

Translator Habitus of Legge under Social Praxeology

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Abstract: Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of social practice as the analytical framework, this study focuses on the translator habitus exhibited by Legge, a renowned British sinologist and missionary. Taking his English translation of Confucian Analects as a case study, it investigates the habitual characteristics formed through Legge's education, work, and social experiences. This paper aims to delve into how these translation tendencies influence his work and to uncover the fundamental drivers behind his successful translation of Chinese classics. It seeks to offer novel research perspectives and references for the English translation of Chinese scholarly works.

Keywords: Social Praxeology; Legge; Translator Habitus; Confucian Analects.

1. Introduction

James Legge, a renowned modern British sinologist and missionary, was the first western scholar to study and translate the classical Chinese canon in an in-depth and systematic manner. Beginning in 1861, he successfully translated into English such magnificent treasures of Chinese culture as the Four Books and the Five Classics, involving a total of 28 volumes. His translation of the Analects of Confucius, in particular, enjoyed the reputation of being "the most authoritative translation" and had a profound and lasting impact on the missionary community of his time as well as on western society as a whole. For more than half a century, Legge was committed to building a bright cultural channel between East and West. His entire career was transformed from a missionary dedicated to spreading the teachings of Christ to an expert in Chinese studies. He began his ministry as a preacher to the East, but became famous for reflecting China's cultural heritage to the Western world. His translations of Chinese Confucian texts marked the transition from the amateur level of Chinese literature in the West to a more systematic and specialized stage.

2. Literature Review

Bourdieu constructed the influential analytical model of social behavior in 1984: [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice [1]. The formula reveals social behavior as a result of the interaction of habitus, capital accumulation and field. Since the 1990s, scholars such as Simeoni [2], Gouanvik [3], Saira Sheffey [4], Chesterman [5], etc., have incorporated its concepts into translation studies, and sociology has thus become a new perspective for interpreting translation. Chinese scholars such as Li Hongman [6], Wang Yuechen [7], and Shao Lu [8] further explored the core position of the theory in translation sociology and evaluated the contribution of social practice theory to translation studies. Hu Weiwei applies the theory to analyze the power structure of scientific translation by missionaries at the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties, pointing out that translation strategies reflect the intermingling of field forces and personal preferences, adding a new perspective to translation studies in that period [9]. Su Rui explored the translation norms of ethnic texts, proposing the need to balance factors such as field and capital [10]. Xing Jie et al. delve into Guanvic's application of Bourdieu's key

concepts and explore its integration with the Chinese translation community [11]. Lu reviews the application of the theory in translation studies in the last two decades, points out its challenges, and proposes new insights on translation fields and policy idioms in the context of China [12].

The concept of "habitus" in social practice theory, introduced to translation studies by Simeoni in 1998, offers a profound expansion of the study. Simeoni defines translator habitus as the behavioral patterns of translators that mediate cultural output in translation activities. Gouanvik emphasizes that translator behavior stems mainly from habitus acquired in the field rather than intentionally constructed strategies. Thus, it is particularly important to pay attention to the origins of translators' practices. Given that practices are born from the interaction of field, habitus, and capital, it is important to analyze the translator's habitus by taking into account the context of the field and the accumulation of capital. Translators act within the translation field, shaped by both cultural and power fields [13], in an effort to compete for capital [14]. The choice of capital, i.e. how translators perceive and invest effective capital, is guided by the habitus cultivated by the site. The dual nature of inertia is reflected in its internalization and externalization as social structures and practices that shape the interaction between the individual and the field. These idioms, formed through education and socialization, give translators a particular style of translation and influence textual choices, translation standards, and translators' subjective understanding of translation.

The social practice perspective provides a theoretical cornerstone for analyzing the socialization process of translators, especially in exploring the internalization and externalization of translators' habits in Legge's "social trajectory", which demonstrates its unique explanatory power. By applying this theoretical framework, the underlying logic and internal and external mechanisms of Ricardo's successful implantation of Confucian classics into the Western English-speaking cultural arena can be revealed in a comprehensive and in-depth manner.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, this study adopts a more macroscopic perspective to scrutinize Legge's translation behavior. The study will read his English translation of The Analects in depth and place it in a broader socio-cultural context to trace the trajectory of Legge's translation career. The study aims to explore how his translator's habits were gradually formed in text selection,

translation concepts and methods, and to analyze how these translator's habits shaped his translation work and contributed to his achievements, so as to explore the core motivations of Legge's successful translation of classical Chinese literature in cross-cultural communication, and how these success factors can inspire us to promote Chinese literature to the international arena and pave a more solid path to cross-cultural communication and understanding. and how these success factors can inspire our current efforts to promote Chinese literature internationally and pave a more solid path for cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

