



Study on the Translation and Communication Content Model of Chinese Literature Going Global From the Perspective of Communication Studies

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Abstract

Chinese culture “going global” is a very important national strategy, and as an important element of Chinese culture, Chinese literature has made a lot of efforts, but has failed to achieve good effect. How to effectively “going global” has seen increasing attention in scholars. From the perspective of Communication Studies, this study aims to clarify the components of the translation and communication content, explore the factors affecting the translator’s choice of it and propose a translation and communication content mode that the works selected by the translator need to meet the requirements of the ideology, poetics and translation sponsors of the target language, and satisfy the audience’s reading preference for optimistic and strong readable stories. And the work itself should have universal value, Chinese characteristics and translatability; The translation strategy chosen by the translator should also adopt “creative rebellious” methods such as abridge and rewriting, as well as the translation strategy of domestication, so as to provide reference for improving the translation and communication effect of Chinese literature “going global”, for expanding China’s soft power, and for promoting Sino-foreign cultural exchanges.

Key words: Chinese literature “going global”; Communication studies; Translation and communication content mode

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1. INTRODUCTION

Chinese culture “going global” is a national policy of the cultural construction proposed in the early 21st century. The translation and communication (hereinafter referred to as “TC”) of Chinese literature is one of the important ways to promote Chinese culture to go global. The state has made a lot of efforts, but *The Chinese Literature* (Geng, 2010) and the *Panda Books Series* (Zheng, 2012) of the Chinese Culture Translation and Communication Project have not achieved the expected effect in the western countries. How does Chinese literature effectively “go global” has become a topic of concern. As more and more Chinese literary writers and works appear on the world stage, scholars have begun to seek the successful experience from these TC cases. But even if Mo Yan’s translation works won international awards, its TC effect is “mixed”. These works have performed well in the world’s library collections, the mention rate of Western mainstream media, and the popularity of professional audiences, but their influence on the general audience is still insufficient (Bao, 2015). Improving the TC effect and exploring an effective TC mode have become an urgent problem for Chinese literature “going global”.

2. THE EXPLORATION OF CHINESE LITERATURE TC MODE BASED ON LASSWELL’S COMMUNICATION MODEL

The research on the TC of Chinese literature “goes beyond the traditional translation studies of language conversion and enters the level of Medio-Translatology, focusing on the spread and acceptance of translated

works” (Xie, 2014). Many scholars have jumped out of the field of traditional translation studies, and began to use the perspectives of communication studies, multiple systems theory, and cross-cultural communication to explore solutions for Chinese literature to effectively go global. “The essence of translation is communication (Lü, 1997)” and the translation of Chinese literature to foreign countries has become an act of communication based on translation. The key to the success of TC is communication, and how to achieve effective communication has always been the subject of communication studies, it is meaningful to apply the communication model to the methodology of discussion on TC mode. Bao Xiaoying (2014), combining Lasswell’s 5W communication model with Medio-Translatology, proposed a theoretical framework of TC mode that includes five basic elements: “who translates”, “what to translate”, “in which way to translate”, “to whom”, “what translation effect”, and verified the validity of the mode. Later, many scholars used this framework to analyze various text types, first expounding the influencing factors of the mode, and then seeing whether the text meets the corresponding requirements, so as to find the reasons for success or failure. In addition to the wide range of text topics analyzed, including traditional Chinese medicine, ethnic minorities, and opera, etc., the selected objects and analysis methods are also diverse. Most scholars, such as Hua Liang (2015) and Liao Ziwei (2017), analyzed the reasons for the success or failure of a work’s translation and communication and obtained inspiration for constructing a specific TC mode; Hu Zuoyou and Zhang Dinghui (2017) compared multiple translations of the same work to find out the characteristics of a good TC mode; Other scholars conducted a general analysis of multiple works of the same author (Wu & Jiang, 2015), the same genre (Dong, 2017), the same region (Han, Jiang, & Yuan, 2019), and the same period, and summarized effective TC mode. Although the researches on TC mode are increasing, and some scholars have begun to conduct in-depth analysis of individual elements (Wang, 2019), there are few systematic studies on “what to translate”, namely the TC content mode. Hu Anjiang (2020) proposed that “the principle of that choice matters over translation can ensure the acceptability, the final dissemination and actual influence of the translation to the greatest extent.” The successful selection of TC content has an irreplaceable role in improving the TC effect. Based on this, the paper will take the TC content as the research object from the perspective of communication studies, and analyze its components and the factors affecting the translator’s choice of it, so as to propose a TC content mode and provide reference for Chinese literature to effectively “go global”. It is of epochal and practical significance in improving the solidified image of Chinese literature among English readers and optimizing our country’s international public opinion environment.

