Extra-linguistic Context and Metaphor Translation

CONTEXTE EXTRA-LINGUISTIQUE ET TRADUCTION DE MÉ TAPHORE

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Abstract: Besides the linguistic context, translators often have to resort to the context in a broader sense, namely, the extra-linguistic context, including the situational context and the cultural context. When it comes to metaphor translation, this paper will mainly discuss the extra-linguistic context. After talking about the importance of the extra-linguistic context in metaphor translation, this paper elaborates on how situational context and cultural context decide the approach to metaphor translation.
Key words: extra-linguistic context, metaphor translation, approaches to translation

Résumé: En plus du contexte linguistique , les traducteurs recourent souvent au contexte dans un sens plus large , soit le contexte extra-linguistique qui comprend le contexte de situation et celui de culture . Ce texte cherche surtout à découvrir la relation entre le contexte extra-linguistique et la traduction de métaphore . Après , ce texte expose de façon détaillée les rôles cruciaux que jouent le contexte de situation et celui de culture sur les approches de traduction de métaphore .
Mots-clés: contexte extra-linguistique, traduction de métaphore, approche de traduction

1. CONTEXT

Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (1985:61) defines context as:

"that which occurs before and /or after a word, a phrase or even a longer utterance or a text. The context often helps in understanding the particular meaning of the word, phrase, etc. For example, the word 'loud' in 'loud music' is usually understood as meaning 'noisy' whereas in 'a tie with a loud pattern' it is understood as 'unpleasantly colorful'. The context may also be the broader social situation in which a linguistic item is used. For example, in ordinary usage, 'spinster' refers to an old unmarried woman but in a legal context it refers to any unmarried woman."

The context deciding the meaning of "loud" is a linguistic context, which refers to a collocation or a sentence or beyond a sentence, such as a sentence cluster, a paragraph, a chapter, a whole book etc. With the aid of the words before and after "loud", "loud music" and "a tie with a loud pattern" can be properly translated as "很响的音乐" and "一条俗艳的领带". Besides the linguistic context, translators often have to resort to the context in a broader sense, namely, the extra-linguistic context, including the situational context and the cultural context. When it comes to metaphor translation, this thesis will mainly discuss the extra-linguistic context.

2. CONTEXT AND METAPHOR TRANSLATION

First of all, the metaphorical meaning exists in the context. The scholars holding the pragmatic view claim that metaphors cannot be completely understood from the semantic perspective alone without considering context. Breaking away from the context, the reader even cannot identify whether an expression is a metaphor or not. For example,

(1) 蘇連玉 （喊）狗兒哥！

狗兒爺 瞧，肥豬拱門來啦------

馮金花 連玉兄弟，過來坐。(《狗兒爺涅槃》：第 6 場)

Su Lianyu [shouting] Brother Doggie!

Uncle Doggie Look who's here, *the fatted pig offering itself* ---

Feng Jinhua Oh, Brother Lianyu, come and sit down.

(by Ying Ruocheng)

Separating from the context, "肥豬拱門來啦" means nothing but "the fatted pig is pushing the door with its snout" and nobody can interpret its metaphorical meaning, namely, "Su Lianyu is bringing me the luck in making money". Here the context involves both the linguistic context and the extra-linguistic context. With the aid of the knowledge of Chinese culture, readers know that 肥豬 represents "luck in making money" and the sentence after the metaphor in question, "連玉兄弟，過來坐", indicates that the whole metaphor describes the situation of "Su Lianyu is bringing me the luck in making money".

Second, the first step of metaphor translation is to comprehend the meaning of the original text. Metaphor is characterized by the fact that it has double meanings: one is literal meaning and the other metaphorical meaning. Its metaphorical meaning is derived from the implicit comparison between two domains (object and image), and the two domains generally belong to quite different semantic domains. Take "He is a tiger" for example, "He" possibly means "a human being; being able to stand and walk with two upright legs; having thought and emotion; male; strong, brave, ferocious, cruel etc". "Tiger" probably means "a wild cat animal; walking with four legs; big size; being brave and strong; ferocity; living on hunting small animals and sometimes attacking human beings; being dangerous and frightening etc." Comparing the two domains, the knowledge of image is more important, for it is more likely to vary with cultural aspects. In other words, different cultural contexts may condition different possible values of the same image. In this example, "strong, brave, ferocious and cruel" may be regarded as the most salient similarities between the object and the image in the given culture. The question is that "strong" or "brave" is used to honor someone while "ferocious" or "cruel" for speaking ill of someone. Therefore, translators have to consider context before deciding the values a particular metaphor may take.