3. Legge's Translator's Habitus and its English Translation of the Analects of Confucius

Influenced by his missionary family since childhood and having joined the London Missionary Society after studying theology at Highbury Theological College in London, Legge was determined to spread the gospel overseas. Prior to his departure, he studied Chinese intensively with Professor Thu Duc at the University of London, and in 1840 he arrived in Malacca, where he served on the staff of the Christian Clerical Society of London and the Anglo-Chinese College of Malacca. In the following year, he compiled the English-Chinese-Malay Dictionary, which later became the teaching book of the college. At this time, Legge began his research, translation and editing of Chinese literature related to Sinology and Christianity, which provided him with the cultural capital to later engage in the English translation of Chinese texts. After the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing, Anglo-Chinese College moved to Hong Kong. During his stay in Hong Kong, Legge was determined to further his studies in Chinese literature, to translate the Chinese classics, and to contribute to missionary activities, a period that initially saw the formation of his scholarly habit of combining his studies in Chinese literature with his missionary activities. 1861 saw the publication of the first volume of the first edition of the Chinese Classics, the first volume of the Analects of Confucius, in Hong Kong. In 1861, the first volume of the first edition of The Chinese Classics, The Analects, was published in Hong Kong, and over the next twenty-five years he published translations of the Chinese Confucian classics, including the Four Books and the Five Classics, reflecting his commitment to translating the classical Confucian literature. In 1875, Legge returned to England and became the first professor of Sinology at Oxford University, where he strongly advocated the strengthening of the study of China, especially the study of Confucianism and the classics, and established a special chair of Sinology, which further shaped his image as a scholar who had made in-depth study of the Chinese Confucian classics and traditional culture. In short, Legge's unique social history shaped his scholarly habitus of studying Sinology and traditional Chinese culture, as well as his translator's habitus of in-depth translation of Chinese Confucian texts. These habits are revealed in his in-depth translation practice and are reflected in the textual choices, translation concepts and methods of his translations.

3.1. Text Selection

Legge's choice of the text of the Analects for English translation stems from a threefold drive: the promotion of missionary activity, the symbolic capital value of the Analects,

and the habitual drive of long-standing Sinological studies.

From the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries, Western missionaries to China attempted to translate Chinese ancient texts, but most of the results were taken out of context, and many of the translations were poorly written and misunderstood due to the translators' limited command of the Chinese language, their superficial study of Confucianism, and their reliance on the cooperation of under-educated Chinese. In view of this, as an authority on the dual field of Chinese Christianity and Western culture, Legge must delve deeply into the Chinese classics in order to live up to his reputation and responsibilities. Thus, he took the Analects of Confucius as a starting point, and began his path of translation that parallels missionary work and Chinese studies.

With a thorough understanding of the centrality of Confucius in Chinese culture and a deep respect for Chinese culture, Ricardo urged his colleagues to respect Confucius. As the originator of Confucianism and the supreme sage, Confucius knew that the translation of the Analects of Confucius would bring him extraordinary symbolic capital.

At first, Legge may have viewed Confucius critically, but as he delved into the Analects, he increasingly saw him as a great man of history. It is clear that Legge's admiration for and study of Confucius and the Analects of Confucius contributed to the formation of a translator's habit of focusing on the Chinese scriptures. This habit has unconsciously influenced and led the translator's choice and direction, and Legge's translator's habit clearly outlines the translation path of his chosen text.

3.2. Translation Philosophy

In the process of translation, Legge plays an important and dominant role, especially in his efforts to lead classical Chinese literature into the western cultural field. His translation efforts could not be separated from the institutional constraints and symbolic definitions that characterize the western cultural field. In the western translation field, in order for a work to be widely disseminated and accepted, it becomes necessary to follow the norms of the field and the aesthetic principles of mainstream poetics. Legge's translation strategy mainly serves the vision of delivering Confucian texts to missionaries and western academia. When confronted with translation challenges, he cites the diverse perspectives of ancient sages and scholars to enrich readers' understanding and reflection.

