

国外翻译研究丛书之二十五

TRANSLATION CRITICISM

The Potentials & Limitations

翻译批评

——潜力与制约

KATHARINA REISS

Translated by ERROLL F. RHODES



上海外语教育出版社

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出版说明

近年来,国内翻译研究取得了很大进展,有关翻译研究的丛书也出了多套。不过,长期以来,国内引进的原版翻译著作匮乏,不少研究都是根据二手资料;另外,学习翻译专业的研究生人数越来越多,这种状况若继续存在,将十分不利于学科的发展和翻译人才的培养。鉴于此,上海外语教育出版社约请了多名国内翻译研究著名学者分别开列出最值得引进的国外翻译研究论著的书目,并对这些书目进行整理、排序,最终确定了准备引进的正式书单。该丛书涉及的论著时间跨度大,既有经典,也有新论;内容的覆盖面也相当广泛,既有翻译本体的研究,也有跨学科的研究。这套丛书的引进将会满足翻译专业研究生教学原版参考书和翻译理论研究的需要。

上海外语教育出版社谨以此丛书献给我国的翻译学界。

借鉴和创造

(代序)

上海外语教育出版社自成立以来一直是我国外语教育最优秀的后勤部和侦调部。因为它不但为我国各个层次(尤其本科与研究生层次)的外语教育提供了多种高水平的教材、教参和工具书,而且还出版了多学科、多语种和多系列的中文版和外文版的学术著作,比如“现代语言学丛书”、“牛津应用语言学丛书”、“美国文学史论译丛”、“外国文学史丛书”、“剑桥文学指南丛书”、“当代英语语言学丛书”以及列入国家及教育部规划的人文社科重点项目的外国语言文学、文化等方面的图书等。为了适应我国现代化建设和教育改革的需要,还出版了一批国际金融、对外贸易、涉外保险、国际经济法、国际新闻和管理科学等方面的教材与专著。这些著作在外语的学科建设与学术研究以及复合型人才培养等方面都在发挥着强有力的侦察、调研和指导作用。这是外语界有口皆碑的。

随着中外文化交流的纵深发展以及我国现代化建设对人才的需求,对比语言学和翻译学近些年来在我国有了较快的发展,最突出的证据就是①外语类硕士博士点上研究对比与翻译方向的学生在逐年迅速增多,而且我们的高校已经有了翻译学院和翻译系(当然还太少)。②外语专业的学生考中文、法律等其他人文社科专业的硕士、博士以及反方向的走向已经起步。这种跨学科的人才已成为人才资源竞争的最主要对象,因此发展趋势定会看好。上海外语教育出版社为适应这种高层次人才培养和新学科建设的需要,不但积极出版国内关于对比研究和翻译研究的专著和论文集,最近又推出了原版“国外翻译研究丛书”,

这套丛书时间跨度从古代到现代,所选书目皆为译学发展史上有里程碑作用的名家名著,堪称译学经典。他们计划分批出版,以满足读者的需求。

这套丛书的出版首先可以解决国内翻译教学原版参考书多年匮乏的困难,真可以说是我国翻译教学与理论研究的及时雨。我想学习和关心这个学科的师生和其他人士定会对这套书的引进为之欢呼,为之祝贺。

这套丛书的价值还在于能大大促进我国翻译学科建设的发
展。译学学科的发展依赖于研究者在三个方面的深入研究和结合。一是对本国译学的继承性研究;二是对外国译学的借鉴性研究;三是对翻译实践和翻译教学中新问题的探索性研究。只有这三者研究深入并结合好了,才可能从经验与技巧逐步升华为具有科学性的译学理论。这三个方面的研究,改革开放以来,在我国已取得了很显著的成就,这是有目共睹的。翻译学在我国已于20世纪80年代末有了独立学科的初级形态,90年代又有了新的发展,对学科的独立性以及理论体系的结构与功能有了更多的探讨。依照学科建设的规律和研究现状,我们尚需在上述三个方面加大研究力度,而这套丛书就是借鉴性研究的主要资源。从这个角度讲,这套丛书的引进也是我国文化基本建设的重要工程之一。

