

Research on English Translation Strategies of Chinese Traditional Aesthetic Thought from the Perspective of Translation and Interpretation Studies

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Abstract: Traditional Chinese aesthetic thought has a long history and is rooted in various fields such as Chinese writing, traditional philosophy, literature, calligraphy, painting, kung fu and so on, which is an important part of Chinese culture. Translation is indispensable for Chinese traditional aesthetics to go out, to build Chinese contemporary aesthetics, and to break the Western-dominated international discourse system. Translation is a cross-cultural translation and dissemination activity involving three levels: language, culture and thought. Only by adhering to the translation strategy of "I am the main one" can we build an academic discourse system with Chinese heritage and Chinese characteristics.

1. Introduction

Chinese traditional aesthetic thought has a long history and is an important part of Chinese culture. Translation is an important means to construct Chinese contemporary aesthetics and break the Western discourse system, involving cross-cultural translation and communication activities at three levels: language, culture and thought.

2. Development of Chinese Aesthetics

Aesthetics as a discipline originated in Europe. Several major adjustments of aesthetics thought since modern times have occurred in Europe and the United States in the later period. From the German classical aesthetics emphasizing system and logic to the psychoanalysis emphasizing irrationality and subconsciousness; from emphasizing the formalism of text research to emphasizing the interpretive aesthetics and reception aesthetics of reception process research; from the Frankfurt School, which emphasizes historical dialectics, to feminism, post-colonialism and new historicism, it advocates 'one-sided depth'. It seems that Chinese aesthetics has always been the quiet and obscure student sitting in the last row of the classroom.[1]

3. Differences between traditional Chinese aesthetics and Western aesthetics

Although as a discipline, aesthetics was introduced into China, traditional Chinese aesthetic thought has a long history in China, embodied in various fields such as Chinese writing, traditional

philosophy, literature, calligraphy, painting, and kung fu. From its origins, Chinese and Western aesthetics are destined to be two very different systems of thought. Western aesthetics originated from ancient Greek culture. Ancient Greek culture advocated discursive thinking, so the study of Western aesthetics from the very beginning attached great importance to the definition and interpretation of concepts and categories, and attached importance to logic, so that it could eventually develop into an independent, systematic and modern discipline in the 18th century. On the other hand, China, as an ancient civilisation, has also had its own "aesthetic thinking" since ancient times, dating back to the pre-Qin period.[2] Confucianism in the pre-Qin period insisted on "perfection and perfection". The kernel of this concept is Confucian morality, so it can be interpreted as internal goodness and external beauty. It can be seen that Confucianism advocates that "beauty" must be dependent on "goodness", with a strong moral and ethical colour. As a whole, the aesthetics of the ancient Chinese focused on sensual intuition and individual perception. Whether it is the philosophical texts that explain the pre-Qin scholars, the Han Dynasty scriptures, the Wei and Jin metaphysics, the Sui and Tang Buddhism, the Song Dynasty rationalism, or the literature, painting and calligraphy theories written by people of all ages, all of them are rich in aesthetics ideas. There has always been a voice in the academic world that traditional Chinese aesthetic thought lacks a rigorous logical system, has no concrete theoretical form, and most of its contents are not in line with the claims of modern aesthetics, so it has little research value. This is a one-sided and radical claim, a kind of cultural colonialist mentality. But this claim has been criticised by the academic community from the very beginning. Many scholars of the older generation advocated that academics should not distinguish between ancient and modern, Chinese and Western. Wang Guowei once wrote a preface for the National Studies Series, in which he pointed out, "I am telling the world that there is no old or new, no Chinese or Western, and no usefulness or uselessness in learning." Qian Zhongshu also in the "Talking about art" force proposed: "East China Sea and West China Sea, the psychology of the same, the South and North learning, Taoism has not been split." It can be seen that both scholars advocate the unity of ancient and modern Chinese and Western academics, conveying the ideal line of the old generation of aestheticians who insisted on the integration of Chinese and Western aesthetics.[3]

