

# 翻译的折中主义及伦理视角

## 纽马克的翻译理论再审视

◎ 王莉娜 著

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An Eclectic and Ethical  
Approach to Translation  
—Newmark's Translation  
Theory Reexamined

上海大学出版社

教育部人文社会科学

研究规划基金项目(编号:14YJAZH058)研究成果

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## 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

翻译的折中主义及伦理视角:纽马克的翻译理论再  
审视/王莉娜著. —上海:上海大学出版社,2017.1

ISBN 978-7-5671-2665-7

I. ①翻… II. ①王… III. ①彼得·纽马克—翻译理  
论—研究 IV. ①H059

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2016)第 316104 号

责任编辑 刘 岚  
封面设计 缪炎栩  
技术编辑 金 鑫  
章 斐

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上海大学出版社出版发行

(上海市上大路99号 邮政编码200444)

(<http://www.press.shu.edu.cn> 发行热线021-66135112)

出版人:戴骏豪

\*

江苏句容排印厂印刷 各地新华书店经销

开本 890×1240 1/32 印张7 字数216 000

2016年12月第1版 2016年12月第1次印刷

ISBN 978-7-5671-2665-7/H·327 定价:28.00元

## 内 容 简 介

彼得·纽马克(Peter Newmark)是英国著名语言学家和翻译理论家,其翻译理论给中西方翻译学界带来了深远的影响。以往的纽马克翻译理论研究存在着种种不足之处。本书对纽马克翻译理论进行了重新审视,通过分析该理论的性质、基本假设、语言哲学基础、合理性以及适用范围,尝试对纽马克的翻译理论作一个全面、客观、系统的研究。

纽马克的翻译理论从本质上来讲是一种翻译的折中主义。其翻译理论吸收了许多学科的理论、观点和方法,试图弥合翻译研究中源语导向与译语导向之间的差距,强调翻译理论与实践之间的紧密联系,试图涵盖所有的文本类型,并尝试解释除了源语与目的语、源语文化与目的语文化及原文作者与译文读者等两元对立范畴,翻译过程中涉及的其他中间因素。纽马克还采用了伦理视角来研究翻译,高度关注翻译标准、翻译中的价值判断以及译者的责任和义务。在其翻译伦理思想的框架下,翻译既是一种高尚的追求真理的职业,又是一种语言、文学及文化批评工具。

本书回顾了中西方学者对纽马克翻译理论所作的研究工作,并指出了以往的纽马克翻译理论研究所存在的不足之处;揭示了纽马克翻译理论的语言哲学基础,梳理了西方著名语言学家弗雷格、布勒、雅各布逊、维果茨基、奥斯汀、萨丕尔、沃尔夫对其翻译理论的影响;论述了纽马克翻译理论中的折中主义思想,探讨了纽马克翻译理论从两元主义到折中主义的转变以及纽马克的翻译伦理思想,将其翻译伦理思想与诺德、皮姆和彻斯特曼的翻译理论思想进行了对比,指出了这四种伦理模式的伦理学基础、适用范围以及局限性,并借此初步构建了翻译伦理学的研究范式。

总而言之,本书揭示了纽马克翻译理论的语言哲学基础,探讨了该理论的折中主义思想及伦理思想,以期使人们能够更全面地了解纽马克的翻译理论,更好地为中国的翻译理论研究和翻译教学服务。

## 序

30 多年的改革开放不仅极大地提升了中国的经济地位,使强国富民在相当大的程度上成为现实,而且也极大地推动了中国翻译事业(包括翻译研究与翻译教育)的长足进步,并使中国学者的翻译观发生了深刻的变化。在这方面起相当积极作用的一个因素,是这期间不断引介到中国的西方译论,其中英国著名翻译学者彼得·纽马克的翻译学说与理念产生的影响不可谓不大。这一点国内翻译学术界与翻译教育界应当都是认同的。

纽马克之所以在中国受到普遍关注与欢迎,是因为他的翻译理论具有别的西方翻译理论家不都全备的特点:一是纽马克思思想深邃,考虑翻译及语言问题有哲学的视角;二是他讨论任何翻译理论问题都比较接地气,因为他本人的翻译实践与课堂教学经验丰富;三是他对自己创立的翻译理论始终持开放态度,且让其处于动态向前的势头,事实上他一直在不断补充与完善自己的翻译思想,与时俱进。正因为如此,中国的翻译理论与实务工作者都能从他的文著与演讲中获益。在今天中国文化满怀信心走向世界之时,纽马克的翻译学说仍不失为一种宝贵的理论与实践指导来源。

