How to Recognize the Value of Translation from the Perspective of Current Translation Development in China

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Abstract. In the new historical period, the translation activities showed some new characteristics that the academia of translation has paid sufficient attention to. Aiming at the puzzles and problems in the current research on translation, this article starts from the aspects of the nature of translation, that is, the value of translation to propose that translation scholars and translators should have mastered essential features of translation and establish the view of translation values, and respond to the major practical problems at the same time.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the new century, the issue of the value of translation has aroused the attention of the academia of translation. One of the main reasons for contemplating the value of translation is that the function of translation especially in China is often considered at the practical level both in academia and in society. There is no change occurring to such a situation up to now. Herein there are two particularly noteworthy things in such a situation. First, with the rise of the language service industry, translation is positioned into the category of language services, which is apt to attribute the function of translation to its instrumentalism. Second, during the process of Chinese culture going global, "the academia of China’s translation and culture has showed the inclination to utilitarianism more or less to seek quick success and instant profits from the translation and dissertation of Chinese literature" [1].

Both of these things like instrumentalism and utilitarianism should arouse the vigilance of the academia of translation as the former situates the role of translation at a practical level on account of its instrumental nature, which inevitably leads to the consequence of underestimating translation and the latter only evaluates the immediate benefits of translation as a project from a market perspective without measuring the long-term historical impact of translation as a career that promotes the exchange and development of human civilization from the perspective of spiritual construction to seek quick success and instant profits, which will inevitably lead to translation anxiety and market determinism on account of lacking the understanding of translation complexity. What deserves more of our attention is that the academia of translation in China lacks the guidance of the value of translation and overemphasizes the practical functions of translation activities. In the discussion of translation and dissemination of Chinese literature, the so-called practical effect has been emphasized as the criterion and multilevel research on the process of translation and a deep understanding of the value of translation have been neglected.

As one of the oldest activities in human society, translation has played a powerful role in promoting cultural exchanges and social development in our world. Professor Ji Xianlin once delivered an important lecture on this issue and his statement is that: "The reason why Chinese culture can keep its transition fluently lies in the existence of translation. Both the translation of western knowledge committed by Liang Qichao and Yan Fu, or Lin Shu's translation of European and American novels have inspired and educated generations of young people through the introduction of new ideas, new spirits and new cultures, which has enlightened the young people by their translation works" [2].

In the new times, translation has played an important role in the strategy of building a cultural power. Translation is closely associated with the development of society and plays a pioneering role.
in emancipating the mind, reforming and opening up and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. And translation plays an important role in introducing Chinese culture to the world, enhancing the soft power of Chinese culture and enhancing China's image internationally in the new times.

From the perspective of my point of view, on the one hand, the establishment of the value of translation should be based on the theoretical exploration and historical contemplation on the "application" of translation; on the other hand, the establishment of the value of translation should make the right to judge the right and wrong on the value of the “application” of translation. A translation critic scholar Liu Yunhong proposed in an interview that "the translators should recognize the richness and complexity of translation activities on the basis of the essential features and essential attributes of translation, and grasp the essence of translation and truly understand the constructive power of translation from the signal translatability and creativity of translation” [3].

"Simultaneously we should be wary of the utilitarianism tendencies of translation views and translation behaviors to examine the richness, complexity and creativity of translation activities from the perspectives of historical development and multicultural equal communication from the horizons of history and openness and to further understand and highlight the various values of translation activities." [4]. On account of the "social", "cultural", "symbolic", "creative", "historic" and other essential characteristics, the translation activity has the corresponding social value, cultural value, linguistic value, creative value and historical value, which is stated in detail in Xu Jun’s translation theory.

Social Value of Translation

First of all, the social value of translation is mainly reflected by the powerful driving force of translation activities in social communication and development. Translation is generated by the need of human communication. While overcoming linguistic differences that impede communication, translation opens channels to communication, helping human society move from mutual blocking to mutual interaction and from the narrow-mindedness to the open-mindedness. What translation has brought to the human society, contains both the spiritual light and the material fruits. By means of translation, human societies constantly exchange the civilized achievements that they have created with each other to promote the development between each other. It ought to be said that there would be no developments in today’s human society without the translation activities mentioned above which are aimed at communicating human minds as a cross-cultural communicative activity. In addition, the social value of translation also manifests itself in the power of translation to shape a national spirit. Through the introduction of advanced science and technology in other countries, translation can bring in knowledge, enlighten the common people, shape the national spirit and the way people think, and translation will even have a direct impact on major political movements and changes in society in special times.

Cultural Value of Translation

Translation has its own cultural value. Translation is not only a linguistic transformation activity, but also a cross-cultural exchange activity that plays an important and unique role in the development process of world civilization. The translation activities embody the obstacles and conflicts that may arise in cross-cultural exchanges and can also provide references for the smooth implementation of other forms of cross-cultural exchanges with their experiences in the field. It is no exaggeration that the history of translation is a history of cultural exchanges. The culture of a nation is the result of continuous creation and accumulation. In a certain sense, translation is to continuously promote the accumulation and innovation of culture, meanwhile, it is also an expansion of the national culture in space and an enrichment in connotation.
Linguistic Value of Translation

The linguistic value of translation is reflected on the translatability of symbols. In a certain sense, there must be the contact between the idiomatic language and the target language in a translation activity. However, the transformation of the two linguistic symbols and the confrontation between the two languages may create a "third language", and the conversion from the idiomatic language to the target language will enrich and expand the latter from the perspectives of syntax, vocabulary, etc. New words also mean new ideas and the changes in languages will also affect the ideological concepts and the ways of thinking, which is what Lu Xun advocates to enrich the Chinese language and to transform the way the national people think through translation. The value of translation is notably reflected in the "vernacular movement", "new literary movement" and "new cultural movement" of the May 4 Movement in China.

Creative Value of Translation

Fourthly, the creative value of translation highlights the spirit of translation; that is, daring to break through the self-closeness and enriching its own creative and innovative spirit in the exchange, collision and integration with the different things. This spirit of translation constitutes the source of the creative function of translation. The new world opened up by translators plays an indirect but extensive role in people’s making new creations. In terms of literature creation, many contemporary writers will mention their own ideas derived from the western translation literature and the creativeness of translation and the contribution of translation to their own creation when talking about their own writing experiences.

Historical Value of Translation

Finally, translation has a great historical value. We must fully understand the actual contribution made by translation in the development of human history. Looking at the history of the development of human civilization, we will find that every major progress and development in history can not be achieved without the translation, accompanied by the climax of the translation. For example, translation tends to work as a pioneer for the cultural rejuvenation such as the ancient Greek and Roman cultures.

Conclusion

The value of translation is also mentioned in an article of Xu Jun entitled "Several Issues Concerning the Recognition of Translation Achievement in Foreign Language Disciplines" [5] in the Chinese Translators Journal, 2017. In general, the social, cultural, linguistic, creative and historical values of translation activities highlight the essential attributes of translation in communication, transmission, creation and development, and it is exactly, in a sense, the embodiment of the translation spirit.

In our times, new features have emerged in translation activities, new changes have taken place in translation activities, and society has begun to pay special attention to the translation and dissemination of Chinese culture and thoughts. This has provided unprecedented opportunities for our translation studies and endowed translation with a more significant mission and responsibility. The louder voices will be uttered by us from our own perspectives and positions through our efforts, which will explore translation mechanisms and the mechanism of cross-cultural exchange activities based on them, and make suggestions to guide cultural exchanges toward a more rational and healthier direction, striving to reduce misreadings and misunderstandings, resolve conflicts and lead to equal dialogues and win-win outcomes for exchanges.
References


