The Translation of "Silver Cactus" under Principle of Relevance Theory

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ABSTRACT. *This thesis is an analysis of translation practice of "Silver Cactus". The source text are two short stories focusing on women in marriage, life, and their confusion about real life from "Silver Cactus", a collection of Long Yingtai's novels. This Taiwanese writer describes not only the experiences and fates of different characters in her novels, but also a true portrayal of her own life experiences. Through these stories, she also provides people in real life with the mentality of how to view things correctly when they are confused by marriage, frustration, difficulties and pressure. In view of the generality of the novel translation and the characteristics of "Silver cactus", and based on the characteristics of the source language and the cultural background, the author tries to use relevance translation theory to guide the translation practice. In particular, ostensive-inferential process, optimal relevance principle and ternary communication were the basic elements of relevance translation theory. Relevance theory not only explains the reasoning process of language cognition, but also helps the cognitive process of translation practice.*

KEYWORDS: *Relevance translation theory; Ostensive-inferential process; Optimal relevance principle; Ternary communication*

1. Introduction

"Silver cactus" is the only collection of novels written by long Yingtai, a Taiwanese writer, published by Guangxi normal University Press in 2016. The book contains seven novel stories written by the author, the contents of which are different from those written by Long Yingtai. She do not write affection, do not write culture, do not write politics in this book, and she only write seven exciting stories here, including distorted love, unhappy marriage, complicated fate and desperation between different women and so on. She has always been realistic with her works, but this time she writes imaginary stories with exquisite details. Her writings are sharply receded. The rest is the capture of human sensitivity and description of details. The story in this novel has a clever plot layout. Each story is about the trap of life and the price of survival, and about the fragility between reality and virtuality. Every story is an attempt and exploration of the form of the novel. Although it seems to be independent, we will find that the link between the story and the text is hidden or explicit, and the maze of the story is the city of illusion of life.

In this complicated world and the concept of people's economic interests is supreme, the author has a new understanding of life through her stories, and reflects the people's attitude to life nowadays, the stories giving us a lot of inspiration. This is why I have used some of the book's stories as translation practice materials. In this practical material, the first and second episodes of the book *"Silver Cactus"* were selected as translation materials. The related theory of pragmatics was used in the translation and I also analyzed translation method of the text.

2. Introduction of Relevance Translation Theory

In his book *"Translation and Relevance-Cognitive and Context"*, Gutt, a student of *Sperber & Wilson* in the 1990s, put forward the theory of relevance translation. He believes that translation is also a cognitive-reasoning process of language communication. The object of translation research is the translator's brain information (Gutt, 1991:30). During the operational process of the processing mechanism, the translator acts as the hub and subject of translation, the intention of the original author, the original text, and the meaning of the original text. The cognitive context and reading expectations of the target readers infer, hypothesize and search for relevance so as to create the target text for the purpose of clearly introducing the author's intention to the target reader. Therefore, the process of translation is to find the optimal relevance between the original text, the translator and the target reader.

In this process, the translator's subjectivity is reflected in thinking, reasoning, putting forward hypotheses and trying to find relevance. On the one hand, the translator should fully mobilize and use his cognitive ability,

thoroughly integrate into the context of the original, understand the original text, and capture the profound meaning that the author of the original text wants to express; On the other hand, in order to realize the translator's own aesthetic point of view and become the re-creator of literary works, the translator should understand the cognitive context of the target readers and look forward to reading.

3. Elements of Relevance Translation Theory

3.1 Ostensive-Inferential Process

If we look at translation from a linguistic point of view, translation is also a process of reasoning. The object of translation study is human brain mechanism. It refers that the translator thinks about the author's intention, puts forward the hypothesis of similarity context, and finds out the process of the relevance between the author's intention and the target reader. The ostensive-inferential process in translation involves two communicators and two hearers. The first ostensive-inferential process is the translator's understanding of the source, well the communicator is the original author and the translator is listener (Sperber D,Wilson D, 1995:15). The author conveys his intention to the translator by means of express or implied meaning in his works.

According to his cognitive context, the translator looks for the correlation with the original context hypothesis and deduces the original author's hypothesis and intention. The translator seeks the relevance of the original context hypothesis according to his cognitive context, and makes an inference on the author's intention.

In the second ostensive-inferential process, the translator becomes the communicator and the listener is the target reader. In this process, according to his own understanding of the original author's intention and the estimation of the cognitive context of the target reader, the translator gives the intended information to the target reader, while the target reader received and understood his intended information. In this way, the translation process was achieved.

