A PRAGMATIC STUDY

OF CONTEXTUAL ADJUSTMENT IN HUMOR TRANSLATION

幽默翻译中语境调整的语用学研究

张春星 张春月 著

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图书在版编目（CIP）数据

幽默翻译中语境调整的语用学研究／张春星，张春月著．
—北京：中国书籍出版社，2008.6
ISBN 978-7-5068-1733-2

Ⅰ．幽…　Ⅱ．①张…②张…　Ⅲ．英语—翻译—语用
学—研究　Ⅳ．H315.9

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字（2008）第 088425 号

责任编辑／金　硕
责任印制／熊　力　武雅彬
封面设计／牛毅书装
出版发行／中国书籍出版社
地　　址：北京市丰台区三路居路 97 号（邮编：100073）
电　　话：(010)51259192(总编室)　(010)51259186(发行部)
电子邮箱：chinabp@vip.sina.com
经　　销／全国新华书店
印　　刷／北京京海印刷厂
开　　本／850 毫米×1168 毫米　1/32
印　　张／6.125
字　　数／127 千字
版　　次／2008 年 6 月第 1 版　2008 年 6 月第 1 次印刷
定　　价／15.00 元

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Preface

This book is a research on contextual adjustment in humor translation with pragmatics and translation theories. The notion of context in translation refers to the background information that determines the meaning of the word; in pragmatics, context means the conditions of an utterance when it is applied. Because humorous languages tend to rely on context to achieve pragmatic effects, the contextual changes invoked while translating from source text (ST) to target text (TT) may result in changes in humorous effects. According to their dependency on context, humor can be classified into two categories, high-context humor and low-context humor. For the purpose to compare their contextual adjustment in ST and TT, the examples selected in this book are high-context humor.

This book applies Equivalence Theory, Functional Theory, and Domestication and Foreignization Theory to analyze contextual adjustment in humor translation. Due to different aims and focuses, each theory has featured explanation on contextual adjustment in humor translation, stressing respectively on dynamic equivalence between ST and TT, customer (or patrons), and domesticated or foreignized expression of ST culture in TT. Contextual adjustment in TT usually takes the form of deletion and redundancy. However, the methods, degrees and effects of the adjustment in TT varied when guided by different translation theories.

Based on the above study, this book continues to analyze contextual adjustment in humor translation with a pragmatic perspective, consisting of Cooperative Principle, Relevance Principle, and Speech Act Theory. The pragmatic study shows that efforts should be made in achieving equivalence in the aspects of maxims' flouting, optimal relevance and perlocutionary effects between ST and TT.

Besides, this book carries on a further discussion on the extent of contextual adjustment in humor translation and the unavoidable phenomenon of added context as humor killers. Some humor loses its amusing effects in TT after necessary contextual adjustment, while some, in order to produce humorous effects in TT, has undergone deviation from ST. Since a discussion of contextual adjustment in translation must involve the argument of translation criteria, pragmatic criteria of translation are also included in this book.

This book is an interdisciplinary study of pragmatics and translation. The pragmatic study of contextual adjustment in

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humor translation will broaden the scope of related translation research, and facilitate an ideal combination of theoretical studies and translation practices. This book is hopefully to be useful in future translation research and teaching.

前　言

本文旨在以幽默语言为例,运用语用学和翻译学原理分析英汉翻译中语境的调整。所谓翻译中的语境是指决定文字含义的背景信息,语用学中的语境是指在表达中决定句子具体含义的条件。本文选择以幽默语言为例进行研究是因为语境在幽默语言翻译中的作用不仅明显而且重要。幽默语言较多地依赖于语境达到幽默效果,而原文和译文中语境的差别则可能导致幽默效果的不同。在翻译中,根据语境对幽默效果影响程度的不同,幽默可以分为高语境幽默和低语境幽默,本文中选取的例子属于高语境幽默,以便于比较分析原文与译文中语境的调整。

本文选取翻译学原理中的等效理论(Equivalence Theory)、功能理论(Functional Theory)和归化与异化理论(Domestication and Foreignization)来分析幽默翻译中的语境调整。由于不同理论中翻译的目的和侧重点的不同,它们对于幽默翻译中语境的调整目的的解释也各不相同,分别侧重于文本功能等效、译文的读者客户(或资助人)以及原文文化在译文中的归化与异化表现。尽管语境调整通常采用的方法不外乎在译文中删除多余的信息或补充必要的信息,然而根据不同的翻译理论,幽默翻译中语境调整的方法、程度和译文效果都有很大区别。

基于以上的分析,本文运用语用学原则中的合作原则

(Cooperative Principle)、关联理论(Relevance Principle)和言语行为理论(Speech Act Theory)来分析幽默翻译中语境的调整。从语用学角度来看,翻译中语境的调整必须使译文与原文在违反合作原则中的任意准则(flouting of maxims)、达到最佳关联(optimal relevance)及语外效果(perlocutionary effect)方面接近一致。

本文还进一步研究了幽默翻译语境调整的限度及某些必要的语境调整对译文幽默效果的负面影响,常见的这两类幽默翻译现象是,一方面,很多幽默在经过必要的语境调整后失去了幽默效果,另一方面,有的译文为了制造幽默效果而过度地偏离了原文。显然,幽默翻译中语境的调整将不可避免地涉及到翻译标准的研究,本文因此对幽默翻译的语用学标准进行了讨论。

从语用学角度分析幽默翻译中语境的调整是一项跨语用与翻译学的研究,本文的研究拓宽了翻译领域的研究视野,深化了语用学理论研究与翻译实践的结合,有助于翻译研究的创新和翻译人才的培养。

STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS

ST source text
TT target text
SL source language
TL target language
CP Cooperative Principle
RP Relevance Principle

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1 Introduction

Virginia Woolf says that humor is the first of the gifts to perish in a foreign tongue (Samovar and Mills, 1995: 324) . This experience of hers may find echoing reflections from many who have also tried foreign humor, no matter in source text (ST) version or target text (TT) version. One may easily argue that humor fails TT readers because the ST writer has a linguistic and cultural background different from that of TT readers in many aspects and there is no way for a ST writer to anticipate the comprehending competence of all potential readers. But what should a translator do to help TT readers overcome this background barrier and come to an appreciation of ST?

Nida thinks there is no insurmountable barrier between people of different background. He says " what people of various cultures have in common is far greater than what separates them" and "even within an individual culture there are usually more radical extremes of behavior and attitude than one finds in a comparison of so-called normal or standard behavior" (Nida, 1982: 9; qdt. by Wilss, 2001: 135) . Wilss agrees by stating "many aspects of translation" can "transcend" cultural boundaries (Wilss, 2001:134). Both of them, although out of different orientations, suggest contextual adjustment when necessary in bringing meanings and effects from ST to TT.

Then, what is *context*? The word *context* coined by Malinowski in 1923 has been widely used in many fields. In pragmatic studies, it is regarded as a "pillar" of any theories of pragmatics (Verschueren, 2000:75). In pragmatic studies of translation, context "is needed to derive the implicatures of an utterance" (Gutt, 2004:76—77). To understand the role of context in translation, one needs to seek the interpretations of it by some fundamental pragmatic principles. These principles include Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) and Austin's Speech Act theory, which are the core of modern pragmatics, and Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Principle (RP), which pursues meaning and communication as well, but in a direction deviated from Grice.

To explore contextual adjustment in humor translation, analysis should be conducted from the aspects of both translation and pragmatics. One might find that the interpretations from both pools support or contradict from one another. But the integration of all these findings will present a panorama of a pragmatic study of contextual adjustment in humor translation.

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