

A Study on Translation of Character Dialogue under the Guidance of Skopos Theory: A Case Study of So Much Water So Close to Home

Baiyue Zhang, Fanghua Liu*

Changchun Normal University, Changchun, Jilin, China

**Corresponding author.*

Keywords: Skopos theory of translation; The Three Principles of Translation; Novel translation; Dialogue Translation

Abstract: Character dialogue is an important component of a novel, which can directly display the character's personality traits, psychological and emotional states, allowing readers to understand the plot of the novel and obtain clues to the development of the story. This article analyzes the translation of character dialogues in Raymond Carver's novel "So Much Water So Close to Home" from the perspective of translation skopos theory, in order to explore the guiding role of translation skopos theory in the translation of novel dialogues.

1. Introduction

The purpose and significance of novel translation mainly lies in conveying the original novel's ideological content, deep meaning and rich extra-meaning to the target language readers. Through semantic analysis and meaning analysis, the translator tries his best to reproduce the style and artistic characteristics of the original novel, while retaining the original plot and characters. In addition, translating novels also needs to retain all the functions and features of the original novels, so that readers of the target language can experience the charm of the novels in their entirety.

In literary translation, especially novel translation, meaning analysis is the most basic and important part. This is mainly because the meaning of novels does not only exist on the surface of words, but also needs to be expressed through the deeper meaning. At the same time, translating novels also needs to retain the rich extra-meaning and deeper meaning of the original novels as much as possible, so as to convey the emotion and ideological connotation of the original novels in a complete way.

2. Overview of Skopos Theory

Skopos theory of translation was first put forward by Fermir in his book *Framework for a General Translation Theory* published in 1978. He believes that any translation behavior is determined by the purpose of translation, that is, the purpose determines the means. Skopos theory emphasizes that translators should focus on the expected purpose of the translation and adopt practical translation methods and strategies according to this purpose. However, whatever the

method and strategy are determined by the purpose of the translation service, and the following three main principles should be followed in this process. That is, skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. The skopos principle is the core, and the translation methods and strategies are determined by the purpose of translation behavior in the process of translation. The principle of coherence means that the translation must meet the requirements of coherence in the text, which is aimed at the relationship between the translation and the target culture. The principle of faithfulness refers to the requirement of intertextual coherence between the translated text and the original text, which is similar to the statement that the translated text should be faithful to the original text. The principles of coherence and fidelity must obey the skopos rule^[1].

The skopos principle emphasizes that the purpose of translation is a kind of behavior, which is a cross-cultural communication activity with intention and interpersonal relationship. Therefore, skopos theory of translation is to get rid of the shackles of traditional equivalence theory. The main factor that determines the translation process is the purpose of the overall translation behavior, and the communicative purpose of the translation is the most important purpose of the overall translation behavior. The communicative purpose of the translation should be in line with the reading habits of the target language readers, without causing any discomfort in form or meaning. It also emphasizes that the author should exert their subjective initiative to solve problems^[2].

3. Raymond Carver's minimalist style of writing

Raymond Carver is an important American novelist in the second half of the 20th century. His works are characterized by minimalism, dirty realism and neo-realism. Carver describes the living conditions of people at the bottom of society through various social phenomena, exposes the frustrated and gloomy bottom social reality, and his narrative art restores the social reality scene to the maximum extent. His writing style has a strong reality and sociality, pointing his brush strokes to the dark side of society, thus arousing people's concern for society, and at the same time reflecting the writer's sympathy, fraternity and humanistic care.

4. Analysis of dialogue translation in *So Much Water So Close to Home* from the perspective of Skopos theory

4.1 Contextual translation under the coherence principle

Coherence rule means that the translation must conform to the standard of intra-textual coherence, that is, the readability and acceptability of the translation, which is able to make the recipient understand and have meaning in the culture of the target language and the communicative context in which the translation is used. Due to the differences between Chinese and English, the target language text needs to be coherent not only in logic, grammar and semantics, but also in the received situation. Therefore, the information presented in the translation should conform to the acceptable context of the target language readers in order to be readable and acceptable.

Example 1:

ST: "What are you staring at me for?" he says. "What is it?" he says and lays down his fork. "Was I staring?" I say, and shake my head. The telephone rings. "Don't answer it." He says. "It might be your mother," I say. "Watch and see," he says.