Legge's translations, with their erudition and scholarly rigor, set the standard for translations of an academic nature. He favors direct translations in order to preserve the subtleties of the original text, to follow as closely as possible the style and sentence structure of the source text, and sometimes even to use literal translations. Though there are occasional instances in his translations where he has been too strict with the original text word by word or where his understanding of the original text has been a little inadequate, it is undeniable that his fidelity and accuracy to most of the chapters is worth recognizing. Legge's translation style is distinctly scholarly, with the intention of maintaining the flavor of the original and adopting the strategy of dissimulation, such as a large number of personal names and proper nouns are treated in a phonetic way.

Legge is not only concerned with the reader's experience, but also with the fidelity and accuracy of the work. These concepts of translation emphasize his habitus as a translator and deeply shape his decision-making and execution in

translation practice.

3.3. Translation Methods

Legge's scholarly habit of delving into Chinese Confucian texts and traditional culture, as well as his translator's habit of caring for the English reader's understanding and faithfully conveying the content of the original text, have combined to influence his translation of *The Analects of Confucius*, in which he flexibly employs a variety of translation methods, including transliteration, paraphrase, and literal translation.

3.3.1. Transliteration

Legge's adherence to the principle of the translator's fidelity to the original, coupled with his in-depth knowledge of traditional Chinese Confucian culture, has enabled him, in the process of translating the *Analects*, to face the challenge of the lack of an equivalent vocabulary in English, to adopt the phonetic method of literal syllabic transcription, with accompanying annotations. He translates "学而第一" as "Book I. HSIO R", with "第一" being transliterated and "学而" being transliterated phonetically, reflecting the fact that "学而" is the first word in the book. The translation of "HSIO R" is a direct translation of "第一", while "学而" is a phonetic translation reflecting the phonetic characteristics of the specific vocabulary of the text. For this reason, Legge provides a cross-reference between the spelling of the Latin alphabet and his own phonetic transliteration style, which is intended to assist the reader. The detailed annotations appended to the text in Chinese and English, although they make the text seem lengthy, are undoubtedly extremely helpful to foreign readers in comprehending the text. This practice of adding post-syntactic annotations reflects Legge's habit of being a faithful translator of the original text and his deep understanding of the cultural heritage of Confucianism.

3.3.2. Paraphrase

Taking into account the communication needs of missionaries and the reading preferences of Western English readers, as well as his in-depth understanding of Chinese Confucianism, Legge utilizes his profound attainments in Chinese history and culture to accurately illustrate the historical background and inherent meanings of the classic text by means of a complementary exegesis. This approach effectively assists English-speaking readers in gaining a deeper understanding of the rich ideas and philosophies embedded in the text of *The Analects of Confucius*.

During the Western Zhou period, "子" originally referred to the title of the nobility, but with the collapse of the ritual system, "公" became the new title of the vassals, and "son" was then lowered to an honorific title for the class of great physicians. The "子" was then lowered to a title of honor for the great doctor class. In the Spring and Autumn Period, "子" became a title of respect for men of status and learning, and was sometimes used to refer to men in general. In the *Analects*, "子曰" refers specifically to Confucius himself. Legge shows great concern in this regard, even noting the use of "子" in front of the family name. This detail is seldom noticed even in China, where such a designation is not very common. This usage has a double meaning: it can indicate that someone is the speaker's teacher, and it can also be used to express respect for him. The example of "子沈子" cited by Legge is from the Book of Gongyang. And "Chu Hsi" is Zhu Xi's phonetic translation. Regarding the interpretation of "learning," he drew on Zhu Xi's "Collected Commentaries on the *Analects*

of Confucius," which states, "Learning is the imitation of behavior." In addition, Zhu Xi interpreted "时" as "时常", and there is another interpretation as an adverb meaning timely, which is adopted by Legge in this treatment. The interpretation of the word "习", Legge also referred to Zhu Xi's "Analecst of Confucius": "习, as if the bird's frequent flight. The cultivation of learning is never-ending, just like the frequent flight of a bird." As for the word "亦," in Legge's commentary, he considers it redundant, and the translation of Wang Yin-chih here refers to the Qing dynasty scribe Wang Yinzhi. The explanation is taken from Wang Yin-chih's *Huangqingjingjie*. In his commentary on the word "说," Legge distinguishes between "乐," which expresses external pleasure, and "悦," which refers to inner joy.

Taking into account more than three hundred important Confucian commentaries and incorporating Confucian scholarship from across the ages, Legge's translation is a masterful one, demonstrating his extensive study of Chinese classics and his rigorous understanding of key Chinese vocabulary. Interpretive translation undoubtedly provides foreign readers with a convenient and in-depth way to explore Chinese culture and classic literature, reflecting the translator's habit of taking into account the reading experience of Western readers.