Throughout the history of Chinese aesthetics, the Chinese aesthetics community has always been faced with a dichotomy: to preserve the Chinese tradition or to westernise it. Fortunately, under the guidance of the Marxist concept of material history, Chinese scholars have gradually come to realise that, despite national differences, both Chinese and Western aesthetics are essentially tributaries of the long river of human civilisation. Whether Chinese or Western scholars, if they want to make a breakthrough and contribute to the development of human civilisation as a whole, they must break away from the dichotomy of "Chinese and Western" and take the initiative to build a more pluralistic and inclusive academic environment. History is always evolving, and traditions need to be innovated on the premise of preserving their essence. In other words, a truly vital traditional thought should be a dynamic "generation" rather than a static "existence".[4]

4. Constructing a Contemporary Chinese Aesthetic System through Disciplinary Translation

In the context of the new era, the biggest problem facing Chinese aesthetics is how to build a contemporary Chinese aesthetics system, especially how to tap into the resources of traditional Chinese aesthetics to participate in the construction of a Chinese aesthetics system, as well as how to participate in the construction of the world aesthetics discourse system in the Chinese aesthetics community.[5]The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Nineteenth National Congress of the CPC) has emphasized the importance of building a system of thought, academia, and discourse that reflects Chinese origins and characteristics. It highlights the

necessity to enhance the system of foreign language disciplines in domestic universities and to promote the dissemination of Chinese voices and stories, thereby strengthening the country's cultural soft power. The Opinions on the Implementation of the Project for the Inheritance and Development of Chinese Outstanding Traditional Culture, along with the Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Humanistic Exchanges between China and Foreign Countries issued by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the General Office of the State Council, align with this vision. These documents echo the call to establish a system of thought, academic system, and discourse system characterized by their Chinese background and unique qualities. Therefore, translation, as a tool "to achieve coordination and dialogue between two cultures through the intermediary of language" (Wang Ning, 2016), is undoubtedly the "best magic weapon" (Zhang Xu, 2012) for launching dialogue with the outside world and building China's soft power, translation Discourse research and translation theory construction is an important part of building a discourse system. Therefore, in order to be recognised and accepted by the global academic discourse circle, it is necessary to do a good job of translating disciplinary discourse. The translation of disciplinary discourse should not only be in line with Chinese national conditions and have distinctive Chinese characteristics, but also be able to dovetail with the Western-dominated international discourse system.

If we want foreign scholars to understand and accept our research results, Chinese aesthetics must use expressions that foreign scholars can also understand when constructing its own theoretical system, especially the core disciplinary terms and definitions of important categories. If the key terms and core categories we use lack unity and descriptiveness, the ideas and theories we put forward will not have much influence in the international academic community, and can only be confined to the discussion of "regional aesthetics". Therefore, Chinese aesthetics researchers need to have an international vision when constructing their discourse, and should never equate translation with language conversion, but should regard translation as a cross-cultural communication activity that includes translation, promotion, mediation, and transmission under the perspective of translation and mediation.

5. Problems in the process of translation

On the whole, translators face three situations in the process of translation. The first situation is that the terminology involved is originally imported from Western aesthetic thought, and the ideas it carries fill the gaps in Chinese aesthetic thought, so it is accepted in its entirety. This kind of situation is the best to handle in the process of translation and interpretation, and the translator only needs to translate according to the agreed-upon translation method. The second situation is slightly more complicated. Although this kind of terminology is also imported, from the very beginning the translator was concerned with the problem of convergence between Western thought and traditional Chinese aesthetic thought, and therefore, after the innovation of Chinese scholars, gave these terms certain Chinese characteristics. For example, when translating Plato's Dialogues on Literature and Art, Mr. Zhu Guangqian translated the English word "contemplation" into the word "care", which has the meaning of both "contemplation" and "care" in English. In English, contemplation has the meaning of both "contemplation" and "calmly and carefully looking at", and in the definition of Western aesthetics, contemplation usually refers to in-depth observation, thinking and experience of the object of beauty, with emphasis on rational analysis and the understanding of the objective attributes of beauty. The word "care" in Chinese has a certain origin in Buddhist thought. In the Buddhist context, especially in Zen thought, "controlling" usually refers to a kind of inner awareness, i.e., one's deep insight into one's own inner world, thoughts, emotions, and external phenomena, which is a kind of cultivation practice, and its purpose is to achieve purity of mind,

