

Translation Strategies for Short Essays under the Perspective of Translation Compensation

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Abstract: This article provides profound examination of the application of the translation compensation theory in translating short essays. It initiates with an exploration of various viewpoints on translation compensation, encompassing the concepts of translation units and functions. The discussion then extends to a comprehensive analysis of the two principal types of translation compensation: explicit and implicit. Explicit compensation is marked by annotations, whereas implicit compensation seamlessly incorporates adjustments into the text. The article also underscores the significance of addressing cultural gaps and strengthening the narrative flow in translations, suggesting strategies, including expansion, clarification, and summarization. In conclusion, the article encapsulates the relevance and indispensability of the translation compensation theory in the translation of essays, offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance.

1. Introduction

Within the Chinese literary canon, short essays from the Ming and Qing dynasties are regarded as a separate genre that is on par with the lyrical verses of the Song era and the poetry of the Tang Dynasty. These works have piqued the curiosity of academics and are a monument to the literary prowess of the time. That being said, there hasn't been the same kind of attention paid to translating these little articles. Many Chinese literary classics have been translated into other languages in order to be widely read due to the need for worldwide communication. But in terms of published volume and timeliness, translation efforts for short essays trail well behind those for poetry or Ci. Perfect linguistic counterparts are difficult to discover when translating these articles into English, and readers of the target language may find it more difficult to understand the content if there is no shared cultural background. Effectively conveying the cultural core of the source material to readers in the intended audience presents translators with their biggest obstacle.

In translation practice, due to the differences in language structure, cultural background and expression habits, the loss of information, meaning, pragmatic function and cultural factors inevitably occurs in the translation process. In order to make up for these losses, translation compensation strategy comes into being. Translation compensation is not only a kind of skill, but also an art, which requires the translator to restore or enhance the expressive and infectious power of the translation through various means on the basis of faithfulness to the original text. The importance of translation compensation strategies in prose translation is self-evident, especially in dealing with cultural differences and making up for cultural deficiencies. As a literary form, short essays are characterized

by concise language and far-reaching artistic conception, which often contain rich cultural elements and regional characteristics. In the process of translation, due to differences in language and culture, some cultural elements in the original text may be difficult to directly convey to the target language readers. Therefore, the translation compensation strategy is particularly critical. The translation compensation strategy can help the translator build a bridge between different cultures so that the target language readers can understand and appreciate the cultural connotation of the original text. Through appropriate compensation, the translated text can be closer to the reading habits and cultural background of the target language readers, so as to improve the readability and acceptability of the translated text. This paper will explore the different perspectives, units, functions and specific strategies of translation compensation in order to provide theoretical guidance and practical reference for translation practice.

2. Perspectives of Translation Compensation

The inherent isomorphism within human languages facilitates communication across languages that may vary significantly in terms of phonetics, syntax, morphology, and other linguistic elements. Isomorphism refers to the alignment of corresponding elements within two or more structures at a certain level of abstraction. Each sentence possesses dual organizational levels: an overt, literal structure and a covert, profound semantic structure. In the act of translation, the translator might aim for equivalence in pragmatics, semantics, and functionality, as well as isomorphism within the language's underlying structure, given the slim likelihood of finding it at the surface level. The process of language translation is inevitably accompanied by losses, encompassing the loss of informational content, semantic nuances, pragmatic roles, and cultural elements. Scholars worldwide have also explored the concept of translation compensation from diverse angles, including the objectives and elements of translation, both on a micro and macro scale.

