

# Analysis of the Translators' Social and Psychological Trends from the Perspective of Intertextuality

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**Abstract**—Translation is an intertextual and cross-cultural communication. It refers not only to the representation of source-text information on the perspective of intertextuality, but also a social activity which is closely linked to the mental activities of the translators. From the theory of intertextuality and translation psychology, the paper aims to study and discover translators' social and psychological trends during the process of translating. And it also analyzes many factors that effect translators' social and psychological changes as well as the impact on the translation process and its result that is caused by translators' mental activities.

**Index Terms**—intertextuality, translation psychology, translators' social and psychological trends

## I. INTRODUCTION

Only when translators master a certain degree of intertextuality knowledge about the target text can they make more faithful translation at the time of interpretation and expression. Translators should have necessary knowledge reserves for original texts and authors as well as a comprehensive understanding of themselves, of which, translators' subjective psychological factors during the process of translating is the most important and most difficult understanding to grasp. From the perspective of intertextuality and translation psychology, this paper analyzes the impact of intertextual elements including objective cultural factors (such as social culture, geographical culture, linguistic culture and religious culture, etc.) and subjective psychological factors (such as the way of thinking and aesthetic standards, etc.) on translators' social and psychological trends and translation results during the process of translating.

## II. INTERTEXTUALITY OF TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATORS' SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRENDS

### A. Interpretation of Intertextuality Theory

The theory of intertextuality is a kind of text theory which produced in contemporary western post-modernism cultural ideological trend. It covers a wide range, not only relating to some major contemporary western cultural theories such as structuralism, semiotics, poststructuralism, Western Marxism, etc., but also penetrating into the practice of new historicism literary criticism and feminist literary criticism as well as translation studies.

The theory of "intertextuality" was first proposed by Julia Kristeva, who was a French semiotician, structuralist thinker, psychoanalyst and feminist ideology representative. "The formation of any work is like the products of drafting a mosaic, and any text is the absorption and transformation of other texts" (Julia Kristeva, 1969). She pointed out in *Semiotik è* which basically means that every text is a mirror of others and one is the absorption and transformation of another. It creates an open network with unlimited potential by referring to each other and holding together to constitute a great open system for the past, the present and the future, as well as form an evolution process of literary semiotics.

Translation process involves the participation of two versions: one is the original text, and the other is the target text. Both texts can be either interlingual translation in the same geographical area within different periods, or interlingual translation in different areas. In terms of translation itself, it has the feature of intertextuality, whether viewing from the point of appearance or the nature. Intertextuality maintains that any text is generated on the basis of the trace or memory of previous text, or formed in the process of absorption and transformation of other texts (Julia Kristeva, 1969). Qin Wenhua said, "Intertextuality emphasizes the interaction of reference, sensor, contact, penetration, transfer and other effects between texts, which concerns on the uncertainty and non-centrality of a text" (Qin Wenhua, 2006). However, as the mediators of translation, translators are the necessary and indispensable bridge for transmitting information. Translation enables members from different cultural communities to communicate freely by eliminating estrangement of verbal or non-verbal behavior, expectations, knowledge, opinions and other aspects caused by different cultural environment, in order to make information sender and receiver communicate with each other more effectively (Zhang

Meifang, 2005).

### *B. Interpretation of Translators' Social and Psychological Trends*

Lin Yutang said, "As a matter of fact, the problem of translation is still nothing more than the relationship between translators' psychology and the text they translate, so translation is said at issues of language and psychological" (Lin Yutang, 1984). Translation study covers a wide range, some studying on translation process on all aspects from a psychological perspective, and some analyzing the impact of psychological factors on translation. Wu Jingquan believes that translation is a social activity, which is naturally affected by translating subjects — individual psychology and social psychology.

Intertextuality is often used to indicate intertextual relationship occurs between two or more texts, which comprises the relationship between two specific or special texts and diffusion effects to other texts by means of memorizing, repeating and modifying. Therefore, from the original text to translation, as the subject identities, translators play the most active roles in the intertextual relationship. On one hand, translators must fully understand the intention of the original text and faithfully convey it; on the other hand, they will have to take the initiative to achieve the recreation of the original. Wang Dongfeng pointed out, "When introducing a concept which contained in a foreign culture discourse to the native place, translators are bound to make their own judgments about these values from other cultures, and then decide to convey it straightforward or just reaching its righteousness; 'retain and reject', or start all over again" (Wang Dongfeng, 2003, p17). Translation is not only the general result of the conversion between linguistic signs, but also an interpretive recreation process. Therefore, whether the target text can convey the same information as the original one, the translator plays a decisive role. As the recreator of the original text, translators must have their own psychological activities, which will certainly have an impact on the process of translating and translation results (Hou Yanan and Dong Guangcai, 2007).