在新的世纪,文化(包括各类科学技术)会多方面快速深入人类的日常生活,各国之间的交流会空前深广,因此翻译的功能会逐步扩大,实用性翻译人才的需求量定会空前增加。这就要求我们除了做好高层次研究型人才的培养以外,还应十分重视实用性人才的培养和应用译学的研究。我想出版社一定会关注和引导译学建设的理论研究与应用的发展趋势。

杨自俭

青岛海洋大学六三居室

2001年3月28日

出版前言

《翻译批评:潜力与制约》一书是德国著名学者、翻译理论家凯瑟林娜·赖斯(Katharina Reiss)贡献给翻译研究领域的一部经典力作,于1971年首次出版。在30年后的2000年,埃罗尔·F·罗得斯(Erroll F. Rhodes)第一次将这部著作翻译成英语,以帮助从事翻译研究的学者和翻译活动的实践者更充分地利用凯瑟林娜·赖斯在这一领域中具有独创性的研究成果。这部著作集中讨论了翻译学的一个中心议题,即如何制定可靠的标准来对译文进行系统的评估。作者运用详实而有趣的例子,对文本进行了系统分类和语用分析,并从功能的视角审视翻译过程,对文本的分类、译者在做出决策时受到的种种制约、译者在译文中融入个人诠释等翻译过程中出现的一些重要问题阐述了自己的看法。

在探讨翻译批评的潜力时,作者对目标语文本与源语文本分别进行了考察。作者从译者的角度出发,将源语文本分为以内容为重的文本(content-focused text),以形式为重的文本(form-focused text),以诉请为重的文本(appeal-focused text)和以声音为媒介的文本(audio-media text),并建议将这种分类方法运用于翻译批评。然后,作者又研究了语义、词汇、语法、文体等语言要素以及环境、主题、时间、地点、读者等非语言要素,并将其与翻译批评的种类联系起来。

在研究翻译批评的制约时,作者谈到了翻译批评的客观与主观制约条件。由于译文具有特殊的功能和特殊的读者群体,作者因而主张根据译文的功能和读者群体的类别来对翻译批评进行分类。而在考察翻译批评的主观制约条件时,作者发现阐述过程本身就受到主观条件的制约,而译者的个性也会在译文

中显现出来。

在详细讨论了翻译批评的潜力和制约之后,作者指出,在对以文本为导向(text-oriented)的译文进行翻译批评时应考虑到文本的类型、文本的语言要素以及对文本产生影响的非语言要素,采用适合该文本类型的标准。而针对以目标为导向(goal-oriented)的译文,在进行翻译批评时则应考虑到译文的特殊功能以及译文所面对的读者群体,采用与功能类别相关的标准。无论是以文本为导向的译文,还是以目标为导向的译文,都会受到阐释过程中主观条件的制约和译者个性的影响。由于批评家也会不可避免地受到主观影响,因此,只有将这些主观因素都考虑进去,翻译批评才可能是客观而公正的。

由于该著作完成时间较早,出版之后翻译研究领域的术语已发生了不少变化,所以译者埃罗尔·F·罗得斯在进行翻译的过程中,在力求忠实于原著的基础之上,采用了目前能被普遍接受的术语。

Translator's Preface

It has been almost thirty years since Katharina Reiss contributed the twelfth in a series of college texts published by Max Hueber Verlag, a slim paperback entitled *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Übersetzungskritik*, outlining principles for assessing the quality of translations. Her pioneering presentation of the challenging possibilities and limitations of translation criticism came at a time when academic and professional leaders were becoming acutely aware of the vital significance of sharing information across cultural borders in a world constantly growing smaller. This work proved to be seminal and it remains today a classic, still valuable for anyone engaged in producing or evaluating translations.

Although the book was originally addressed to the wide spectrum of translation professionals and researchers, we believe it may be especially significant for a particular segment of this audience, namely Bible translators and Bible translation consultants. This is because Bible translators – so gifted in normative approaches to the field – may be able to profit immeasurably from the insights and approaches that characterize modern translation studies with their accent on descriptive approaches to the theory and practice of translation.