2.1 Units of translation compensation

Wolfram Wilss (1982) proposes the concept of translation compensation through the lens of the translation unit, proposing it as a strategy to bridge structural differences both within the linguistic framework and beyond it ^[1]. He delves into interpretive translation, which serves as the translator's primary income source, and the method of indirect vocabulary translation. Wilss touches upon the issue of cultural elements that resist translation. He posits that "discourse" is the fundamental unit for translation. The term "equivalence in translation" does not signify an exact match in the meanings of words and phrases; it pertains to the broader equivalence of the impact of paragraphs or even chapters. His central thesis revolves around "compensation at both micro and macro levels." By addressing the debate over the use of words, phrases, and sentences as translation units, Wilss's definition of compensation, considering the "micro-context and macro-context" of the translation unit, is deemed legitimate. Compensation can transcend the confines of a single word, phrase, or sentence, as the act of determining compensation often disrupts the balance of the source text's words and sentences, leading to a new equilibrium within a larger unit in the target text. Hervey and Higgins' ideas on merger compensation and spin-off pay lend some credence to Wilss's assertion. Furthermore, Hatim and Mason (1990) recommend that compensation should be conducted at the levels of ideational, interpersonal, and textual dimensions, while also being in harmony with the surrounding context ^[2]. Harvey (1995) argues that the stylistic approach and the unique characteristics of individual texts are essential for compensation, and that modifications, omissions, and transformations at the vocabulary level are of lesser importance ^[3]. In contrast, Newmark classifies the adaptation of cultural meaning as a form of "adaptation" or compensation.

2.2 Functions of translation compensation

Newmark (1998) initiates his discussion by examining the generation of compensation in translation. He suggests that the concept of compensation placement is confined to "another sentence within or adjacent to the sentence in question," primarily aiming to counteract the loss of auditory and semantic elements in translation, as well as to address rhetorical and pragmatic imperfections ^[4]. Hatim and Mason (1990) articulate a more precise definition of compensation, noting that "translators often have to leverage the specific linguistic expression tools of the target language to compensate for the distortions and deficiencies in the translation's language impact, ensuring that the translated texts achieve an effect roughly equivalent to that of the original text". When conceptualizing compensation, Hatim, Mason, Hervey, Higgins, and Harvey also emphasize that it should render the translated text "identical" or "akin" to the source text, and "equivalent" in terms of impact. Ma Hongjun (2003) expands on this by offering a broader, macroscopic view of compensation types, suggesting that an "interpretation" or "adaptation" could be seen as compensation if its objective is to convey the text's implicit meaning and reproduce the original language's effect ^[5]. Furthermore, Xia Tingde (2006) proposes that compensation should be determined by the nature of the text and the translation's purpose, ensuring that any potential or actual losses incurred during the translation are remedied and compensated for in the target language, adhering to its specifications and other linguistic standardization methods ^[6]. Several factors, such as the translator's skill and differences in language and culture, can lead to a loss of meaning, rhetorical strategies, phonetic effects, and the expressive power of the original text in translations. To mitigate these inevitable translation losses, translators must employ a variety of compensation strategies.

2.3 Strategies of Translation Compensation

Translators from both local and global contexts have utilized the strategy of translation compensation in their professional practice, either intentionally or inadvertently, and have also developed specific strategies for it from diverse perspectives. The categorization of compensation proposed by Hervey and Higgins is influential and consists of four key types: (1) kind-based compensation: achieving the original text's impact in the translation by employing linguistic equivalents; (2) location-based compensation: generating the same effect in a different location from where it originally appeared; (3) merging-based compensation: amalgamating various elements from the source text and consolidating them in the translated version; (4) splitting-based compensation: expanding the meaning and details of the source's concise sentences into an extended paragraph in the translation ^[7]. The author emphasizes that these forms of compensation are not exclusive and can be implemented concurrently. Numerous translation techniques have arisen from Hervey and Higgins' studies, which can be broadly classified into two categories: overt compensation and covert compensation.

2.3.1 Explicit compensation

To distinguish the translator's contributions from the author's original work, explicit compensation is indicated by a conspicuous indication of the adjusted content within the translated text. Ke Ping (1991) lists annotation as one of the compensation methods. While annotations serve as a valuable asset for translators, they should be applied judiciously, especially in literary translations to avoid misuse. A technique involving annotation and intertextual enrichment has been put forward, recognizing it as a final option. Annotations, which encompass endnotes, footnotes, and appended notes, are utilized to transplant cultural elements and compensate for any loss of meaning. Moreover, Ke Ping underscores the adaptability of annotations in literary translation, notably in poetry,

advocating that readers be granted ample space for imagination. Out-of-text compensation is identified as a pivotal approach to addressing cultural gaps in translations ^[8]. Ma Hongjun (2003) provides an expanded definition of explicit compensation, reflecting the trend of estrangement in translation, encompassing footnotes, endnotes, transposition notes, in-text notes, appendices, prefaces, and so on. Classic Chinese texts are often accompanied by appendices and prefaces in their translations. Xia Tingde (2006) defines separated compensation, which is categorized based on the annotation's placement: within the text or outside of it.

