

Appraisal Theory in Functionalism and Translation Evaluation*

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Abstract—The function of language is to communicate, so meaning is the most important concept. In the field of translation, the convey of meaning is the only goal. To transfer the meaning in a more scientific way is the topic many translators and translation theorist try to explore. This study is using theories in functionalism to explore the subjects of translation criteria and translation evaluation. Using the theories in functionalism, the study of translation theories appears more scientific.

Index Terms—functionalism, intention, appraisal theory, evaluation

I. INTRODUCTION

Communicative situations are settings in which people communicate with each other. Communication is thus a kind of interpersonal interaction. The different roles in the interaction play a significant part and thus very important in the translation process. The people involved in the communication have their own functions and roles. Those roles are interconnected in a very complex network. The understanding and analyzing of these roles are very important. So sometimes action theory may be able to explain certain aspects of translation process. According to action theory, action can be defined as the change from one state of the affairs to the other, mostly intentionally. In most cases, human interaction can be defined as change of a state of affairs affecting two or more people or agents. Within the same cultural background, the sender and the receiver have already formed the particular rules, so they have no difficulty in understanding each other. But when senders and receivers belong to the different cultural and language background, they need an intermediary agent to bridge them. The intermediary agent needs not only the language knowledge of the source and the target language, but also the communication rules and communication settings of both cultures.

II. TRANSLATING AS A FORM OF TRANSLATIONAL INTERACTION

A. *The Role of Translator*

Of course, the role of the translator is vital in the whole translating process, for the translator should be responsible both for carrying out the meaning of the source language to the target language, and ensuring the result of the process. So in the process of translation, the translator first is a receiver of the source language, and then perform a translational action, which may present a short summary of the source text according to the communication setting of the target language. Translator can be compared with a target-culture text producer expressing a source-culture sender's communicative intentions. When doing the translation process, most of the times translators have to take receivers of the target text into consideration since the addressees of the translation is a deceive factor in the production of the target text.

B. *Intention and Function*

The prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose, in other words, the function of the target text is crucial to determine the word choice and tone of the translation. From the point of the sender, the author or the speaker of the source text wants to achieve a certain purpose, which can be called intention (Catford, 1965). But the intention of the original source text may not achieve the ideal result, especially in the situation where the sender and the receiver are quite different. In translation, in order to achieve the function of the target text, the receiver of the translation, the purpose of the target text are the important factors to consider.

It is important to distinguish intention and function, since the sender and receiver usually belong to different cultural and situational settings. And because of these differences of the sender and receiver, intention and function have to be analyzed from the two different perspectives. The function of a particular translation task may require a free or a faithful translation, or sometimes a translation between these two extremes. According to Vermeer, "every cultural phenomenon is assigned a position in a complex system of values, it is evaluated. And every individual is an element in a system of space-time coordinates. If this is accepted, trans-cultural action or communication across culture barriers has to take account of cultural differences with regard to behavior, evaluation and communicative situations" (Vermeer, 1990, P.29). Two different cultural factors may be different in form, but the different forms may have the same function. The

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translation process involves comparing cultures. Readers who never experience the foreign cultural factors themselves have to compare the foreign culture with their own cultural in order to have an understanding. So the concept of the target language culture acts as the touchstone for the conception of other cultures.

C. *Text Classification*

According to Reiss, text typologies help the translator specify the appropriate hierarchy of equivalence levels needed for a particular translation Skopos. Usually text types are divided according to the function the text wants to achieve, and sometimes linguistics characteristics or conventions are also important. Based on the standards, there are usually three types of texts, which are informative, expressive or operative.

In informative type, the main function of the text is mostly to tell the readers about a certain subject or phenomena in the real world. The choice of words and phrases and the stylistic forms are all subordinate to this function. In translation of such informative type, the correct and complete representation of the source text's content is essential, and the stylistic choices should be guided by the norms of the target language and its culture.

In expressive type, the aesthetic meaning is somehow more important than informative meaning. The stylistic choices made by the author have an aesthetic effect on the reader. When translating, translators have to take this aesthetic effect into consideration, trying to present a kind of translation which can express the same interpersonal meaning in the original one.

In operative texts, both content and form are not so important compared to the extra-linguistic effect that the text is attempted to achieve. In order to bring about the same reaction to the readers or audience, sometimes the content and the stylistic features of the original text might be changed (Bassnett, 1991).