TT: “什么意思” “我有吗？” “那你接吧”

Analysis:

The translation should better convey the purpose of the speaker or the writer, that is, to consider the communicative intention⁰. Peter Newmark, a contemporary British translation theorist, once

divided texts into three types based on the theory of language function: expressive, informative, and vocative. He advocated for semantic translation of expressive texts such as poetry and short stories aimed at introducing the source language culture, aiming to convey the semantic content of the source text and maintain the author's personal emotional color, literary methods, and structural form⁰.

Although the source text "What is it?" "Was I staring?" "Watch and see," it can reflect loyalty as translated by literal translation, it does not conform to Chinese reading habits, and readers may feel inexplicable. At this point, it is necessary to integrate the target language context and the characteristics of daily Chinese language expression. The free translation method is a method that does not adhere to the original form and focuses on highlighting the meaning in the text. Here, the writer adopts the free translation method, so the author treats it as the translation. It can not only reflect the context expressed in the dialogue translation of the novel, but also reflect the author's minimalist style and fully reflect the dialogue forms in daily life^[6].

Example 2:

ST: My husband eats with a good appetite. But I don't think he's really hungry. He chews, arms on the table, and stares at something across the room. He looks at me and looks away. He wipes his mouth on the napkin. He shrugs, and goes on eating.

Analysis:

The source text here belongs to action description. According to the gap between Chinese and English, Chinese pays attention to parataxis, that is, to convey the meaning of the original content. English pays attention to hypotaxis, that is, to the neatness of sentence patterns. In the source text, it is composed of short sentences, and the subject "He" is used four times, complete with a series of actions. Here, according to the coherence principle of Skopostheorie, the writer combines several short sentences into one sentence by means of co-translation, thus omitting the word "he" twice so this is treated as the target language^[7].

4.2 Vividness of character dialogue translation under the principle of fidelity rule

The Skopos theory of translation emphasizes to a certain extent the translator's initiative, requiring them to fully understand the original text and follow the principle of fidelity when the purpose of translation is coordinated with their understanding of the original text. Fidelity only requires a certain correspondence between the original text and the translated text, and does not require a literal translation of the content. On the premise of achieving the expected function of the translation, for the translation of novel literature, it is necessary to maintain the consistency of the language features between the translation and the original text as much as possible^[8].

Therefore, when translating the dialogues between characters in the novel *So much water so close to home* the translator needs to vividly present the emotional colors and tone of the characters in the original dialogue to the speaker, in order to stimulate the reading interest of the target language readers. Therefore, in order to accurately grasp the interlingual coherence between the source text and the target text, the writer needs to present the unique vividness of the source text through the target text.

Example 3:

ST: "What did I tell you?" he says when I hang up. He starts to eat again. Then throws his napkin on his plate. He says, "Goddamn it, why can't people mind their own business? Tell me what I did wrong and I'll listen! I wasn't the only man there."

TT: “他便发起了牢骚” “他叫到”

Analysis: Here, the source text belongs to emotional description, and the two words translated by

metaphrase in the source text cannot show the emotional characteristics of the protagonist at that time. The hero said these words with emotion, and he was complaining. In both English and Chinese languages, due to the different ways of expression, it is possible to change the types of words or increase or decrease the quantity of words.

The Amplification is to add some words according to the meaning (or rhetoric) and syntax, so as to express the ideological content of the source text more faithfully. Of course, this is not to add words arbitrarily, but to increase the words that can accurately express its meaning, so as to make the translation more vivid. Therefore, the author adopts the method of Amplification, adding words after “he says” in the first place. The second “he says” translates as the target text. Using yell can better reproduce the tone, image, and emotional color of the source text.

Example 4:

ST: “You’re going to get me riled,” he says. I look at the creek. I’m right in it, eyes open, face down, staring at the moss on the bottom, dead. “I don’t know what’s wrong with you,” he says on the way home. “You’re getting me more riled by the minute.” There is nothing I can say to him. He tries to concentrate on the road. But he keeps looking into the rear-view mirror. He knows.

