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CONTEMPORARY WESTERN
TRANSLATION THEORIES IN CHINA
(1980-2000) WITH FOCUS
ON THE ANGLO-AMERICAN
SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION

当代西方语言学派翻译理论
在中国的传播与接受

(1980 ~ 2000)

李 欣◎著

南开大学出版社

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序

与世界上其他民族一样，中华民族的翻译史也源远流长。作为一种有组织的活动，从汉到宋，中国的佛经翻译即已有上千年的历史。翻译在中华民族五千年的历史上有灿烂的成就，也有深厚的积淀，但现代西方意义上的“翻译理论”，则一直处于萌芽、空白状态，有“译”无“论”是其主要特点之一。中国人的思维习惯、文化传统以及学术研究的套路似乎在漫长的历史时期内造成翻译理论不能成长为一门独立的人文学科。这与 18 世纪中叶以来中国整体自然科学、社会科学、人文科学的严重落后，有相似乃至相同的复杂原因。

20 世纪 70 年代末以来，国门洞开，西方哲学、文学、经济学、政治学等几乎所有人文科学门类的观点、流派、思潮再次涌入中国，中国知识界迎来了自 1919 年五四运动以来又一个生气勃勃的年代。十年间，这个国家发生了历史性的沧桑巨变，其人文社会科学领域也有了蓬勃的发展，其中即有容易被学界忽视的西方翻译理论著述的大量译介。

英美科学派翻译理论开始被大量引进中国，逐步打破了传统译论在中国翻译界绝对的统治地位。中国的译论与英美科学派翻译理论从并立，到对立，到对峙，再到交融的过程，对建设真正中国文化背景下的翻译理论，实现与西方翻译理论界在一个平台上的对话，发挥了不容忽视的作用。

李欣博士的著作在全面地梳理英美科学派翻译理论 20 世纪最后 20 年间在中国的传播与接受的基础上，深入分析了英美科学派译论对中国翻译理论发展的重大影响，讨论了中国译界对英美科学派译论误读及其背后深刻的文化、历史根源，这是最难能可贵的学术贡献。李欣博士截取了中西人文科学交流最为活跃的 20 世纪最后 20 年，以

此为历史的一个片段，进行了细致、深入的梳理、分析和探讨，其中既有对中西翻译理论交流史的还原，也有对二者冲突、融合的文化、历史因素的深入挖掘。这部著作对中国的翻译理论建设有着相当的意义。

尽管上个世纪最后 20 年西方译论被大量引入中国，但中西方译界各自为营、自说自话的现象直到 21 世纪的今天，仍然没有得到根本的改变。李欣博士对中西翻译理论交流史的还原自然有其价值，但这部著作更大的价值在于对上述现象背后的文化、历史因素进行了探索。翻译理论不是机器，也不是物品，引进容易，消化、吸收则并不简单，至少需要一个漫长的历史过程。

李欣博士的著作是一部翻译理论领域的中外学术交流断代史，不做创新之自诩，不求学术之高产，其认真、扎实、严谨之态度，在今天翻译界年轻学人中间尤为少见，在翻译理论界没有灵魂的学术蔚然成风的大背景下尤为可贵。

是为序。

许建忠

2013 年 3 月

前 言

自中国改革开放后，建立在语言学、交际理论、符号学等现代社会科学基础上的英美科学派翻译理论开始引入中国。英美科学派译论以其科学性、系统性以及客观性很快受到中国译学界的关注。从 1980 年到 2000 年间，具有代表性的英美科学派译论先后被引进中国。国内译学界在接受英美科学派译论的过程中出现了对个别译论家特殊关注，而对其他译论家相对冷落的现象。此外，在接受过程中还存在着对英美科学派译论的误读以及各种消极态度。虽然如此，英美科学派译论仍然对中国翻译研究产生了深远的影响。通过考察英美科学派译论在中国的传播与接受，我们可以更清楚地看到中国翻译研究中存在的问题，从而推动中国译学研究的发展。

从这一理念出发，本书考察了 1980 年至 2000 年间英美科学派译论在中国的传播与接受情况，分析了中国译学界在接受英美科学派译论过程中存在的误读以及各种消极态度，深入挖掘了奈达翻译理论在中国译学界广受欢迎的深层次原因，并探讨了英美科学派译论对中国翻译研究的影响。