### *C. Interpretation of Translation from the Perspective of Intertextuality*

Traditional translation studies only focus on activities of establishing a standard language level, such as the translation mechanism of translators and seeking translation strategies, instead of the subjectivity and creativity of translators, which advocate the translation to be faithful to the original text without considering whether the information can be expressed one-to-one by target language, regardless of the intertextual elements such as the translator's inner literary accomplishment, personal experience, ways of thinking, education and external background of national history, society and culture, education and life experience, etc. Denouncing the "creative treason" of a translation without any analysis makes the translator in an awkward position. However, the emergence of the theory of intertextuality makes the translation community reposition the role of translators and put more attention to them.

Intertextual translation study has diversified translation relationships, which not only refers to the relationship between text and text, but also text and readers, text and translators, as well as the external dialogue field with text, author, reader, translation, and literary, social and historical context (Qin Wenhua, 2006). Therefore, as the main subjects involved in translation activity, author, translator and reader are all active in the field of intertextual movement, playing an important role in countless texts. Originally, authors are also readers of other texts, who will write under the influence of previous authors and under the help of absorbing and accepting previous texts. That is to say, authors are all converted from readers. People who never read cannot write, which is just the same as the situation that people who never heard of a foreign language is impossible to communicate with foreigners. As the reader of the original text, translators are supposed to have a certain amount of related knowledge about the original and have a thorough understanding of the text before translating, from language to culture and other aspects. At the same time, they should do some research on the original author, such as the concept of life, language features, art features of his works and so on. In addition, translators themselves should have enough and complete knowledge structure and information system related to the original text. With more intertextual knowledge, translator will have more profound understanding about the original work, and the translation will be closer to the original, under which circumstance, the translation will become a true and special intertextual text.

Reading is the process of extending translators' horizons, increasing intertextual knowledge with the original author. The equivalent degree of translation and the original fundamentally depends on the subjectivity and creativity of translators, whose intertextual knowledge plays an important role. As the third subject in translation process, readers will understand the text under the influence of life experience, IQ, EQ, and aesthetic taste. In reading, to gain a better understanding of the text, they will analyze the structure of the work consciously, and regroup it with their own modes of thinking. Thus, readers with this purpose are likely to become authors of the new translation. This iterative process produces a translation activity.

## III. INTERPRETATION OF TRANSLATORS' SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRENDS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERTEXTUALITY

### *A. Impact of Social and Cultural Differences in Intertextual Texts on Translators*

As a product of culture and society, language and culture are inseparable, which must be understood from the perspective of culture and society; similarly, as a product of cultural intertextuality combined with translators'

psychology, translation is a special kind of cross-cultural communicative activity, which must be studied from the perspective of cultural intertextuality and translators' psychology. Translators are the link and bridge for cross-cultural translation communication. Specific social and cultural consciousness produces unique way of thinking; and different ways of thinking affect psychological activities of different nationalities; "This national psychological differences exert a profound influence on people's thinking, emotional expression, language habits and behaviors, and so on" (Wan Yulan, 2007, p182).

Different translators have different social and cultural backgrounds, which result in the appearance of different translations to the same text. Take the title translation of *A Dream of Red Mansion* (one of China's four famous books) for example, which involves the social and cultural intertextuality. How to translate the color "red" in the title is the most controversial one. In Chinese culture and society, red represents good luck, festivity, warm, imaginative, passion, fight, revolution. For instance, in ancient China, walls of many palaces and temples, official residence and dress are mainly red, which are so-called "vermilion gates" and "Chinese clothing"; in the five elements of traditional Chinese culture, the corresponding color of fire is red, so is Li Trigram in the Eight Diagrams. The same as "vermilion", "red mansion" in the book is also the nickname of an ancient princely noble residence. So, it goes without saying, *A Dream of Red Mansions* means that it is nothing more than a dream for noble people who lived in a red grand house. Therefore, the domestic well-known translator Yang Hsien-Yi and his wife Gladys joint to translate the title as *A Dream of Red Mansions*. However, in western culture and society, red is the synonym of evil, cruelty, bloodshed, tension, danger, obscene and other derogatory statements. For example, a red adventure story (a very tense adventure story). So, when Hawkes, the famous sinologist is translating the title, he realized that readers with English background do not have intertextual knowledge of the meaning of red in Chinese culture, who may think of the derogatory meaning in western culture, he then translated as *The Story of the Stone*. The difference between them is that the former himself is a Chinese with highly traditional literacy, who is able to appreciate and understand the profound meaning of the book; while the latter is a Westerner, who will first consider the reading habits of Anglo-American readers, ignoring the interpretation of Chinese culture. Qu Yunjie (2009) believes that any form of a text is not isolated. It is always integrated in national literature, history, tradition, custom and other factors(p34). Inspired by the way of intertextual thinking, interpretation of literature is an intertextual interpretation, and the analysis of translation is an intertextual analysis.