“心灰意冷” “他心里明白我的意思。”

TT:

Analysis: In the source text, action and dialogue occur at the same time, so in order to make the translation more vivid, the author should consider the context of the context when translating. 错误!未找到引用源。

Language is not only loaded with heavy cultural information and rich cultural colors, but also conveys wonderful “overtones” to readers through rhetoric and style. In this sentence, the word dead appears at the end of the sentence. Dead usually means somebody dead in Chinese. If this sentence is translated literally as the usually means, it does not conform to the source context.

Dialogue translation is not just about the dual exchange of different words, but also involves individual factors that go beyond the source language. It takes into account the tone, intonation, and imaginable intonation of the characters on both sides of the speech. So the writer uses the free translation method to express the hidden semantic information of “dead” and processes it as the target text, “he knows” also appears at the end of the dialogue, which plays a role in summarizing the above information. Therefore, the writer uses free translation here to explain its meaning and function, so it is treated as the target text.

4.3 The oral nature of character dialogue translation under the skopos rule

The Skopos Theory holds that the primary principle followed by all translation activities is the “Skopos Principle”, which means that translation should be able to function in the target language context and culture in the way expected by the target language recipient. The purpose of translation behavior determines the entire process of translation behavior, that is, the outcome determines the method. In dialogue translation, the translator's goal is to make the entire dialogue in the original text more relevant to life and colloquial, rather than translating word for word.

Example 5:

ST: “I am going to a funeral tomorrow, I say.” “I’m sorry to hear that,” Marnie says.”It was a murder,” I say. “That’s the worst kind,” Marnie says. “We weren’t all that close.” I say. “But you know. “We’ll get you fixed up for it,” Marnie says.

TT: “请节哀” “我们会帮你搞定的”

Analysis: Chinese belongs to the category of thematic language, which often highlights the theme and has a significant degree of self-neutrality in discourse organization. The implicit connection of context plays an important role. English belongs to the subject prominent language,

and the subject in a sentence is the soul of the sentence, which is the key to determining sentence structure and selecting word combinations. When dealing with the Source text, domestication is used to express the colloquiality of the dialogue. Therefore, the author treats it as the translation.

5. Conclusion

The translation of the dialogue of characters in novels is mainly analyzed from three principles: the principle of purpose, the principle of coherence and the principle of fidelity. The writer finds that the application of Skopos theory in literary translation gets rid of the equivalence between the source and the target text, or the traditional mode of focusing on the source text, and arouses the writer's initiative. Instead of mechanical literal translation or hard translation, the writer needs to fully understand the source text first, then analyze the text, transform and reconstruct the source language to the target language, and clarify the purpose of the translation. According to this purpose, the writer chooses the appropriate translation strategy, and finally presents the translated text to the target language readers, which can improve the readability of the translated text. From the perspective of Skopos theory, the character dialogue translation of the novel *So Much Water So Close to Home* follows the contextual translation under the coherence principle, the vividness of the character dialogue translation under the fidelity principle and the oral quality of the character dialogue translation under the purpose principle improve the quality of the translation, and provide a reference for the dialogue translation in the novel.

References

- [1] Johnson, C. D. (2006). *A General Theory of "Multivariable" Servo-Tracking Control-Design For MIMO Linear Dynamical Systems; Framework for a Unified Theory of Modern Linear Control? Southeastern Symposium on System Theory. IEEE.*
- [2] Hans Vemmeer. *Skopos and Commission in Translational Action [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1989.*
- [3] Newmark, P. *A Textbook of Translation [M]. New York: Prentice Hall, 1988.*
- [4] Nord Christine. *Translating as a Purposeful Activity-Functionalist Approaches Explained[M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001*
- [5] Bian Zhengdong. *Skopos Theory of Translation [J]. Journal of Wuxi Institute of Education, 2004(01):57-61.*
- [6] Cao Jianxin. *A Preliminary Study on the translation of dialogues between characters in novels [J]. Jiangsu Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 1996(01):62-64.*
- [7] Zhao Jing. *On the Development of Functionalist Skopos Theory in Translation [J]. Journal of Reading and Writing 2016(1)*
- [8] Chen Jing. *Analysis of the three Principles of Skopos Theory and their application in translation practice [J]. Overseas English, 2016(17):89-90.*