通过对所搜集文献的整理分析，本书（1）对英美科学派译论在中国的传播与接受做了较为全面、系统的研究，认为中国译学界对英美科学派译论的接受并不全面深入；（2）指出中国译学界在接受英美科学派译论过程中出现的一些现象和问题，如对个别译论家的特殊关注、对英美科学派译论的误读以及各种消极态度，其根本原因在于中国传统译论根深蒂固的影响。作者提出中国译学界对英美科学派译论的接受是一种文化过滤现象，因为中国传统译论与中国传统思想文化紧密相连，并深受其影响。中国译学界对英美科学派译论的接受过程就是两种思想文化的碰撞过程，接受过程中的现象与问题均源于两种思想

文化的碰撞与冲突；（3）指出中国译学界对英美科学派译论的接受推动了中国科学派译论的发展，促使中国译学界建立翻译学，在方法论上拓宽了中国译学研究的视野。作者认为，英美科学派译论对中国翻译研究最重要的影响在于它结束了近一个世纪以来中国传统译论统治而形成的独白话语，从而使中国传统译论与西方翻译理论进入对话状态，推动了中国翻译研究。

全书共分为六章。

第一章通过简单回顾西方传统翻译研究与介绍当代西方翻译研究现状，将英美科学派译论置于历史发展中，以便更清楚地看到英美科学派译论的优缺点。本章按照英美科学派译论大致发展状况重点介绍了其主要代表人物，包括卡特福德、纽马克、奈达等译论家以及从篇章语言学、心理学、认知科学和符号学等角度探讨翻译的学者。

第二章通过回顾引进英美科学派译论之前中国的翻译研究，揭示中国传统译论的特点，说明中国传统译论与中国传统思想文化紧密相连，并深受其影响。本章通过量化分析，较为全面客观地研究了英美科学派译论在中国的传播与接受，并挖掘了奈达理论在中国译学界广受欢迎的深层次原因。

第三章研究了中国译学界在接受英美科学派译论过程中出现的误读，并分析了导致这些误读的原因。本章还以中国译学界对奈达“翻译科学”的误读为个案，研究了“幸运的误读”现象，认为这种“幸运的误读”促使中国学者提出建立翻译学。

第四章按照消极态度从强到弱的顺序，分析了中国译学界对英美科学派译论的消极态度，并深入探讨了产生这些消极态度的原因。

第五章以金隄翻译理论为例研究中国译学界对英美科学派译论的积极态度，通过分析英美科学派译论对金隄理论的影响以及金隄理论与奈达理论的相异之处，指出金隄理论就其实质而言，仍然没有摆脱中国传统译论的影响。

第六章从中国科学派译论的发展、中国学者提出建立翻译学的努力以及中国翻译研究的变化等三个方面探讨了英美科学派译论对中国翻译研究的影响。

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Chapter I The Anglo-American Scientific Orientation to Translation Studies¹

1.1 Translation Studies in the West before the Rise of the Scientific Orientation

Since the first written record of translation appeared in around 250 BC, the Western world has witnessed six great leaps in translational activities: the translation of ancient Greek classics by the Roman conquerors; the translation of the Bible into Latin between the late period of the Roman Empire and the early stage of the Middle Ages; the translation of ancient Greek classics from Arabic into Latin by Western translators gathering in Toledo, Spain in the mid-Middle Ages; the translation of philosophical, literary, and religious works in the Renaissance; the translation of literary works from the second half of the 17th century to the first half of the 20th century; vigorous translation in the scientific, business, religious and literary fields in the 20th century.

Problems in translating called for theoretical thinking. Cicero's differentiation of *ut interpretes* and *ut orator* is considered the origin of literal translation and free translation. St. Jerome and St. Augustine went a step further than Cicero. Although theorizing on translation started to abound in the ancient Roman Empire, it was only fragmentary records of the translators' ideas and systematic study was few and far between. The Renaissance witnessed remarkable progress by Martin Luther, Amyot, Dolet, and Chapman. An important contribution in the 17th century was made by Dryden with his differentiation of translation method into

metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation. The 18th century is a period for the development of Western translation theory. A. F. Tytler's tripartite model exerted great influence on Western translation studies and became an important milestone. It marked the beginning of a new era in the Western history of translation studies. The 19th century did not witness translation theorization comparable in any sense to Tytler's three principles. Up to the 20th century, before World War II, practically no fundamental change took place in the field. Debates still focused on issues like re-creation, effect, faithfulness, and diction in translation, especially literary translation (Tan Zaixi, 1991: 218). Small wonder Peter Newmark laments over the pre-linguistic period of translation studies:

The wider aspect was ignored: translation's contribution to the development of national languages, its relation to meaning, thought and the language universals. It was mainly discussed in terms of (a) the conflict between free and literal translation, and (b) the contradiction between its inherent impossibility and its absolute necessity. (Newmark, 1981: 4)