In summary, annotation is a well-acknowledged strategy for explicit compensation, recognized by scholars and utilized by translators across various text genres for many years. Guided by theories such as Thick Translation Theory, Functional Equivalence Theory, and Communicative Translation Theory, researchers have conducted in-depth studies on annotation, especially in the context of Chinese classics translation, to ascertain its necessity and explore its objectives.

2.3.2 Inexplicit compensation

Implicit compensation is a prevalent technique among translators, where the compensatory elements are seamlessly woven into the fabric of the translated text. It requires translators to identify and integrate forms in the target language that correspond to the source material, based on a deep understanding of the original content. Six strategies for translation compensation are outlined: supplementation, expansion, segmentation, consolidation, substitution, and conveyance. These strategies are essential for addressing the loss of meaning that can occur during the linguistic transformation from the source text. Ke Ping (1991) views compensation as a ubiquitous translation tool that should be implemented at three distinct levels: referential meaning, pragmatic meaning, and intralingual meaning. He elaborates on various compensation strategies, including contextual enrichment, perspective shifting, specification, generalization, paraphrasing, adaptation, and back-translation, and these methods are crucial for compensating for the inevitable semantic losses that arise during the translation process, ensuring that the translated work retains the essence and impact of the original. ^{[9] [10]}. Additional emphasis is placed on a set of six compensation approaches, encompassing equivalence, elucidation, compromise, direct translation, transliteration, and alteration. These methods are applied in various contexts to address different translation challenges. To maintain a balance between the text's readability and the conveyance of cultural significance, techniques such as generalization and specification are also employed. The objective of translation compensation is to preserve the text's coherence. Beyond annotations, a trio of strategies for addressing cultural gaps is outlined: direct translation, omission, and elucidation. The term "inexplicit compensation," introduced by Ma Hongjun, refers to the translator's comprehensive use of all translation techniques to adjust the source text (enlargement, interpretation, specification, domestication, etc.) to fully convey its meaning, showcasing a tendency toward domestication. Xia Tingde (2006) introduces the concepts of separated and integrated compensation, with the latter involving the assimilation of compensatory content into the text itself, expanding the definition of translation compensation. This is akin to implicit compensation, where no indicators are present in the translated text, and it mainly includes expansion, specification, generalization, and the enhancement of contrasts. Scholars have conducted extensive research on translation compensation strategies from multiple perspectives, with a particular focus on the classification and application of these strategies, laying a solid foundation for future research and guiding translators throughout their work.

Until the 1980s, the concept of compensation was not highly regarded, being a nascent translation theory. Though still in its early stages, it has been gaining more attention in recent years. The literature review indicates a gap in the study of categorization and strategy. Research on translation compensation is often integrated with other linguistic theories, broadening the research scope and aiding practical application. By examining various literary works, compensation strategies are

categorized. However, there is a scarcity of research on essay translation, with a concentration on poetry or fiction translation. Based on a literature review, translation compensation tactics can be divided into two main groups: explicit and implicit compensation. Specific strategies for each are presented, proving to be widely applicable and beneficial.

3. Strategies for Translation Compensation in Proses

3.1 Explicit Compensation

When translators provide conspicuous annotations—such as footnotes, endnotes, transpositional notes, in-text comments, prefaces, appendices, and so on—that reflect a tendency toward foreignization, this practice is known as explicit compensation in the translation process. By employing a range of overt annotation methods, explicit compensation delineates a clear boundary between the contributions of the original author and those of the translator. It also endeavors to preserve the original text's contextual information, compensates for any missing context, and affords the translator a certain level of creative liberty. This approach eliminates comprehension obstacles for readers from diverse historical and cultural contexts that arise from cultural disparities. To enhance the conveyance of the original text's cultural and semantic content, translators often need to address historical and cultural background by incorporating prefaces, appendices, or annotations. These annotations enhance the comprehensibility of the text, enrich its context, and facilitate cultural dissemination. Explicit annotations can be categorized based on their placement into two types: those that are integrated within the body of the text and those that appear outside the main text. This distinction is made according to the different positions where compensation is applied.