3.2 Optimal Relevance Principle

Translation is actually a process in which the translator uses various means and strategies to find the best relevance between the cognitive context of the source language and the cognitive context of the target language and to obtain the best contextual effect. The communication cues at various levels, such as language emotion and color, make contextual assumptions so that their own thinking is related to the cognitive environment of the original author and the readers of the target text (Cao Xiying, 2007: 86). To find the best relevance, we must first ensure that the content of the target text is similar or identical to the original text, which is also the principle of "trust" in translation, that is, the translation should be faithful to the original text.

3.3 Ternary Communication in Translation

According to the theory of relevance translation, translation is no longer the traditional dualistic relationship between the original text and the target text, the original author and the target reader. It is a new ternary communication between the original author, the translator and the target reader (Yuan Jianjun, Liang Daohua, 2009:56). The translator, as the link between the author of the original and the reader of the target, assumes the dual identity of the communicative receptor in the first stage of translation and the subject of communication in the second stage. The translator should not only pay attention to the author's writing intention and situational hypothesis, but also take full account of the cognitive and reasoning abilities of the target readers, and combine the two perfectly in order to complete a good translation work. The translator should know the context culture of the original text and the context culture of the readers of the target text, make a good bridge and link, and form the interaction among the three, so as to achieve the purpose of translation.

4. The Application of the Relevance Theory in Translation of "Silver Cactus"

4.1 Application of Cognitive Context

In the translation of *Silver cactus*, the translator understands the cognitive context of the text: the character travels alone in the African desert, she struggles with the harsh environment and she also feels confused and lonely when she is lost. Therefore, there are many descriptions here reflecting the psychological activities of the

character. The translator's premise is to assume that she is in the African desert driving alone. The translator also tries to imagine her loneliness and confusion when she encounters difficulties in the desert.

For example, we can see the following source text and the target text.

Source Text:我离开了电线杆.

织鸟给我的安全感,我清楚地知道,是虚幻的.在那下面等着,无异于坐以待毙.我必须自寻生路.我越来越紧张,全身的神经末端都在一触即发的充血状态.夜里听见土狼的笑声,阴恻恻充满非人的恐怖.我在睡袋里觉得手脚冰凉.一点点风吹草动,或者只是蜥蜴爬掠过我的车顶,都使我歇斯底里想失声狂喊.

Translation: I left the telephone pole.

Weavers gave me a sense of security, but I clearly know that it was illusory. Waiting under them is equal to sit still. I had to find my own way. I became more and more nervous and the teleneuron of my body were trapped into the state of congestion which was on the verge of breaking out. I heard the coyote's laughter in the night, which was full of extreme terror. I felt cold in my sleeping bag. I was so sensitive that even a slight voice or a lizard sliding over the top of the car can make me break out and shout out loudly.

The translation of the above text reflects the context and mentality of the character in the story, and the translator also empathizes with the integration of herself into such a context. Context is a process of psychological construction. In order to make the activity of translation successful, the key question is how the target readers get these realistic assumptions from their own cognitive context. The translator reasoned that she was traveling alone in the African desert, in a lonely, harsh natural environment and lost herself, which was a confused psychological situation. The translator reflects this context to the reader through the translation. It is easy for readers to reasoning and imagining of Africa's harsh natural environment and they may reason the confusion they encounter in real life too.

4.2 Application of Optimal Relevance

The basic argument of relevance translation theory is optimal relevance. Relevance is a relative concept, and its strength depends on two factors: processing effort and contextual effects. There is a potential context in each person's brain, in which a lot of information is stored. But in a particular situation, not all information can be pulled out of the brain with the same processing effort.

For example, when we read the text depicting Suzhen's death, the sad information in his brain about funeral is easy to pull out, but information about weddings or birthday parties is not easy to pull out.

Optimal relevance is the principle of translation studies and it is also the target of translator. It is the translator's duty to try to keep the author's intentions in line with the target readers' expectations. So, the translator should do double inference during the task. For example: The clerk of a shop said, "We are about to close" that means it's time for the customer to leave. But if the clerk says this to his friend, his intention is to let him wait so they can go home together. So, this is the translator's responsibility to reason in different contexts and make accurate translation.

5. Conclusion

This translation practice is a literary translation practice of Long Yingtai, a female writer in Taiwan. The translator has gained some inspiration in the process of reading the novel and translating them into English. The optimal relevance of translation depends on the understanding of the original text and the efforts of reasoning. Only when the author's intention agrees with the target readers' expectations can the translation achieve the best results. For example, the translator deduces that the context of the original text is about a person's psychological activities. Through her own understanding and reasoning, the translator chooses the idioms and sentences which conform to the habits of English expression, and gives the best translation version to the reader. The communicative relationship among the author, the translator and the readers of the target text was done.

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