Reinterpretation of ‘Faithfulness’ under the Translation Notion of ‘Refraction’

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Abstract. The traditional translation theories hold that the original text can’t be changed, any adaptation of the original text was considered as illegality and unfaithfulness. And people also reject such kind of translations. Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction and Andre Lefevere’s refraction shared the same idea and anti-traditional translation theories. They’ve added the fresh blood to the translation, especially in “faithfulness”. This paper intends to reinterpret faithfulness under the refraction through some examples and with the combination of Eugene Nadia’s functional equivalence, thus exampling the true faithfulness.

Introduction

It is universally acknowledged that translation enables people to communicate with others from different cultures with different languages, the aim of translation required translators to convey the exact content of the original text, namely, as a translator, the first and foremost task of translation is to express the meaning of text without any omission, given to many factors influenced on the translation, to be 100% of faithfulness is absolutely impossible. these factors also attracted the attention of scholars, with the development of translation, scholars have proposed their own ideas of translation, especially In 1970s, there are many new ideas about translation, one of the two are deconstruction and refraction, these two ideas have challenged the traditional recognition of translation, thus have added the new and fresh blood to translation, and provided a new and wide perspective for translation. Under the notion of refraction, the traditional translation criteria have been subverted. This thesis is trying to analyze the faithfulness under the notion of refraction. In addition, as for translation, without constantly creating and injecting new vigor, translation theories would be banal and rigid.

Review of Faithfulness in Traditional Translation Theories

Faithfulness is an everlasting topic in translation study. Scholars have studied and researched it since ancient times both at home and abroad. In fact, with the development of translation, the understanding of faithfulness has been changing, form a whole perspective of understanding the faithfulness, it is necessary to summarize the achievements in faithfulness both in China and the West.

Review of Traditional Chinese Theories on Faithfulness

It is widely acknowledged that Chinese translation activities can be dating back to the Eastern Jin Dynasty (314–420) caused numerous of Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures were introduced into China and needed to be translated into Chinese.

There are a lot of translators have made great contribution to the development of translation in China, and there is no denying that their ideas have promoted the development of faithfulness. Kuramajiva, the first Chinese translation theorist, once said translation that explains the original too much, the original text may lose its own spirit and the meaning of the original text can also be changed.
Xuan Zang has emphasized the importance of faithfulness. Yan Fu proposed his translation criteria in the preface of his translation to *Evaluation and Ethic*, namely, “faithfulness”, “expressiveness” and “elegance”. Here, faithfulness has been put in the first place among the three criteria, and requires to be faithful to the meaning of original work.

Lin Yutang argues “The first principle of translation is faithfulness” This is the turning point in translation study, and scholars started to explore the truthful faithfulness. Qian Zhongshu compared faithfulness as soul of a person, without faithfulness, and an unfaithful is just like a man without soul.

To sum up, based on the most Chinese translators, faithfulness is the first and foremost among all the translation principles. However, faithfulness is absolutely not to translate word by word, but to master the meaning and thought of original work, then translated text should be equal to the original both in meaning and style.

**Review of Western Theories on Faithfulness**

In the West, translation activity began with the translation of religious documents. In the 3rd century BC, the translation works have been recorded, that was the remark of the beginning in the western translation.

As to the first translation theorist and the founder of Western translation theory, Cicero is fully deserved the title of it. As to his understanding of translation, a translation is not just focused on the original, translators must have their own ideas about the original text and try to break the limitation of the original in the perspective of artistic expression and have their own creation of text.

Horace, one of the greatest translation theorists among all Roman scholars, has extraordinary idea on faithfulness and he proposed a faithful translator should translate “sense for sense” rather than word for word.

As we all know, in the 20th century, linguistic studies gradually dominated the translation researches, and the mainstream was the concept of equivalence. Eugene Nida, a great translator and scholar, who made significant contribution to translation and gave totally new definition of translation, that is, the translator should use the closest natural way to convey the meaning of the original text.

To sum up, keeping the faithful is the mainstream in Western translation history. In the process of researching, scholars have considered a lot of factors influencing on the faithfulness, such as content, form, style as well as the artistic expression, there are absolute and relative faithfulness. Moreover, they thought culture plays a significant role in translation.

**Introduction of the Refraction in Detail**

At the very beginning of 1980s, Andre Lefevere has published a book, *Mother Courages’s Cucumbers: Text System and Refraction in a Theory of Literature*. In this book, Lefevere expressed his idea about Bertolt Brecht’s translation work, which can be regarded as the turn of his opinion about translation. He stated: “A writer’s work gains exposure and achieves influence mainly through “misunderstanding and misconception”, or, to use a more neutral term, refraction. Writers and their works are always understood and conceived against a certain background or, if you will, are refracted through a certain spectrum, just as their work itself can refract previous works through certain spectrum.” Refraction is to be found in the obvious form of translation, or in the less obvious form of criticism, commentary, historiography, teaching, the collection of the works in anthologies, the production of plays. When it comes to the function of refraction, it has great power in establishing the reputation of a writer and his or her work, because through refraction, it is easier and more acceptable for readers to understand the thoughts and styles of works.

In 1990 and 1992, he has published the two famous works, *Translation / History / Culture : a Source Book*, 1990, and *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, 1992. In these two works, he used “rewrite” to replace “refract”, in a matter of fact, such change reflects that the “refract” is more conservative than “rewrite”, that also indicated the theory becoming mature.
When it comes to rewriting, some people might have misunderstanding that rewriting is translators who reproduces the original work according to their own viewpoint. In fact, the translation rewriting is a constrained rewriting, translators are not totally free to rewrite the original work, but to rewrite it to be more acceptable and easily understanding for target readers. The purpose of rewriting is to adapt the original culture to be easily understood by target readers, then making translation more effective.