3.3.3. Literal Translation

In his translation practice, Legge demonstrates the translator's habitus of loyalty to the original text as well as an in-depth knowledge of Confucian culture. This combination contributes to the distinctly scholarly character of his translations, which aim at preserving the originality of the original texts. He tends to adopt the direct method of translation in order to preserve as much subtlety as possible and to maintain a stylistic and structural resemblance to the source text, sometimes even at the expense of a literal translation.

First, when Ziqin asks Zigong about the way Confucius was informed about the local political situation when he went to any country. Legge's translation takes a direct and precise approach to the questioning, presenting the content and manner of the questioning in a delicate manner. He maintains the original structure of the interrogative sentence, asking the question in the form of "Does he ask his information? or is it given to him?", which is faithful to the logical structure of the original text and the spirit of the inquiry. This kind of direct translation is more common in academic translation, which respects the expression of the original text and strives to convey the thought content of the original text to the readers. When Zigong praises Confucius for his attitude and manner in acquiring information, Legge's translation similarly utilizes the method of direct translation. "The master's mode of asking information!-is it not different from that of other men?" which not only completely reflects the question posed by Zigong, but also demonstrates Legge's capture of tone-allowing the rhetorical implications of the question to come to the fore, maintaining the dialectical and reflective character of the original.

Legge tends to translate directly, trying to preserve the original meaning of Confucius while retaining the cultural color and philosophical depth of the text as much as possible. This method of translation not only demonstrates the translator's profound linguistic skills, but also reflects his respect for the philosophical ideas of the original text and his trust in the comprehension ability of English readers.

However, in modern academic translations, direct translations may sometimes pose an obstacle to the understanding of readers unfamiliar with the Confucian canon, and thus the commentary by Legge is particularly crucial to a full understanding of the text.

To summarize, Legge's translation demonstrates his fineness of translation and respect for the original text, and is a model of scholarly translation, which is also a manifestation of his faithfulness to the original text and his proficiency in the habitual habits of translators of both Chinese and English. His translations not only provide readers in the English-speaking world with a window into ancient Chinese philosophical thought, but also serve as an important bridge for cross-cultural exchange.

4. Conclusion

With the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of social practice, especially with the theory of "habitus" as the cornerstone, this study chooses the English translation of Legge's version of *The Analects of Confucius* as the object of study. Following this theoretical perspective, this paper retraces and analyzes Legge's translation practice, its influence in text selection, translation concept and method, and other dimensions. The results show that the reason why his version of *The Analects of Confucius* has become the "most authoritative version" in the English-speaking world is due to the fact that its translation practice is deeply rooted in people's hearts.

Possessing a unique linguistic potential and a broad academic vision, Legge's Western background and poetic cognition reached a profound level. In the course of his socialization, Legge's keen awareness of the power and literary fields led him to develop a habit of translating in accordance with Western theories while taking into account the reading experience of English-speaking readers. He infused the essence of traditional Chinese culture and scholarship into his translations, not only pursuing accuracy, but also emphasizing the readability of the works, forging his distinctive academic translation style. Driven by this translation habit, Legge's English translation of *The Analects of Confucius* skillfully synthesizes the methods of phonetic translation, paraphrase translation and direct translation, which is not only faithful to the original text, but also close to the readers, making his translation become an outstanding translation widely disseminated in the Western world.

In summary, it is evident that Legge's translation practice goes far beyond the *Analects*, and his translation achievements involve many Confucian classics, paving the way for Chinese ancient texts to go global. In terms of text selection, translation philosophy and methodology, he has contributed useful experience to the global dissemination of Chinese classics: on the one hand, in text selection, it is appropriate to choose those works that have global appeal without losing their Chinese flavor; in terms of translation philosophy, it is important to emphasize openness, not sticking to the principle of absolute "fidelity", but rather, making the translated works fluent and acceptable in the target culture. On the other hand, we should also learn from the example of Legge's use of multiple translation methods. On the other hand, we should also learn from the example of Legge's use of multiple translation methods, because there is

no constant rule for translation, and translators should adjust their approach according to the specific situation in order to achieve the best translation effect.

Acknowledgments

This study was funded by Anhui University of Science and Technology Graduate Student Innovation Fund Project "A Study on the Translation of Political Literature from the Perspective of Skopos Theory" (2023CX2182) and Anhui University of Science and Technology 2023 Student Entrepreneurship Fund Supporting Project "Anhui Chu Culture Museum One-stop 'Experience Economy' Platform"

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