Each text type is assumed to have many kinds of text genres, but one text genre does not always correlate with the only one text type. For example, a lover letter might be of the expressive type, a business letter would be informative, and a letter talking about complaint may belong to the operative type. So text genres are divided by conventional features, and their classification is very important in functional translation.

D. *Appraisal Theory*

Appraisal theory put forward by Martin is the new achievement in functional linguistics. The theory has great impact on linguistics and translation field both home and abroad. In recent years, there are lots of papers about the appraisal theory in seminars both home and abroad.

In *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Halliday has pointed out the relation between language and its function. The field of discourse, tenor of discourse, and mode of discourse control the ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function respectively (Halliday, 1985). Halliday put more emphasis on the grammatical level such as mood and modality. Martin also points out that lexical expressions are also the important symbols of interpersonal meaning. It is important to recognize the connection between the grammatical expressions and the lexical expressions. Usually, the lexical expressions are more concrete, since they talk about the meaning of a word or phrase in a certain context. The grammatical expressions are usually general, since it sums up the grammatical usages of mood and modality. Such as the indicative mood is used to exchange of information. The imperative mood is used to exchange of goods and services, and the mood mostly talks about the probability and usuality. The research about lexical expressions has a very wide range, since every word can be the research object, while the research about the grammar is comparatively smaller, since the research objects in grammatical field are limited. But the information conveyed by the grammatical expression is much more than the information conveyed by vocabulary.

The appraisal theory is developed on the basis of functional linguistics. The most significant meaning of it is the study of interpersonal meaning in lexical level. The study of lexical expressions made up the limit of research only about grammar. The appraisal theory not only expanded the range of interpersonal meaning in functional grammar, but also has a great influence on language teaching, especially on the improvement of students writing ability. The study about lexical expressions also provides the guidelines for the choices of words in translation. Translators can be guided when they are doing the translation work, and the translation work can be judged by the theory.

To evaluate translation, the ideational and interpersonal meaning should be analyzed. Whether the translation is good or not depends on the transfer of the ideational meaning and interpersonal meaning. Because the translation would certainly be influenced by the features and the cultural background of the target language, the organization of textual meaning sometimes is different with the source language. Because the quite different two systems, the difference in organization of textual meaning sometimes is necessary and this alone cannot be used to criticize the unfaithfulness of the translation.

According to theory of functional linguistics, the language unit should be discourse. Translation, as the transfer of languages between cultures, is no exception. To describe or explain the translation process, the suitable way should take the perspective of discourse as well. The quality appraisal system of translation, which can be used to judge whether the translation is equivalent from the perspective of function, should base its theory on the discourse.

How do we judge if the target language has achieved the equivalence in ideational meaning and interpersonal meaning? According to the analysis of language behavior in functional grammar, the language people use to communicate with each other is a framework composed by form, function and context. The relation among the three is: the context determines the form, and the form becomes a kind of context as well. The form expresses function and

meaning, so the function and meaning are carried out by form. The analysis of language should start from context, so does the evaluation of translation. To evaluate translation, the first step is to analyze the context and form of the source language. In this way, the meaning of the source language can be clear. Using the same way, the context and meaning of the source language can be analyzed. Then if the translation is equivalent or not with the original one is clear.

Since textual meaning is much stressed in the translation process, the central problem translation criticism focuses on the transfer of the discourse meaning of the original language, so the other minor factors that may also affect the transfer of meaning might be overlooked. In fact, faithfulness not only refers to the meaning of the source language, the target language, translation motivation, the application of the translation and the readers of the target language should also be the factors that are taken into consideration when evaluating the translation. If translation analysis is only based on the translation alone, in other words, to compare source language and target language statically is very likely to fall into a closed mechanic criticism mode, and the criticism would be not persuasive. The analysis of translation process from the perspective of form, function and context and put the translation into the framework of all the communication factors, then the evaluation would be more reasonable. To judge whether the translation is faithful or not depends not only on textual meaning, but also the minor factors such as the features of target language, the social and cultural environment. On the basis of these analyses, the number of places in the translation that are not equivalent can be calculated, and these data is the basis to judge whether the translation is faithful or not. The analysis based on the data is more scientific and can provide concrete way to conduct the evaluation of the translation. From another perspective, translators can follow these guidelines to do the translation process. While doing translation work, translator always bear in mind that the minor factors such as the features of target language, the social and cultural background are all the elements to be taken into consideration to present an ideal translation work.

