

Translation of Literary Novels from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence: A Case Study of Hoping

Haiyan Cao

*School of Languages & Cultures, Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology,
Nanjing, 210000, China
2399500546@qq.com*

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Abstract: Cultural confidence is a popular topic, which is reflected in all aspects of social life, especially in the field of translation. In recent years, the overall trend of translation in China has shifted from the translation of foreign famous works to the translation of domestic works into foreign languages, making Chinese culture go global. Among all types of translation, literary translation is always difficult. Under the guidance of functional equivalence theory, the application of appropriate translation methods and strategies is conducive to solving translation difficulties, making foreign readers better feel the charm of Chinese culture, so as to spread Chinese culture and enhance cultural confidence.

1. Functional Equivalence Theory

Functional equivalence theory was proposed by American translator Eugene A. Nida in the 20th century. The word "dynamic equivalence" was emphasized, which was later replaced with "functional equivalence", because the word "dynamic" was often misunderstood. This translation theory was summarized by Nida in the process of translating the Bible. He once defined dynamic equivalent translation as "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message"^[1]. We can extract three key words from this sentence, namely "equivalent", "natural", and "closest". "Equivalent" means to be equivalent to the source language information; This also points out that the fundamental task of translation is to seek equivalence between the target text and the original text. Although many translators have different expressions in translation theories, they all emphasize this point, such as Yan Fu's "Xin", Lin Yutang's "Zhongshi", Lu Xun's "Faithfulness rather than smoothness" and so on. "Natural" means that the target language should be smoothly expressed; As Nida wrote, "The best translation does not sound like a translation" (Nida, 1969). It indicates that the best translation does not sound like a translation, but like the original. This also puts forward the requirement for translation, that is, to avoid translationese. "Closest" brings the first two orientations together by using the closest approximation as the benchmark.

To sum up, functional equivalence is to achieve functional equivalence between two languages rather than pursuing rigid word-to-word translation. As Nida once mentioned in his book: "Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalence of the

source language, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of the style.”^[2] The core of "function" lies in the fact that the response of the target language reader to the translation is generally consistent with that of the original recipient, but it is not limited to this. The premise of readers' consistent response is to accurately convey the meaning of the original text, which requires to be faithful. That is the basic requirement of translation. Its deeper meaning also includes the function of "culture", that is, it can convey the historical and cultural traditions of a country through the language, so that the target language readers can form a correct cognition of the country and culture represented by the source language after reading the translation. For example, when receiving compliments from others, Chinese people often reply with "You give me too much praise", "I feel ashamed", "I am far from enough", etc., while Westerners often reply with "thanks" to accept the compliment from others. The different reactions lie in the cultural differences between East and West. Chinese civilization is profound and rich, which results from five thousand years of inheritance. Humility is a long-standing virtue of the Chinese nation. The Western culture represented by the United States is different, advocating people's independent will and people's ability. Therefore, they pay more attention to individual self-expression. In addition to lexical and syntactic equivalence, functional equivalence also includes textual and stylistic equivalence. Because the information conveyed by translation is not only superficial lexical information, but also deep-seated cultural information. Therefore, in this case, when the target language readers read the translation, they can have a cognition of the modesty of the Chinese character, which conveys profound cultural information. In this paper, the author will focus on the analysis of how to achieve the translation of literary novels under the guidance of functional equivalence theory to make readers have identical reaction and accurately convey the internal cultural traditions.

2. Linguistic Features

Literary novels are different from argumentative essays and expository texts, both of which have strong logic and are precise, concise and easy to understand. Firstly, the language of literary novels has the characteristics of vividness and imagery, and the description of characters' appearance and surrounding scenes is not limited to a simple description. Instead, it uses very meticulous expression to describe in detail. Therefore, such works often use metaphors, parallelism, exaggeration, personification and other rhetorical devices to enrich the language with poetry. In "Hoping"-"fool's poem", its vocabulary incisively reflects vividness and figurativeness. Literary words in the original text has been used many times. For example, "the north wind is blowing", "the trees are rustling" and "the sun is shining". "Blowing" and "rustling" employ onomatopoeia rhetoric, which vividly show a picture of cold winter wind. Secondly, in terms of syntactic structure, there are many scattered small sentences and fuzzy sentences. Chinese is a paratactic language, which pays attention to the meaning conveyed in the language and does not overemphasize the sentence elements. For example, we often use a question that has no subject to greet others, and it is acceptable in Chinese. But English is a hypotactic language and very formal, with a lot of emphasis on the structure of the sentence and on the completeness of the sentence. In the original text, some sentences or words do not express the exact meaning. It can be seen from original sentences that literary language not only uses written language, but also oral language. Meanwhile, Language is metaphorical and can express aesthetic meaning. Therefore, from the perspective of lexical and syntactic structure, it is very necessary to understand its profound meaning and use fluent language to convey its connotation.

3. Case Analysis

3.1. Lexical Equivalence

Functional Equivalence Theory believes that “Correspondences and contrasts between source and receptor languages are two major types: (a) structural correspondence and (b) dynamic correspondence.”^[3] There are four main principles to be observed in the translation process: lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence and stylistic equivalence. Lexical equivalence requires finding the corresponding meaning in the target language. This correspondence is not formal word-to-word rigid correspondence, but internal meaning equivalence. Nida first proposed "formal equivalence". The so-called "formal equivalence" refers to paying attention to the information itself, including making the content and language form in the target language fit the original text as much as possible. In the opinion of Eugene Nida, this kind of translation is rare. For some sentences with implicit meaning, literal translation will create translationese, and the translation will be awkward and unreadable. Under the guidance of the theory of functional equivalence, translators can adopt the translation strategy of free translation to deal with some sentences that cannot be translated into English by literal translation. Professor Feng Qinghua mentioned in his book that the so-called free translation is a translation method that does not retain the form but only conveys the meaning. Therefore, under the condition of being faithful to the original text, translators use free translation to help readers understand the real meaning of the original text without being confined to the form of the original text.

