功能理论视域下的应用翻译研究

TRANSLATION STUDIES ON PRACTICAL TEXTS
IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF FUNCTIONALIST
TRANSLATION THEORIES

刘美岩 薛红果 黄河 著

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Preface

In recent years, with the globalization of the economy and frequent international contact, translation has become a booming industry. The focus of translation research has shifted from the domain of traditional literature translation to more practical areas ranging from politics, economics, science to social and cultural life. With the characteristics of information delivery and action vocation, practical translation plays a more and more important role in bridging international exchanges.

Since practical translation involves different types of text and carries different purposes, there is a great need to determine proper translation theories, criteria and strategies guiding the translation practice. This is just what this book is concerned about.

The book consists of six chapters. The first chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the contemporary functionalist translation theories such as Nida's functional equivalence theory, Reiss' text typology theory, Newmark's Text Types and Text Functions theory, Justa Holz Manttari's Translational Action theory, Vermeer's Skopostheorie theory and Nord's Function plus loyalty theory, which would shed light on different aspects of practical translation. The second chapter deals with the comparison between English and Chinese language. Because translation is actually a conversion from one linguistic form to another, a thorough understanding of the special features of the two languages can contribute to a better translation. The remaining four chapters elaborate on engineering translation, tourism translation, business translation and News translation respectively. Each chapter offers abundant materials for readers, including language features of each type of text, guiding translation principles

and effective translation strategies, with many typical examples to fully illustrate the viewpoints expressed.

This book draws upon the latest translation studies and researches both at home and abroad. It is specially designed for advanced translators, English majors in postgraduate studies, college English teachers and those who are interested in translation studies. This book was written in the hope of providing them with theoretical and practical guidance in translation practice.

The first three chapters were compiled and written by associate professor Liu Meiyan, the fourth and fifth chapters by associate professor Xue Hongguo, and the last chapter by associate professor Huang He, who have spent years on the study and practice of applied translation. The whole manuscript was proofread by foreign teachers Jeremy Balch and Lisa Mattson.

Finally, the authors want to show their gratitude to the school of Humanities, Economics and Law of Northwestern Polytechnical University for sponsoring the writing and publishing of this book.

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Chapter One

Related Translation Theories Concerning Practical Texts

With China's entry into WTO and rapid development of economy, its contact with the world has becoming more and more frequent over the last decade, which brings about an ever growing political, economic, technological and cultural cooperation between China and other countries. As a result, practical translation has entered a period of mushrooming development. According to statistics, literary translation now accounts for only four percent in translation practice, whereas practical translation is becoming the mainstream(Chen Xiaowei, 2006).

What is Practical Translation? According to Prof. Fang Mengzhi, practical translation, with the purpose of offering information, covers all aspects of economic and social life. In Lin Wusun's opinion, "practical translation should consist of scientific translation, business translation, legal translation, tourism translation, political translation, and social science translation."(Lin, 2003:28). Because practical translation is playing a more and more important role as the bridge in international

exchanges, proper translation theories, criteria and strategies concerning practical texts deserve great attention so that qualified versions can be produced with the same effect of the source texts to serve social and economic development.

1. Related functionalist translation theories concerning practical texts

Started in the 1970s and widely developed in recent years, functionalist translation theory, which is reader-oriented as well as target-culture-emphasized is quite applicable to practical translation, especially to the translation of vocative (operative) and informative texts such as advertisements, news, tourism texts, scientific texts and engineering texts (Jia Wenbo 2004; Zhang Changming& Zhong Weihe, 2005; Wei Zhongsheng, 2006). Scholars like Chen Gang (2004), Jia Wenbo (2004), and Zhang Meifang (2005) also maintain that functional translation theories, especially theories put forward by Eugen Nida, Newmark, Katharina Reiss, Hans J. Vermeer, Christiane Nord, are most applicable to practical translation.

1.1 Nida's functional equivalence theory

Eugene A. Nida is a distinguished American linguist and translation theorist. His translation theory has been popular in the world for over 50 years and become an indispensable part of translation studies, because it provides new perspectives and brings enlightenments to this field and contributes a lot to the establishment of the discipline of translation studies or translatology.

Nida's major contribution to translation studies is the theory of dynamic

equivalence put forward in his article *"Principle of Translation as Exemplified by Bible Translating"*, in which he defines translation as "Translating consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalence to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style" (Nida & Taber, 1969: 12). This definition of translation clarifies the relationship between meaning and form, which indicates that meaning has priority over form, and in order to preserve the meaning, the form can be changed. In *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), Nida distinguishes two types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. He points out that formal equivalence "focuses action on the message itself, in both form and content", while dynamic equivalence is based upon "the principle of equivalence effect" (Nida, 1964: 159). In his 1969 textbook *The Theory and Practice of Translation,* dynamic equivalence is defined as "in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language (Nida & Taber, 1969:12) , so the focus of translation shifts from "the form of the message" to "the response of the receptor". As a result, when determining whether a translating work is faithful to the original text or not, critics should put the "receptors' response" rather than the formal structures between the source text and its translation as the first concern. That is, if the reader of the receptor language understands and appreciates the translated text in essentially the same manner and to the same degree as the reader in the source language did, such a translation can be evaluated as a dynamic equivalent translation.