#### B. Impact of Religious Differences in Intertextual Texts on Translators' Psychology

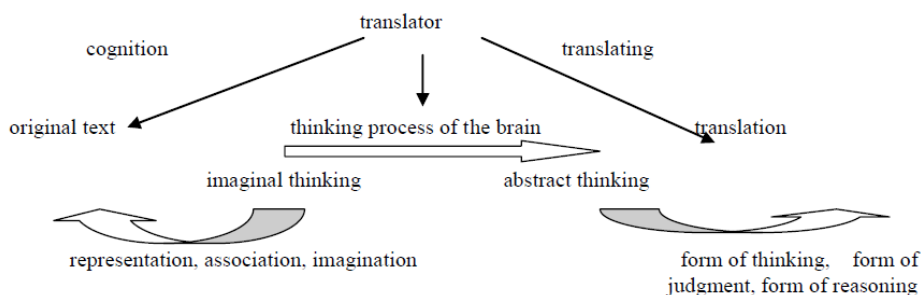
"Religions play a role in guiding people's values, which has a deep-rooted influence on the way of thinking and behaviors" (Zhang Yingchun, 2010, p166). "In China, three religions that dominated by Confucianism and supplemented by Taoist and Buddhist thought have a broad impact, while the Christian and Western philosophy are the main parts that constitute traditional religious culture of English-speaking countries. This kind of cultural and religious differences influence people's understanding of the meaning of things and language expression" (Li Xiaoyuan, 2008, p13). Christianity is a religion peculiar to the Western countries. Since many Chinese do not have the intertextual elements of this religious background, they will encounter a variety of obstacles in the process of cross-cultural communication. In Western culture, many historical allusions come from ancient Greek and Roman mythology and biblical stories. For instance, in the sentence of "You are just doubting Thomas. You won't believe what I tell you", "doubting Thomas" is derived from the biblical story. As one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, Thomas was a suspicious person in nature. Later, "doubting Thomas" is used for describing a suspicious man. If the translator has intertextual knowledge of Western religious culture, he will understand the cultural connotation of this sentence and translate it accurately as "You are really a suspicious person, who never believes me, no matter what I say."

Many English words and phrases represent a specific religious significance. People without intertextual knowledge will have the wrong associations when they only understand it literally. Taken "End of the World" for example. People with different ethnic religions will have different understanding of these words. Deeply influenced by Confucianism and goodness said of Buddhism, Chinese people may understand it as a catastrophe, or mankind is about to be destroyed and go through some horrible time; but for Westerners who are influenced by "original sin" of Christian, it only means the moment of justice. "many English words involving religious activities and rituals represent a particular meaning, the full meaning of which cannot be conveyed when simply translated into Chinese" (Wang Tianzhi, 2008, p340). In this case, while translating a text with specific religious and cultural content, whether translator and the original author have intertextual knowledge of religious culture or not will be in dominant position, which controls the translators' psychological direction in the process of translation. Only with a deep understanding of Eastern and Western religious and cultural differences, as well the religious culture in language can translators avoid mistranslation.

