

A Study of English Translation under Newmark's Theory of Text Categories: The Case of Lin Yutang's Translation of the Peach Blossoms

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Abstract: *As a masterpiece of ancient Chinese prose, The Peach Blossoms enjoys a high reputation in China. In recent years, with China's economic and social development as well as its international status, more and more attention has been paid to cultural propaganda. Based on Newmark's text-categories translation theory, this article analyzes the version translated by Lin Yutang and outlines the difficulties when translating this expressive text of literary works.*

Keywords: *Text-categories theory, The Peach Blossoms, Lin Yutang*

1. Introduction

With the development of China's society and economy as well as the improvement of its international status, cultural propaganda work is becoming more and more important. Chinese culture is vast and profound, leaving behind a wealth of ancient poems that can reflect the connotations of Chinese thoughts. It has become an important task for translators to make the world understand the culture of ancient Chinese poetry. *The Peach Blossoms* is a typical representative of ancient prose, which expresses the author's pursuit of a good life and dissatisfaction with reality through the depiction of the peaceful, peaceful, free and equal life in Taoyuan. Newmark's theory of text categories plays a very important role in the translation process and is very worthy of translators' reference. Based on this theory, Mr. Lin Yutang's translation of *The Peach Blossoms* is analyzed to provide reference for future translation practice.

2. Newmark's Translation Theory of Text Categories

In *Approaches to Translation* published in 1981, Newmark adopted Bühler's functional classification model of language and classified language into expressive, informational, and evocative functions. Based on this, text types can be divided into expressive, informative and evocative categories. Expressive texts are more subjective in content and take the author as the starting point to express his thoughts and feelings, such as literary works and autobiographies. Informative texts convey information steadily and focus on the objective content described by "language, non-literary works and academic papers. Evocative texts are human-centered and aim at infecting and influencing readers' behavior, such as notices, propaganda advertisements, etc.^[9]

According to the categories of text, Newmark proposed two translation methods, semantic translation and communicative translation. Semantic translation focuses on conveying the semantic content of the original text and reproducing the meaning of the context. Communicative translation focuses on the reader's understanding and response, and the effect of the translation on the reader of the translated text is as much as possible equivalent to the original.^[1] They are very different in many aspects, one objective and one subjective; one attaches importance to the original text and the other to the translated text. Newmark also pointed out that the translation method to be adopted in translation should be chosen according to different text categories, and specific analysis should be made to choose the most appropriate translation strategy in order to maximize translation efficiency and rationality.^[9]

3. Translation Methods Guided by Text Type Theory

The Peach Blossoms, as a typical expressive text, which is characterized by the author conveying his

point of view and subjective content. The original language is refined, but contains aesthetic elements. Therefore, the original language should be used as the foothold, and the semantic translation method should be adopted. However, considering that the original text is an ancient text, which is difficult to understand, it will be more effective to adopt a translation method that combines semantic translation as the main language and communicative translation as the supplement.

3.1. *Additional translation*

In order to translate the potential information in the original language and make the target language readers get the same feeling of original readers, translators often adopt addition. Addition refers to add some words and phrases that have their own meanings in the original language according to the grammatical structure, expression habits, semantic coherence and rhetorical needs of the target language. So as to express the meaning of the original more faithfully. The use of this method can make the original text smooth and natural.

Example 1: During the region of Taiyuan of Chin, there was a fisherman of Wuling. One day he was walking along a bank. After having a certain distance, he suddenly came Upon a peach grove.....

Chinese has many tight sentences with short and concise structures, and Chinese is a topic-based language. It is obvious that the subject is not prominent in Chinese. But English is the opposite, English is a subject-oriented language. In the translation, we can see that Mr. Lin Yutang used the usual expression “there be” in the first sentence to introduce the subject, fisherman. He also used “he” to add the subject in the subsequent sentences, which makes the English sentence structure complete and easy to understand.^[8]

Example 2: They said that their ancestors had come here as refugees to escape from the tyranny of Tsin Shih-huang (builder of Great Wall) some six hundred years ago