Before the emergence of modern linguistics in the 1920s, the philological approach held a dominant position in the Western history of translation studies. However, another minor approach intertwined during the interval: an approach which attaches importance to the role language theory plays in translation and overemphasizes untranslatability in translation. This approach features a kind of philosophic and rationalistic thinking. German language philosophers made important contributions. While Wilhelm von Humboldt believed that the thought and culture of a people was entirely shaped by its language, Friedrich Schleiermacher is more dialectical with regard to the relationship between language and thought. Frierich Hölderlin believed that every language was a reflection

of the same basic language, namely pure language, and the task of translation was to search for the core of this basic language. Walter Benjamin followed Hölderlin's footsteps by stating that it is the form rather than the meaning of the original that should be reproduced in translation. For Benjamin, "a true translation should be transparent, not blocking the light of the original but allowing the underlying pure language (*die reine Sprache*) to shine through" (Chesterman, 1997: 27).

This philosophical and rationalistic thinking in Western translation studies gradually made way for modern linguistics. The establishment of modern linguistics as an independent discipline, the growth of communication theory, semiotics, and other related social sciences, and "the supplementing of structuralist-generative linguistic theory with a situational-contextual view of linguistic relationships", "the development of research on language universals" and "structural semantics" (Wilss, 2001: 38-39) helped invigorate modern translation studies. Modern translation studies started to shift to more scientific and systematic description.

Liu Miqing (1989c) divides Western translation theory into four schools: the philological school, the hermeneutic school, the linguistic school and other approaches like the communicative-functional and sociosemiotic which are derived from the linguistic school. Nida's classification is basically the same as that of Liu's, i.e. philological, linguistic and sociosemiotic (Nida, 1993: 158-168). Except for the philological and the hermeneutic school, all the rest aim to explain the various phenomena in translation with the help of modern linguistics and related social sciences. It is not common for Western theorists to follow the linguistic school only. Many base their theories of translation on both linguistics and other related sciences. Besides, there is no clear demarcation line between these schools, especially the linguistic, the communicative and the sociosemiotic schools. For instance, Nida and

Taber (1969) is generally regarded as a representative work of the communicative school, but there are still linguistic theories, especially semantic theory, running through it. Apart from that, it is sometimes hard to pinpoint exactly to which school a translation theorist belongs. The focus of a scholar's theory may switch from one school to another. Nida's early ideas of translation largely benefited from descriptive linguistics, focusing on the descriptive study of translation with the help of syntactics and semantics. In the 1960s, his translation theory was mainly built on the latest achievements in communication theory, psychology, anthropology, etc. Since the 1970s, he has turned to sociosemiotics. For the reasons cited above, we prefer to call the modern linguistic, communicative and sociosemiotic schools collectively as "the scientific orientation to translation studies". This scientific orientation, as opposed to the traditional approaches, features deduction instead of induction in its research methodology, and is formulated on the basis of modern linguistics, communication theory, semiotics and other related social sciences. Therefore the word "scientific" here is used in the sense of social sciences rather than natural sciences. The scientific orientation, belonging to the modern stage of translation studies, covers the last two schools of Western translation theory in Liu Miqing and Nida's classification.

Compared with the traditional approaches, this modern orientation is more scientific and systematic in describing translation. It is this modern scientific orientation in the West that has been vigorously imported into China since the early 1980s and has exerted a far-reaching influence on China's translation studies. This scientific orientation has been taken up simultaneously by scholars in many Western countries, the most notable being France, Germany, US, UK and the former USSR. Translation theorists like George Mounin, Wolfram Wilss, E. A. Nida, J. C. Catford, Peter Newmark, A. V. Federov, L. S. Barkhudarov, et al, have made their contributions to the development of translation studies in the West.

However, owing to the economic strength of the USA and international status as well as the ensuing English boom in China since the country opened up, the influence of the English language is paramount in almost every field of China's academic research. Though translation theorists from the Western countries other than the USA and UK were introduced into China, their influence could in no way match that of their Anglo-American counterparts. However, the book's focus on the Anglo-American perspective implies, by no means, a total neglect or ignorance of the contributions made by scholars from other Western countries.

1.2 The Anglo-American Scientific Orientation

The Anglo-American scientific orientation began with the application of linguistics to translation studies. The stress on linguistics and the early experiments with machine translation in the 1950s led to the rapid development of the scientific orientation to translation studies in the Western world.