#### C. Impact of Different Modes of Thinking in Intertextual Texts on Translators

Three aspects of human's psychological activities — cognition, emotion and will are often in a dynamic state, but also connect with each other. Viewing from their structure and mechanism, these psychological activities possess a human commonality that is subject to common rules. However, expressed in each specific person, the psychological process will not be exactly the same. Because the psychological process is always reflected in the person's practice of their different lives and constrained by different rules, thus people show different tendencies and different individual psychological characteristics. In the process of translation, individual's social and psychological factors play an important role, which results in different translations created by different translators to the same original text. As shown

in the chart:



In other words, combined with the feature that translator has multiple identities, and the cognitive process for the original that the brain uses the imaginal thinking of concrete thinking for representation, association and imagination of the text, as well as the form of thinking, judging and formal reasoning through abstract thinking, translations then can be completed. Viewing from the perspective of intertextuality theory, creative thinking is the combination of thinking and imagination, as well as the result of the absorption or conversion for relevant text.

From the perspective of intertextuality, translator is the main subject of the translation process, which results in producing different versions of the translations to the same original text. From the above chart, we can easily conclude that the main cause for different versions is translators' different ways of thinking. Because thinking is a complex structure, the underlying performance of which is undercurrent like emotion and will, and the attitudes of observing things that exist in the form of subconsciousness, while its shallow performance is language. Due to various natural and cultural conditions, ways of thinking for Chinese and Westerners objectively exist differences. Modes of thinking of oriental peoples are circular, which emphasize integrity, with an intuitive experience as a tool; Westerners' are linear, which emphasize on part of analysis by means of logical positivism. Chen Chongwei (2004) mentioned: Chinese attach more importance to intuition and concreteness, while Westerners to rationality and logic. Chinese traditional thought pays attention to practical experience and overall thinking, emphasizing the sensibility, inspiration and enlightenment with the help of intuition and intuitive thinking; while Westerners lay stress on rational knowledge, analysis and demonstration. The different ways of thinking manifested in language are the image of Chinese and functionality of English.

#### D. Impact of Geographical Differences in Intertextual Texts on Translators

Translation not only involves the conversion of language, but sometimes also the conversion of scenes and geographical environment where information occurs. At this moment, from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, it is the conversion between the geographic and cultural information, which is conducted by inter-language conversion. "For translation between English and Chinese, there is a big difference between these two languages, including the aspects of history, geography, politics, economy, culture and customs." (Zhou Fangzhu, 1997). Different geographical and natural environment of languages and cultures perform in different forms of verbal expression of different ethnic groups for certain phenomenon or things. Intercultural Communication showed that particular growth environment has made people develop a certain mindset, and most anthropologists and sociologists believe that a country's geographical condition plays a very important role on culture in varying degrees. Western culture originated in Greek mythology, while Greece is an island, where they established the first democratic contract society. Because of the activities in the sea, they developed a good habit of "move", also this kind of national character and outlook on life, furthermore, change and curious have become the characteristics of marine culture. Besides that, different geographical and cultural differences also lead to different material concepts. For example, the concept of the five elements including wood, fire, earth, gold and water is an outlook on substance in ancient China, which is mostly used for philosophy, medicine and divination. However, Western countries only talk about the four elements, which is said to be the theory of the material composition of the world according to ancient Greece. Therefore, in the process of translation, translators should stand in the angle of target readers and think from the perspective of intertextuality to eliminate cultural differences in the case of geographical and cultural ambiguity. So, "Wu Xing" should be translated into "the five elements", and its corresponding explanation should be "The five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth, held by the ancients to compose the physical universe and later used in traditional Chinese medicine to explain various physiological and pathological phenomena)". Geographical and cultural differences are also reflected in the ways of expression for describing the same things in different languages. For example in Chinese, we have "宁为鸡首, 不为牛后", corresponding to the English "Better be the head of an ass than the tail of a horse" (rather as a donkey head, nor as horsetail). In this regard, in the process of translation, the translator should take their geographical and cultural characteristics of different nationalities into account, always converting the original texts to the target texts from the perspective of intertextuality.

#### E. Impact of Gender Psychological Differences in Intertextual Texts on Translators' Psychology

Gender is a ubiquitous fact that gender differences in language reflect in different social environments. Qiu Fen (2009) indicated that: With the popularity and spread of feminist thought and feminine literary in society, male and female translators will encounter a series of technical problems, such as how to authentically transfer words with feminism color or a special cultural meaning in original texts to the target language environment, and so on(p12). In the process of translation, if it comes to gender issues in other cultures, translators may first gain more sense of identity for authors with the same gender during reading and interpreting. Moreover, female translators with certain knowledge of feminism will also reflect their gender consciousness in translation practice. Western feminist translation shows a characteristic of strong individuality, emphasizing self-awareness and individual awareness. But because of long-term imprisonment by the feudal system, self-consciousness of Chinese females is dim, blind and intermittent.

