

The Applicability of “CEA” Framework and Skopos Theory in English-Chinese Translation —— Take *The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing (Excerpts)* as an Example

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Abstract: Creative writing evolved in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century had been widely expanded throughout a century of history. However, the development of the localized practice of creative writing in domestic universities is restricted due to the short introduction time. Herein, an excerpt from *The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing* is discussed in a practical translation, is designed to provide creative advice and strategies for the creators of novel to boost the selling of their work. The translator has selected cases from “plot and structure” in the book. Through the translation of the source text, the translator’s aim is to provide high-quality assistance to Chinese authors who write novels. By stimulating authors’ interest in reading and cultivating their enthusiasm for creative writing, not only quality reference material for readers but also the development of creative writing in China can be improved. By targeting the purpose of the translation and the characteristics of the source text, Skopos Theory as the guiding theory and “Comprehension, Expression, and Adaptation (CEA)” as the working framework for translation practice are adopted. In this work, the translation strategy of domestication as the main focus and foreignization as the supplementary one to deal with the source text are applied. The translator considered the differences between the English and Chinese languages and used literal translation and liberal translation at the linguistic level. Besides, the combination of translation techniques such as addition together with division is used to maintain a high degree of consistency between the translation and the source text, resulting in the target text with high readability. The translator completed the translation practice with accuracy and fluency through consulting a large number of monographs and literature, which in turn confirms the applicability of Skopos theory and “CEA” framework in the translation.

Keywords: CEA Framework, Skopos Theory, Translating Experience

1. Introduction

The translator selected *The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing* as the source text for the translation practice. In this part, the translator will introduce relevant information of the sourcebook and elaborate on the purposes and significance of the translation.

1.1 About the Sourcebook

The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing was compiled by many editors of *Writer’s Digest* magazine and published in 2016. Founded in 1920, *Writer’s Digest* is an American magazine for beginners and well-known writers, including interviews, writing guides, manuscript evaluation, and so on. Over the years, the magazine has helped a large proportion of writing lovers become professional writers, and today its circulation is still more than 60,000 copies. *The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing* is compiled from many foreign best-selling writers’ interviews and articles. It aims to provide readers with guidance and suggestions on novel writing and best-selling strategies.

In order to make readers have a professional understanding of the narrative of novel writing, the translator selected Articles 6 to 11 in Part One as the source text, which focuses on plot and structure, mainly including: “6. The Hero’s Journey,” “7. The Two Pillars of Novel Structure,” “8. Weaving In A Seamless Backstory,” “9. The Essential Endgame Structure,” “10. Supporting Stories,” “11. Behind the

Scene.” The Chapter mainly focuses on the arrangement of plot and structure in the novel writing, showing the relevant articles and interview materials on the theme of “Plot and Structure” by Paula Munier, James Scott Bell, Karen Dionne, and Larry Brooks to provide readers with writing suggestions.

1.2 Significance of the Translation

As for the theoretical value, in the process of translating Articles 6 to 11 of the book *The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing*, the translator adopts CEA framework, the Skopos theory, translation strategies of domestication and foreignization, and uses the translation methods of literal translation and liberal translation with techniques of addition, omission, and division to overcome the difficulties in translation. The use of the above translation theories, methods, and skills guarantees the translation and shows the readers the translator’s understanding and application of the above them. It is worth mentioning that CEA framework provides the translator with new ideas for writing the translation practice report. She can follow its principles to explore the contents of the source text fully and show readers her thinking process in the process of translation.

As for the practical value, the translator has a deeper understanding of translation learning by reading a large number of books and works of literature on CEA, Skopos theory and related translation strategies and methods, and also gained knowledge, improved her translation and tempered persistence in this translation practice, thus providing a firm foundation for future study or work.

In short, from a macro perspective, this translation task can play a role in promoting the spread of creative writing in China and introducing CEA framework to readers, which in turn confirms the applicability of Skopos theory and “CEA” framework in the translation; from a micro perspective, the translation also promotes the translator’s comprehensive ability to solve problems in translating to improve her skills.