Lefevere thought rewriting plays a significant role in prompting the development of literary. It is the rewriting that plenty of famous works were understood by many people and then widely acknowledged. Also, much efforts is needed to research the rewriting, the positive aspect of rewriting makes great contribution to the progress of literature and society. Rewriting creates new notion, new literature style and new methods, and the history of translation is also the history of literature reform as well as one culture influences another.

From the above analysis, there in no doubt that the process of translation is not only a transferring of language code but mixed with culture, and translators need to consider social culture, ideologies and main literal system and thoughts of target language. Through understanding “three elements” of translation, as for scholars, only by placing translation works under culture and society which it produced, and from the perspectives of culture and history, can scholars make right and neutral comments on them rather than only faithfulness.

Reinterpretation of Faithfulness under the Notion of Refraction

Some rewriting translation examples

In traditional translation, the first requirement is to convey the basic information of the original work so that the readers can have a basic understanding about it, but that’s absolutely not a golden rule to all kinds of translation. As a matter of fact, in some translations, rewriting and re-creation have better effect.

When translating some idioms, translations are not faithful to the original ones at all, they’ve not been translated word for word, but choosing the conversion to convey the essential meaning of idioms, the translations meaning are equivalent to the original idioms, and to some extent, it is rewritten from cultural perspective. In this way, there is no misunderstanding about these idioms for both home and abroad readers.

In fact, in advertising translations, the translators must adopt different methods to convey the effect of the products, thus prompting the purchasing desire of buyers. “Golgate” can be translated into Chinese “Gao Lujie”, which means by using the “Golgate”, you can have the clean teeth as well as confidence, however, the word “Golgate” itself does not have any of such meaning, but only a brand. As for “Coca Cola”, the “Coca” is a kind of plant called “Coca leaf”, and “Cola” is also a kind of plant called “Cola nut”, and the name of “Coca Cola” is to explain that the drink enriches the natural components which is reliable and healthy. And it translated as Chinese “Kekou kele”, not only shows its taste but reflects the happiness after people drinking it. While “Pepei Cola” with transliteration, translated as Chinese “Baishi Kele”, made people feel relaxed and be in good mood.

All these translation have fully displayed the characteristics of the products, but all these translations are not fully faithful to the original words. From analyzing the translation of advertisements, the fully faithful to the original is not the only criterion to weigh the good or bad of the translation. In fact, to some extent, every true translation is a kind of rewriting, and then “re-created”. What’s more, it is easy to understand that the advertising translation has close relationship with ideology and patronage, when translators translate advertising slogan, they must consider the idea and function the producers convey, and reach the purpose of the publicizing as well as conform to the ideologies of society.
Some Rewriting Methods

There is no doubt that rewriting is a good way for translation. Translators also need the right rewriting methods and only by mastering these methods correctly can translators make great progress in translation. The following are some commonly used rewriting methods.

Domestication refers to eliminate the foreignness of original works, and use the familiar concepts in target language to replace the strangeness in source language, then to reach the cultural equivalence. Conversion refers to change the way of expression because of great differences in grammar and expression way between Chinese and English. Through shifting of perspective, conversion makes translation fluent and native. Hence, it is easy for readers to understand. Amplification, there is no denying that translator can’t convey the meaning of text only depending on the original works, there are three situations need amplification, for grammar, meaning and rhetoric. Through amplification, translators can convey the meaning and style of original text as well as conform to the expression way of target language. Omission refers to delete some words which are necessary in original works but useless in translation from perspectives of grammar and rhetorical. Omission not only makes text brief but easy to understand. Annotation, it is admitted that some cultural words have no equivalent words in Target Language, but translators have to convey the meaning of works. By annotation, translators can add background information, the original of vocabulary or give a brief explanation of phrase, thus readers can have a better understanding of text. Transliteration refers to words in one alphabet represented in another alphabet, and it is a basic way to absorb foreign language and rich another language. Transliteration has great advantages, such as keep the exotic colors and styles of source language, enriches the target language, moreover, it can make the words themselves more concise and brief.

Through these methods and examples, we can have a better understanding of translation, and every method also has close relationship with rewriting, translators use all kinds of methods to translate phrases and sentence as native as possible.

Conclusion

There is no denying that faithfulness is the foundation in every kind of translation, and faithfulness to source text still masters translation, only taking faithfulness as the first and foremost step of translation, can translator have a good start in translation. And with the development of translation, there are different kinds of understanding about faithfulness, and the definition about faithfulness is changing and becoming mature, not just pursuing complete faithfulness, but considering the practical function and style of original works. Just as Cicero said if I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth. Obviously, from the perspective of function, sense for sense translation is better than word for word translation.

Admittedly, there are great differences in culture, the way of thinking, history and language among different nations. Andre Lefevere proposed that refraction tries to carry a work of literature over from one system into another. In this process, the translator, as a negotiator between two different parts, is trying hard to convey the meaning of each other faithfully and make a satisfying negotiation as much as possible. For reaching this satisfying negotiation, it is inevitable and reasonable to making some rewriting, translators have to fully understand original works while adapting works more acceptable for target readers through rewriting and re-creation.

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