3.1.1 Annotation outside text

Annotations that are positioned outside the main text, such as footnotes and endnotes, are primarily employed to elucidate any complexities present in the source material, thereby equipping readers with the necessary insights to grasp the original text's meaning and appreciate its artistic qualities. Occasionally, the translator's own interpretation of the annotated material is also included. To maintain the integrity of the original text's structure while assimilating the source language's cultural elements into the target language, these external annotations are often utilized to present the characters and specialized terms from the original text, along with the unique cultural aspects and the historical significance of events inherent to the source language.

In ancient Chinese tradition, scholars are known by a variety of names. Besides their family names, they possess legal names for formal documentation and signatures, adopt style names to reflect their personal interests and ideals, and use courtesy names among friends for verbal or written address. Style names may also convey additional information like official ranks, workplaces, or birthplaces. For example, Bai Letian, known by his courtesy name Letian, is the renowned Tang Dynasty poet Bai Juyi. In the translation, the original text's names, legal names, courtesy names, and style names could all be rendered as legal names to prevent confusion among readers. Supplementary information is then appended in the form of footnotes, which enhances the article's cohesion and reduces the cognitive burden on the reader.

3.1.2 Annotation within text

Annotations within text involve integrating the compensatory content directly into the body of the translated text, clearly indicating that the marked or bracketed sections are additions by the translator, using the target language's punctuation or parentheses. This method of annotation is predominantly used for translating historical periods and the names of scenic locations.

In ancient China, there existed four principal types of calendars: a. one aligned with the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches; b. one based on the reigning monarch's title; c. one based on the reigns of feudal lords or princes; and d. one combining both the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches with the reign title. Each of these calendar systems, utilized in the source text, represents a unique aspect of ancient Chinese civilization. While Chinese readers can easily grasp these historical nuances, for those unfamiliar with Chinese history, understanding these details can be quite challenging. This translation method can convey the cultural differences of the original text to the target audience. However, a direct, unannotated translation of a monarch's reigning title could deprive it of its historical depth and authenticity. Therefore, when translating a historical period, it is essential to provide a concise introduction. For example, in order to effectively translate the aforementioned calendar types, the translator must also incorporate the Christian epoch into the target text to provide a historical reference for the reader. Text annotation can meet the translation reader's need for supplementary information, and help readers establish contact with the author while maintaining the readability of the translation.

The translation of scenic location names also benefits from textual annotations. These names serve dual purposes: firstly, as identifiers that distinguish one place from another, similar to a person's name; secondly, they often embody rich cultural significance, reflecting local customs, traditions, philosophies, and religious beliefs. Translating the names of scenic locations requires a balance between fidelity and creativity. Upon analysis, the various types of names can be broadly categorized into those based on physical characteristics, geographical position, historical events, myths, legends, and other appealing features named after figures, colors, functions, numbers, etc. Translators can employ transliteration, complemented by liberal translation, to convey the cultural significance of the names of scenic sites while preserving their distinctive and identifying features.

3.2 Implicit Compensation

Implicit compensation is distinct from explicit compensation in that it does not feature any overt signs or markers. Instead of disrupting the reading experience, the compensatory elements are seamlessly integrated into the translation to clear any potential reading obstacles. The key strategies for implicit compensation encompass domestication, expansion, clarification, summarization, and elucidation. This type of compensation is adept at enriching succinct details within the translation itself.

3.2.1 Amplification

Amplification serves as a literary technique where an author enhances a statement by incorporating additional details, thereby increasing its value and clarity. Known also as 'addition' in the context of translation, this method allows the translator to introduce new words or phrases beyond a direct equivalent of the original text. This process of language adaptation involves compensating for information that may be obscure or unknown to readers of the target language through judicious supplementation. It is often used to clarify the cultural significance of a term or to supply essential background for the target audience to fully understand the text. Amplification is commonly employed to elaborate on contextual details and to ensure grammatical precision.

Amplification proves particularly useful when translating culturally rich concepts. The allure of literature, music, and film lies not only in their entertainment value but also in their role as conduits for cultural understanding. Language and culture are inextricably linked; language is both a part of culture and its vehicle. Every culture possesses unique terminology, expressions, or idioms that encapsulate meanings specific to a particular group, developed over time. When translating such culturally laden terms, it is imperative to consider their cultural implications. Many allusions stem

from traditional Chinese narratives, which can evoke deep emotions in Chinese audiences, even without additional context. However, Western audiences, lacking shared cultural knowledge, might not resonate with the precise significance of these references. This phenomenon is known as 'cultural default,' where there is an absence of a shared cultural understanding. In such cases, translators should employ compensatory strategies like analogical interpretation, liberal translation without annotations, or literal translation accompanied by annotations.