2. Working Framework, Translation Theory and Strategies

In this chapter, the translator will elaborate on the CEA framework, Skopos theory, and translation strategies (domestication and foreignization) selected in the translation practice.

2.1 The “Comprehension, Expression, and Adaptation (CEA)” Framework

“CEA” is the abbreviation of “Comprehension, Expression, and Adaptation,” presented by Professor Li Changshuan, Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation, Beijing Foreign Studies University. The initial idea of the framework comes from the *Meaning and Expression: Annotated Texts in Chinese-English Translation*, co-authored by Li Changshuan and Lynette Shi in 2012^[1].

The book’s previous chapters contain Professor Li Changshuan’s detailed elaboration of the CEA framework. CEA is a comprehensive summary of translation processes, and it focuses on the issue of “understanding.” The key to translation lies in understanding because only when we fully understand something can we express it^[2]. In “Comprehension,” it mainly shows how the translator realizes “faithfulness,” which can be divided into subsections according to different standards. For example, the unit is divided into understanding words, sentences, and chapters; according to the ways of understanding, it can be divided into understanding through context, reading materials, interviewing experts, and so on^[3]. Regarding “expression,” Li believes that it conveys what the author of the source text could be clearly expressed, wishes to be expressed, or even should be expressed.” Issues that can be discussed in the expression of the translation include fluency, logical consistency, and form of expression in the translation. As for “adaptation,” that is, “choose among methods and techniques such as literal translation, liberal translation, addition or omission, adjustment, interpretation, etc.” can be discussed in combination with different translation methods and skills.

To some extent, Professor Li Changshuan’s book may also promote the reform of translation teaching in content and methods. However, the three parts of “comprehension,” “expression,” and “adaptation” mentioned in the CEA framework are discussed separately, so it is easy for readers to have the illusion that the three are separated and isolated. However, in fact, the relationship between the above three is carried out simultaneously and complementary in the translation process, so it is recommended that the author add additional explanations to the book.

After reading the relevant materials, the translator finds that the obvious advantage of the CEA

framework is that it is compatible with other translation theories. However, not many authors combine translation theory with the framework to jointly analyze the process and text of their translation, it may be due to concerns about redundancy or incoherence, and the focus is not highlighted. Therefore, how to organically combine the guiding framework and translation theory, which pays attention to the translation process and examines the quality of the translated text by following the translation theory, requires more exploration and attempts in the future.

Skopos theory is quite suitable for the CEA framework regarding translation theories abroad. The “Skopos rule” in Skopos theory requires that whether it is a literal or liberal translation, supplement or omission according to the purpose of translation, which can be classified as the “adaptation” part. The “coherence rule” in Skopos theory requires that the translation can be understood by the target readers and summarized into the “expression” part. As for the “fidelity rule,” the translation is required to be faithful to the source text. Even if there is “adaptation,” it cannot violate the purpose of the source text. It can be summarized as “comprehension”^[3].

Therefore, the translator chooses the CEA framework as the guiding framework for translation, paying more attention to the process of the translation task and focusing on recording the difficulties in translating and its solutions. In addition, to test the translation’s quality, the translator intends to review the translation from the perspective of Skopos Theory, which strives to improve the overall quality of the translated text, enhance the report’s credibility, and improve the thesis’s professionalism writing. Furthermore, combining the CEA framework with Skopos theory to write a practical report is also an attempt by the translator. She hopes that she will have a deeper understanding of this translation practice under the guidance of the authoritative framework and theory.

2.2 Skopos Theory

German functionalism has opened up a new field of translation studies for scholars, and its central theory is the Skopos theory of translation, which was put forward by Hans J Vermeer. Its basic framework was first described in the *Grundlegung Einer Allgemeinen Translations-theorie* co-authored by Hans and his tutor Katharina Reiss. “Skopos” comes from Greek and refers to the “goal, function or intention of an act.” The theory had a far-reaching impact at that time, so the functional school is sometimes called the skopos school.

Skopos theory is put forward and continuously developed on the basis of absorbing many practical theories. Therefore, its theoretical foundation and structure are relatively enriched and have high practical guidance value. The important obligation of translators is to grasp the purpose of their translation behavior and the readership expectations from a macro perspective and then choose the appropriate translation strategy.