Example (4):

“这样一来，作为一位精神病患者，一位被死亡阻隔的不幸恋人，理所当然地需要得到特别的保护。”

Translation: As a result, Lily deserves special protection and care for her mental illness and loss of boyfriend.

After careful analysis of this sentence, the translator found that its meaning is very obscure. It is difficult to translate literally. From the context, it can be concluded that Lily's boyfriend is dead. Meanwhile, Lily suffers from mental illness. These are the two reasons why Lily needs special protection and care. If the translator did not use free translation, but the word-for-word translation to explain the third sentence, its version would be “a wretched lover cut off by death.”

This literal translation deviates from English language standards and fails to convey exactly what it means that the death of Lily's boyfriend causes them could never meet again. In order to make the translation readable and understandable, translators need to use free translation when literal translation is invalid, that is, to convey the internal meaning of "boyfriend's death" without retaining its form (being blocked). Therefore, this sentence should be translated by free translation to improve its readability, so that target readers can better understand the original text.

3.2. Syntactic Equivalence

According to functional equivalence theory, syntactic equivalence should be emphasized.

Example (5):

“一想到她如锦缎般光滑的肌肤，想到她那对微微上翘的乳房……他心中冒险的念头很快就占了上风。”

Translation: The thought of her satin skin, of her slightly upturned breasts. The idea of adventure soon got the better of him.

According to the comparison between English and Chinese languages, Chinese does not mind repetition. Repetition exists in many rhetorical devices, such as overlap, repetition, antithesis and

parallelism. In publicity materials, we often see the word "develop" appearing four times in a sentence. However, repetition is taboo in English. So in the translation process, we need to take necessary translation methods to avoid repetition, such as synonyms, pronouns, hyponymy or omission. Omission is an important translation method, which can help us to omit redundant words and unnecessary repetition, so as to make the article more concise and conform to the English expression habits. Professor Zhang Peiji pointed out that in English sentences, if the same verb and preposition are repeated, the preposition is usually used and the verb is omitted in the second and third occurrences. There are many verbs plus prepositions in English, such as "think of", "agree with", "approve of", "comprise of", "count on" and so on. In general, if these structures are used in front of several different objects. On the second or third time, the verb is omitted and the remaining object is connected by a preposition. The first half of this sentence contains two identical verbs "thought", which is very redundant if the verb is translated twice. Unnecessary repetition is taboo in English, except in some special occasions, such as diplomatic texts, legal documents. In this sentence, the author is thinking of two things at the same time, so we can use "thought of" to connect, and thought is dropped before the second object. This translation is more readable and concise.

3.3. Textual Equivalence

In terms of textual equivalence, functional equivalence theory requires translators to consider cultural contexts, such as socio-cultural background, historical and cultural traditions and the social background of language use. Holz-Manttarionce replaced translation with "intercultural cooperation"^[4]. Therefore, culture plays a vital role in translation.

Example (6):

“老于世故的葛大夫瞥了他一眼，问他是否愿意留在这里吃饭。”

Translation: Dr. Ge casted a sophisticated glance at him, inviting him to stay for lunch.

This sentence is easy to understand on the surface, but actually contains traditional Chinese values. The Chinese are famous for their hospitality. When we visit someone's home, the host family will give us a very warm welcome and ask us to stay for lunch. Some even invited us to stay for dinner. So when you visit someone, you never hear the host ask if you want to have lunch at their house. If the translator literally translates the second sentence as "Do you want to eat here?" This question is completely out of line with Chinese tradition and makes guests feel unwelcome in their host's home. At the same time, Chinese people are more introverted and modest. When asked if they would like to eat at a friend's house, they rarely say yes, for fear of bringing trouble to the host family. Even if this sentence is translated literally, we can understand its meaning, but considering the Chinese historical and cultural tradition, the translator must use free translation, and translate it as "inviting him to stay for lunch". Meanwhile, as Lian Shuneng mentioned in his book: More nouns are used in English than in Chinese.^[5] That is why we use "for lunch" instead of "eat dinner", and the former is consistent with English expression habit. What's more, this version demonstrates the tradition of Chinese hospitality. In other words, the translation conforms to cultural equivalence under functional equivalence.

4. Conclusions

By analysing the sentences with vague meanings, cultural background and syntactic structure differences between Chinese and English in the selected sections of "The Fool's Poem" in Gefe's "Hoping", this paper shows how to use free translation, omission and other translation methods under the guidance of Eugene Nida's functional equivalence theory to clarify the meaning of the original text, as well as preserve the cultural traditions contained in the language. Generally

speaking, under the general trend of more and more Chinese works being translated into foreign languages, literary novels occupy an extremely important position. Therefore, in the translation of literary novels, we should not only consider the content, form and rich aesthetic feeling, but also correctly convey the cultural connotation contained in language as a carrier, so that foreign readers can have a deep understanding of Chinese culture and enhance the cultural confidence of Chinese people.

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