where the significance of each text unfolds through referring to each other. The nature of translation makes it possible and necessary to consider “intertextuality” a prominent perspective in translation studies. In this paper the author discusses the interrelation between translation and intertextuality from the history of translation practice, emphasizing on the exemplification regarding the change of language and the advancement of culture through translation practice. Going still further, the author applies the synchronic and diachronic models for analysis based upon the translated texts. The essay is composed in the hope of rendering a new dimension to translation studies and providing a new dimension for terminal meaning.

2. The Methodology of “Intertextuality”

The theory of “intertextuality” is suggested by Bakhtin’s Dialogism and constructed by Kristeva who is influenced by both structuralism and post-structuralism. As a matter of fact, it may appear that post-modernists develop their theories and approaches on the bases of structuralism, for each new methodological innovation presents itself as drawing on a distinct set of basic assumptions, which is similar to a kind of inheritance and success as well as variation and creation upon the former ground. As Guy Cook points out “one might argue that the former is a metaphorical description of the latter.”^[1] The interrelation between structuralism and post-structuralism is no exception. Likewise, “Modern” translation theory, the developing process of which is similar with that of current literary theory, begins with structuralism and reflects the proliferation of the age, since which, both the philosophy and the practice of translation are in constant motion and debate. Theories and methods influenced by

structuralism had been practiced as more objective approaches in the field of translation studies before they were criticized by post-modernists. Even in Saussure, the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign and the differential nature of meaning have embodied instability for the structure. So the movement of structural linguistics is heralded as a dawn of post-structuralism on the threshold of the twentieth century. In this sense, the post-structuralism are so called not because they have repudiated structuralism, but because they relocate part of it within its structural definition--and vice versa. As William Ray argues, "the most radical critical programs of the present day are less a departure than a continuation, less revolution than evolution." And it might be profoundly concluded that "their newness lies not in the ideas they propound, but in their attempt to implement both sides of a paradox at once."^[2]The case is true of Bakhtin's rejection of Saussure's theory.

Such a strategy is not devoid of translation studies. Obviously, it is time for scholars in that area to navigate "intertextuality" into their research process so as to render one more dimension to theoretical argumentation. This very speculation of intertextuality has already given much enlightenment to literature criticism, fostering a trend of investigation from the brand-new viewpoint, which is characteristic of Post-Structuralist and Deconstructionist. Susan Bassnett does a lot of investigations to free translation from the restriction of the old conventions governing and halting translation development. At the foundation of Derrida's thought, Susan Bassnett succeeds in opening the door for new, alternative approaches by breaking down misconceptions. Her theory serves to aid future collaboration. Though it is merely a first step, it now stands on the threshold of a very exciting new phase after modern translation theory evoked a long way since its structuralism beginning.

While meaning is concerned in the field of translation study, it is embodied with denotations and connotations much more extensive than Saussure's definition, much more being taken on through opposition, paradigmatic substitution, syntactic ordering, deletion, insertion, and transposition. It cannot be found in one single text, in isolation, nor can it be found in the simple relationship of one single text to the world. Rather, it can be found through its differences from or similarities to others. If a given text is not related to another system outside itself---language, or thought, or history, or any other intertextual element---then it seems to have no meaning other than itself, and the activity of translation becomes a dead end. Bassnett holds it true that all texts are seen to link to all other texts because no text can ever be completely free of those texts that precede and surround it in accordance with the tendency of translated text producers to be influenced by other texts they have experienced.

3. Language as "trace" in the Process of Translation

In translation, what is visible is language referring not to things, but to language itself. Viewed by deconstructionists, any translated text is a translation of another earlier translation and translated texts. The insight of "intertextuality" underlies such an approach. As a matter of fact, a large quantity of broad-minded scholars in translation study, especially those among whom Bassnett is a member, have turned their attentions to the resolution of such attributes as coherence, reflection, dissolving, and transformation of each text knitted in an infinite web of texts. Just as William Ray assumes, "one work takes another as its basis or point of departure and must be assimilated in relation to it".^[3] This viewpoint guides translation researches to an intertextual view, thus making it possible for us to spy from a translated text the traces or tissues of the former translated texts. Though By common sense, we consider translation as to transfer a text from one language into another, it is far from that too-simply-qualified one-way flow. Any translated work appears like a "tissue" or "trace" in the eternal flux of "intertextuality". It is not surprising that Derrida considers translation neither a mere copy nor an interpretation; instead, he deems it a form of "complement" that traces other texts.

Derrida advocates to substitute "translation" by a more intertextual notion --- transformation, for he stresses on the interaction of texts through unceasing intertextual activity such as difference,^[4] supplement, and dissemination(diffusion). One reason why Derrida favors the term "regulated transformation" over that of "translation" is that he thinks it is impossible to transport pure signifieds from one language to another. His argumentation goes like that: "Difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact, have never had, to deal with the "transport" of pure signifieds from one language to another, or even within the same language.^[5] In defining the term "trace", Derrida seems to suggest that the play of trace can never be presented, for as it is named, as one tries to stop its movement and grasp it, it disseminates, separates, and continues to move on, crossing over to another place. The action of translation is correspondingly a kind of word play, in which new avenues for further difference are

opened up, boundaries are extended, and further room for play is allowed.