回顾这几十年来我们引进西方翻译理论的经历,可以看出一个明显的特征,即我们撷取与借鉴别人的有益研究成果不少,但往往是各取所需,各引所爱,而对有影响的外来理论进行较全面而系统的研究往往付之阙如。这个现象实际反映出我国译学研究中的一个短板,而这一短板若不去补上,从长远看必然影响我国译学理论的整体与可持续发展。

王莉娜这本专著基于其在复旦大学撰写的博士学位论文,聚焦纽马克翻译理论的哲学探讨与伦理审视。这个选题颇具挑战性,抓住纽马克学说的哲学基础,把握住其理论的伦理视角,就能在宏观上进入纽马克学说研究的大视野。经王莉娜的探索,如今呈现在我们面前的纽马克翻译

理论,有如一棵根深枝粗叶茂的学术大树,让我们领悟到人们所耳熟能详的他的“语义翻译”与“交际翻译”的概念背后有着扎实的支撑,包括其哲学基础、折中主义价值观及其自身的伦理取向等。据我所知,国内对纽马克翻译理论贡献研究能达此境界者极少,王莉娜在这一领域里的探赜具有明显的开拓意义,这本专著的学术价值因而也是不言而喻的。

为写好这本专著,王莉娜下了苦功夫、细功夫。她对国内外相关的文献作了较深入细致的梳理与撷集,对相关的文著作了较精深的研读与比较。她的前期准备工作充分,辛勤耕耘换来有价值的成果。现在专著即将付梓,我作为她曾经的博士论文导师,感到由衷的欣慰。更希望她以此为新的起点,在未来的学术研究生涯中继续开拓,并一径到底,争取再有新的建树。是为序。

何刚强

2016年5月30日于补拙斋

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## Introduction

Peter Newmark (1916—2011) was a famous British linguist and translation theorist. He was Professor of Translation (appointed in 1974) and Dean of the Faculty of Modern Languages at the Polytechnic of Central London (1978—1981) and retired from the university as Professor Emeritus in 1981. From 1982 onwards he was Visiting Professor in Translation Studies in the Department of Linguistic and International Studies at the University of Surrey. During 1988—1993, he was President of the Institute of Linguists. He was also the Vice-President, Council Member and Editorial Board Member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists. He published five books and numerous articles on translation. The five books he published are: *Approaches to Translation* (1981), *A Textbook of Translation* (1988), *About Translation* (1991), *Paragraphs on Translation* (1993), and *More Paragraphs on Translation* (1998). Among the five books, the first two books have influenced generations of translation scholars, teachers and students. Newmark's contribution has been generally acknowledged in the circle of translation studies around the world. Newmark was conferred with honorary doctoral degrees by the University of Trieste, the Baptist University of Hong Kong, the Masaryk University and the University of Westminster. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999, a symposium on "Translation in the New Millennium" was held at the University of Surrey, Guildford to pay tribute to Newmark for his contribution to translation studies and the meeting was concluded with the presentation of the book: *Word, Text, Translation; Liber Amicorum for Peter Newmark*. Four years later, another book *Translation Today; Trends and Perspectives* was published bearing his imprint. This book consists of Newmark's keynote paper and a record of the round-table discussion and other

contributions from Newmark's friends engaged in the field of translation studies.

Newmark's views on translation can be challenged and refuted, but Newmark's contribution to translation studies cannot be denied. German translation Scholar Albrecht Neubert (2003) makes such a comment on Newmark: "What I have always appreciated about his work is that it is stimulating of thought and imagination ... it's always a little bit provocative; you put in certain things which you know are just for rebuttal and, most importantly, contradicting Peter is always raising the contradictor to a higher level—in other words it enhances the logical, cultural, philosophical and humane level of argumentation." (p. 48) Neubert says that contradicting Newmark is always raising the contradictor to a higher level for the reason that when you climb the mountain of Translation Studies, Newmark's translation theory is just something you need to hold on to on the way up. Newmark's translation theory might be "out of fashion" as his views run counter to the current trends in translation studies, but it is not "out of date", as criticized by some translation scholars<sup>①</sup>. Translating is a multidimensional activity and there is room for a variety of perspectives. Newmark studied translation from the perspective of a university teacher. Although Newmark's translation theory has been criticized for its prescriptivism, a lot of what Newmark said is true if his theory is studied in the context of translation teaching. The validity of a translation theory should be judged by its explanatory power for the multifarious translation phenomena and its general applicability to translation practice and it is simplistic to dismiss a translation theory simply as "out of

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① Mona Baker criticized Newmark's theory as "out of date" in an informal talk. This is how Peter Newmark (1998) responded to this kind of criticism: "An editorial board member of a refereed academic journal recently stated that *A Textbook of Translation* (1988) was 'out of date'. Personally I think any work about translation may be bad or good or out of fashion, but it cannot be out of date. A scientific work can be out of date, but translation is not a science, although it has a scientific component. There are so many different approaches to this relatively new study that qualifiers like 'out of date' or 'traditional' are inappropriate." (p. 119)

date”.