Although this sentence is short, it contains a lot of information, and there are three additions in the translation. First, the subject is added.^[8] The Chinese does not indicate the subject, but the reader can conclude from the context that the subject is “the people of Taoyuan”, because English is a subject-oriented language, so it is necessary to add “they” to the translation. Second, add nouns. The word “refugee” in the translation is “a person who has been forced to leave their country or home, because there is a war or for political, religious or social reasons”, which effectively complements the image of “refugee” in Chinese and makes the translation more better.^[6] Third, add words and phrases. In the original text, the phrase “the tyranny of Tsin Shih-huang” is easy to understand for Chinese readers, but it is difficult for readers of the target language to understand what it means without the knowledge of Chinese history and culture. Mr. Lin Yutang first used the word “tyranny” to explain so that readers can have a general understanding. Then he used the commentary “builder of the Great Wall” to explain the character of Qin Shi Huang. It is worth noting that the commentary uses “The Great Wall”, a famous building in China and abroad, which is easy for readers to understand.^[2] Finally, the addition of the time “six hundred years ago” allows the reader to build a clear timeline and deepen their understanding. ^[8]

3.2. *Chinese spatial translation*

The depiction of space in Chinese is logical and follows the spatial rules of size, i.e., from far to near, from high to low, from large to small, and from whole to local.

Example 3: He saw before his eye a wide, level valley, with houses and fields and farms. Were running about.

In the original text, we can see that the scenery the fisherman first sees is described from far to near and from the whole to the local. The land and houses in the distance and the chickens and dogs and people in the near. Mr. Lin Yutang translated in a logical order and split the sentences, following the semantic translation method, making the English sentences reasonably smooth. At the same time, it makes it easier for readers to construct the picture of Peach Blossom Garden and bring themselves into the “fishermen” and feel like they are in the place.

Example 4:, and when he came to the end of the grove, he saw a spring which came from a cave in the hill. Having noticed that there seemed to having noticed that there seemed to be a weak light in the cave,.....

The original text visually moves from large to small. The sequence of peach blossom forest, the spring, hill, cave, and light is described from large to small. Original readers can easily construct what the

“fisherman” saw.^[7] There are four short sentences in Chinese, so a direct translation would make the English long and illogical. Mr. Lin Yutang followed the sequence of the original text, clarified the internal logic of the original text, and adjusted the sequence appropriately to translate it in a more reasonable and natural way.

3.3. Replacement

Example 5: He went to the magistrate’s office and told the magistrate about it. The latter sent someone to go with him and find the place. They looked for the signs but got lost and could never find it again.

“Taishou” was the honorific term for county sheriffs from the Qin Dynasty to the Han Dynasty in Chinese history. “County” was the highest local administrative division in the Qin Dynasty, equivalent to “province” today. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (7th Edition)*, “magistrate” means “an official who acts as a judge in the lowest courts of law “. It can be seen that there are similarities between the two meanings, but there are also differences. The former is the highest local administrator, while the latter is a magistrate, the lowest rank.^[5] In the author’s opinion, the former has much higher rights than the latter. However, if we translate directly here, it is difficult for the target language readers to understand what kind of official “Taishou” is. Therefore, Mr. Lin Yutang chose the word “magistrate”, which is in line with Western culture, so that the readers of the target language can understand the content of the text more easily and the distance between the target language readers and the original work can be narrowed.^[2]

Example 6: Liu Tsechi of Nanyang was a great idealist.

The main point to note in this passage is the translation of the term “noble man”. At first glance, many people would translate “noble man” as “noble man” or “lofty man”, which is reasonable in terms of meaning. However, Mr. Lin Yutang here treated “noble man” as “idealist”, which is more appropriate. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines “idealism” as “the belief that a perfect life, situation, etc. can be achieved, even when this is not very likely. In the original context, the “noble man” obviously refers to someone who believes or expects the existence of the Taoyuan. However, as a “utopian” existence, it is only a fantasy of idealists in the historical context of the time, so the word “idealist” is more appropriate here.^[2] Therefore, Mr. Lin Yutang found the subtle differences between the two cultures, which makes the translation very clever and evocative, and exquisitely expressed the characteristics of the original “noble scholar” who pursues freedom of thought, learning, independent personality and ideal pursuit.

3.4. Translation of quantifier

Quantifier is adjective words used frequently in Chinese. It expresses number, amount or degree.

Example 7: After having gone a certain distance, he suddenly came upon a peach grove which extended along the bank for about a hundred yards.