Hence, when a translator translates or evaluates, the first element he should keep in mind is who will be the reader of the translation and the goal of translation is to elicit from the target language (TL) reader the same response

as that of the source language (SL) reader to the original message. This view is different from the traditional ones in which translation is mainly message-oriented. Later, in Nida's *From one Language to Another,* (1986, with De Waard,), the expression "dynamic equivalence" is replaced by "functional equivalence". But essentially there is not much difference between the two. The substitution is just to stress the communicative functions of translating and to avoid misunderstandings of the term "dynamic", which is mistaken by some people for something in the sense of impact (Nida, 1993: 124). When discussing the significance of reproducing the style of the original, Nida argues that "it is functional equivalence which is required, whether on the level of content or on the level of style" (Nida, 1969: 14). In *language, Culture and Translating* (Nida, 1993), functional equivalence is further divided into two levels: the minimal level and the maximal level. The minimal level is defined as "the readers of a translated text should be able to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive how the original readers of the text must have understood and appreciated it". The maximal level is stated as "the readers of a translated text should be able to understand and appreciate it in essentially the same manner as the original readers did" (Nida 1993:118; 1995:224). The two definitions of equivalence reveal that the minimal level is realistic, whereas the maximal is ideal. For Nida, good translations always lie somewhere between the two levels (Nida 1995: 224). obviously, functional equivalence is a flexible concept with different degrees of adequacy.

To Sum up, Nida's theory shifts the emphasis from the "verbal correspondence" to "functional equivalence", from "source text" to "readers' response", which holds that the receivers for whom the target text is intended, are a decisive factor for making the target text. The information about the potential readers of the target text (their socio-cultural background, expectation, perception of the world,

knowledge, etc.), is very important to the translator. Nida's theory has widened our theoretical research angle and completely changed the situation of the static aspect of traditional translation mode, thus enables us to treat translating in a broad sense.

1.2 Reiss' text typology theory

Katharina Reiss, one of the representatives of German functionalist school, is the first one relating function with translation and distinguishing different text types accordingly.

Based on Karl Biihler's model of language functions, Reiss put forward translation-oriented text typology theory during the period of 1968 to 1969 and divided all texts into three main types, namely, content-focused text (informative text), form-focused text (expressive text) and appeal-focused text (operative text). She summarized the functions of text types and its relation with translation methods as follows:

text type	informative	expressive	operative
language function	informative	expressive	appellative
language dimension	logical	esthetic	dialogic
text focus	content-focused	form-focused	appellative-focused
Translation method	'Plain prose' explicitation as required	'Identifying' method, adopt perspective of ST author	'Adaptive', Equivalent effect

(Reiss 2001:26)

Among the above three types, the principal function of an informative text is to convey information to the receiver, so its language is usually plain and logic

with the content or 'topic' as the focus of the communication. In translating such text, literal translation method is often adopted. An expressive text is concerned with aesthetic value, and its informative aspect is partly complemented or even overruled by an aesthetic component. Therefore, the translator should give importance to produce an analogous aesthetic effect as well as reproduce the semantic content of the original. An operative text is appellative-focused with the purpose of activating action or persuading readers to do something. Translating this kind of texts, translators should pay special attention to its persuasive effect.

Reiss stresses that the three categories cover all written texts, though some texts are compound texts, i.e. texts with more than one function. Indeed, many texts have multiple functions, primary or subordinate. The primary function of ST decides the translation method. That is to say, translation method should vary with different text types. Munday points out that "the significance of Reiss's theory is that it broadens people's view to communicative purpose of translating beyond the linguistic level and the literal meaning. (Munday, 2001:76) Nord regards Reiss' text typology as a "milestone" (Nord 1997:9), because her theory set up the priority of translational function over the traditional standard of equivalence.

1.3 Newmark's Text Types and Text Functions theory

Based upon Buhler's classification of language functions and Reiss' text typology, Peter Newmark, a famous British translation theorist, put forward his own text type theory. According to him, texts fall into three major types, namely the expressive, the informative and the vocative type. He also points out that the main functions of language are expressive (the subjective or 'I' form),

the descriptive or informative (the 'it' form) and the vocative or directive or persuasive (the 'you' form), the minor functions being the phatic, the metalingual and the aesthetic (Newmark, 2001:21), and different types of text require different translation methods as is shown in the following table.