Any text consists of uncountable units of information, and these units of information are in different levels. They are different in their position. And different languages have different language construction modes and different cultural background, so it is quite difficult to transfer the one hundred percent meaning from the source text to the target text. In other words, equivalence is impossible to achieve. The problem that translation theory needs to solve is to let the information reduction to its lowest point. If information is not lost from the process of translating or lost as little as possible, then the meaning is transmitted to its utmost, and the translation should be the ideal one.

Since the information units are not at the same level in their importance, translators' most important task is to guarantee that the main information unit that is carried by the original should be transmitted to the target language. Even if the other information units that are in the unimportant position cannot be transmitted totally, the main information unit should be transferred clearly. In order to achieve this aim, translators must put emphasis on the whole textual meaning, instead of paying much attention to the equivalence of every word and sentence. Sometimes translators can omit, combine or reconstruct some information units that are impossible to translate. So the equivalence of the source text and the target text can be classified into two types. The first type is the necessary equivalence, that is to say, the translation must transfer the equivalent meaning in the target language, otherwise it will not be called translation. The second is the optional equivalence, the equivalence that translators choose according to the context. Which aspect should achieve equivalence, or which aspect cannot or there is no need to get the equivalence can be in the hands of translators. Because of this, different translators, different translation context will cause different choices. Contextual factors are so important to evaluate any translation. Only on the basis of contextual factors can the evaluation be scientific and persuasive.

E. Translation Criticism

Translation criticism is one of the central subject of study in translation theory research field. Since translation evaluation is the basis of translation criticism, the research about the translation evaluation appears more important. Researchers can choose the different aspects and interest to begin their study. Such as from the research on the principles and approaches about translation theory, researchers can make a summary about the present study in this field and arrive at the conclusion on the level of philosophy. On the other hand, researchers can choose a certain type of text and make evaluation just on this certain type. This can be classified into the study of translation practice rather than the study of theory. But to make scientific study, both the theory and practice field are important. However, some of the parameters in the book are not so scientific and the procedures are too simple, and the whole assessment system has only the upward direction. Moreover, her study is based on the translation of English to German. To apply it in the translation of English to Chinese is not so reasonable.

Since too many factors have to be taken into consideration to evaluate translation work, it is very hard to render a scientific and comprehensive system. To construct a comprehensive and scientific and practical evaluation system is even more difficult. Although there are many studies about this field, the result is not that satisfying. In German Translation theorist House's *Translation quality Assessment*, She used the theories on functional linguistics and discourse analysis to analyze the eight types of English to German translation. She presented a set of comparatively scientific system and procedure. It is the first translation assessment system and started the research in this field.

Taking equivalence as her basis, Reiss develops a model of translation criticism based on the functional relationship between source and target texts. According to Reiss, the ideal translation would be one "in which the aim in the target language is equivalence as regards the conceptual content, linguistic form and communicative function of a source language text. She refers to this kind of translation as integral communicative performance.(Nord, 2001,P.9)

Because Reiss herself is an experienced translator, having finished many translations from Spanish into German. From her own translating experience, she found that real life sometimes gives situation where equivalence is not possible, and in some cases, the equivalence is not desired. In many situations, it is impossible for translators to offer the same amount and the same kind of information as the source-text can produce. Translators will use another form to offer another kind of information. Translators have their own assumption of the readers or audiences need, expectations, or the knowledge they already have, and so on. The new assumptions made by the translators must be different from those made by the original writers, since the source language addressees and the target language addressees are in quite different cultures and language communities. So equivalence is definitely not the only and feasible standard to do the criticism in translation work. This view directly challenges the traditional concept of equivalence as the standard of translation. For the occasion that equivalence is not desired, the reason is that the target text is intended to achieve a purpose or function other than that of the original. Such as adapting a prose text for the stage, translating Shakespeare's plays for foreign-language classes, or providing word-for-word translations of an Arabic poem intended to serve as a basis for a free rendering by an English poet who does not know the source language. A further exception is when the target text addresses an audience different from the intended readership of the original.

F. Intentionality, Acceptability and Informativity

Communication has certain intention to achieve. The speaking and writing in its context convey kind of intention the speaker or writer wants to fulfill, such as making an order or request, expressing certain feeling, etc. This is called intentionality in the discourse level. From the relation of function and form, different function requires different form to convey the meaning. Such as greeting, making a declaration, or presenting a speech have quite different forms. On the other hand, from the perspective of the relation between textual structure and intentionality, the differences are apparent. The relation between discourse structure and intentionality in instruction pamphlet, patent book or legal regulations is more direct, while in some literary style, such as in poems, the discourse structure and the intention the poet wants to express is not that clear. From the perspective of communication process, language realize its function through the code and decode between the sender and the receiver and intentionality is the term from the angle of speaker or writer. To understand the intentionality would certainly help the better transfer of meaning in translation.

