

A Comparative Study of Nida and Lin Yutang's Translation Thoughts

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Abstract: with the development of translation, translation theory has gradually matured and become an important pillar of translation. Among them, Eugene A. Nida, a famous American translation theorist and Chinese writer and translator Lin Yutang, put forward a systematic and comprehensive translation theory, especially Nida has a great influence on the development of world translation theory. Although Lin Yutang's comments were seldom paid attention to at that time, it was not paid attention to Later scholars gradually realized the comprehensiveness and profundity of his translation theory. The two translation ideas are both common and different. Therefore, this paper will compare the differences and similarities between Nida and Lin Yutang from the three aspects of translation definition, standard and strategy.

1. Introduction

Eugene A. Nida is an American linguist, translator and translation theorist. Nida's theory represents the high achievements of traditional translation studies. When he makes a profound analysis of linguistics, he also pays attention to the concept of translation as cultural exchange, which is the transitional stage of the transition from conventional translation studies to descriptive translation studies. Based on linguistics, communication theory and anthropology, Nida puts forward the concept of "equivalence" and "transformation theory", emphasizing that the information received by the target readers should be basically the same as that received by the source text readers. Because of its innovation and practicality, Nida has attracted the attention of many scholars, which has a great impact on translation theory and practice.

Lin Yutang, a famous contemporary literary giant in China, has unique views on Chinese and western traditional culture. He was once nominated as the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature and was praised as "one of the intelligent figures of the 20th century" by American academic circles. Lin Yutang's translation thought laid the foundation for the theoretical circle of our country at that time, and also has far-reaching inspiration for the current theoretical translation workers. Lin Yutang's main translation thoughts include "aesthetic subject theory", "aesthetic standard theory" and "aesthetic object theory of translation" [1]. He puts forward a more comprehensive and systematic theory of translation standard, translator's quality and translation method.

2. The Similarities between Nida and Lin Yutang's Translation Thoughts

First of all, as far as the definition of translation is concerned, they both think that translation is an art. In his book *Exploration of Translation Science*, Nida puts forward “translation science”. Nida's view that “translation is science” at that time had a great repercussion in western linguistics and translation theory. In translation theory and practice, Nida believes that “translation is not only a science, but also a technology, and the real ideal translation is an art in the final analysis.” He defined translation as “to reproduce the information of the source language with the closest natural equivalent in the target language from semantics to style”. [2] This definition clearly points out that the essence and task of translation is to reproduce the information of the source language in the target language, and the method of translation is to reproduce the information of the source language “with the most similar natural equivalent”.

Lin Yutang's thoughts on translation are mainly reflected in his article *On Translation* and his translation practice. First of all, as far as the definition of translation is concerned, Lin Yutang applies Chinese aesthetic thoughts to translation practice and theory, and believes that translation is an art. He clearly points out that “the first thing people who talk about translation should realize is that translation is an art. The success of any art depends on one's artistic attainments, that is, his training in the art. Besides, there is no shortcut, because there is no shortcut to success in art. The art of translation depends on: first, a thorough understanding of the original text, that is, the content; second, the translator can use the Chinese language freely and write clear and smooth Chinese; third, training in translation, so that the translator has a proper opinion on the translation standard. “

Secondly, the translation criteria of “faithfulness and fluency” proposed by Lin Yutang and “dynamic equivalence” proposed by Nida are essentially the same. Lin Yutang's definition of translation criteria: faithfulness, fluency and beauty. As for loyalty, Lin Yutang opposes rigid and literal loyalty. He believes that loyalty in translation does not refer to word-to-word translation, but to the meaning and content of the original text. Lin Yutang also divides the degree of fidelity into four categories: literal translation, dead-end translation, free translation, and untruthful translation. For literal translation and free translation, he also proposed that “sentence translation” is the correct translation method, that is, the translation should be based on the sentence, and after the meaning of the whole sentence of the original text is understood in detail and accurately, the content of the original text should be reproduced in the unit of sentence.

The word “information” in Nida's translation definition includes all kinds of information conveyed by the source language: semantic, textual, literary, situational and psychological effects, as well as the successful or unsuccessful information of the work itself. At the same time, this definition also puts forward four criteria for translation: to convey the message, to convey the spirit and style of the original work, to speak fluently and naturally, to fully conform to the norms and conventions of the target language, and to respond similarly to the reader. To achieve these four criteria, there will inevitably be some irreconcilable contradictions between content and form. Although the translator should try his best to combine content and form, “spirit” and “form” organically in translation, there are always times when the contradiction between the two cannot be satisfactorily solved. In this case, Nida argued that form should give way to content.

3. The Difference between Nida and Lin Yutang's Translation Thoughts

First of all, Nida's theory is based on linguistics, while Lin's is based on literary theory. As far as translation steps are concerned, Nida draws on the concepts of core sentence, non core sentence and transformation in the theory of transformational generative grammar and puts forward the famous translation theory of inverse transformation. He believes that the process of translation is not as simple as people think (directly converting the surface structure of the original language into the surface structure of the target language), but much more complex. This tortuous process includes

four stages: analysis, transformation, reorganization and test. Specifically speaking, on the basis of the analysis of grammar and semantics of the original text, it transforms the surface structure into the deep structure, then translates the deep structure of the translation, and finally transforms the deep structure into the surface structure of the translation. Finally, the translation is compared and tested.