Text types and Translation

Text type	expressive	informative	vocative
Typical examples	Literature	Scientific and technical reports and text books	Publicity, propaganda, notice, laws
"ideal style"	individual	Neutral, objective	Persuasive or imperative
emphasis	Source language	Target language	Target language
focus	Writer(1st person)	Situation(3rd person)	reader(2nd person)
method	literal	Equivalent effect	Equivalent effect
Translation unit Maximum minimum	Small Collocation word	Medium Sentence Collocation	Large Text paragraph
Language type	figurative	factual	compiling
Meaning loss	considerable	small	dependent
New words and meanings	Mandatory if in SL text	Not permitted unless reasons given	Yes, except in formal text
Rare metaphors	reproduce	Give sense	recreate
length	Appx. the same	Slightly longer	No norm

(Newmark (2001:40)

As presented in the above table, typical expressive text includes formal works of literature (poem, novel and drama), authoritative speech (political statements of important person, kinds of rules and regulations, laws and academic works), autobiography, prose and personal letters. Informative text includes textbook, technical report, newspaper, journals and thesis, etc, which stresses"truth" and the fact outside the language Vocative text treats readers

as center and its purpose is to call for readers to think and take actions. Notice, propagandas and advertisements all belong to this category.

According to Newmark, the central factor of an expressive text is the author's writing style, so Newmark suggests adopting the approach of semantic translation (ST) in such text translation. In other words, more emphasis should be put on SL than on TL to fully display the authors' style which can be realized by comparing the syntactic and semantic differences between SL and TL. Besides, artistic value and cultural elements embedded in the texts also deserve translators' special attention.

The typical informative texts are concerned with any topic of knowledge, so the information conveyed rather than the language form is the core of this type of text. Meanwhile, the author's status in the text is anonymous. Therefore, Newmark suggests adopting the approach of communicative translation (CT) method and more efforts on TL rather than on SL should be given because the quality of TL texts is a high-stake factor influencing the effectiveness of readers' information reception and response.

The core of vocative text is the readership, the addressee. Newmark uses the term "vocative" in the sense of "calling upon" the readership to act, think or feel, in fact to "react" in the way intended by the text. (Newmark, 2001:41). The function of this type of text has been given many other names including "conative", "instrumental", "operative" and "pragmatic". Recently, vocative texts are more often addressed to a readership than a reader. So the status of their authors is not important, what is important is the effect of information transmission and the readers' response. Therefore, Newmark suggests that vocative texts can be rendered by communicative translation approach because this method is aimed at smooth communication between SL authors and TL

readers and prompting readers' reaction to TL texts. What's more, translators with the readers' reading habit, background in mind have much more "freedom" in dealing with the original syntax to retain the 'vocativeness' of SL texts. They can rearrange the sentence structures of the text to make the translated text natural, fluent, and easily understood. Hence, the translator must firstly identify and analyze the text types before starting to translate an article, a book or a letter, because the type of text plays a primary role in the selection of translation strategies and methods.

However, few texts are purely expressive, informative or vocative, most include all three functions, with an emphasis on one of the three in the aspects of author status, text emphasis, and language manner (Newmark, 2001:42). Therefore, translators can make the most of these features to work out proper translation methods.

1.4 Justa Holz Manttari's Translational Action theory

As a Finland-based German translation scholar, Justa Holz-Manttari put forward the theory of translational action in her book *Translational Action: Theory and Method* in 1984, which views translation as purpose-driven, outcome-oriented human interaction and describes the process of translation as "message transmitter" (Nord, 2001:13). In this model, translation is defined as "a complex action designed to achieve a particular purpose" (Nord, 2001:13). Like Vermeer, she holds that translation is a form of action across culture instead of a trans-coding process.

A translational action is actually an interpersonal interaction between agents who are people involved in the process of translation. These agents play

certain roles in the translation process and are interconnected through a complex network of mutual relations. The agents include:

(1) The initiator: the company or individual who starts off the translation process and determines the purpose of the target text;

(2) The commissioner: the individual who asks the translator to produce a target text for a specified purpose;

(3) The source text (ST) producer: the individual who produces the source text for a translation action;

(4) The target text (TT) producer , who is the translator;

(5) The TT receiver, who is the final recipient of the TT.

The above participants in the translation process are not so absolute, because one participant can play several roles at one time. For example, a translator who translates a book and sends it to a publishing house for printing acts as the initiator as well as the translator. This is quite different from the traditional concept simply involving three agents of ST author, translator and TT reader , and complements functionalist theory and widens its application to a broader scope of communication (Nord, 2001:12-13).

1.5 Vermeer's Skopostheorie theory

Early in 1971, in her book "*Possibilities and Limits of Translation Criticism*", Katharina Reiss develops a model of translation criticism on the basis of the functional relationship between source and target text by introducing a functional category into her "*objective approach to translation criticism*". Following the line of equivalence, Reiss points out that an ideal translation would be one "in which the aim in the TL is equivalent as regards the conceptual content,