In the three decades since Katharina Reiss wrote, the terminology of translation studies has evolved on many fronts. For example, the terms “equivalence” and “fidelity” today are associated with different meanings and values. In translating Reiss’s book, we have tried to be faithful to her presentation, while at the same time using terminology that today’s reader would generally understand and value.

In preparing the present text for English readers certain aspects of its format have been slightly modified. For example, the number of footnotes has been reduced by about one fifth to eliminate detailed references to older ephemeral publications and dated illustrations. Further, the citation of references has been moved from footnotes to author-date insertions in the text in accordance

with recent scholarly usage.

Finally, we wish to thank both Hueber Verlag and the author for kindly allowing us to translate and publish this book. We are also specially indebted to Mary Snell-Hornby for graciously reviewing the translation and contributing many valuable suggestions, as well as to the staff of the Research Center for Scripture and Media, in particular, Liza L. Young, J. Scott Dilley, Deborah G. Atkinson and Scott S. Elliott, for their painstaking work in arranging the bibliographical references and preparing the index. We hope that readers of this book will find it as useful and stimulating as did the translator.

Erroll F. Rhodes
New York, New York
Feast of St. Jerome

Foreword

About thirty years ago, when I was working as an editorial consultant at Max Hueber Publishers in Munich, I was given a manuscript to assess on an exciting new topic: translation critique, using objective and strictly verifiable criteria, as opposed to the purely practical, do-it-yourself methods typical of the time. The author, Katharina Reiss, had worked for some time as a teacher of translation at the Institute of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Heidelberg, and she could obviously draw on many years of thought and experience. The manuscript impressed us all as being something of great promise for the study of translation (“Translation Studies”, as we now know the subject, had not yet been identified), and it was published in 1971 as Volume 12 in the series *Hueber Hochschulreihe* under the title *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Übersetzungskritik. Kategorien und Kriterien für eine sachgerechte Beurteilung von Übersetzungen*.

Now, in the year 2000, Katharina Reiss’s book is still selling, and it has long since achieved the status of a pioneer work in the discipline of Translation Studies in the German-speaking area. Her approach must have been used in hundreds of diploma theses as the classical model of translation critique, and her arguments provoked heated debates in scholarly journals right into the 1990s. Reiss has meanwhile developed her ideas, not only in her 1976 monograph *Texttyp und Übersetzungsmethode. Der operative Text*, but also in many essays and lectures, and the book she wrote with Hans J. Vermeer, *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* (published 1984) is widely known as the basic work on functional translation theory in Germany (*Skopostheorie*).

It is high time, it seems, for an English version of her pioneering book, and the present initiative is more than welcome. While many observations must be seen against the background of the late 1960s, the model of translation critique and the thoughts that inspired it still make stimulating reading for anyone interested in translation.

We can only hope that Katharina Reiss will be as greatly appreciated by her English-speaking readers as she has been in Germany.

Mary Snell-Hornby
Vienna, February 2000

Author's Foreword

In an age when the world is constantly growing smaller, when nations are increasingly drawn closer together and the necessity for exchanging information and ideas across borders in both oral and written forms has become a fact of life, communication has become inconceivable without translation. It is especially important in international scientific endeavors to communicate the results of research rapidly and accurately, not only so that new insights can be shared, but also for avoiding an unnecessary duplication of effort. Translators and interpreters have long been employed in international politics, and they are now increasingly present at interregional conferences of economic, industrial and scientific interests. Finally, the translation of literary works as well as of forms of amusement and entertainment play a significant role in mutual exchanges between cultures.

The sheer bulk and undeniable significance of translations in today's world require that the quality of translations be a matter of special attention. But this is not the only motivation for being concerned with principles for evaluating translations. Undeniably many poor translations have been made and even published. An interest in better translations could be stimulated by more contextually sensitive principles of criticism. From a pedagogical perspective as well the development of objective methods of evaluating, translations would have advantages, because it would be an excellent and even more attractive way of honing an awareness of language and of expanding the critic's linguistic and extralinguistic horizons. And finally, a careful study of the potential and limitations of translation criticism is all the more necessary because the present state of the art is inadequate. The standards most often observed by critics are generally arbitrary, so that their pronouncements do not reflect a solid appreciation of the translation process.