Acceptability is a term from the angle of the receiver. If the intention of the speaker or writer wants to express in the original text cannot be decoded and accepted by the receiver, then the communication will fail. So in order to make the communication smooth, the discourse made by the sender must be acceptable and can be decoded by the receiver. Although sometimes because of the complexity of context and social differences, the intention accepted by the receiver may not be the same as the intention the sender wants to convey.

Informativity is another important nature in discourse analysis. Informativity means the content, information and knowledge the discourse conveys. If the content in the discourse is totally new to the receiver, then the degree of informativity is high, and the receiver may have greater interest, otherwise, the interest may be low. But if the informativity is too high, that is to say, the receiver has a lot of difficulty in understanding it, then the readability is low. Translator should take this into consideration. To make the translation which has high informativity readable and understandable, translators have to add some explanation in the notes or provide the reader some background information.

G. Translation Errors

According to the theory of functionalism, the notion of translation error must be defined in terms of the intention of the text and translation process. Error means the meaning of the original text is not expressed in the target text. Errors can be classified into such types as offense against the function, or against the coherence, or against the text type or not in accordance with the cultural conventions. "A particular expression is not adequate in itself; it only becomes adequate with regard to the communicative function it was supposed to achieve" (Nord, 2001, P.73). Knowledge about error and error type can help training translators. According to the study, students make fewer linguistic mistakes if they know clearly the situation for which they are translating. If translators don't know the purpose of translating, they cannot imagine who is addressing, they will be confined to the source-text sentence structure. In other words, they have no clear direction towards the target text. The less they know about the intention of the translation, the more likely they make mistakes. Knowing the situation and cultural factors in the target language is important, the knowledge of translators own cultural background is even more important. Because if we want to translate in an adequate way, there must be certain type of comparison between the two languages and cultures. "To do this, we have to replace our intuitive behavior patterns with conscious knowledge of our cultural specificity" (Nord, 2001, P79).

III. CONCLUSION

Meaning is probably the most complex term in linguistics, and because of the complexity of meaning, the nature of translation becomes difficult to define. It has been proved through the history that the theory about meaning in functionalism is more scientific than other schools. It divides meaning into the three parts and every part has its own system. This paper takes the interpersonal meaning as the subject of study.

In functional linguistics, the study of meaning serves for the analysis of discourse. A successful discourse has to

accomplish two tasks: one is to find the right form to express the meaning. As to the interpersonal meaning, it is to choose the suitable ways to express the sentiment or attitude of the speaker or writer. The second is that the choices should be defined by the context factors. The first task is the internal requirement and the second one external requirement. The theory of functionalism is more scientific than the theory of formalism because it pays more attention to the contextual factors. Translation is closely connected to discourse, so a successful translation should also accomplish the two tasks: first, it should meet the internal requirement of meaning, and second it should also meet the external requirement of context. Translation is the transmission of language meaning in use, so the study of translation should adhere to the environment the language is in. Context is one of the crucial factors to decide the translation strategy.

The nature of translation and the nature of the functional linguistics have some agreements on their attention of context, and in recent years, many scholars have applied the theory of functional linguistics to the theory of translation. This paper also tries to connect the functional linguistics with the translation theory.

On the basis of the structure given by functional linguistics, the writer has explored the mood system and modality system of English and Chinese and finished the papers on the topics "*Typology and the Translation of Interpersonal Meaning*" "*Lexical ways of expressing interpersonal meaning and translation strategy*" and "*Rhetorical Ways of Interpersonal Meaning and Translation Strategy*". By studying the interpersonal meaning in English and Chinese, the similarities and differences between the two languages can be found, and this is helpful to the translation. In the papers, the writer tries to explore the relation between typology and interpersonal meaning. It takes some styles as examples, and tries to get the conclusion that different style and different intention of the original texts have different ways of expressing interpersonal meaning, so this requires translators to fully understand the type and its intention before translating. The insight into the relationship of form and function becomes the basic procedure in the interpersonal analysis of discourse within the theory of register. Text typology involving genre analysis, which can help translators develop strategies that facilitate their work and provide satisfactory translation.

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