enlightenment and liberation. From this, we can see that there is a similarity between English contemplation and Chinese "Guanzhao", both of which emphasise the interaction and intrinsic connection between the subject and the object, and Mr Zhu Guangqian's use of the word "Guanzhao" to translate "contemplation" is an attempt to capture the meaning of the word "contemplation". Mr Zhu Guangqian then used the word "contemplation" to translate the word, which captures the similarities between Chinese and Western thought and facilitates the acceptance of Western thought by Chinese people. But in essence, contemplation focuses on rational analysis and the understanding of the objective attributes of beauty, while "care" in Chinese aesthetic thought stresses the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, reflecting the Chinese philosophical thought of "unity of heaven and man".[6] Today, simply translating the term "care" as contemplation to introduce Chinese aesthetic thought to the outside world may seem inadequate given the continuous efforts of the Chinese academia to promote the modernization process of traditional Chinese thought. The most complex situation involves terms like "qiyun," "qiye," "fengbiao," "shangshen," and "xingshen," which represent China's unique aesthetic thought and form the core vocabulary of modern Chinese aesthetics. These terms, including "Form and Spirit," are crucial in shaping and defining modern Chinese aesthetics. Unlike "aesthetics," "consciousness," and "context," which were originally terms of Western scholarship, terms such as "style and bones" have a strong sense of "aestheticism." The translator needs to make great efforts to understand the connotation of these terms and then use certain translation strategies to translate them into international academic language accurately and clearly. Specifically, in this process, translators should have cultural self-confidence and cultural self-awareness, adopt the strategy of "I am the master", realise that since cultural ideas are Chinese, the right of interpretation and translation should be in their own hands, focus on presenting Chinese ideas, contributing Chinese wisdom, breaking the hegemony of the Western cultural discourse since the 19th century, and completely stepping out of the Western-centrism, so that they will not be able to use the Chinese terminology in the international academic language. It should break the hegemony of western culture since the 19th century, completely get out of western centrism, and build the discourse of Chinese aesthetics.[7]

6. Issues to be Considered when Adopting the "Me First" Translation Strategy

Firstly, the purpose of translation activities should be clarified. On the surface, translation is the conversion between different languages, the conversion of language symbols, but in essence, translation is the translation of meaning, retaining the meaning of the original text. What is meaning? Meaning is the unity of form and content. Form is the linguistic level, which is the surface structure and the object of translation researchers' long-term attention; while content is the culture and thought behind the language, which is the deep structure. Chen Daliang (2021) pointed out when talking about the translation of Chinese political discourse to foreign countries that we should have a big picture when building Chinese political discourse in the international arena, and we should look at the issue of translation from the strategic height of culture and ideology, and we should form a new translation concept of language, culture and ideology at three levels. He believes that language translation is the foundation, cultural translation is the bridge, and ideological translation is the hard core. The key to linguistic translation is to establish the intrinsic connection between language, culture and ideology, so as to complete the conversion of meaning; the key to cultural translation is to re-contextualise the elements of Chinese culture in order to promote cross-cultural exchanges; and the key to ideological translation is to provide in-depth interpretation of Chinese political terms and concepts, so as to facilitate their understanding and acceptance by foreign audiences. Chen Daliang's question about the level of foreign translation of Chinese political discourse is instructive for us when translating traditional Chinese aesthetic thought into English.

