A Study of the Effects of Equivalence Theory and Equivalent Effect on Translators' Choices
----With an Illustration of Chinese Translation of Charlotte's Web

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ABSTRACT. *The notion of equivalence is undoubtedly one of the most problematic and controversial areas in the field of translation theory. Nida's equivalence theory, including formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence, is the most cited one in the field of translation. The establishment of this theory greatly promotes the development of translation. This essay will first review theories of equivalence studied by some of the most innovative theorists in this field, such as Jakobson, Nida and Taber, Newmark, Coller, Baker and so on. These theorists have studied equivalence in relation to the translation process with different approaches, and have provided fruitful ideas on this topic. Based on the theoretical support, the author suggests studying the effects on translators' choices under the equivalence theory and equivalent effect from three aspects. In the next section, after a brief introduction of the contents and features of Charlotte's Web as children's literature, an analysis of the Chinese version of Charlotte's Web is illustrated to describe factors involved in translators' decision-making processes based on equivalence theories and equivalent effect.*

KEY WORDS: *Equivalence Theory, Chinese Translation, Charlotte's Web*

1. Translation Theory of Equivalence and Equivalent Effect

The term "Equivalence" seems will continue to cause heated debates within the field of translation studies. This term has been analyzed, evaluated and discussed from different points of view and has been approached from many different perspectives. Therefore, researchers have distinguished different types of equivalence. Roman Jacobson is regarded as one of the earliest theorists who carried out the study of equivalence in meaning. Roman Jakobson's study of equivalence added new ideas in translation theories since he introduced the concept of "equivalence in difference". Jakobson (1959) suggests three kinds of translation: Intralingual translation, Interlingual translation and Intersemiotic translation. Since

then, this concept of equivalence dominates the translation theories for several decades (Hatim & Munday, 2004).

Nida (1964) suggests two different types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself, in both form and content. It requires there should be a close similarity between the ST and the TT message. Dynamic equivalence is based on the "the principle of equivalent effect", in which "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptor and the message." (Nida, 1964, p. 159). Nida also mentions the notion of naturalness. He claims that the main aim of equivalent effect is to achieve the closest natural equivalent to the source language (Nida, 1964). Actually, the concept of naturalness is the core element in Nida's equivalence theory, which relies on the adaptation of grammar, cultural references and lexicon of the ST. Comparing form and content of texts, Nida (1964) mentions that content should come first in translation. According to Nida (1964), the dynamic translator is more faithful than the literal one, since they may consider more fully and satisfactorily the meaning of the original text.

Newmark (1981) makes a distinction between communicative and semantic translation, which is similar to Nida's dynamic equivalence. Communicative translation tends to create the same effect on the TT reader as that obtained by ST reader, resembles Nida's dynamic equivalence. Semantic translation focuses on the rendition of the contextual meaning of the ST according to the syntactic and the semantic characteristics of the TT, which is similar to Nida's formal equivalence.

Another figure of translation theorist Koller proposes five types of equivalence: denotative, connotative, pragmatic, textual, formal and aesthetic equivalence. Koller (1979) mainly studies the examination of the relation between equivalence and correspondence. Equivalence refers to the equivalent items in both the ST and the TT based on langue, while correspondence can be related to contrastive analysis, as a field of comparative linguistics based on parole.

The theory of equivalence is always to be a central issue. Theorists and scholars try hard to define it in order to enhance translation quality. In the recent research of this field, new concepts have been assigned to the notion of equivalence, including the aspects of grammatical, textual, pragmatic equivalence, and several others. In the book In Other Words, Baker (1992) examines the problems of equivalence at different levels in translation process. Baker combines the approaches of linguistic and the communicative by adopting a bottom-up method, and begins with simple words and phrases and continues with grammatical, textual and pragmatic equivalences. She distinguishes the equivalence theory into the following 4 points: equivalence can appear at word level and above word level, when translating from one language into another; grammatical equivalence, when referring to the diversity of grammars across languages; textual equivalence, when referring to the equivalence between a ST and a TT in terms of information and cohesion; pragmatic equivalence, when referring to implicatures and strategies of avoidance during the translation process.

