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A STUDY OF ZHANG GURUO'S PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

Zhang Guroo lists few systematic theories on translation; however, he has unique insight into translation. From four aspects his views will be illustrated in this paper: on faithfulness; on idiomaticness; on notes; on readers. On faithfulness, Zhang's view is that "the content is like the matter and substance while the form like the words and expression." He has been in pursuit of idiomaticness for all his life. From the perspective of translation, he advances translating idiomatic originals into idiomatic Chinese. From the perspective of humanity, he advocates the translator must be a genuine person first in order to do the genuine translation. Notes are important parts of Zhang Guroo's translation works. Notes should be done before translation and used to resolve those unsettled or puzzling problems; Notation is also research work. The more important is that what Zhang Guroo pursues goes beyond being faithful to the text. He takes much more consideration on TL readers. The ultimate aim of "faithfulness", "idiomaticness" and "notation" all serve the target readers.

Key Words: translation characteristics; Zhang Guroo; *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*;

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1. INTRODUCTION

Zhang Guroo, an eminent translator, devotes himself his life to the research and translation of English literature. With the use of idiomatic Chinese language, he evolves a style of his own. His translated works involve novels, poems, dramas, and so on. His translation of Hardy's works achieves remarkable success and is appraised as an "expert on Hardy". The characteristic of this translator, in all his translations, is that he is both faithful to the original and uses genuine and idiomatic Chinese, a feat very difficult to accomplish because there is such a distance between the two languages. Of particular interest to the Chinese readers are his translations of *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Tom Jones* and *David Copperfield* etc. With the booming emphasis of translators' studies in current translation world, it is necessary to reassess Zhang's achievement in this field. By using Even-Zohar's Polysystem theory, this paper, with special attention to his *Tess* translation, aims at studying the translation characteristics including his practices and theories against the context of the society and culture, as well as the significance of his translation on Chinese literature and translation.

Zhang Guroo lists few systematic theories on translation because he advocates: "Action speaks louder than words". No words do not mean no thoughts. Zhang actually has his own criteria on translation, and he is qualified enough to be a more acute thinker on some translation problems about which few people concern, as well as some points at issue. His opinions on translation are summarized under the following points.

2. Zhang Guroo's philosophy of Translation

2.1 On Faithfulness

Faithfulness has always been regarded as one of the most important translation criteria both at home and abroad. In China, although early in the Tang Dynasty, the learned monk Xuan Zang said that a translation should not only seek for truth, but also be intelligible to the readers, we always cite Yan Fu's three-character standard: "faithfulness", "expressiveness", "elegance" since public opinion favors his proposal so far in the world of translation. In fact, what Xuan Zang advocates "seek for truth" also means "to be faithful to the original work". In the west, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, Alexander Fraser Tytler laid three principles of translation: "A translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original works; the style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original; the translation should have all the case of original composition". (Shen Yuping, 1999 : 167) He further points out that the abovesaid principles are arranged and ranked according to the order of their significance, and that, when they are not simultaneously attainable, the first principle should be held to at the sacrifice of the third principle, then the second one. Yan Fu is undoubtedly receptive to a degree of the views of Tytler. The difference between them two is that Yan Fu attaches an equal importance to each of his three characters, while Tytler treats his three principles in different ways and in proportion to their respective degree of weight.

Faithfulness refers to loyalty to the author and readability to the readers in general. It admits of no distortion or perversion, no permits of arbitrary interpolation or expurgation. Huang Long put forth three decisive factors of "faithfulness":

- i. The first factor acting on "faithfulness" is subjective inspiration. This is an inspiration to reproduce precisely and exactly the language translated from in the language translated into without any alteration of the content in the least.
 - ii. The second factor is the correct interpretation and intensive comprehension of the original. This is a further stride beyond simple inspiration toward "faithfulness". But this is a mere prerequisite of "faithfulness", not "faithfulness" itself.
 - iii. The third factor is to render the original into its corresponding version. The pivot lies not in aspiration or understanding on the part of the translator but in the results achieved by him and in the settlement of the contradiction between the translator's thoughts and the author's.
- (Huang Long, 1998: 91)