1.2.1 Early linguists' contributions

Linguists at the time took great interest in translation studies, as they believe that the study of translations could throw light on the study of language. Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory had a profound influence on the linguists of the Prague School, the Copenhagen School and the London School. Each school of linguistic theory has its own understanding of translation. The Prague School insists that the various functions of language such as the cognitive function, the expressive function and the instrumental function should be taken into consideration in translation, and attention should be paid to the comparative and contrastive study of the source and target languages, including meaning, grammar, phonetics, style and genre (Tan Zaixi, 1991: 241). The most

influential linguist from the Prague School is Roman Jakobson, who immigrated to the USA after World War II. His contribution to translation studies is best illustrated in a seminal article *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*, in which he approaches the issue of translation from the perspective of semiotics as well as modern linguistics and analyzes the relationship between language and translation. Despite his language view as a universalist, Jakobson admits that translatability could be challenged if the form of the language has meaning, such as that of poems and puns. With insight gained from semiotics, Jakobson classifies translation into three categories:

(1) intralingual translation, or *rewording* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language).

(2) interlingual translation or *translation proper* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language).

(3) intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems).

(quoted from Bassnett, 1991: 14)

By differentiating the three types of translation, Jakobson helps people see the correlation between translation proper, i.e. interlingual translation, and the translation between signs at large, such as the rest two kinds of universally existing translation. This classification serves as an eye-opener for scholars engaged in translation studies. Approaching the issue of translation equivalence from the perspective of semiotics, he concludes that equivalence in message is the key to accurate translation. We should say that Jakobson have done a very important pioneering work in exploring the semiotics of translation studies.

British linguists studied language from a sociological perspective, stressing the importance of context. A central theme of the London School

lies in that the meaning of language is determined by the social context of situation. Whether a word in the translation is equivalent to that in the original depends upon whether they are used in the same context of situation (Tan Zaixi, 1991: 248). J. R. Firth is a representative of the London School's translation view. He believes that language analysis is the basis of translation, perfect or ideal translation does not exist, and certain expressive modes in one language could not be translated into equivalent ones in another language (ibid, 249). His account of translation is, on the whole, rather abstract and rarely touches upon translation techniques.

In the United States, major schools of modern linguistics including anthropological linguistics, American structuralism, transformational generative grammar, etc. had more or less impact on translation studies. The well-known Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which overemphasizes the differences between languages, an obvious influence of Wilhelm von Humboldt, highlights language relativity by proclaiming that the language a people speaks determines its thought. Those who agree with this hypothesis are generally known as the relativists whereas those who disagree are often called the universalists. This division in language view is significant for translation scholars, since their view of language as either a relativist or a universalist decides to a large extent their view of translation. C. F. Voeglin, an anthropological linguist, put forward a five-step translation procedure. Dwight Bolinger, by using Chomsky's T-G grammar, brought forward the concept of structural translation. J. J. Katz based his theory on structural linguistics and gave an in-depth account of translatability and the philosophical issues of language and translation. One thing the above-mentioned Anglo-American linguists share is that their description of translation is often too abstract and theoretical. And they describe rather than prescribe translation phenomena from the perspective of linguistics. As they are more interested in explaining general phenomena of translation, their remarks could hardly provide

immediate help for translators. Apart from that, their theorizing is lacking in systematicness when compared with later generations of linguists interested in translation studies. However, their work paves way for further study.

1.2.2 J. C. Catford

Like all the above-mentioned Anglo-American linguists, J. C. Catford approaches translation studies from a linguistic perspective. Instead of prescribing what a good or adequate translation is, he describes translation phenomena from a relatively neutral stance. He differs from his predecessors in that his study is more systematic and comprehensive. Catford's discussion embodies a kind of purely theoretical probe. His classification of translation into full and partial translation, total and restricted translation, especially his categorization of restricted translation into phonological, graphological, grammatical and lexical levels, helps enhance the explanatory power of his translation theory. His understanding of translation shifts, which include level shifts and category shifts, as departures from formal correspondence provides a theoretical basis for translation techniques. As Catford is more concerned with "the analysis of what translation is" than tackling problems in translating, his theory may appear somewhat abstruse to Chinese translation scholars, who regarded it as insipid and dismissed it as too theoretical to be of any use to translation practice.

By slightly adapting Halliday's general linguistic theory about levels of language, Catford distinguishes the internal levels of language, which consist of phonology, graphology, grammar and lexis; and extralinguistic levels, which comprise medium-substance (including phonic and graphic substance) and situation-substance (simply "situation"). The relationship between grammar/lexis and situation is referred to as "context". All the internal levels of language add up to form the "text". This differentiation is