Newmark made miscellaneous remarks on translation and his translation theory almost touches on every aspect of translation. Although Newmark's views on translation have often been quoted by western and Chinese translation scholars, there are many problems with the previous studies of his translation theory. Firstly, some of Newmark's ideas on translation were misinterpreted and distorted. Secondly, most translation scholars focus on some of Newmark's views on translation formed in his earlier academic career without noticing the revisions Newmark made later in his theory, especially his correlative approach and his ideas on translation ethics. Thirdly, translation scholars focus only on critical comments made on Newmark's theory without paying attention to Newmark's own defense against these criticisms, not to mention Newmark's critical comments on the major schools of translation studies. Lastly, some scholars accept Newmark's translation theory uncritically while other scholars simply dismiss his theory as too impressionistic and unsystematic to be worthy of study. These are two extreme tendencies in the study of Newmark's translation theory that we should always be on guard against. Considering these deficiencies in the previous studies, this book attempts to make a comprehensive, systematic and objective study of Newmark's translation theory to reexamine its nature, its basic theoretical assumptions, its linguistic-philosophical foundation, its validity and range of application.

This book studies Newmark's translation theory both synchronically and diachronically. On one hand, key concepts in Newmark's theory are first studied in relation with the contexts in which these concepts were put forward in order to reveal their theoretical foundation, and then compared with relevant concepts proposed by other translation scholars in order to demonstrate their unique features, their rationality and their inherent limitations. On the other hand, this book follows the evolution of Newmark's translation theory in a linear sequence in order to find out what modifications Newmark made in his theory in his later academic career, why Newmark

made these modifications and what the significance of these modifications is for the current translation studies.

This book falls into four chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the reception of Newmark's translation theory both in the west and in China, pointing out the deficiencies in the previous studies of Newmark's translation theory.

Chapter 2 reveals the linguistic-philosophical foundation of Newmark's translation theory and delves into how Newmark's translation theory was influenced by the language philosophers such as Gottlob Frege, Karl Bühler, Roman Jakobson, Lev Vygotsky, J. L Austin, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf.

Chapter 3 focuses on the eclecticism in Newmark's translation theory. It summarizes the eclectic features in Newmark's translation theory, analyzes Newmark's conception of translation theory and traces the shift from dualism to eclecticism in Newmark's translation theory.

Chapter 4 discusses Newmark's translation ethics, focusing on the three main components of Newmark's translation ethics: "ultimate purposes of translation", "close translation" and "the five medial truths". This chapter first makes a critical analysis of the three components of Newmark's translation ethics and then makes a comparison among Newmark's "five medial truths", Nord's "function plus loyalty", Pym's "intercultural space" and Chesterman's "four values" in an attempt to construct the paradigm of translation ethics.

## Chapter 1 Literature Review

Peter Newmark's profound and far-reaching influences on the field of translation studies can be demonstrated by the fact that his views on translation have been widely quoted and discussed by translation scholars both in the west and in China and by the symposium held at the University of Surrey, Guilford, on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999 on "Translation in the New Millennium" to pay tribute to him for his contribution to translation studies.

Translation scholars in the west focused on an overall appraisal of Newmark's approach to translation and on his dichotomy "semantic and communicative translation". The correlative approach, which was Newmark's substitution for his dichotomy, was met with silence in the literature of translation studies and his translation ethics received little recognition.

Newmark's theory was introduced into China more than three decades ago. At the early stage, the Chinese scholars introduced and analyzed Newmark's views on translation, especially the dichotomy, proposed in the two books *Approaches to Translation* and *A Textbook of Translation*, and made comparisons among Yan Fu, Nida and Newmark's translation theories. At the later stage, Chinese scholars devoted their attention to Newmark's text typology, to the application of his principles, methods and techniques, to the translation of particular categories of texts and to the solution of specific translation problems. Newmark's translation ethics went unnoticed. Though his correlative approach caught the attention of several scholars, it was misinterpreted.

### 1.1 Reception of Newmark's Theory in the West

It is generally acknowledged in the west that Newmark took a pragmatic

approach to translation for his primary concern with translation teaching and translation criticism. However, his theory met adverse criticism. The reception of Newmark's theory in the west can be investigated from the following four aspects: overall appraisal of Newmark's theory, translation of metaphor, semantic and communicative translation and the Guildford symposium.