Zhang Guroo puts forward two aspects of faithfulness: for one hand is the content like the matter and substance. For another is the form like the words and expression. These two ingredients of the original works constitute an organic body closely interrelated and inseparably interacting. They must be viewed as a single whole and can never be isolated from one another. The form is determined by the content; and in turn, the content, by the form. There is no content that can be expressed without the aid of the linguistic form. Nor can a form exist independently of the content. In translation, it is necessary to deal with these two aspects organically and dialectally. That is to say, the content of the original must be represented exactly to the life; the linguistic form of the original must be transformed without any transfiguration. For example, to translate Chinese "花钱如水" into "to spend money like water"; "不过尔" into "just so so"; "天一号" into "A No. 1" etc. The two expressions are equivalent in the following four aspects: the contents, or in another words, the meanings of the two are the same or quite similar; the form or the expressions of the words and sentences are the same; the usages of the two are the same, i.e. Both are slang expressions; and lastly, both are idiomatic. It will be perfect if the translation can attain the equivalence of the above four aspects. But usually the translator must sacrifice one or more aspects since the case is rarely happened. If sacrifice must be done, the first aspect that should be abandoned is the form, and then the usage, i.e. slang is not always translated into slang. The key matter is that the version should be meaningful and idiomatic.

2.2 On Idiomaticness

Idiomaticness, *didao* in Chinese, is one of the outstanding characteristics of Zhang's translation theory. This opinion is first advanced by Zhang himself in the preface of the first edition of translated *Tess*. But what he uses the first time is *daodi* rather than *didao*. In *Chinese word-book*, meanings of *daodi* are listed as follows: (1) genuine, true, especially refers to products; (2) to be thoughtful or considerate of others...(Xia Zhengnong, 2002: 301, my translation) In this way, *daodi* describes matters on the one hand, and people on the other. But little by little, *daodi* is replaced by *didao* in Chinese and in the latter claims of Zhang's, he also adopts *didao*. In 1980, he published an article named "idiomatic source language and idiomatic target language", in which he mentioned two principle of translation: "Avoid mechanical word-for-word translation; idiomatic source language must be reproduced by idiomatic target language". The meaning of idiomaticness (*didao*) also possesses at least two meanings: genuine or standard, i.e. in accordance with the particular nature or structure of a language, dialect, etc. Specifically, if the language is formal in the source text, so does in the target text; on the other hand, if the source language is dialectal, so should be the target language. The last two points in the above four aspects of equivalence are in fact inclined to this quality. In western world, idiomatic translation is also discussed. It refers to a translation strategy with the aim for a TT that reads as naturally as possible. The approach is similar to that of dynamic equivalence, in that it stresses the importance of reproducing the original's impact on the target audience. An idiomatic translation is thus defined as one "which has the same meaning as the source language but is expressed in the natural form of the receptor language", and one in which "the meaning, not the form, is retained". (Mark Shuttleworth, 1997: 72-73)

Professor Sun Yingchun explains "idiomaticness" after a deep study of Zhang Guroo: (1) With reference to the source text, it implies the harmony between the content and the form; the naturalness of the language in expression and the unique artistic features in style. (2) With reference to the target text, it requires the agreement between the content and the form when reproducing that of the original without any destroying of that harmony in translating process. At the same time, the target language, just like the source language, should be natural in expression and artistic in style. (3) With reference to the relationship between the source and the target text, the highest state to which translation can attain is "faithful" not only to the reproduction of the content, the fluency of the expression but also to the uniqueness of the artistic style. If there is any contradiction among these several "faithfulnesses", the minor one should be abandoned so as to save the major one. E.g. comparing with the content's, the faithfulness of the form is the secondary to preserve. Accordingly, "idiomatic translation" is summarized as follows: (1) Idiomatic translation is dialectical. On the one hand, it should be faithful to the original meaning, and on the other, the version should comply with target language norms. (2) "Naturalness" is the most important characteristic of idiomatic translation. Too much foreignization is not allowed in order to avoid being obscure or farfetched of the version. (3) Idiomatic translation aims at ensuring the effect of translation with considerations of both meaning and artistic style. ...(Sun Yingchun, 2004: 59, my translation)