Skopos theory holds that translation is a purposeful and results-oriented act based on the source text, which must be accomplished through negotiations. The theory emphasizes that the translator should focus on the expected purpose of the target text and adopt practical translation strategies according to this purpose by following three rules: Skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule.

In translation practice, the translator strictly follows the three rules of Skopos theory in translating.

First of all, as far as the Skopos rule is concerned, it is the core rule of Skopos theory, including the translator’s purpose, the communication purpose of the translation, and the purpose to be achieved by using a particular means. Therefore, guided by the Skopos rule, the translator adopts corresponding translation strategies (e.g., domestication and foreignization) to flexibly deal with the differences between the source text and the translated text, facilitating the reader’s understanding habits. Under the guidance of this rule, the status of translators has been greatly improved. At the same time, the translation methods and strategies in the translation process have also been well supplemented, and the translator’s ability to translate has also been improved^[4].

Secondly, the coherence rule, also known as textual coherence, refers to the consistency and coherence of the translation’s grammatical structure and semantic expression. The rule emphasizes that the translation should be understood by the target readers and meaningful in the target language context. The coherence rule examines the translator’s ability and professional degree very strictly. It requires translators to take into account the linguistic and cultural differences between the target language and the source language when translating, but also under the principle of enhancing the readability of the translation among the target readers. Therefore, when translating, the translator is required to make the necessary adjustments to the translation. In the case analysis part, the translator will present to the

readers how to translate under the guidance of the coherence rule, in turn, echo the rule with the final translation.

Thirdly, the fidelity rule. Namely, the loyalty principle, which was put forward by German functional theorist Christiane Nord ^[5]. It emphasizes interlingual coherence between the source language and the target language. However, the attention here is no longer centered on the source text but advocates that the fidelity and loyalty to the form and content of the source text should depend on the purpose of the translation. Namely, to achieve the Skopos and coherence rules, the translation should be as consistent as possible with the source text in form and content. This is to show dual care for the authors and the readers. Therefore, the translator should maintain a reasonable degree of adjustment while translating. It is crucial not to miss or delete any information in translating so that the source information is missing in the readers' eyes, and the source text cannot be overinterpreted so that the translation deviates from the main idea of the source text.

Among these three rules, the Skopos rule reaches the highest position.

However, some scholars also discuss the application of skopos theory in translation. They believe that "Skopos theory does not pay enough attention to the characteristics of the source text and the transmission of some characteristics on the micro-level of the target text. However, Vermeer ^[6] responded that to what extent the source text determines the translation methods; there is a certain logical relationship between the type of source text and the purpose of the translation. Reiss^[7], also a representative of functionalism in translation, also suggested that "different translation methods should be adopted for different types of texts" and said that "whether the main function of the source text has been delivered is the decisive factor in judging the translation."

The source text is classified as argumentation, a very expounding work. Therefore, whether the translator can convey the profound and abstract themes of the source text to the target readers in clear Chinese through appropriate strategies at the language level and from the perspective of the expected audience to enlighten the readers of the translation is a problem that the translator aims to explore so that it is related to the Skopos theoretical ideas. The source text is selected from well-known American writers' comments on the theme of "Plot and Structure," which combines the writers' own experience for creative writing and presents readers with typical cases to give guidance and suggestions for novel writing. The main idea of the report is to take the informational, guiding, and operative main text characteristics of the source text as the starting point. Based on realizing the readability of the translation, highlighting the central idea of each part and calling on readers to learn from, the accuracy of the meaning of the source text can be achieved through the appropriate processing of vocabulary and text, to express fluently, strengthen the practical effect of the translation, and show the applicability of teleology in this translation practice.

2.3 Domestication and Foreignization

The famous American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti proposed "domestication" and "foreignization" in his book *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* ^[8].

Domestication, the essence of which is "the orientation of the target readers of the translation," requires the localization of the source text, the destination of the target text or the readers of the translation, and the use of expressions that the target readers are accustomed to convey the content of the source text; helping readers better understand the translation, and enhance the readability and appreciation of the translation.

