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TRANSLATION TRENDS IN CHINA OF THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1840-1919)

Abstract. The article considers the main trends in the development of translation in China of the early modern time. The study is based on an analysis of the original texts and their translations made by three well-known interpreters of that time. There has been made several conclusions on the use of basic translation strategies and their peculiarities.

Keywords: translation strategy, source text, target group, sender pragmatics, communicative effect.

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НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ ПЕРЕВОДЧЕСКОЙ МЫСЛИ В КИТАЕ В ЭПОХУ РАННЕГО НОВОГО ВРЕМЕНИ (1840-1919)

Аннотация. Рассматриваются основные тенденции развития перевода в эпоху раннего нового времени в Китае. Анализируются тексты оригинала и перевода трех известных переводчиков того времени. Делаются выводы об использовании ими основных переводческих стратегий и их особенностях.

Ключевые слова: стратегия перевода, источник, реципиент, прагматика отправителя, коммуникативный эффект.

The time from 1840 to 1919 was a hard time for China. During this period, it faced a number of invasions from other countries. In 1840s it was the time of the First Opium War, which lasted for two years. The Chinese government fought against England. The fact that England introduced lots of opium to China, even sold it to common people, made the Chinese addicted to opium. China failed. As a result, Hong Kong was occupied by England. During this period, the Chinese were treated unfairly even in China.

It was the time for China to make a change, and some of the patriots realized the importance of introducing the advanced ideas from the West. Therefore, this period is one of the most important in the Chinese translation history because many translations were made at that time. The translators wanted to change the way of thinking of Chinese people by introducing advanced western works. There were three most influential translators of that period: Yan Fu, Lin Shu and Liang Qichao.

Yan Fu paid a lot of attention to introducing the most famous scientific works from the West

to China. After his translation of “Evolution and Ethics”, he came to the conclusion that there were three difficult but important strategies in the process of translation: Xin、Da、Ya (信达雅). They were his requirements to the adequate translation [2]. ‘Xin’ means that translators should follow the source text and should not change its meaning. ‘Da’ means that translators should make sure that what they translate should be understood by the reader of the target language, and the translated text should be accepted by them. ‘Ya’ has a flexible meaning, because different scholars have different understanding of it. “Ya” is the translator’s perception of the original text and its further transmission to the reader in a way that should produce the desired impact on the reader [1].

Example 1.

Source text: *It may be safely assumed that, two thousand years ago, before Caesar set foot in southern Britain, the whole country-side visible from the windows of the room in which I write, was in what is called “the state of nature”* (“Evolution and Ethics”, Thomas Henry Huxley).

Translation text: 胥黎独处一室之中，在英伦之南，背山而面野。槛外诸境，历历如在几下。乃悬想二千年前，当罗马列大将恺彻未到时，此间有何景物。计惟有天造草昧 (Huxley was alone in the room of the house in southern Britain, and in front of the room there was a field behind the mountains. He was thinking about the time before Caesar set foot on it. The field might be a great view made by nature).

We can see that Yan Fu also changed the order and narrative role of the source text. This change makes the target text more acceptable for the target country. As Huxley was an unknown name for the people of China, the third person narrative can make the reader accept it easily. Thus, the translation of Yan Fu follows the principle of ‘Ya’, he stands on the position of his readers.

Example 2.

Source text: ...contented with one another for the possession of the scanty surface soil.

Translation: 争长相雄，各据一抔黄土 (相雄 and 各据 means that they struggled to get more territory).

We can see that the original context described the growth of flowers and grasses, but the translation tended to insinuate the international situation. Thus, the translation of Yan Fu also presents the author’s thoughts and ideas, and his translation has some purpose. He wanted to make the Chinese know about the state of the world, wanted the Chinese to realize the seriousness of the situation. He aimed at enlightening the readers.

In the translation of “Evolution and Ethics”, Yan Fu changed the narrative role of the original

text. In the source text the writer narrated in the first person, but the translated text was in the third person. As a result, Yan Fu translated “Evolution and Ethics” and made his translation look like a story. This change of narrative role made his translation work wildly accepted by the Chinese. Using the ‘Ya’ method, Yan Fu managed to show that the described period was hard for China, and it was the time for reformation. The goal of Yan Fu’s translation was to arouse the Chinese people’s spirit and desire to change the life in China. Therefore, he added some of his own understanding of original text to his translation. The language he used was the classical Chinese; it was more simple, graceful and acceptable for the people of that period. His translation absolutely followed his requirements to the translation (Xin、Da、Ya) [4].

As it was mentioned above, the period in which Yan Fu worked was a special time for China. The country experienced hard times and every patriot wanted to know if there was any hope for China to become powerful. So, Yan Fu chose the text “Evolution and Ethics” to answer this question. The other books he chose covered the topics in the fields of economy, politics, philosophy, sociology, science etc. His main interest was natural survival. Though he did not always follow the original text, his translation was adapted to the current needs and issues. It was the product of the time. That is why the translation of Yan Fu had his own nature and character.