After introducing the different stages and development of equivalence theory in

the past decades, it can be seen that there are several different definitions and understandings of the equivalence theory. Regardless of the diversities of equivalence theory, however, it is inevitable that the application of equivalence theory would make translators confronting different choices of translation types in translation process. According to Nida (1964), there are three basic factors deciding the types of translations. The first factor is "the nature of the message", which means the "messages differ in the degree to which content or form is the dominant consideration" (p. 156). The rest two factors are "the purpose of the author and, by proxy, of the translator and "the type of audience" (p. 156). From the three factors we can see all of them are relates to two items: form and content. If the form of a message in ST is of primary consideration and the purpose of author focusing on the form of ST, then the translator can choose formal equivalence in translating, otherwise, he/she can select dynamic equivalence.

However, when focusing on textual pragmatics in translation, it is found that form is not so highly rated over meaning. Translation decisions therefore have to be seen as hierarchical and iterative (Hatim & Munday, 2004). In this way, the author suggests studying the impact on translators' choices under the equivalence theory and equivalent effect from the following three aspects:

(1)Skopos or Purpose (e.g. the intention of the translation, target readers' expectations)

(2)Cognition and Knowledge (e.g. the knowledge of translators and readers)

(3)Cultural Differences

In the next section, the author will explain the effects of equivalence theory and equivalent effect on translators' decisions by analysing and comparing the different Chinese translation of *Charlotte's Web* from the three perspectives mentioned above.

2. The Analysis of the Chinese Translation of Charlotte's Web

The source texts of examples analyzed here are extracted from an award-winning children's novel---- *Charlotte's Web* written by American author E. B. White. Being (2008). The book was first published in 1952. The novel tells the story of a pig named Wilbur and his friendship with a barn spider named Charlotte. When Wilbur is in danger of being slaughtered by the farmer, Charlotte writes messages praising Wilbur (such as "Some Pig") in her web in order to persuade the farmer Wilbur is a special pig, therefore letting him live. Written in White's dry, low-key manner, *Charlotte's Web* is enjoyable to children as well as adults. The Chinese version of the book was translated by Ren, and first published in 2004. Ren is committed to Children' Literature in his whole life. Except being an excellent translator, he is also a good writer for children.

Additionally, since the text type of *Charlotte's Web* is children's literature, it is essential to point out the features of children's literature. Klingberg (1986) claims that children's literature translation is a specific kind of translation in which translators need to consider cognitive and linguistic abilities of their target

readers----children. With the development of children's literature, a shift appeared from conservative approaches to liberal ones, concentrating on readers' interaction with the translated This "methodological shift from source orientation to target orientation" (Tabbert, 2002, p. 303) Thus, when translating the children's literature, translators should consider more on the target readers' expectations and try to satisfy their demands. By comparing the different Chinese translation of *Charlotte's Web*, this section explains the influence of equivalence theory and equivalent effect on translators' decisions from the three equivalences mentioned above.

2.1 Skopos or Purpose

As the main target readers of *Charlotte's Web* are children, the purpose of the author is to attract children' attentions and arouse their interests to this book. Therefore, in order to appeal the attentions of children whose thinking-styles based on images, children' literature requires not only fresh and interesting plots, but also vivid language. If translators want to realise the original intentions of ST and achieve equivalent effects when translating this book, he/she must meet the target readers' expectations. By achieving this aim, translators should make adjustments by using onomatopoeia, reduplicated words, metaphors and other techniques to provide a more intuitive world displayed in the book to children. It is stated that adjustment is essential to cope with the wide range of purposes which translations might serve (Hatim & Munday, 2004). This can be illustrated by the following examples in *Charlotte's Web*

Example 1:

"The next day was rainy and dark. Rain fell on the roof of the barn and dripped steadily from the eaves. Rain fell in the barnyard and ran in crooked courses down into the lane where thistles and pigweed grew. Rain spattered against Mrs. Zucker man's kitchen windows and came gushing out of the downspouts." (White, 2003, p. 24)

Chinese Translation:

"第二天下雨,天色阴沉沉的.雨水落在谷仓顶上,不停地东屋檐上滴落下来;雨水落到谷仓院子里,弯弯曲曲地一道一道流进长着蓟草和藜草的小路;雨水噼噼啪啪地打在朱克曼太太的厨房窗上,咕咚咕咚地涌出水管."(Ren, 2008, p. 177)

Back Translation:

The next day was rainy, the sky looks heavily dark. Rain fell on the roof of the barn and steadily dripped from the eaves. Rain fell in the barnyard, squiggly and crookedly ran in courses down into the lane where thistles and pigweed grew. Rain spattered with sound of "PI-PI-PA-PA" against Mrs. Zucker man's kitchen windows and the water gushing out of the water pipe with the sound of "GU-DONG-GU-DONG"

This example describes a scene in raining. The bold words in Chinese translation represent the translation strategies used by translator. The translator use reduplicated

words, such as "沉沉"(heavy),"弯弯曲曲"(in twists and turns)to describe the color of sky and the form of rain flow. Besides, the translator also apply the techniques of onomatopoeia, like "噼噼啪啪"(PI-PI-PA-PA), "咕咚咕咚"(GU-DONG-GU-DONG) in order to vividly describe the image of raindrops and raise the reader's attention to the sound of rain in the aspect of hearing. Reduplicated words are not a simple repetition of words. In fact, the appropriate use of it can enhance the sense of rhythm in language and increase the young readers' understanding towards images. The use of onomatopoeia, making the language more specific and vivid, leaves an impressive feeling to the readers.

Example 2:

"Without hesitating a second, he dashed the water at Wilbur. In his excitement he missed his aim, and the water splashed all over Mr. Zuckerman and Avery. They got soaking wet." (White, 2003, p. 20)

Chinese Translation:

"他毫不迟疑地把水泼到威尔伯身上.他太激动了,没泼中猪,倒泼到朱克曼先生和艾弗里的身上.他们给淋成了落汤鸡."(Ren, 2009, p. 157)

Back Translation:

He without hesitating a second, poured the water at Wilbur. He was too excited, didn't pour the water at the pig, but splashed the water all over Mr. Zuckerman and Avery. They were poured like drenched chickens.

The use of metaphors can make the things described in the story more vivid so as to arouse the target reader's interest. In the Chinese version, the translator compared Mr. Zuckerman and Avery to the "drenched chicken" (in bold). In this way, the translation spontaneously reflected a sense of humour and closed to the children' reading habits.

From the two examples above, we can find that the translator does not confine to the original form of ST, but adjusted to the language habits of target language. Combined with the characteristics of children language, the Chinese translation not only provides a strong perception of vision, smell and feeling but also triggers their imagination as well as attracts children to continue reading this story. After making several adjustments in TT, the Chinese translation achieve "resemblance" with the original text in term of purpose, which accounts for the definition of dynamic equivalence claimed by Nida. The Chinese translation can trigger the same impact on the target audience as the original text did upon the source audience. This translation choice made by Ren clearly explains the influence of equivalence theory on translators' decisions.

2.2 Cognition and Knowledge

When translating children' literature, translators should bear in mind that children with limited vocabulary and knowledge are hard to understand the difficult

part in the book. In terms of vocabulary, translators should use common words, colour words, spoken words, etc. instead of using abstract, rare and complex vocabulary. However, English literature always tends to use a number of long sentences, complex sentences whereas in Chinese, complex and long sentences are not common used, especially in children's literature. Therefore, translators should convert difficult sentences to simple and easily understood sentences to the target reader. Otherwise, children would lose their interests in reading the story due to the tedious and boring language. This is a basic requirement to translators of children's literature.