3. THE TRANSLATION AND COMMUNICATION CONTENT MODE OF CHINESE LITERATURE TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Scholars differ in their views on the components of “what to translate”, with some seeing it as a counterpart to the “say what” in the 5W communication model, and only addressing “the original text”. Another view is that the components of “what to translate” also includes “when to translate” and “how to translate” and other choices made by the TC subject. The subject’s choice of the original text before translation, the formal structure and the translation strategy largely determine the image of the translated work presented to the reader. Therefore, the components of “what to translate” in this paper are the issues of “what text to translate” and “how to translate”, while “what text to translate” refers to the choice of the author and its works, “how to translate” refers to the translator’s choice of the formal structure and the translation strategy of the translation.

According to the American social psychologist Lewin, “key positions in the communication process are guarded by gatekeepers who decide what goes into the communication channel according to their own value systems and group norms (Wu, 2015). As a gatekeeper, the TC subject has to constantly make choices in a competition between internal and external factors.

“Translation activities are not carried out in a vacuum, but in a certain historical and cultural context” (Lefevere, 2014). Similarly, the acceptance of translation activities in the target language culture is not carried out in a vacuum, and will be affected by many factors. The dominant factors are target culture’s “social ideology, poetics and translation sponsors (Lefevere, 2014)”. In order to improve the communication effect and increase the acceptance of the translated works, the TC subject should give priority to these three factors in the selection of works. After World War II, a group of American youth hated machine civilization, strongly questioned all secular rules, pursued spiritual freedom, and resisted traditional values by indulging in sensory enjoyment. They were called the “Beat Generation” (Bao, 2014). Translator Snyder believed that Hanshan’s image of going his own way was consistent with the ideology of the society at that time, and the Zen thought of letting nature take its course expressed in Hanshan’s poems brought spiritual comfort to people, so once translated, it could successfully resonate with Americans. As far as the poetic tradition is concerned, the United States in the 1950s was in a “new culture” movement, with movements such as the Beat Generation, ethnic minorities, and feminism emerging one after another, and the modern American poet known as “the father of the Beat Generation”, Kenneth Rexroth

, initiated the “San Francisco Renaissance”, which extensively absorbed Eastern and Western ideas while restoring Whitman-style native American poetry (Xu, 2015). The Hanshan poems containing Chinese Zen thoughts, are consistent with the free and open poems of the Beat School, which are highly respected by people. However, the translation of Hanshan poems did not have a similar TC effect in the UK, because the Hanshan poems do not follow the rhythm, which were incompatible with the British conservative poetics tradition at that time (Bao, 2014). When talking about translation sponsors, it refers to the manipulation of translators by sponsors. For example, Can Xue’s short story *Dialogues in Paradise* has two translations, one of which is included in the state-sponsored Panda Books Series. The translator has no right to change the original text, and the translation strategy is mainly to be faithful to the original text. One book is published by Northwestern University Press, and the translator has played its subjectivity, taking care of the reader’s reading experience, and has made the translation popular with readers.