Viewed from another perspective, with the adoption of Benjamin's argument, the "task" of translator is no less than to insure the survival of language and, by extension, the survival of life. By transforming the source text, the translator gives life to it, keeps it living on to a more and better level, so that as Derrida says, the translated text "lives beyond the means of the author".^[6] Translation, in this sense, is transformation that comes after and proceeds from the original that always contains another form for future survival. It is like that the text has an unending desire for life and a desire for translation. The structure, or in other words, the form of the will-be-translated text has more to do with a state of being incomplete in relation to future possibilities, or an openness that any static or definite version can never change.

Such open structure of the source text is filled in by translation, via which the original is modified, renewed, mutated, and transformed, at last, growing and maturing. Translation acts as a functional and effective intermediary to extend as well as enlarge language by transforming original texts in the source language, by transgressing the limits of the target language, finally making language grow into "pure language".

Very simply put, translation is a sequence of intertextual language usage procedures in which two linguistic levels, lexis and grammar, form a functional complex. Since linguistic utterances are not represented by just one linguistic sign as a rule, several signs must be combined together. Traces, marks, affinities of dissipated meaning of language relate to one another less in terms of copying or reproducing and more in terms of interactive play of transformation, by which meaning is rerouted or diverted. What does exist is a continuous chain of signification comprised of languages mutually supplementing each other in a constant state of transformational interplay. Sequentially, there have been some scholars who regard translation as language transformation by collaborating reading action and interpreting action, both of which are by themselves intertextual activities. In the vision of Post-modernists, translated texts together with original texts undergo ever-lasting shifting in the meshes of intertextual associations and interrelated meanings, the process of which is similar to a lively operation of difference. In this way, original meaning is somewhat "distorted", while a network of texts is revealed simultaneously, and interlingual communication is both enabled and prohibited paradoxically.

In this way, the conception of "intertextuality" has given rise to the notion that every text is in a sense a translation. More succinctly put, it is within, against, and across the pre-existent or surrounding textual elements, which relatively resemble the original text that the new textual "tissues" arises as the outcome of a set of transformations. This complete succession is not dissimilar to translation manipulation. It is not surprising for some Deconstructionists to claim the paradigm of "translations of translation" since they believe that every sign, every language, every text, or the like is in its essence, already a translation of firstly the non-verbal world and secondly the other sign, language, and text. Thus all translations are entangled into an intertextual history that is always transforming other translations. We therefore think of every act of translation as an infinite entwining transformation or an inextricable knot or mesh of relations, the summit of which can be seen from many altitudes. And every text in translation, the being translated or the translated, is referable to infinite coordinated axes, and it presents itself in infinite ways.

4. Translated Texts in the Cultural System

In the present age, more and more researchers are aware that translation study is not a phenomenon of language alone, but a complex of historical and cultural factors, which is impossible to isolate and to be isolated. People have been closely concerned with the relationship between individual texts and the wider cultural system within which those texts are produced, translated, and read. We are now in the domain of the sign, the semiotic, the culture, all of which are taken as the prime movers of pragmatic action and communicative interaction. The studying of interrelationship between culture and translation will open up not only the discourse of translation theory, but the exploration of receiving culture for possible social change through the practice of translation as well.

In his essay *"The Task of The Translator"*, Benjamin states that "translation ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages", for "in any translated work the languages themselves, supplemented and reconciled in their mode of signification, harmonize." He even asserts that "it is translation which catches the fire on the eternal life of the works and the perpetual renewal of language". Benjamin's pronouncement of "reconciliation of language"

makes clear the intertextual quality of languages through translation practice. One of the most persuasive examples is drawn from Bible translation, in the history of which, “each successive version drew on the work of previous translators, borrowing, amending, revising and correcting. In that age, Martin Luther once advised the would-be translator to apply translation as a vehicle to enrich the target language as well as to improve the source language. Likely, Chinese have owed greatly to translation of western texts in respect to language reformation, literary creation, academic investigation and so on.

The elaboration about language leads us into the contemplation upon cultural intertextuality reflected or reshaped by translation practice, which serves to usher in new concepts, new poetics, new genres, new devices, and new powers, etc. The positive aspect of translation can be of noted help in the innovation of a society and evolution of a culture. It is an undeniable fact that the accomplishment of cross-culture communication is benefited fundamentally by written translation or oral interpretation, especially at the commencement of culture contacts.

Notwithstanding, the ubiquitous “intertextuality” incidentally brings a variety of difficulties to translation practice. Taking literature translation for instance, one can not help but call to mind Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which must have depressed many translators since it “disturbed” the world. It is eccentrically ironic that a daring “intertextual” creation furnished by numerous unconventionally over-lapping signifieds and signifiers evokes a sharp conflict with a varying “intertextual” operation based on translator’s intertextual knowledge and semantic universe. As languages are always trapped in an intertextual labyrinth, referring backward and forward to “something else”, it is now high time for learners and scholars to greet the mission granted to them for the purpose of raising more theoretical breakthroughs so as to push translation work to a more fruitful field.