The purpose of this book is to formulate appropriate categories and objective criteria for the evaluation of all kinds of translations.

It is essential to develop a general framework that will accommodate the range of standards relevant to specific individual translations. This leads to the recognition that different kinds of texts call for different kinds of standards. A typology of texts to be translated is the first step toward determining the literary, linguistic and pragmatic categories which provide the points of reference by which a particular translation is to be evaluated.

Once these basic questions have been clarified, the limitations of translation criticism should be defined and categories developed that will consistently ensure the objectivity of judgments or expose their subjectivity.

The following pages undertake the task of proposing a workable and flexible framework that is sufficiently broad to include the whole range of texts subject to translation, and yet is no more specialized or detailed than is necessary for it to be useful as a model.

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A. Introduction

Now that it is translated and finished, everybody can read and criticize it. One now runs his eyes over three or four pages and does not stumble once – without realizing what boulders and clods had once lain there where he now goes along as over a smoothly-planed board. We had to sweat and toil there before we got those boulders and clods out of the way, so that one could go along so easily. The plowing goes well when the field is cleared.

Martin Luther (1963)

“Plowing is easy when the field is clear,” Luther would say to the critics of his translations in 1530 when they showed themselves all too ready with their criticisms. And all the same he had the satisfaction of having his translations “criticized” at all.

How has the situation changed with regard to translation criticism today? Putting the question in this way suggests that there is such a thing as translation criticism. But is there? Of course, in one place or another translations have always been discussed, evaluated and criticized. Daily and weekly periodicals, as well as quarterlies and annuals feature, reviews and discussions of translations. But do these represent translation criticism in the strict sense?

It has been remarked often enough that with the advent of commercialization in the literary world, the level of literary criticism (apart from some outstanding exceptions) has generally sunk alarmingly low. The criticism of literary *translations* in no way constitutes an exception.¹ And yet the simple fact that every year more than three thousand books are translated into German, not to mention the technical translations, essays, speeches and reports that are churned out daily by hosts of translators, might make one think that

¹ The passionate arguments over translations of the world’s literary classics in the Romantic period come to mind, with their attempts to form a theoretical analysis of the problem of translation.

greater attention would be devoted by literary critics to translation criticism. But no such tendency has been observed. Apart from a few exceptions (Schneider, 1956), which are as sparse as the knowledge of their original languages is restricted, reviews of translations do not usually judge them as translations at all. And when they do, it is usually only in passing and with such trite phrases as “translated fluently,” “reads like an original,” “excellent translation,” or “sensitively translated” – judgments that are almost always vague and unsupported. Reviewers rarely take the time and effort to compare a translation with its original language version, even if they are familiar with the language. It will happen more frequently if the language of the original is either English or French, less frequently if it is another European language, and very rarely if it is any other language. The result is outrageous: a work is examined for its content, style and sometimes also for its esthetic character, and both the author and his work are judged only on the basis of a translation without consulting the original work. This fact itself is usually assumed tacitly, with neither positive nor negative mention. The author is judged solely by proxy, via the translator, in absentia and without the fact even being mentioned.²

There is, of course, the question whether judging a translation lies within the competence of a literary critic. Is a critic’s knowledge of the literature or degree of specialization in a given field an adequate qualification for the task? Does he have a sound appreciation of the boulders and clods (to use Luther’s phrase) that the translator first had to clear away? Can he distinguish something other than the final product of the translation process, which then is treated as an original?

In the light of these considerations we may conclude that translation criticism is possible only by persons who are familiar with

² On rare occasions a reviewer may show an awareness of this fact. Thus M. Reich-Ranicki (1965, p. 72) writes: “Hemingway’s style has had an influence on a whole generation of German writers. But whose style has actually had this influence? Hemingway’s, or that of Annemarie Horschitz-Horst, his translator?”