Example 3:

"The children grabbed each other by the hand and danced off in the direction of the merry-go-round, toward the wonderful music and the wonderful adventure and the wonderful excitement, into the wonderful midway where there would be no parents to guard them and guide them, and where they could be happy and free and do as they pleased." (White, 2003, p. 112)

Chinese Translation:

"两个孩子拉着手,蹦蹦跳跳地朝着旋转木马跑去,向着美妙的音乐,惊人的冒险和奇妙的兴奋而去.他们跑进了神奇的游艺场,那里没有爸爸妈妈保护他们,指点他们,他们可以快快活活,自由自在,爱干什么就干."

Back Translation:

The two kids with hands in hands, bouncingly jumped toward the merry-go-round, toward the beautiful music, amazing adventure and fantastic excitement. They ran into the magical midway, there is no dad or mum protect them or guide them, they could be happy and free and do whatever they want.

In the ST, we can see a long and complicated sentence. The author translates this example herself in order to show the techniques clearly. Through a series of prepositions "of toward" and "into", White describes the places the two kids went then followed by a "where" attributive clause. Under this circumstance, if the author chooses a literal translation to translate this sentence through form-to-form resemblance without dividing the long sentence into several short parts, the young readers might hardly understand the meaning of the sentences and become confused or even reluctant to keep reading the book. Therefore, in order to let the target readers understand the original meaning of ST, the author makes some adjustments by dividing the whole sentence into two short sentences and re-ordering the sequences of some phrases.

2.3 Cultural Differences

In order to reproduce the messages of source language, the translator should not only consider the differences between SL and TL but also attach importance to the different cultural backgrounds of both languages. Translators must take full consideration of the cultural differences and try to present the cultural information

and content of source language in a way accorded with cultural habits of target language, so as to achieve a higher degree of equivalence.

Example 4

"And now, Fern, it's time to get ready for Sunday school. And tell Avery to get ready..." (White, 2003 p. 47)

Chinese Translation:

"'现在,弗恩,该上*主日学校*去了.叫艾弗里快准备好....'

(页下注:主日学校是星期日对儿童进行宗教教育的学校,大多设在教堂里."(Ren, 2008 p.200)

Back Translation:

"And now, Fern, it's time to go to the *Sunday school*. And tell Avery to get ready…"

(Note: Sunday school is a school provides religious education to children on Sundays, most of them locate in churches.)

In the text above, due to the cultural differences between SL and TL, most Chinese children regard "Sunday School" as a relatively new and unfamiliar phrase. They do not know much about the Christianity. In the west, however, people's daily lives are closely linked with religion, especially Christianity. Culture exists in the language, the real translation would never be a simple transfer between two different languages but a cross-culture communicative activities. According to Nida (1993), in order to achieve truly successful translation, it is more important to know two different kinds of culture than two different languages, because words can only have its specific meanings when applying them to the cultural environment. Therefore, the translator builds a bridge between Naturalising Translation and Foreignizing Translation by adding a note at the bottom of the same page, so as to help children overcome cultural barriers and understand the original meaning of source text.

3. Conclusion

With equivalence theory as the key concept in translation studies, Nida carries out two orientations in the translation of texts: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Together with other theories related to equivalence, the equivalence theory and equivalent effect have great impact on translators' decision-makings in translation process. Based on the characteristics of children' literature, the essay employs equivalence theory properly to analyze *Charlotte's Web* from three aspects: skopos or purpose, cognition and knowledge and cultural differences. From the analysis of Chinese version of the book, it can be inferred that in order to achieve higher equivalence between ST and TT, translators need to choose different types of translation and make correspondent adjustments, including using onomatopoeia and reduplicated words, adjusting sentence structure and adding notes, etc. Therefore, adjustment becomes an important strategy for achieving equivalence.

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