On Obeying Ethical Principles in Literary Translation from the Perspective of Translation Practice in China

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Keywords: Ethical Principles, Principles of Loyalty, Literary Translation.

Abstract. In the new historical period of China, the translation activities showed some new characteristics, which the academia of translation has paid sufficient attention to. Having a deep perception of the essential features of translation, establishing a historical view of translation and clarifying the value of translation are of the important guiding significance for translators to grasp translation activities correctly. One important issue on translation research in China is whether the ethical principles of translation needs to be obeyed in literary translation and how to obey the principles of loyalty in literary translation activities in China.

Introduction

Having a deep perception of the essential features of translation, establishing a historical view of translation and clarifying the value of translation are of the important guiding significance for translators to grasp translation activities correctly [1]. In 2012, Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize for Literature, which aroused the public attention on the translation development in China and much discussion on translation in China’s academia. The most important discussion is around the translation methods, which is focused on whether the "loyalty" principle of translation should be adhered to strictly. Some commentators hold the viewpoint that there is "censorship" and "adjustment" in Ge Haowen's translation of Mo Yan's works, which is a combination of "translation with modification". And this method of translation is a miraculous medicine to effectively help Chinese literature to go global successfully. Some commentators have made it clear that the method of translation that is loyal to the original work is out of date and that the "loyalty" principle of translation is outdated on the basis of this viewpoint.

Ethical Principles

The development of the times will certainly call for a new understanding of the nature, function and purpose of translation. However, further discussion on the principle of "loyalty" in translation is outdated or impracticable is necessary because it is related to not only the issue of translation methods, but also the perception of the value and the nature of translation and the issue of translation ethics. Herein it is necessary to further study whether Ge Haowen's translation is a “combination of translation with revision”. Many scholar hold the viewpoint: "The issue of translation methods in the process of translation and dissemination of literature abroad is, by its very nature, refracted from the perspective of how to treat the heterogeneity of language and culture and how to treat the ethics of otherness cultures in intercultural communication from the perspective of the translation ethics.[2]" In 1984, Berman proposed the concept of "translation ethics" and called for the study on ethics of translation. Since then, many translation scholars have explored and thought about this issue. In fact, "loyalty" is an ethical concept. The meaning of "faith" is also included in this category. Therefore, to clarify the confusion caused by "loyal" translation is, to some extent, to answer the question "Should ethical principles be obeyed strictly in translation activities?" The main points of view on this issue from Chinese scholars and translators are as follows.
On the one hand, obeying ethical principles strictly is the essential requirement of translation. Translation is a cross-cultural communicative activity by means of symbolic transformation and meaning regeneration as a task [3]. The goal of translation is to break cultural isolation and promote mutual understanding and integration between different cultures, which is a two-way exchange between self and otherness. In this sense, many important issues in translation activities are related with the ethnics. Among them, the ethical perception of "difference" is of particular importance nowadays. The "difference" in translation refers to both the variance and the meaning of the otherness and the foreign lands, which involves many aspects such as language, culture and thinking. The origin of translation lies in a word of "difference" and there is no need to do translation without "difference". The translation activity is generated by the "difference" between different languages, but it is not merely a linguistic activity, but involves many elements such as language, culture, society, history, ideology and so on. Therefore, in addition to the differences between languages, there are deeper "differences" in the related thinking and culture. The essence of translation is to seek common ground in different places and to keep differences in the same place.

**Literary Translation and Principles of Loyalty**

Literary translation needs to deal with the relationship between similarities and differences. Translation is not a simple linguistic code conversion, nor is it a mere transmission of information. It is a kind of experience open to the world. Therefore, the test of difference is reflected by the fact that conveying the "difference" and to some extent retain the original heterogeneity while transcending the "difference". Translation promotes cultural openness and the openness of thinking through the language conversion and the essence of translation lies in is the establishment some kind of connection between self and otherness [4]. By means of translation, the ego can return through otherness back to self to watch and enrich self. To achieve the goal of opening up cultures and seeking common ground while retaining differences, it is crucial to obey the loyalty ethics strictly. Berman believes that loyalty is the objective and intrinsic need of translation. The ethics of translation lies in how to define "loyalty". And loyalty a certain attitude towards "self", "otherness", "the world", "experience" and "text" [5]. "A certain attitude" called by Berman is actually a kind of "respect", which is specifically the respect for the original works and the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity in the original works. This is, in our opinion, the core content of Berman's translation ethics and the ethical goal of his translation. How to treat the relationship between "difference" and "similarities" and how to coordinate the relationship between "self" and "otherness" is the key to understand the ethics of translation and the issue on Chinese literature translation that we should pay attention to.

On the other hand, obeying the ethical principles is a necessary condition for ideological and cultural inheritance. In terms of translation activities, language conversion is only a means, however, cultural heritage and communication is the basis of translation. Because of differences in language and culture, it is very necessary to make some alternatives in the process of translation. However, sticking to "loyalty" is not only the requirement of translation ethics, but also the necessary condition for inheritance and dissemination of thoughts and culture. In the process of translation, the translator will inevitably encounter all the difficulties and obstacles caused by the difference, which include the differences of the world, the thinking difference, language differences, cultural differences, and so on. They not only constitute the necessity of translation basically but also bring up the practical obstacles and difficulties to translation. The first problem to be solved in translation work is how to treat different cultures. Which is the right way, to bias towards one, at the expense of sacrificing the benefits of other one or to strive to promote communication and exchange with an equal attitude? This is a question that needs serious consideration. From the perspective of the history of Chinese and Western translation, ignoring, despising or looking up at exotic cultures are all contrary to the nature of translation and the fundamental goal of promoting equal exchange among different cultures through translation, which is also contrary to the ethics of translation.
Conclusion

If literary translation is a cross-cultural exchange activity, then the core issue of culture is ethical morality, including moral beliefs, ethical principles and moral emotions. “Ethics, in essence, means how people become human beings and a way of treating people with personality by self-respecting and respecting others” [6]. Different cultural attitudes and values orientation determine different modes of translation, reception and dissemination. In Chinese literary translation activities, translators are not only engaged in the transformation between the two languages, but achieving a real two-way exchange on the basis of recognition of differences and respect for differences. Such exchanges are not only the communication between different cultures, but also the equal and long-term dialogue and integration between different cultures. Although the translation method of "Translating with revision" and its value orientation have their rationality in a specific space-time environment, they undoubtedly have their inherent risks that Chinese scholars and translators need to pay attention to. Making only superficial changes through translation, or revising freely, not only harms the subjectivity of Chinese literature, but also runs counter to the view on the diversity of cultural ecology, which runs counter to the goal of two-way exchange through translation. If, to a certain extent, translation becomes an accomplice of cultural misreading or cultural filtering, it completely departs from the fundamental goal of translation under the essence of its intercultural communication. Therefore, examining the position and attitude of translation on otherness and the way of understanding and dealing with "otherness" in the test of "difference" are the requirements of translation ethics as well as the preservation of the necessity of translation and the value of translation.

References