Secondly, it is recognised that the activity of translating traditional Chinese aesthetic thought into

Chinese is a kind of translation-out activity. Xie Tianzhen (2012) points out the problem of "translation direction" when he talks about the problems facing translation studies. He believes that there is a difference between "translation in" and "translation out", and how Chinese culture goes out belongs to the problem of "translation out". On the surface, "in-coming translation" and "out-going translation" only differ in the order of language pairs, and there is no substantive difference at the level of language transformation. There is no substantial difference in the level of language conversion, but Xie Tianzhen (2014) argues that, considering that translation is essentially a cross-cultural communication act, and cultural communication has its own inherent rules, "in-coming" and "out-going" should essentially belong to different Behaviour. For a long time, the biggest misunderstanding we have fallen into when engaging in foreign translation activities and research is to deal with the problem of "translation out" from the perspective of "translation in". It is very important to realise that the English-Chinese translation of traditional Chinese aesthetic thought is a kind of translation activity. This is because once it is clear that it is an act of "translating out", the problem of the need for translation can be solved. According to Xie Tianzhen (2008), historically, Chinese culture has been successfully translated and disseminated abroad mainly because foreign audiences took the initiative to do so, and there was a "demand for translation", and thus good results were achieved. In a certain sense, "translation demand" is the key factor determining the success of translation and communication activities. "The context in which the translation takes place has a strong intrinsic need for the translation of foreign literature and culture, and as long as a qualified translation is delivered, the translation activity and its translation results will naturally gain readers, win the market, and even have a certain impact in the translation-into-language environment" (Xie Tianzhen, 2014). In contrast, there are many other factors to be considered in "translation out" activities, such as audience acceptance. Hu (2013) has pointed out that "the key to the spread of culture is not what the communicator does, but what the receiver needs." Market economists believe that demand is the driving force of economic development, but supply can lead and even create new demand. In terms of translated content, it is important to choose content that highlights both traditional cultural genes with China and international compatibility. In terms of text types, there should be both academic texts and popular science readings that meet the public's tastes. In terms of the mode of translation, the Internet and translation technology have completely changed the traditional mode of translation, social networks and new media have changed the traditional mode of translation and dissemination, and international dissemination has shown a trend of mobility, socialisation, multimodality, intelligence and digitisation. Translation is no longer a simple unimodal language conversion, but a multimodal transformation. Only by organically integrating Internet technology, text, pictures, animation, video, music, hypertext links and other elements can we produce effective translation and communication effects.

Thirdly, we attach importance to the modern transformation of traditional Chinese translation theories. Traditional Chinese translation theory has a long history of development, and it is a translation theory developed from traditional Chinese theories and ideological discourse resources, including traditional philosophy, aesthetics, literature, rhetoric, painting theory, book theory, etc. Yan Fu's "Faithfulness, Dignity and Grace", Fu Lei's "Divine Similitude", Qian Zhongshu's "Realm of Transformation", and so on, are the key elements of traditional Chinese translation theory. Yan Fu's "Faith and Grace", Fu Lei's "Divine Similarity", and Qian Zhongshu's "Realm of Transformation" all belong to the category of traditional Chinese translation theory. The different qualities of traditional Chinese translation theories can make up for some blind spots caused by the shortcomings of modern western translation theories. For example, influenced by the traditional Chinese philosophical view of language, traditional Chinese translation theory presents the characteristic of emphasising meaning rather than linguistic form. Zhu Shenghao believes that translation must maintain the charm of the original text, and holds a disapproving attitude towards word-by-word and sentence-by-sentence translation. Influenced by the tradition of Western language philosophy, Western translation theory has the cognitive bias and blind spot of pursuing

formal equivalence.

The resources of traditional Chinese translation theories are rich, but they are limited by history, politics, culture, science and technology, and cannot meet the needs of translation and communication activities in the new era. Therefore, extracting the valuable parts of traditional translation theories for modern conversion has become an urgent problem. The modern transformation of traditional Chinese translation theory is not to remove the tradition or westernise it. Zhang Beran (2001) proposes that modern transformation is a kind of rational analysis, aiming at activating those parts of ancient translation theories with vitality, obtaining modern interpretation, giving them modern significance, and making them part of modern Chinese translation theories.