Amplification can also be effectively used to provide historical context. Classical Chinese texts often omit sentence elements such as predicates, prepositions, subjects, and objects. The compact and dense style of these classics emerged from ancient scholars' preference for brevity in language. A direct translation without additional context would likely result in a confusing and cumbersome text. To maintain the readability and linguistic elegance of the text, the translator may opt for amplification over annotations when dealing with the historical context of these events.

3.2.2 Interpretation

Culture-loaded terms, such as idioms and allusions, can be rendered through an interpretive translation strategy. The translator often encounters a wealth of references and imagery within the lines of poetry when translating essays. Given the constraints of the poetic form, the translator may need to rework the language to convey the underlying meaning of idioms or allusions, sometimes even diverging from their original form or specific content.

Allusions are commonly interpreted rather than translated literally. The study of allusion translation has consistently been a focal point for those working with traditional Chinese literature. Each allusion carries a unique origin that can evoke a cascade of associations and inspire imaginative thought in readers. An imprecise rendering of the associative meaning of an allusion may fail to achieve its intended effect. However, the complete conveyance of the allusion's rich cultural and historical context is often not feasible in translation due to the strict demands for linguistic precision and brevity in short essays. The translation of images follows the same principle. Classical Chinese poetry is famous for its use of imagery, which is the inner fusion of the poet's emotions and tangible reality. In the translation of traditional Chinese poetry, it is very important for translators to accurately grasp and deeply understand the cultural meaning of images and effectively convey the meaning of poems and the poet's emotions. In the essay, the writer will often quote the relevant poetry to convey the emotion and enhance the literariness of the essay. Therefore, the translation of essays also involves the processing of images. When certain images are too complex to express succinctly, or when annotations might disrupt the rhythm and aesthetic of the poem, the translator may choose to express the underlying meaning in other ways, even if it means omitting the literal image. This approach is adopted to preserve the integrity of the poetic form and to ensure that the translated work remains understandable and resonating with the reader in the given context of translation.

3.2.3 Generalization

The concept of "generalization" in translation includes techniques such as ellipsis, subtraction, and conceptual extension to deal with what might be considered superfluous in the target language or already implied in the context. This approach aims to perfect the language and structure of the translation without losing clarity or creating ambiguity in the original message. Generalization is a method of simplifying text by integrating previously stated information, thereby preventing duplication or excessive elaboration of concepts or terms when they arise again. Strategies to make up for cultural differences in translation include annotation, amplification, explanation and generalization. These strategies have been carefully selected to reflect the nuances of the language and the deep cultural implications of the source material. They are used to bridge cultural gaps and

ensure that the translated work resonates with the target audience without compromising the essence of the original.

The value and effectiveness of translation compensation, especially in short text translation, are proved through the investigation of various methods of translation compensation. This survey highlights the importance of these strategies in achieving translations that are both faithful to the original text and understood by the target audience.

4. Conclusion

As a key means of translation tools, translation compensation plays a vital role in making up for cultural differences, enhancing the cohesion of the text, and improving the reading experience of the target audience. Through the systematic classification and analysis of different translation compensation strategies, this study confirms the necessity and effectiveness of using translation compensation strategies in short prose translation. Clearly, techniques such as annotation, amplification, interpretation and generalization not only improve the quality and readability of the translation, but also ensure that the basic concepts and clarity of the content are retained. In addition, these technologies help bridge the gap between the source and target languages. The application of translation compensation strategy promotes cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. Through compensation, translators achieve transformation at the linguistic level, promote communication at the cultural level, and enable target language readers to understand and evaluate literary works in a multicultural context. In addition, the paper emphasizes the importance of selecting a translation compensation strategy based on a deep understanding of the linguistic features and cultural differences of the source text, as well as an accurate understanding of the intended responses of the target reader. With the deepening of translation studies, translation compensation theory is expected to be more widely applied and further developed, further enriching the field of translation and promoting cross-cultural communication.

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