The TC audience is the direct target of the TC content, and its acceptance of the content will directly affect the TC effect. The readers’ reading interests are objective factors that cannot be ignored in the translator’s choice of text and translation strategy. The translator should deeply analyze the audience at first, clarify the type of readers of Chinese literature, and then decide the content to be translated according to the reading preferences of the target audience. The overseas readers of Chinese literature are mainly professional readers such as sinologists and Chinese scholars, and ordinary readers who are interested in Chinese culture. In order to maximize the acceptance of the translation, the main consideration here is the general Western audience. Generally speaking, the audience will show a selective tendency when dealing with a large amount of mass information, and are accustomed to accept the part that is consistent with or close to their own interests and needs (Wu & Jiang, 2015). The British scholar Leavis mentioned in his book *Fiction and the Reading Public* that the general American reader tends to prefer a direct and quick sense of satisfaction, likes stories with strong readable, positive attitude, and works related to the United States. Howard Goldblatt, a famous sinologist, once said in the selection of content for translation, “Americans like works with sexual and political content, as well as Chinese detective novels and historical novels. His clear understanding of the reading interest of American readers is one of the important reasons for the success of his translation works (Bao, 2014).

The above discussions are all from the perspective of acceptance, and at the translation level, the translator should also consider the content and translatability of the work itself. Liu Yi (2012) believes that in order to achieve

the purpose of cross-cultural communication, translated works must at least have “universal values” and “regional characteristics”. Howard Goldblatt chose ten novels from Mo Yan’s works precisely because these works have both universality of world literature and heterogeneity of Chinese literature (Bao, 2015). At the same time, the translatability of the work itself is also one of the factors that cannot be ignored (Xie, 2014), that is, whether the original style and the creative features of the work can be easily restored in the translation. The dialects in Jia Pingwa’s *Qin Cavity* once made the translator feel so difficult to complete the translation.

In Bellman’s “cultural transplantation” point of view, it is mentioned that foreign literary works must first be noticed by local readers, and then be partially translated or rewritten. Eventually, there will be various retranslations and the classic translations, just like the ancient Romans’ translations of Greek classics. In the TC of Chinese literature, there is a “time gap” phenomenon between Chinese and Western cultural exchanges, and the foundation for Western readers to understand Chinese culture is relatively weak (Xie, 2014). In this specific period, compared with translating the complete works, the translator should make abridged and rewritten as in Lin Shu’s time, so as to precisely attract the interest of Western readers.

The position of translated literature in the Literary Polysystem of the target language will affect the choice of translation strategies of the translator (Xie, 2003). Many people think that foreignization should be adopted (Zhang, 2015) because of the purpose of TC of Chinese literature and the needs of Western readers for Chinese culture. However, from the perspective of Polysystem Theory, when the translated literature is at the center of the target language, the main task of the translator is to pursue the “adequacy” of translation, which is infinitely close to the original text. At present, Chinese literature is still in a marginal position in world literature (Liu, 2015). Goethe proposed three stages of translation and three corresponding methods. Translators should realize that the TC of Chinese literature is still in the first stage. In order to let Western readers understand foreign things, translators should adopt more domestication translation strategies to let Chinese literature be naturally integrated into the target language, rather than the pursuit of being faithful to the original text and the use of foreignization-based translation strategies to destroy the reading fluency and pleasure of readers.

To sum up, the discussion of the TC content mode should include both the ‘choice of authors and works’ and the ‘choice of formal structure and translation strategy’, which are influenced by internal factors such as translation purpose and preference, as well as by external factors such as social ideology, poetics and audience needs. Based on the current stage of translation and

communication of Chinese literature, in order to improve the TC effect, the works selected by the translator need to meet the requirements of the ideology, poetics and translation sponsors of the target language, and satisfy the audience's reading preference for optimistic and strong readable stories. And the work itself should have universal value, Chinese characteristics and translatability; The translation strategy chosen by the translator should also adopt "creative rebellious" methods such as abridge and rewriting, as well as the translation strategy of domestication, in order to cater to the audience's reading habits and improve audiences' acceptance of Chinese literature.

4. CONCLUSION

The acceptance of Chinese literature in the Western world is a staged process. We should stand on the perspective of historical development and the height of cross-cultural perspective, fully recognize the current status of the translation and communication of Chinese literature, and clarify the goals and TC mode of the current stage. From the perspective of communication, this paper elaborates on the factors that affect TC subjects' choice of TC content, discusses the translation and communication of Chinese literature to maximize the TC effect of translation works, and proposes a TC content mode for reference, which has a certain role in promoting Chinese culture to "go global" effectively, good communication between China and the West, and the development of translation disciplines.

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