Third, context is a deciding factor for choosing a proper approach to the translation of a particular metaphor. The same metaphor may often have different translations with the change of contexts. The following will use three Chinese versions of "All's fish that comes to one's net" as an example.

(2) Don't throw that old coat away; let the gardener have it. *All's fish that comes to his net.*

別扔掉那件舊衣，給園丁吧，他什麼都能派用場。

(3) She's had Emmott and Coleman dancing attendance on her as a matter of course. I don't know that she cares for one more than the other. There are a couple of young Air Force chaps too. I fancy *all's fish that comes to her net* at present. (*Murder inMesopotamia)*

艾漠特和柯爾曼向她獻殷勤，那是不用說的。

我不知道她對哪個比較有好感。還有幾個空軍的小夥子也一樣。我想對她來說，目前抓到籃裏的便是菜。

(4) "Never mind," returned the Captain, though he was evidently dismayed by the figures: "*all's fish that comes to your net*. I suppose?" "Certainly," said Mr. Brogley. "But sprats ain't whales, you know." (*Dombey and Son*)

"這不要緊，"船長回答說，雖然數目明顯地使他吃驚，"我想凡到你手裏的都是魚，對你都有用。"

"那當然，"柏羅利先生說，"但是，你要知道，小鮃和鯨魚是不同的。"

English saying "All's fish that comes to one's net" comes from fishermen's fishing experience. Fishermen would turn all the fishes they got to use, no matter what size and type they were. Later it is used to describe the situation of "to turn everything to some use", which is generally neutral in tone. "抓到籃裏的便是菜" is usually regarded as a corresponding image of "All's fish that comes to one's net". However, "抓到籃裏的便是菜" in Chinese has a slightly derogatory sense by emphasizing the purpose of making profit. For this difference, the image in (2) is not preserved in the TL (target language). In (2) "All's fish that comes to his net" is completely neutral and there is not any hint indicating that the gardener is motivated to take advantage of the old coat. If the image in this context is mechanically translated into "抓到籃裏的便是菜", the sense of the original text would be distorted. In (3) "All's fish that comes to one's net" is employed to depict that "she" was keeping several guys dancing attendance on her, and the emotional impact is a little derogatory. "抓到籃裏的便是菜" is an appropriate translation not only in sense but also in tone in (3). Preserving the image in (4) is the only and best choice, for "But sprats ain't whales" in the next sentence is based on "all's fish that comes to your net". Therefore, if the image is replaced by "抓到籃裏的便是菜", the coherence between the two sentences in the SL text will be broken in the TL text.

3. SITUATIONAL CONTEXT AND APPROACHES TO METAPHOR TRANSLATION

Situational context refers to the action taking place, participants, temporal and spacial mode in speech events (胡壯麟,1994:182. Translated by the writer). Situational context sometimes is a deciding factor affecting the final decision of the translation approach. For example, "鴉雀無聲（聞）" literally means "not even a crow or sparrow can be heard --- silence reigns", however, its translation may vary with different situational context.

(5) 寶釵獨自行來，順路進了怡紅院 ------ 不想步入院中，鴉雀無聞。（《紅樓夢》，第 36 回）

Bao-chai's route took her past the House of Green Delights …The courtyard was silent as she entered it. *Nor a bird's cheep was to be heard.* (by Hawkes)

(6) 寶釵來至王夫人房裏，只見鴉雀無聞，獨有王夫人在里間房裏坐著垂淚。（《紅樓夢》，第 32 回）

When Bao-chai arrived at Lady Wang's apartment she found the whole place *hushed and still* and Lady Wang sitting in the inner room on her own, crying. (by Hawkes)

In (5), the situation is a courtyard, so it is possible to maintain the literal meaning (not necessarily the same as the version in *The Chinese- English Dictionary*) and the metaphorical meaning at the same time. However, in (6), keeping image is improper and even impossible, for the situation is a chamber, where usually no crows and sparrows are found. The only choice is to reduce the metaphor to sense. In fact, in the SL text of (6) the image 鴉 and 雀 are not important, and 鴉雀無聞 is used just for the sake of its metaphorical meaning, that is, "being hushed and still".

守株待兔 is rendered differently for the different situational context.

(7) "這樣，他採取'守株待兔'的態度，還是當他的鄉董。"（《倪煥之》）

Accordingly, having adapted this attitude of "*watching the stump and waiting for a hare,*" he continued his councillorship.

At the end of the translation in (7), the translator adds an annotation to introduce the fable which 守株待兔 comes from. The approach of adding annotation to the preserved image is proper in this context, but not applicable for the situation of (8).