Turning back to Kristeva and her adherents, who insist on the diachronic and synchronic models of analysis for “intertextuality”, which contains a revision of specific historical context and a survey of contemporary interlocked context. Of course, such tactic is concerned not just with semiotic enquiry but with translation studies. In the presence of “trace” or “tissue”, the translated text functions as a mediating role to transfer meaning across culture and as well, throughout multiple historical traditions in a crisscross network of referable signals. To determine the formation, the meaning, and the function of translation, we need a rather effective pattern.

5. Diachronic Analyzing of Translation

Considered diachronically, each translated text plus its meanings descends itself from those prior to it, appropriating, distorting, and meanwhile feeding upon the future texts. Translations, therefore, are woven into a textual history that is always transforming terms, translating other translations.

It must be clear that the text, which is understood to be in a dialectical relationship with other texts, is at the same time located within a specific historical context. Translators and readers of the translated texts both are accommodating the intertextual reference on the basis of their previous experiences of encountering this type of text, or on the basis of the other performing elements for interpretation. Through the past, in the present, toward the future, the text is recognized to be threading its way in the network of intertextuality. Such intertextual view has advantage so far in that it has further viewed the construction of coherence as the interaction of no single isolated text with knowledge of the world around. It has taken account of knowledge of all other texts, and of the compel effects which intertextual resonance may have on the overall effect.

In respect to translation practice and theory, a continuous thread has been woven through the history of translation by the argument over the normative points of reference and the practical performance of translation. The situation is similar whether it is considered in the western countries or in China. Details of composition, of amendment, of debate remain intertextual through the development of history. Each late translated text is ensured to accept or inherit the spirit of those former texts.

Intertextuality can not be considered simply as a mechanical process, nor can it be understood as the mere inclusion of the occasional reference to another text. A text is not merely a combination of elements culled from other texts, and as a matter of fact, citations, references will be brought into a text for some reason. The nature of this intertextual relationship may be explained in terms of historic development.

In the post-modern context, terminal meaning is closely interrelated with translation studies. The time has come when a neologism “indetermanence” is explained and used in post-modernism. The term suggests a free play of “traces” called by Derrida or “tissues” named by Barthes. In the domain of

translation study, Derrida's "play of the trace" belongs not to translation which carries identifiable meaning across boundaries, but to a movement along an absent road, one that has disseminated or evaporated, of a voice which tells but cannot be captured, an echo disappearing as it is heard." And between the lines of translated texts, the play of the traces is perceived to transport and enclose, always revealing and concealing. Thereby, the stance of "original or unique creation" should be deconstructed, for such analyses create a new set of texts which may themselves be analyzed, initiating a process which is potentially infinite. In this interpretation, the attempt to establish a classic or canon or masterpiece is yet another attempt to bring the endless free play of signs and texts as traces or tissues to a halt. The proposed abstract centers are merely intending to close down the ungraspable interconnections, thus sliding down to another center analogous to a fundamentalist's God, the western tradition of logocentrism. According to Derrida, the linguistic system, the literature system, and the intertextual flux, with which translation is entangled, are comparable to bottomless chessboards, subjecting to endless, random, and unintentional developments.

As Barthes points out in his broader definition, intertextuality entails the view that texts are never totally original or particular to a given author. They are always dependent on the prior existence not only of clearly identifiable texts but also of general conditions of appropriateness that might govern the entire genres. The bound between opuses fades, any text is opening up to all the other texts, ready for being intertextualized. Actually, such thinking paradigm echoes against Derrida's "anti-logocentrism" resoundingly. The situation in translation study field is similar to it. Totally original creation of a translated text is impossible, neither is an absolutely novel construction of translation theory. Viewed from another perspective, no two translations are to be alike, as we all know, fragments of our individualistic readings will drift through our reading and our translating. Difference is built into the translation process, both on the level of the readers and that of the writers.

In this case, we should avoid settling problems in a way of severing time dimension from place dimension, or vice versa. All signifiers, all texts depend upon past and future, referring to their surrounding texts, which are incessantly crisscrossing. Insights concerning this intertextual view of translation are interrelated with a great deal of different disciplines like linguistics, literary criticism, communication theory, sociology, psychology, aesthetics, socio-semiotics, and cultural anthropology. That is really an attitude of "intertextuality".

Of course, there exists on the relative level a kind of stability of meaning, which is one of the causation of the existence of translation standard, the constitution of translation study, and the appreciation of translated text.

6. Conclusion

This paper is a cautious attempt to introduce and apply "intertextuality theory" in the hope of promoting translation studies and unfolding new vistas to the practice and theory of translation. Nevertheless, to accomplish such a job requires more exact and solid materials, part of which are left undiscussed. Nowadays, in the territory of translation studies, many scholars are broadening their investigation by bringing in a variety of available theories interrelated with it, and striking progress has been made on the avenue of interdisciplinary researches during these two decades.

Shed by the light of "intertextuality", the paper itself might be read less as a research paper and more as an act of translation in the broad sense.

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