Foreignization emphasizes that the language characteristics of foreign cultures should be accommodated in the translation, and expressions of a foreign language should be absorbed. The advantage of foreignization is that it can introduce the language structure, expression, and cultural elements of the source language into the target language, enrich the expression of the target language, promote the development of the target language, and thus promote cultural exchanges between different groups. The translation strategy of foreignization can also be used to reveal the cultural identity of vulnerable ethnic groups ^[8].

In order to enable the reader to fully understand the meaning that the author of the source text is supposed to convey, the translator tries to choose words and sentence patterns close to the target readers' expression habits for translating. Therefore, the translator uses "domestication" as the leading translation strategy guidance. Due to the high degree of wordization of English words, that is to say, complex meanings are usually condensed into one word in English^[9], it is not recommended for the

translator to translate word by word in translating; otherwise, it will give the reader a sense of “abruptly stop,” but should fully consider the expression habits of the target readers. Appropriately adding some category words to enhance the readability of the translation and achieve the appeal of the source author. However, the names and English letters appearing in the source text do not have a more appropriate expression in Chinese. Therefore, the translator decides to retain the style characteristics of the source language, transliterate the person’s name, and adopt zero translation of the English letters, which can also reflect the care for the authors and enrich the language form of the translation. Moreover, it accounts for a relatively small part of the translation process, so the foreignization strategy adopted is only used as an auxiliary.

To sum up, considering the stylistic and the genre of the source text, the main purpose is to provide readers with instructive information, so the translator adopts domestication as the primary strategy and foreignization as an auxiliary in this translation practice. At the same time, it is supplemented by appropriate translation methods and skills that fully consider the target readers and respect the expression of the source author to improve the readability of the translation.

3. Case Analysis

The analysis case was divided into two aspects: translation methods and techniques. In terms of translation methods, the translators mainly use literal translation and liberal translation for translating, supplemented by addition, omission, and division, showing readers some representative examples in the translation process and its analysis process.

3.1 Translation Methods

Under the guidance of the translation strategies of domestication and foreignization, in order to solve the problems in translation, it is imperative to adopt appropriate translation methods. The application of translation methods needs to be based on specific translation strategies^[10]. The translation aims to provide readers with a highly readable translated text, so, in this part, the translator combines translation methods, including literal translation, liberal translation, transliteration, and zero translation that proposed by Professor Xiong Bing^[10], and fully excavates the contents of the source text, and presents some representative examples as follows.

3.1.1 Literal Translation

For most factual content of the source text, the translator should try to use vocabulary, syntactic structure, and stylistic style that consistent with the target language. In the processing of language forms, appropriate changes or conversions (such as word order conversion) are allowed to bring the translation into line with the target word-grammatical norms so that the final expression is closer to the original meaning^[10].

3.1.2 Liberal Translation

For particular words and sentence structures, it is difficult for literal translation to accurately and fully express the meaning and connotation of the source text, or the literal translation does not conform to the reading habits of the target reader. At this time, it is necessary to consider the method of liberal translation, only retaining the source meaning, less the forms of the source text^[11]. It is usually used more in translating sentences or phrases (or larger sense groups) and when the text of source and translation reflects substantial cultural differences. For example:

Case one:

THE HERO’ S JOURNEY, STEP BY STEP

Case two:

ST2: THE TRUE TEST

Case three:

ST3: The Hero Is a Catalyst

Case four:

ST4: The Hero Grows Internally

Case five:

ST5: A New and Better Hero Emerges

Analysis: Liberal translation is employed in the translation of titles and subtitles. The translator first reads the context carefully and then understands and summarizes the main idea of each part. When exporting the translated text, considering that Chinese idioms are inductive and concise, the sentence pattern will not make the translation lengthy and cumbersome. Therefore, the translator tries to choose to translate in the form of four-character text and idioms, which is more in line with the expression habits of target language readers.

3.2 Translation Techniques

Translation skills are the techniques or skills required to implement and apply a certain translation method in translation. It is the micro-level, which is the operation of the text at the language level [12]. In this report, the translator will show the readers three kinds of translation techniques in translating: addition, omission, and division.