There was another outstanding Chinese translator – Lin Shu. Unlike Yan Fu he translated literary works mainly, because he thought that Western writers intended to enlighten other people by their fiction. He also wanted to follow the revolutionary way of western countries. Though Lin Shu was called a translator, he did not know English and all his translations were made by retelling and paraphrasing the translated texts. Therefore, his translations were not very accurate but always included his own understanding and opinion [8]. Some of scholars think his translation cannot be called translations, because they may not coincide with the source text.

In his translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Lin Shu made the text more detailed and changed the original idea of death into his own perception of life [3].

Example 1.

Source text: I’ll fight for my liberty to the last breath I breathe. You say your fathers did it, if it was right for them, it is right for me [5].

Translation: 盖吾之自由，必与持压力者抵死争之，必胜而后已，且美国之自由，盖同英伦力争而得，今吾之自由，必当力与美人争之。（Just as the freedom of America was got by fighting with the England. We should fight with the aggressors for our freedom and we must win.）

The example shows that Lin Shu extended the original meaning of the source text and added his own ideas in his translation. Sometimes he even omitted parts of the source text. He took initiatives to select the original text instead of translating whatever his collaborators brought to him. His translations to some extent were production of his own translation goal: to save the nation from subjugation and to ensure its survival. Most of the novels he translated were in the vernacular languages, but Lin Shu translated them in the classical Chinese, which reflected his aesthetic pursuit and his consideration of target readers. He preferred free translation to literal translation, so translation techniques such as addition, deletion and alteration were not unusual for him. It is due to his initiatives that his translations possessed a wide readership and became a great success in the literary translation history of China. Definitely they had a tremendous impact on his contemporaries and the Chinese society of that time.

Liang Qichao was a revolutionist and scholar of the modern time. He regarded translation as the road to a stronger China. His translations reflect on the commitment of the Chinese pioneers to democracy and freedom and their efforts to learn from the West. However, Liang Qichao was the only one to wholeheartedly embraced the idea of translating and publishing political novels and he exerted much effort on propagating this view. He regarded translation as a duty incumbent on educated people. Liang gave top priority to the selection of good books for translation. It is obvious that he took this seriously. The books he referred to were all political novels from the West that aimed at educating readers. He sensed that there were fundamental humanistic principles in the contemporary Chinese thinking and was determined to apply them to the practice of literary translation and develop a theory of literature.

According to Liang Qichao, both the Japanese and the Russians translated Western works and made their countries stronger. He admitted that it would be reasonable to translate Western scholarly works directly from the source languages, but he stressed that another advantage of translating the works from Japanese was that, at that time, the Chinese knew Japanese better than Western languages and therefore the number of potential translators would be higher [6]. It would take, furthermore, much more time to translate directly from Western languages and that would be inimical to the need for imminent reform. There was also a practical reason: it was easier to acquire Japanese books than Westerns ones. Japan and China had been using almost the same characters ever since Japanese adopted Chinese characters. Japanese developed dialects. After a reform in 1860, Japan was determined to learn from the West and translated many books in almost all fields.

There also was extensive publication of new books written by the Japanese nationals. It was easier to translate from Japanese for many reasons. Firstly, the Japanese language is succinct and terse. Secondly, the pronunciation is similar to that of Chinese, with no difficult or rough sounds. Thirdly, the grammar is fairly loose and free. Fourthly, terms and names are much like Chinese.

Liang Qichao claimed that it was not possible to follow all the translation requirements of Yan Fu (Xin, Da, Ya) because the translator had to decide which one was the most important. He said that the 'Xin' was the most important, the second was 'Da', finally was 'Ya' [6]. He emphasized that translators should not only master the source language and target language but also acquire the professional knowledge of translation. He chose the Japanese translation works which were translated from the Western languages and translated them into Chinese.

Liang Qichao pointed out that translation played an important role in the development of the Western countries. So he thought that in order to make China stronger, the translation should be promoted [7]. His practice of translation must be kept apart from his thinking on translation. His practice was utilitarian and pragmatic and aimed at awakening the people of China. On the contrary, his translation theory was aesthetic and academic; it was based on a profound study of Buddhism and full of insights, containing many unique and deep truths on the nature, methods, and functions of translation. His ideas still influence the current studies of translation. His translations were intended to be "wake-up calls" and were not meant to be loyal to the original. Liang Qichao often resorted to adapting, reducing, or presenting the meaning of the source texts in the target texts so that the translations supported reforms.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that Liang Qichao, Lin Shu and Yan Fu had their own methods of translation, but all of them paid attention to the main idea of the source text and were not limited by its form. They had the same purpose to enlighten common people to fight against the invasion of other countries by introducing the advanced ideas of the West. Therefore, the translation in that period was strongly influenced by the political, social and economic condition of China.

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