(8) 否則，袖手旁觀，守株待兔，就變成了長期不抗不戰了！(《同志，你走錯了路》)

Otherwise, standing by with folded arms and *waiting for gains without pains* will prove to be nothing but long-term non-resistance.

In (8), annotations are of no help for the stage performance, so preserving the image does not work in the situation. Here the approach of reducing the image to the sense, that is, "to wait for gains without pains" is the only choice. In the English language, there is a common saying "No pains, no gains", with the light of which the TL readers can get the lucid and full metaphorical meaning embodied in 守株待兔.

4. CULTURAL CONTEXT AND APPROACHES TO METAPHOR TRANSLATION

4.1 Culture and Metaphor Translation

"Metaphors may have cultural (cultural distance or cultural overlap), universal (or at least widely spread) and subjective aspects" (Newmark, 1981: 87). The cultural aspect forms the main obstacle to translators while the universal aspect makes metaphor translation possible. In the SL (source language) culture, one would expect "S is P" to be "S is R", for the P term has a set of possible values of R (Searle, 1979:83). If the values of R in the TL culture are not associated with the P term but other terms, or in the TL there is even no such terms which have the values of R, the metaphorical meaning in "S is P" will certainly get lost. Hence, translators are frequently faced with the difficulty of choosing among keeping the P term in the TL, changing the P term into another one which has the values of R in the TL and giving up the P term by only transferring the values of R into the TL.

Every language user belongs to a certain community that has its own history, culture, customs, idioms, and values and all these form cultural context. Considering cultural context is essential for receptors (a translator is a special receptor) to fully understand the original text. For example, turkey is traditionally one of the main courses for Christmas dinner in western countries. Neglecting the custom, a translator may mistakenly rendered "Turkey Dinner" on Christmas day into "土耳其午餐".

Cognitive linguistics claims that metaphors are rooted in our bodily experience (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Here, "bodily experience" should be interpreted in a broad sense, referring to human's bodily function and interaction with the outside world. However, the bodily experience can only tell what are possible metaphors. Whether these potential metaphors are actually selected and what are the metaphorical meanings of these metaphors in a given culture is largely dependent upon the cultural models shared by individuals living in this culture. The use of animal metaphors, which to some extent reflects people's interactions with the outside world, should serve as an illustration. A paper "Cultural Connotation of Animal Words in English and Chinese" (郭建中 編，2000：350) written by Chen Dezhang supplies a result obtained through questionnaires:

"some animals stand for similar images (which is equivalent to metaphorical meaning in this thesis) in both languages, such as the fox, some animals stand for very different images, such as the dog and the dragon, while some are of very subtle differences, for example, the pig. Certain characters are represented by different animals in the two languages. For example, the horse in

English often plays the role of the ox in Chinese, and the image of lion in English often assumes the image of the tiger in Chinese."

4.2 Cultural Contexts and Approaches to Metaphor Translation

The implications of the image in the SL may change in the following two ways after its translation: (1) in the TL, the same image loses or changes its fixed peripheral meaning, or produces a peripheral meaning; and (2) though the image is not in conflict with the peripheral meaning in the TL, it is not traditionally used to describe the same object in the TL as in the SL. Therefore, there are two other main approaches to metaphor translation besides preserving images, namely, changing images and leaving out images. Some SL images and TL images are almost completely corresponding or partly corresponding in peripheral meaning in certain contexts, where the two images are intertranslatable. However, with the change of context, preserving the image or leaving out the image may become a more appropriate choice. For example, "All's fish that comes to one's net" and "抓到籃裏的便是菜" discussed previously are two different images representing almost the same sense in some particular contexts, where the two images can be intertranslated. However, when the differences in emotional impact between the two images become salient because of context, the approach of substitution will give way to other solutions.

It may be concluded that the following two essential factors lead to the difference in approaches to translating the same metaphor: (1) all images in the SL and the TL are not always identical in the metaphorical meaning and the emotional impact; and (2) the particular difference between the SL image and the TL image marked by the context will ultimately determine the translation approach to the metaphor.

Though "casting pearls before swine" is usually regarded as a corresponding image to 對牛彈琴 in Chinese, the two images have intrinsic differences in the metaphorical meaning. "Casting pearls before swine" is from a sentence in Chapter 7 of *Matthew* of *New Testament*, which reads "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you (不要把聖物給狗，也不要把你們的珍珠丟在豬前，恐怕它踐踏了珍珠，轉過來咬你們). Considering the origin of the image, its metaphorical meaning includes "offer good thing to one incapable of appreciating it" and "requite injury with kindness". In contrast with "casting pearls before swine", 对牛弹琴 has much lighter derogatory sense. It only refers to "having wrong audience", which corresponds to "offer good thing to one incapable of appreciating it", but only part of it. For the overlap between the metaphorical meaning, the two images are intertranslated in the

following two sentences.