Fourth, insist on alienation as the dominant and use naturalisation appropriately. Domestication and foreignisation are common translation strategies. The former takes the target language as its home, stresses the fluency of the translated text, and is conducive to reducing the reading load of the translated audience; the latter takes the source language as its home, stresses the heterogeneity of the original text, and is conducive to preserving the differences in the language and culture of the source text. In the history of Chinese translation, "naturalisation" used to be the mainstream translation strategy. At the stage when the two cultures did not communicate with each other, it was an inevitable choice in history for the curator of translation and the translator to formulate the translation strategy of naturalisation based on the cultural norms of the translated language in order to introduce the convenience of the foreign culture as soon as possible, or in order to convey the main message of the original work. However, if translation is regarded as a tool of cultural struggle from the perspective of anti-colonialism and anti-hegemony, naturalisation is in fact the colonial domination of the strong culture over the weak culture, which embodies cultural inequality. Huang Xin (2022) points out that if the translation and communication activities take place in the direction from the weaker culture to the stronger culture, then naturalisation is the domestication of the weaker culture, while alienation is the "anti" domestication, which is the retention of the ethnicity of the weaker culture. On the other hand, if the direction of translation and dissemination activities is from the strong culture to the weak culture, alienation will be a facilitator for the strong culture to invade the weak culture, while naturalisation is conducive to the preservation of the linguistic characteristics of the weak culture. In the current international political, economic and cultural context, Chinese ideology and culture, in most cases, still belongs to the conversion from weak culture to strong culture, so it is necessary to insist on the dominance of alienation and the protection of the ethnicity of Chinese culture, in order to realise the righteousness and innovation in the new era. At the same time, we should also give full play to the auxiliary role of naturalisation. When the translation of alienation may cause misunderstanding among readers, in order to achieve the reciprocity of deep semantic or pragmatic meanings, it is advisable to adopt the treatment of naturalisation. In short, under the premise of upholding the concept of equal interaction in foreign translation and interpretation, whether to adopt "alienation" or "naturalisation" in translation and interpretation activities must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Fifthly, we advocate co-operation between Chinese and foreign translators. In the field of translation, it is a generally accepted practice in the industry for Chinese translators to "translate" works into their mother tongue. This is because they can better grasp the expression habits and cultural background of the target language, thus ensuring the quality and acceptance of the translation. In contrast, foreign translators are more favoured in the process of "translating out" because they have the advantage of their mother tongue, are more familiar with the cultural background and narrative habits of the target language, and are able to adopt a mode of expression that is more in line with the target readers from the perspective of the target readers, which will in turn increase the acceptance and market influence of the translated text, and therefore are more favoured in the field of external translations. However, if we want to do a good job of translating Chinese thought and culture from the three levels of language, culture and thought, I am afraid that it is not enough to rely solely on the efforts of foreign translators, and Chinese translators must also take part in it. Therefore, a more reasonable and efficient approach should be the co-operation

between Chinese translators and foreign experts, such as the co-operation between Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidian, and the co-operation between the American sinologist Ge Haowen and Lin Lijun. Usually Chinese translators have a deep understanding of the original text and can accurately grasp the cultural connotations and linguistic features of the original text. Foreign experts, on the other hand, have an advantage in the expression and cultural background of the target language and are better able to transform the Chinese content into a form that is easily accepted by the target language readers. This complementarity helps to improve the quality of translation, so that the translation is faithful to the original text and conforms to the reading habits of the target language. Especially when it comes to the translation of Chinese cultural ideas, the cooperation between Chinese and foreign experts is of great significance in promoting Sino-foreign communication and understanding and building Chinese disciplinary discourse.

7. Conclusions

Chinese traditional aesthetics is all-encompassing and has a long history, but it has been translated by western aesthetics for a long time, which can't show the Chinese nation's heritage. To break the dominant definition of aesthetics in the west, to rebuild the system of Chinese traditional aesthetics and to let Chinese traditional aesthetics go out, translation is a very important means to realize the dissemination of three levels of language, culture and thought through translation, and only by realizing the means of translation in the native way, we can build up the system of aesthetics with the heritage and characteristics of the Chinese tradition and get the discourse right of Chinese aesthetics.

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