In this sentence, “Bu” is a unique Chinese quantifier, which was a unit of length in ancient times. In ancient times, it was used as a unit of length, with one step for lifting one foot once and one step for lifting two. Nowadays, it is also often used as a unit of measurement. However, due to the cultural differences between China and the West, it is difficult for readers to immediately understand the distance of “hundreds of steps” if translated directly. Mr. Lin Yutang used “yard” here, which means “a unit for measuring length, equal to 3 feet (36 inches) or 0.9144 of a meter” in *The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary English-Chinese, Ninth Edition*. 0.9144 of a meter”.^[6] This substitution method is in line with Western culture and enables the readers of the translated language to understand the content of the original clearly.

Example 8: The fisherman told them, which they heard with great amazement.

The word in the original text means “one by one, in detail”, which is a common word in Chinese expressions. In this sentence, “one by one” means that the people of Taoyuan are responding to what the fisherman said about the outside world. Other translations, such as Davis’s translation of the word as “item by item,” is correct in meaning, but the expression is not free from the original and seems lengthy and cumbersome. Here Mr. Lin Yutang did not correspond to the original text, but saved the translation, so as to achieve the meaning and smoothness, which meets the requirements of communicative translation.^[2]

4. Translation difficulties under the guidance of the theory

4.1. Translation of Chinese cultural words

Example 9: And the old men and children appeared very happy and contented.

This sentence is a typical translation of a Chinese idioms. The original phrase of “the old men and children” refers to old people and children. The word “huangfa” refers to the old man’s hair turning from white to yellow; “chuitiao” refers to the ancient time when children’s hair fell down before they were crowned.^[8] Such culture-specific words are also difficult to translate. Although Mr. Lin Yutang’s semantic translation of “the old men and children” was reasonable, the loss of the image of the original text is a loss of style. It is worth affirming that this translation makes effective trade-offs and does not affect the reader’s reading effect. In the future, we can also learn from this way of expressing the meaning when we face the translation of idioms, and just translate the original meaning.^[5]

4.2. Translation of dynasty

Example 10: They were thus completely cut off from the world, and ask what was ruling dynasty now. They had not even heard of the Han Dynasty (two centuries before to two centuries after Christ), not to speak of Wei (third centuries A.D.) and the Chin (third and fourth centuries).

The issue of dynasties is a unique Chinese culture. Some translators use the method of adding notes, marking time, or using the same time in Western culture to promote better understanding by readers of the translated language. Mr. Lin Yutang adopted the third method, using a direct translation with Western chronology to close the distance between him and his readers.^[6] To some extent, it reduces the cultural differences between Chinese and English, and is an example of combining semantic and communicative translation.^[8]

4.3. Chinese artistic conception

The beauty of Chinese ancient poems lies in the unique meaning of images and artistic conception, which is difficult for foreign readers to understand. This is also an important reason for the difficulty of translating Chinese and English ancient poems.

Example 11: He suddenly came upon a peach grove which extended along the bank for about a hundred yards. He noticed with surprise that the grove had a magic effect, so singularly from the usual mingling of brushwood, while the beautifully grassy ground was covered with its rose petals.

In this sentence, the phrase “the beautifully grassy ground was covered with its rose petals” describes the beautiful scene of flowers falling one after another, and a dynamic process of “falling” is implied here. Lin Yutang’s translation was concise, using the word “cover”, which does fit the meaning but lacks of artistic conception.^[4] However, Mr. Lin Yutang had also done a better job. Because his adding “the grove had a magic effect” to give the reader a brief explanation, and using the word “surprised” to explain the fisherman’s surprise at seeing the beautiful scenery. The use of the word “surprised” in front of the phrase indicates the fisherman’s surprise at seeing the beautiful scenery, which can also enhance the feelings of the readers in the translated language.^[3]

At the same time, Mr. Lin Yutang adopted addition to expand the word “grass” to “a large area of grass”, and adding “falling” to “many flowers”. This allows Western readers to better associate with the beautiful picture the author wants to convey, and the mood is full.

5. Conclusion

Newmark’s translation theory of text types is an important part of Newmark’s translation theory. And it is impossible to prescribe the right remedy if you cannot figure out the text types.^[1] The position of semantic translation and communicative translation in translation science based on this proposal is irreplaceable. However, we should use translation method flexibly in order to preserve the favor of original work and convey the same feeling to foreign readers. So Newmark’s text type theory insists on semantic translation as the main method and communicative translation as the supplementary method, which is still worth learning.

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