

A Study on the English Translation of the Analects of Confucius from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract: The Analects of Confucius in Chinese language compared with English language habits in terms of vocabulary and sentences. From the perspective of Skopos theory, the translation methods and techniques used in Ku Hungming's translation are studied from the aspects of conversion, amplification, adding annotation, and the adjustment of word order and division. Generally speaking, Mr. Ku's translation is rich in words and variable in sentence structure. It focuses on free translation and is flexible in translation style.

1. Introduction

As a whole, the language style of *The Analects of Confucius* is very simple and clear. There are also rhetorical methods such as sentence rhythm and sentence changes, phonology, clever use of function, words, flexibility, and questioning, while rhetoric includes parallelism, metaphor, contrast and foil, double, serious and so on^[1]. Sometimes it is difficult to find a word or phrase in English that can accurately express the meaning of a Chinese word, which requires the translator to have a very comprehensive and deeper understanding of the book, understand the content and significance of the work and convey it to the reader. Ensuring that the content and meaning of the original text are not lost in translation is a difficult problem to solve in the translation of *The Analects of Confucius* (Ku, 2014).

2. A Study on Translation Methods at the Lexical Level for the Analects of Confucius

2.1. Conversion

Our predicate verb is oriented in Chinese, and the verb is an indispensable meaning content in our emotions or practical actions. However, in English, its terms are widely used according to the language characteristics of English. Because the use of verbs in English often needs to consider very complicated tense problems. But in many articles or paragraphs, tenses are difficult to define and different readers will have different explanations^[2]. Therefore, in order to accurately convey the cultural meaning originally intended to be expressed in *The Analects of Confucius* and avoid misunderstandings among readers, Ku nominalized verbs in many cases in the process of English translation, thus avoiding unnecessary misunderstandings among readers. In *The Analects of*

Confucius, there are still many Chinese words or short sentences that are not easy to be translated word by word. So the translation method of adding or subtracting according to the cultural background and cultural significance is adopted to achieve the goal of correctly spreading cultural ideas (Nord, 1991).

Example 1: Confucius said, "A gentleman does not seek to be satisfied when he eats, and does not seek to be safe when he lives."

Translation: Confucius remarked, "A wise and good man, in matters of food, should never seek to indulge his appetite; in lodging, he should not be too solicitous of comfort."

The word "eats" is a verb in *The Analects of Confucius*, but it is translated into "food", a noun in English. This example shows the use of nominalization of verbs. Verbs are the soul of Chinese and the use of verbs is essential in Chinese expression. But in English, there are few cases where several verbs are juxtaposed^[3]. Because it is inconvenient to break sentences, which is not in line with English language habits. Therefore, nominalization of verbs is a widespread translation method in the process of translating Chinese into English. And there are great differences in structure and ideograms between English and Chinese. English emphasizes form, grammar and sentence structure. Chinese emphasizes parataxis and does not pay too much attention to grammar and sentence structure. Therefore, the structural features and grammatical rules of English should be fully taken into account in translation. Ku's translation translated "food", "residence", "matter" and "word" into four prepositional phrases, indicating that these four aspects are symmetrical and neat in structure, in line with the principle of coherence (Li, 2020).

2.2. Adding Annotation

It can be said that although Ku's translation is slightly lower in fidelity, it is easier for western readers to read and understand. His domestication strategy is clearly motivated by the ethics of serving the target readers^[4]. In addition to the "leader" translated into "God", Ku also cited the western culture as much as possible and caution to explain China's unique culture, such as the "Xia、Shang" these two dynasties, in annotation not only give the concretes of two dynasties, also compared it to the east of ancient Greece and Rome, which is based on the cultural background of the target language readers, bring readers closer to the source text.

Example 2: Confucius said, "Three Hundred Poems, in a word, say 'thinking without evil'."

Translation: Confucius remarked! "The Book of Ballads, Songs and Psalms* contains three hundred pieces. The moral of them all may be summed up in one sentence; Have no evil thoughts."

(Now called the Canon of Poetry, one of the so-called five Classics in The Bible of China.)

It is explained in the way of annotation. In the annotation, the content of the language and cultural background of the target language is analogized^[5]. By using *The Bible* as an analogy, readers can clearly understand the content of the annotation (WenYin, 2021). The translation of this sentence reflects the fidelity principle of Skopos Theory.

2.3. Amplification

The language characteristic of *The Analects of Confucius* is brief and clear, so there will be a problem when translating into English: some sentences in *The Analects of Confucius* have no subject, or only use one or two words to express a lot of meaning. When these situations are translated into English, if they are translated word by word, there will be situations that readers can't understand or misunderstand^[6]. In order to avoid the above situation, Mr. Ku used the method of amplification to expand the sentences, so that readers can get more information from the translated sentences. The information includes historical background and specific groups, so as to help readers

understand better^[7].

Example 3: Confucius said, "Even I have grown old!" I no longer dream of Zhou Gong!

Translation: Only once in his old age Confucius was heard to say: "How my mental powers had decayed! For a long time now I have not dreamt, as I was wont to do of our Lord of Chou."

In order to make readers understand the meaning of this sentence better, Ku used the way of amplification to simply explain the historical period of this sentence, that is "Only once in his old age Confucius". What's more, Ku specifically added a note in the footer: "The Moses or Solon of Chinese history, is the founder of Confucius's native state Lu". Moses and Solon are both sages familiar to western readers. Ku Hungming uses them to interpret Lord of Chou in order to let western readers understand the status and achievements of Lord of Chou in China through their local culture. This is a good example of the skopos rule.