Zhang Guroo is in pursuit of this criterion for all his life. In translation practice, He always studies the original text thoroughly and carefully, trying to grasp the inbuilt style of it and to maintain this style in the target text without any losing of foreignizing features. A typical example is that Shandong dialects are used in *Tess* translation to represent the Wessex dialects in the original work. This idiomatic translation ensures not only the naturalness of language but also the effect of the artistic style. In a certain way, Zhang Guroo's "idiomaticness" refers to the similarity of style between the source and the target language. In addition, Zhang's "idiomaticness" also possesses a kind of human flavor. He says: "to do the genuine translation, the translator must firstly be a genuine person." This also justifies the explanation of the word "*daodi*": to be thoughtful or considerate of others. If it is interpreted from the perspective of a translator, it may be viewed as to be responsible for the original author and the target readers. For the former, the translator should understand comprehensively the meaning of the author as well as the original text. For the latter, the translator should guarantee the quality of the version and intelligibility for readers.

2.3 On Notes

Notes in translated works are easily to be overlooked because they seem to be trifling and beneath notice, but they are important parts of Zhang Guroo's translated works. His views on notation are classified into several points as follows:

- (i). Notes should be done before translation and be used to address those unsettled or puzzling problems. Annotation is not to copy simply from dictionaries. Of course, translation still can do without notes, but that should be free from a responsible translator. This point reflects Zhang's rigorous scientific attitude toward notes, or in another word, toward translation. His great efforts on notation attract our attention to this problem.
- (ii). Annotation is also research work. For those popular novels which vanish as soon as they appear, it may be unnecessary to give notes. But some books which are able to withstand the test of time and have been affirmed their own inbuilt values. If translation does well enough to be viewed as a classical work that is worthy of being studied by later scholars, notes in this kind of version become naturally research work. Zhang lists several examples to illustrate this point. We just take one from chapter 40 in *Tess* as an example. There is a dialogue between Miss Mercy Chant and Angle Clare:

“Why—you wicked man, a cloister implies a monk; and a monk Roman Catholicism!”

“And Roman Catholicism sin, and sin damnation. Thou art in a parlous state, Angle Clare!”

(Thomas Hardy, 1994: 260)

Zhang Guroo gives a note here: from line 40 to line 46 in scene II, act III of *As You Like It* by Shakespeare, there is a paragraph: “Why, if thou never wast at court, thou never sawest good manners; if thou never sawest good manners, then thy manners must be wicked; and wickedness is sin, and sin is damnation. Thou art in a parlous state, shepherd.” (See William Shakespeare)

We can see that what Angel Clare says is an imitation of Shakespeare's play to make fun of him. This example can be multiplied indefinitely from which we can see that “the translator should read what the author reads, and know what the author knows. Otherwise, translation is just like drawing a tiger with a cat as a model. And other examples prove that the translator should be affected by the author's thoughts or feelings as if he has been experienced them him-/herself. Roman poet Horace once said: As human faces laugh with those who are laughing, so they weep with those who are weeping, so does a translator. Surely weeping and laughing here go beyond facial expression.” (Zhang Guroo, see Wang Shoulan, 1989: 455-456, my translation)

- (iii). As to readers' attitudes toward notes, views vary dramatically. Some editors or publishers like few notes for printing convenience. But it is no doubt that some readers who are interested in getting a deep comprehension of the works, especially those researchers, give much more concerns of notes.