3.2.1 Addition and Omission

The translator serves the whole translation task, so it is not recommended to blindly obey the author of the source text. Therefore, in the practice of translation, if there is a situation that hinders the realization of the purpose of translation, such as interpretation, logic, or factual errors, the translator can weigh the interests in respective aspects and correct or modify them in some way [1]. Due to the differences in expression between English and Chinese, sometimes considering grammatical, meaningful, or modifier needs, appropriate additions, and omissions must be made in the amount of the translated text. However, it is worth noting that it is necessary to ensure that additions do not add meanings and omissions do not delete core information so that the translation can accurately convey various functions of the source text, conform to the expression habits of the target language, and create an unobscure translation for the target reader. For example:

Case one:

ST: ... Most of our lives are basically mundane and dull, and it's up to the writer to find ways to make them interesting.

Analysis: The word “mundane” in the source text means “Something is very ordinary and not at all interesting or unusual.” and “dull” means “boring.” In the sentence, the translation techniques of omission are used to translate these two words with similar meanings into Chinese, which avoids the redundant and cumbersome translation, and the expression of the four-character case is also a common form in Chinese. In addition, when dealing with “it's up to the writer,” the Chinese “level” word is supplemented as a category word, which is more common use in Chinese. If the translator only translates according to the structure of the source text, it will appear that the translation is stiff and obscure. The additions here make readers read closer to the expression habits of the target language.

3.2.2 Division

Division refers to dividing one sentence in the source text into two or more sentences. The translation technique is more suitable for long and complex sentences with a certain context connection. For example:

Case one:

ST: I was amused many years ago when a writing teacher of some repute shouted in front of an auditorium that there was no such thing as structure.

Analysis: In this example, the overall sentence pattern is more extended, and the structure is quite complex. It is not difficult to realize that the clause is set up with several clauses. At this time, we need to consider the feelings of the target reader while translating. After sorting out the logic of the sentence, we should make some appropriate sentence pattern adjustments and translate them in a way that is more in line with Chinese expression habits—when narrating in Chinese, and it often follows the order of time and logic. Following the order and explaining them one by one with the help of verbs makes the whole sentence concise and clear [13]. It is divided into four short sentences using the decision technique, with more precise meanings and is more readable in the target language context.

4. Inspirations

This translation practice is based on the plot and structure of novel writing in the second section of Part One of *The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing*. The source text selected by the translator is related to the skills and suggestions of novel writing in plot and structure, and the content contains some excerpts of classic literary works and comments from famous writers. For the translator, this translation practice task can accumulate some knowledge about novel writing, accumulate practical translation experience, and cultivate the translator's interest in appreciating foreign literary works. At the same time, the translator also deeply realizes that translation is a dynamic activity that needs to be adhered to for a long time, which contains many choices and negotiations. Therefore, for translators, translation is also a practical activity that helps to improve her self-ability and cultivate the translator's critical thinking.

Today, with the rapid development of science and technology, as qualified translators, we must always maintain the original aspirations of active learning and keep pace with the times. As mentioned above, translation is not static, and the source text, the authors, and target readers need to be fully considered in the whole process. In a word, the translator should be responsible for the translation task and control the quality of the translation.

This practice uses the CEA framework and Skopos Theory as guidance and adopts a translation strategy combining domestication and foreignization. On this basis, literal translation, and liberal translation methods are also used, supplemented by translation skills of addition, omission, and division. The above are combined to solve the difficulties in translation and finally come up with a clear semantic translated text.

5. Conclusions

All in all, this translation practice is a new attempt by translator herself and a new exploration to combine CEA framework and Skopos Theory. From this point of view, combining the two, that is, focusing on the translation process, it is also necessary to strictly control the quality of the translation text, and finally present a more readable translation. As long as CEA framework is concerned, there are issues yet to be explored. For instance, translation ethics which Skopos Theory and CEA framework touches upon should be discussed and the scope of the applicability of Skopos Theory and CEA framework has to be further explored in different text type.

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