Take the following three translation versions of *Purple* for example, analyzing the differences that translators of different genders deals with gender consciousness in the original text.

She has the nerve to put one hand on her naked hip and bat her eyes at me.

Tao Jie: 她居然敢把一只手放在光屁股上对我飞个媚眼。

Lu Shujiang: 她满不在乎地把手搭在她那光光的屁股上冲我眨了眨眼。

Yang Renjing: 她厚着脸皮把一只手放在光屁股上, 还对我挤眉弄眼。(Li Hongyu, 2008, p23)

In the first two versions of translation, translators used the neutral word “居然敢(dare)” and “满不在乎(indifference)” to express a tone of Xili’s surprise about Shug’s behavior. This is because the translator had found out Xili’s astonishment and envy about Shug’s exaggerated behaviors; While the third translator used the derogatory word “厚着脸皮(shameless)” and objectionable phrases “对我挤眉弄眼(make faces to me)” to express translator’s hate about Shug. This is because he added his own personal emotions to the translation, instead of expressing the true feelings of Xili. Thus, in text translation, gender differences in translator’s psychology have the re-creation impact creative treason on translation, and gender awareness also reflects in the target text.

#### F. Impact of Aesthetic Ideology in Intertextual Texts on Translators’ Psychology

Chinese aesthetic consciousness is characterized by taste, touch and smell, which is seen as the prototype for perception. There is a clear tendency to fracture and grade related to the relationship between the five senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch in Western aesthetic awareness, speaking highly of the former and disparaging the latter. Vision and hearing are considered to be close to the heart of the “theory of the senses”, while smell, taste and touch are senses of animals and functions. This hierarchical description suggests that Western aesthetic consciousness has values of respecting for the soul and the spirit, but disparaging the flesh and materials. Chinese aesthetic consciousness takes taste, touch and smell as the prototype, instead of emphasizing the importance of vision and hearing. Like master said “Five colors blind the eyes”, “So the Wise Man will do what his belly dictates, and never the sight of his eyes”, “Thus it is that the Great man abides by what is solid, and eschews what is flimsy; dwells with the fruit and not with the flower”. Because of the integrated relationship between ways of perception and perceived object, Chinese-style aesthetic consciousness with smell and touch as the prototype presupposes some intrinsic aesthetic value and outlook of an integration of the universe and humanity (Sun Shiqian, 2010, p89). A prominent feature of Chinese culture is reserved and harmonious, which further affect Chinese aesthetic and cultural psychology. For example, as for aesthetic, female behavior pay attention to implicit beauty, like “try less teeth”. In literary translation of *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*, the Western beauty with strong personality and “marked” look was creatively transformed into a Chinese classic beauty:

The original: She was a striking looking woman, a little short and thick for symmetry, but with a beautiful olive complexion, large dark Italian eyes, and a wealth of deep black hair (Conan Doyle, *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*).

Translation version (translated by Cheng Xiaoqing): 安娜貌颇丽, 肤色雪白, 柔腻如凝脂, 双目点漆, 似意大利产。斜波流媚, 轻盈动人, 而卷发压额, 厥色深墨, 状尤美观。形体略短削, 稍嫌美中不足。(《海军密约》)(Huang Xiaoxiong, 2007,p55)

To make the women of the work is in line with the aesthetic psychology of Chinese readers and easy to be accepted and loved by target text readers, the translator transformed the description of a Western woman characterized by the appearance into an oriental woman with unique personality. But just because of the lack of intertextual knowledge about Western aesthetic culture, the re-shaping of the original text lost its unique aesthetic and cultural characteristics of Western society.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Since the combination of translation study and intertextuality theory, the intertextuality of translation study has broken the closed model of traditional translation study, shifting its perspective again to translator, who is one of the multiple translation subjects. From the perspective of intertextuality, this paper discusses translators’ own psychological factors and some of the inevitable social and psychological factors that affect translation variants when translating texts with cultural differences. The study of translators’ psychological trend is an inseparable part of translation study. Furthermore, translation process is a complex process of psychological activity, which involves linguistic psychology, aesthetic psychology and cultural psychology of translators. Through the above analysis, we can make sure that

psychological activities of translators should be studied from multiple levels because of its multiplicity.

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