In translation practice, Zhang Guroo adopts literal translation with notes when meeting classical allusions, jargons, puns, customs, and quotations etc. This way maintains the style of the original work on the one hand, and helps target readers understand the source text. It is estimated by Sun Yingchun that there are altogether 452 notes on various subjects in the translation of *The Return of the Native*(1958/1998); 436 in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*(1957/1991); 403 in *Jude the Obscure*(1958/1995); 640 in *David-Copperfield* (1989)and 1356 in *The History of Tom Jones*(1993/1995). More than 3200 notes in these five translated works prove Zhang's great efforts. He is deserved to be what western literary world calls “experts on Hardy”. His notes which are numerous in quantity and high in quality, varies from geography, history, character, religion, science, law, to fable, custom, art, critic, and so on. These notes reflect his mastering of the original works as well as of the author's thoughts. In the same time, these notes are particularly helpful for target readers to understand the author and his works comprehensively, especially for those who are studying on English literature, even on Hardy. Moreover, these notes also contribute to the transmission of foreign culture to China.

2.4 On Readers

Traditionally, translators focus their attention on the correspondence in lexicon and grammar between the source and the target languages. That's why “to be faithful”, especially to be faithful to the original text is so much stressed in the translation world. But the target audience for whom a translation is

made almost always constitutes a major factor in determining translation procedures and the level of language to be employed, just like what Eugene Nida says:

Judging the validity of a translation cannot stop with a comparison of corresponding lexical meanings, grammatical classes, and rhetorical devices. What is important is the extent to which receptors correctly understand and appreciate the translated text. Accordingly, it is essential that functional equivalence be stated primarily in terms of a comparison of the way in which the original receptors understood and appreciated the text and the way in which receptors of the translated text understand and appreciate the translated text. (Nida, 1993: 116)

What Zhang Guroo pursues goes beyond being faithful to the text. The elements of human are also in his consideration. In fact, "faithfulness" and "idiomaticness" stressed by Zhang are not only on account of his scientific rigorous approach and his responsibility to the author. They all serve the target readers.

His insistence on idiomatic translation in 1930s, which goes opposite to the current fashion of word-for-word translation, is just taking readers' response into consideration. He holds the opinion that "Translated works are mainly read by those who do not understand the source language, so the response of the target language readers should be similar to that of the source language readers." This idea is quite similar to that of "dynamic equivalence" or "functional equivalence" put forward by Eugene Nida in 1980s. A minimal, realistic definition of functional equivalence can be stated as "The readers of a translated text should be able to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive of how the original readers of the text must have understood and appreciated it." A maximal, ideal definition can be stated as "The readers of a translated text should be able to comprehend it in essentially the same manner as the original readers did." (Nida, 1993: 118) To attain this point, He must understand thoroughly the designative and associative meanings of the text to be translated. This involves not only knowing the meanings of the words and syntactic relations, but also being sensitive to all the nuances of the stylistic devices. So he first should comprehend in a whole the form, the content, the style and even the spirit of the source text and then translate it in an equivalent target language to the reader. His method of literal translation with notes is a good way to help the reader to understand the foreign language and culture. His idiomatic translation does not absolutely domesticate all foreign language or culture. On the contrary, many new words or cultural information are introduced into Chinese and to be learned by Chinese readers, and finally get alive in the native soil.

3. Conclusion

There are inbuilt agreements between Zhang's translation practice and views. Therefore, we cannot judge his translation, especially those typical characteristics, in an isolated way. He puts his own views on translation into practice and sums up his experience to verify his theories. Therefore, when his translation skills are discussed by drawing support of any other current theories, his own standpoint should not be ignored. The reason why Zhang Guroo adopts Shandong dialects to translate Wessex language, and employs a large number of four-character phrases is due to his advocating of "idiomaticness". What's more, this adoption and employment are quite suitable to transmit the flavor of the original text, and easy to accept for TL readers. As for his large numbers of notes in his translated works, it is no wonder of great values no matter from what perspectives you take of academic research, cultural transmission or helping TL readers to better understand the source text. Although Zhang does not verbalize in detail his theory on translation, his teaching and practice are greatly influential. His translation forms a school with its own features, enriches translation methods and widens the horizon of TL readers and translation researchers.

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