3. A Study on Translation Methods at the Syntactic Level for the Analects of Confucius

3.1. Analysis on Changes in Word Order

Chinese uses the normal narrative structure of subject, predicate, and object in formal texts, which is consistent with the language habit of Chinese people. Because we need to look at the subject of an action before looking at other sentences^[8]. Which part we want to emphasize in the sentence is reflected by adding the corresponding attributive before it. However, in English, the emphasis is usually placed at the beginning of the sentence in inverted or half-inverted form, which is rarely seen in Chinese. Ku Hungming used the method of adjusting word order in his translation^[9].

Example 4: Confucius said, "If one does not know without being annoyed, is it not also a gentleman?"

Translation: Confucius remarked! "But he is a truly a wise and good man who feels no discomposure even when he is not noticed by men."

The sentence translations into "But he is truly a wise and good man who feels no discomposure even when he is not noticed of men." In order to emphasize the latter half of the original sentence, the latter half of the sentence is advanced in the process of translation^[10]. By adjusting the word order of the two half sentences, the purpose of progressive tone and emphasizing meaning is achieved. The translation of this sentence follows the coherence rule. Ku translated the three progressive sentences in the original text coherently. The first two questions were translated normally, and a turning conjunction "but" was added to the last question, which completely clarified the meaning of the original text and enhanced the tone implied in the original text. The translation of this sentence embodies the coherence principle of Skopos Theory.

Example 5: A disciple of Confucius said, "He is also a filial brother, but willing to offend minimizes; It is not easy to offend, and those who are willing to make trouble have not yet."

Translation: A disciple of Confucius remarked! "A man who is a good son and a good citizen will seldom be found to be a man disposed to quarrel with those in authority over him; and men who are not disposed to quarrel with those in authority will never be found to disturb the peace and order of the State."

"Minimize" in the original text is translated into "seldom" and inserted in the middle of the sentence as a frequency adverb to connect the sentence. This method of translating words expressing frequency in advance as adverbs to ensure that sentence coherence has a very high frequency^[11]. This is a famous saying about national social governance, which makes a good application of the principle of fidelity. The translation of the core terms in the original text: filial, son, good people, and so on is loyal to the original text, without any other extended meaning. It is a

very good transmission of the original Chinese traditional cultural concepts^[12].

3.2. Analysis by Division

Chinese sentences belong to linear or bamboo structures. In the expression of complex meaning, it is generally in chronological order or logical order gradually explained. It is possible to use several verb structures together or use a few nouns continuously. Any sentence that is too long should be split properly. But in English, tree structure is a hierarchical structure. English sentences have a framework in which subject-verb (SV) is the backbone^[13]. In the process of translating Chinese into English, we should first make clear the logical relationship of Chinese sentences and use conjunctions to connect sentences, to avoid translating multiple short sentences in Chinese into English and corresponding translation is still multiple short sentences.

Example 6: Confucius remarked! “At fifteen. I had made up my mind to give myself up to serious study. At thirty I had formed my opinions and judgment. At forty I had no more doubts. At fifty I understood the truth in religion. At sixty I could understand whatever I heard without exertion. At seventy I could follow whatever my heart desired without transgressing the law.”

The example is the most clear and intuitive one that makes us feel the differences between Chinese and English language habits. In Chinese, we use semicolons to separate coordinated sentences to form a coherent progression. But a meaning expressed clearly in English, is a sentence, we should be separated by a period of different meanings, so in the translation of this sentence, Ku translated every age segmentation into a single sentence, let the target language readers can clearly see the logic of Syntactics^[14]. At the same time, this translation method ensures the coherence of sentences and conforms to the coherence rule in Skopos Theory.

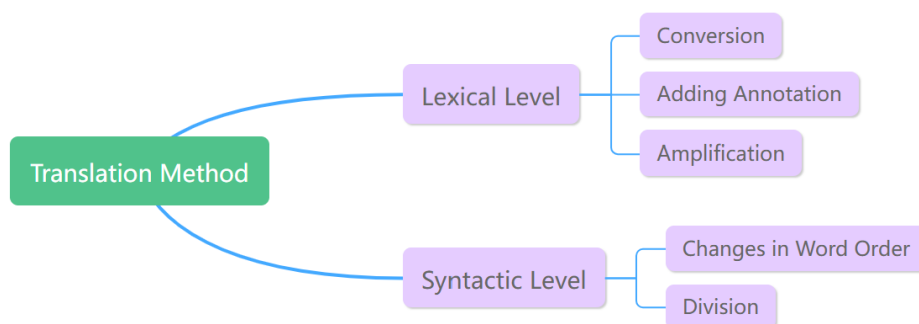


Figure 1: Translation Method

English translation methods mentioned in this article of *The Analects of Confucius* in Ku Hungming's translation is shown in Figure 1. Ku's translation focuses more on free translation, which is suitable for westerners who do not understand Chinese culture. When translating Chinese classics, researchers should adopt corresponding translation strategies according to the different translation purposes and target readers. And the translator should have fully accurate understanding of the target language, country, social, and cultural knowledge, to avoid the deviation of the understanding on to guarantee the fidelity and reliability of the translation. Only in this way can we promote the foreign communication and exchange of Chinese traditional culture.

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