### **1.1.1 Overall Appraisal of Newmark's Theory**

Wolfram Wilss (1982) relegated Newmark's theory to the text-linguistic approach. Roger Bell (1991) and Ernst-August Gutt (1991), representatives of the linguistic approach to translation, refused to give a theoretical status to Newmark's study of translation on the grounds that it was unsystematic and did not help to shed lights on the scientific aspect of translation. Sergio Viaggio (1992), an interpreter-turned scholar, though asserting that Newmark did have a single and coherent theory, argued that Newmark's theory was a wrong and didactically dangerous one. Jeremy Munday pointed out that Newmark had been criticized for his prescriptivism and his unscientific use of language in translation evaluation. Susan Bassnett, Gideon Toury and Theo Hermans, representatives of the descriptive approach, criticized Newmark's approach for its prescriptive, source-text orientation and its indifference to history.

Wolfram Wilss (1982) identifies four approaches to translation teaching in the west: the practical, inventory-oriented approach, the encyclopedic approach, the stylistique comparée approach and the text-linguistic approach. He assigns Newmark and Reiss' translation teaching to the text-linguistic approach for the reason that they both assume that the translator must use specific transfer strategies to cope with specific text types.

As a linguist who studies translation from a linguistic approach and makes a fetish of "diagrams, schemas and models", Roger T. Bell (1991) voices his disagreements with Newmark on the nature and purpose of

translation theory<sup>①</sup>. Bell criticizes Newmark for his denial of the possibility of establishing a general translation theory: "It is, no doubt, the seeming chaos of variation faced in texts by translators and the inevitable inability of a theory of translation to be strongly predictive which has led some to go so far as to deny the very possibility of creating a 'single valid comprehensive theory of translation' and fall back on stressing the 'subjective', 'craft' nature of the activity." (p. 9) In Bell's opinion, Newmark makes arbitrary principles or rules by relying on personal experience and mere anecdotalism: "The reliance on personal experience and the promulgation of 'general principles', on the basis of mere anecdotalism is still common and, in spite of the fact that most would probably now admit that 'it would almost be true to say that there are no universally accepted principles of translation', lists of approved techniques and rules for translation continue to appear." (Bell, 1991: 10) Unlike Newmark, who argues that the purpose of translation is to lay down prescriptive rules to regulate the process and evaluate the product, Bell claims that the purpose of translation theory is to explore descriptive rules which help to understand the steps and stages through which the translator works in the process of translating. To Bell, the normative approach should be abandoned and psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic theories should be drawn heavily on if translation theory today is to be in step with the mainstream of "intellectual endeavour in the human sciences" (1991: 10).

Ernst-August Gutt (1991) claims that Newmark's approach to translation is non-theoretical. Although Gutt admits that there is some truth in Newmark's

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① Before his retirement, Newmark worked as Roger's colleague at the School of Languages of the Polytechnic of Central London. Though they were colleagues, Newmark and Roger had drastically different views on the nature and purpose of translation theory. Newmark (1988) questioned Roger's attempt to study the process of translating scientifically: "From the point of view of the translator, any scientific investigation, both statistical and diagrammatic, of what goes on in the brain during the process of translating is remote and at present speculative." (p. 21) On the other hand, Roger criticized Newmark for his individual anecdotalism and his tendency to establish arbitrary rules for the creation of "correct" translations.

skepticism about an objective and scientific treatment of translation, he remarks that Newmark's position on the nature and purpose of translation is "obviously not helpful to the scientific penetration of the subject" (p. 9). Gutt argues that Newmark's rules cover a wide spectrum of different kinds of translation and that "each of these rules is an application of the principle of relevance to an audience with particular kinds of interests" (p. 121). As far as Gutt is concerned, every decision the translator makes in the process of translating is based on his intuitions or beliefs about what is relevant to his audience, which, in turn, are based on his assumptions of the cognitive environment of his audience.

Sergio Viaggio (1992) endeavors to show that Newmark's theory is a wrong and didactically dangerous one despite his most "opportune and welcome" contribution to the development of the study of translation as a discipline. Viaggio considers Newmark's translation theory as a wrong and didactically dangerous one for the following reasons: firstly, Newmark refuses to distinguish linguistic, semantic meaning from extra-linguistic sense. Newmark rejects both the idea that translation is always communication and the notion that the meaning of words and other linguistic units and structures (linguistic, semantic meaning) is subordinate to what the people who use language mean by them (extra-linguistic sense). To Viaggio, sense is the result of the interaction between the semantic meaning of the utterance and the communicative situation. Writing is communicating because, even for a person who writes only for himself, he has an ideal reader in his mind. Translating is communicating because even if the author does not or fails to take the readership into account, the translator has to take his readership into account because he is paid to translate for them. Translation as communication does not begin or end in texts. It originates and culminates in the mind of human beings and texts are just the observable vehicles of such attempts at communicating. Secondly, Newmark advocates literalism and criticizes Seleskovitch's interpretive theory for its de-verbalization, which according to Viaggio, is an essential procedure in translation. For Newmark,