The analysis stage includes at least three aspects: analyzing the grammatical relationship between words and phrases; analyzing the denotative (referential) meaning of semantic units (words and specific phrases); analyzing the connotative meaning (associative meaning) of grammatical structure and semantic units. This stage is to express the relationship between the various components of the original in the form of the clearest and least ambiguity, so as to provide the basis for the next step of transformation. When changing the surface structure into the core sentence, Nida makes a functional analysis of words, namely, event words, activity words, abstract words and relation words. Object words refer to the subject of human, animal, place, event and other activities; activity words mainly refer to the action or process in which the object words participate; abstract words refer to the quality or quantity, time and space, or strengthening semantics of the object words or activity words; relational words refer to the relationship among the above three types of words. The transformation stage is the most critical step in the whole translation process after the analysis, which is carried out on the core sentence or near core sentence, because the various relationships between the language units of an information can be most clearly marked at this level, and the deep structure similarity of different languages at this level is far greater than that at the surface structure level. In the reorganization stage, it is much more complex and difficult than the process of descriptive analysis and transformation, because it is deeply influenced by the structure of the target language itself. The process of reorganization includes two categories: formal category and functional category. The first category involves the stylistic style to be adopted by the translator in the process of reorganization. There are generally three choices: technical style, formal style and informal style. The style of the translated text should correspond to the style of the original text, and the random changes in style are mostly caused by the failure to fully understand the intention of the original text. The second category includes different literary genres, such as epic, proverb, fable, historical story, personal letter and so on.

Based on literary theory, Lin Yutang thinks that there are no specific steps in translation, so he puts forward two requirements: 1) sentence oriented. In the process of translation, the translator must fully understand the meaning of the whole sentence in the original text, and then translate the meaning of the whole sentence according to Chinese grammar. 2) It should be written according to Chinese psychology. Every language has its own national language habits behind it. In order to make the translation smooth, we must follow the grammatical and syntactic habits of the target language, that is, to conform to the acceptance habits of the target language readers. He believes that translators should not only pay attention to the faithfulness and smoothness of the translation, but also pay attention to the problems of beauty in translation. The ideal translator is not only a language worker, but also an artist. When translating, he should treat the translation with artistic vision and attitude, and make translation an art. Especially in the translation of literary works (such as poetry, prose, drama, novels, etc.), we should pay more attention to the beauty of words. Because literary works are different from other general words, it is not enough to translate the source language information. The translator should not only seek to convey the meaning, but also to convey the spirit. Therefore, when translating artistic works, we must translate the author's demeanor and charm. Mr. Lin cites Croce's view that "translation is creation" and agrees with this view. He believes that those who translate literary works must regard their translation career as an artistic work.

Secondly, the two methods are different. Nida introduced scientific research methods into

translation studies. His translation theory is based on the development of contemporary linguistics, communication theory, information theory, semiotics and anthropology. Lin Yutang's translation theory, in essence, belongs to the category of traditional translation studies. It is an elaboration from the representation of one language to that of another. Such an exposition fails to point out in a scientific way what specific steps should be taken in the process of translation, how to obtain a full understanding of the original text, and how to analyze the article.

In addition, Nida and Lin Yutang have different purposes in translating and discussing translation. Nida's discussion on translation originated from the practice of translating the Bible. His purpose of translation was to promote Christianity and make God's people better listen to the Bible. Therefore, it was necessary to eliminate difficulties in translating the Bible, such as differences in cultural and economic levels and educational levels of different countries, so that ordinary citizens could understand and believe in Christianity. In addition, Nida's works rarely involve the differences between different styles of translation, and seldom discuss how to preserve the form, beauty, charm and unique temperament of literary works in the process of translation, which is inseparable from his own focus on the translation and promotion of the Bible. And translation may not just for the sake of communication, the translator should pay more attention to the reader's ability to accept and reflect, but this does not mean that must reduce the difficulty of the source language to the purpose of general communication, because of some products, such as Milton's *paradise lost* this kind of work, even in translation, the audience should also learn more cultural knowledge. Lin Yutang is a litterateur. He mainly translates literary works. The purpose of his translation is to let Chinese people understand foreign culture and Westerners understand oriental culture, just like a bridge between East and West. Therefore, his discussion of translation must involve the characteristics of literary translation and help readers understand while retaining the flavor of the original.

4. Conclusion

The comparison of translation ideas aims at adapting to the appeal of independent discipline and the translation of China dream. The theoretical formation process and the change of gravity of the two thinkers have a certain similarity in the essence of translation theory in China. At the same time, there are essential and inevitable differences in the theoretical basis, methods and purposes between the two. The differences between the two are also the differences in translation between the East and the West. From the comparison, it can be seen that Chinese translation theories still need to actively draw on the advantages of western translation theories, based on the characteristics of Chinese translation theories, and continue to move forward.

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