(9) I read some of my poetry aloud to them, but it was *casting pearls before swine*. They obviously didn't understand a word of it and soon started yawning, looking at their watches and fidgeting in their chairs. 我給他們朗誦我的幾首詩，可確是對牛彈琴。他們顯然一個字也不懂，不一會兒他們就打哈欠，看表，在椅子上煩躁不安。

(10) I won't waste good advice on John any more because he never listens to it. I won't *cast pearls before swine*.

我再也不給約翰進忠言了，他根本不聽。我可不對牛彈琴了。

Contrasted to the example (9) and (10), "casting pearls before swine" in (11) and (12) means more than the overlapping meaning, so changing images is out of place. Instead, the image has to be rendered with other approaches according to the context.

(11) How strange that I should be called a destitute woman! When I have all of these treasures [beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart] locked in my heart. I think of myself as a very, very rich woman! But I have been foolish --- *casting my pearls before swine*. (*A Streetcar named desire*)

我竟被稱為一無所有的女人，多麼奇怪！我有這麼多寶貴的東西[心靈的美，精神生活豐富，溫柔體貼]藏在我心裏，我認為我自己是一個非常，非常富有的女人！我把我的好東西糟蹋了----我真傻。

(12) and when I let the upper floor to Cap'en Cuttle, oh I do a thankless thing, and *cast pearls before swine*! (*Dombey and Son*)

------ 我把樓上租給卡特爾上尉，人家謝也不謝，我一番好意扔給狗了！

In (11), "casting my pearls before swine" means that the woman's good qualities are not appreciated by others, but has no common meaning with 對牛彈琴. According to the context, the image is translated to "我把我的好東西糟蹋了". In (12), "pearl" in English represents "a good thing", but in Chinese, though "珍珠"is also believed to be "a good thing", it is not established to describe "good intention". Thus, the translator reduced "pearl" into sense and kept the image of "swine (狗)".

The distinction between the SL image and the TL are also reflected by the difference in emotional impact, which quite possibly cause different approaches to metaphor translation with the change of context. "Birds of one feather" and "一丘之貉" are merely partly corresponding in emotional impact, though the two images are used to describe people of the same type in their respective language. The English one is often in a derogatory sense, and sometimes, neutral, while the Chinese one is derogatory all the time. Hence there is no

problem when "一丘之貉" is translated with "birds of one feather". The question is "birds of one feather" cannot always be substituted with "一丘之貉". It is the context that eventually determines the Chinese version of "birds of one feather". Look at the following examples:

(13) 增加混亂的倒是有些悲觀論者……將一切作者詆爲 "一丘之貉". (《中國文壇的悲哀》)

In fact it is these pessimists who increase the chaos by …… considering all writers *birds of one feather*.

(14) He has conspired against me like the rest, and they are but *birds of one feather*. (C. Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*)

他和其餘的人一樣陰謀同我作對，他們都是一丘之貉。(《英語成語詞典》，第 114 頁）

(15) The neighbor thought that she and her boyfriend were *birds of a feather*.

鄰居們都認爲她和她的男朋友是一個類型的人。

(16) Henry's own father was a plain man, a miller, and he trained his eldest son to that occupation. The three younger sons were *birds of a very different feather*. They rode with a fast fox- hunting set. (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl*)

亨利的父親是一個普通人，一個磨坊主。他培養他的長子幹他那一行，另外三個兒子完全是另一個類型。他們和一夥騎馬獵狐的人搞在一起。

(17) He's joined their society, has he? Well, I'm not surprised, *birds of a feather flock together*.

他參加了他們那個團體，是吧？我一點也不奇怪，物以類聚，人以群分嘛。

In (13) and (14), the image in the SL text has the derogatory sense, so the original image is proper to be translated as "birds of one feather" and "一丘之貉". In the rest three sentences, "birds of a feather", "birds of a different feather" and "birds of a feather flock together" have and only have a neutral tone, referring respectively "people of the same type", "people of different type" and "people of the same type would like to stay together". "一丘之貉" is completely improper for these cases and the three images are reduced to the sense. It is noted that even though the three are directly transferred into the sense, the translation in (17) is a common saying in Chinese. The reason is that when "birds of a feather" is collocated with "flock together", "物以類聚，人以群分" is its established translation in Chinese, a much better version than "同一種類型的人總在一起" in its clarity and compactness.

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