

The Feasibility Study of “Manipulation” and “Rewriting” theory on Guiding English Translation of Petroleum Science and Technology

Siteng Chen

School of Foreign Language, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu 10500, China

Abstract: In the existing literature, there are many translation theories to guide the translation practice of petroleum science and technology English, such as communicative translation theory, text type theory, interpretive theory and so on. But a few people regard André Lefevere’s “manipulation” and “rewriting” theory as the guiding theory of English translation of petroleum science and technology. Therefore, this paper aims to introduce the content of this theory and compare the advantages and disadvantages of the theory with other translation theories in petroleum text to analyze the feasibility of the theory as a guiding theory in science and technology translation.

Keywords: Manipulation, Rewriting, André Lefevere, Petroleum science and technology.

1. Introduction

The translation practice of petroleum technology English has always been an important research area in the field of translation studies. With the continuous development of the global petroleum industry and the deepening of technical exchanges, the translation of petroleum technology English has become increasingly critical and complex. In order to ensure the accurate transmission of professional knowledge and information, translation scholars have been exploring various translation theories to guide the translation practice of petroleum technology English.

In previous research, there are various translation theories being applied to the translation work of petroleum technology English, such as communicative translation theory, text type theory, and interpretive theory. These theories provide translation practitioners with guiding principles and methods to deal with specific translation challenges. However, despite the effectiveness demonstrated by these translation theories in certain situations, there has been little attention given to André Lefevere’s “rewriting” theory as a guiding theory for the translation of petroleum technology English.

André Lefevere, a French cultural critic and translation scholar, provides a unique perspective with his “rewriting” theory, which aims to understand and analyze power relations and cultural influences in the translation process. This theory suggests that translation is not only a process of language conversion but also a process of cultural recreation. By selecting, manipulating, and rewriting the source language text, translators can convey specific meanings and values in the target language text. However, despite its extensive application and research in fields like literary translation, the application of this theory in the translation of petroleum technology English has been relatively limited.

Therefore, this paper aims to introduce the content and key points of André Lefevere’s “rewriting” theory, and compare it with other translation theories to analyze its feasibility as a guiding theory in the translation of petroleum technology English. Through in-depth research and exploration, the author hopes to reveal the potential value of this theory in the practice of translating petroleum technology English and

provide translators in this field with a new framework and approach to enhance translation quality and effectiveness.

This paper will be conducted through a review of literature and case analysis, combined with actual translation practices, to explore the prospects of applying the “rewriting” theory in the translation of petroleum technology English. Finally, the author will summarize and provide recommendations and prospects for the practical application of this theory, aiming to contribute insights and references to the research and practice of translating petroleum technology English.

2. The Content of “Manipulation” and “Rewriting” Theory

André Lefevere’s “manipulation” and “rewriting” viewpoints were also brought into the public eye with the publication of “Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame” at the end of the 20th century. According to Lefevere, translation is not a simple and straightforward activity but rather a process influenced by various factors. He identifies two controlling factors: internal factors and external factors.

The internal factors refer to practitioners such as critics, commentators, translators, and teachers, whose creative and translational ideas, as well as their styles and techniques, shape the translation process. On the other hand, external factors primarily include sponsors, commissioners, audience demands and responses, prevailing poetic principles, and socio-ideological contexts during specific periods. (Cheng & Yang, 2017)

2.1. Descriptive Research

Lefevere’s translation theory is a descriptive research method that emerged through the analysis and synthesis of numerous translation phenomena, aiming to reveal the underlying logic and patterns behind these phenomena. Translation is viewed as an entity, a component within the target language system. It describes the nature of translation activity from the perspective of the target language system’s ideology, poetics, and patronage systems, explaining the generation, consumption, functionality, and operation of translated texts within the target cultural system.

In this theory, it is through the research method of describing, analyzing, and interpreting the reasons for different versions that the hidden rules and constraints in translation are effectively revealed, such as cognitive forms. The rewriting theory adopts a descriptive research approach that breaks free from the limitations of previous descriptive research methods.

By employing this descriptive research approach, Lefevre's theory sheds light on the absolute role of hidden rules and constraints in translation, uncovering the dynamics at play. It offers valuable insights into the nature of translation as a creative and cultural activity, challenging traditional notions of translation as a mere transfer of meaning from the source text to the target text. (Cheng & Yang, 2017)

2.2. Centering on the Target Text

In the theory of rewriting, every translated text possesses its own value and significance, not solely reliant on the emphasis placed on the source text, but rather on the skillful utilization of both the source and target texts to achieve a more natural and authentic translation. The focus of this theory lies in describing, analyzing, and interpreting the reasons for deviations from the original text, with translation being at the center of translation research. The formal description and analysis of the translated text, particularly successful translations that deviate from the source text, help reveal the underlying patterns in translation activities: translation is a rewriting activity carried out by translators within the constraints of the target language's mainstream ideology and poetics. Consequently, the research of the rewriting theory centers around translation, subverting the previous authoritative position of the source text.

2.3. Translation Research Based on the Cultural Level

André Lefevre believes that translation is not a simple and straightforward activity, but rather a process influenced by various directions. Therefore, it is necessary to place translation within a broader cultural framework, where translators need to grasp the cultural environment and engage in translation activities accordingly. The rewriting theory aims to explain the phenomena of translation activities and establish a set of principles, highlighting that translation is a small part within a cultural context and is subject to the control and influence of the cultural system. In such a system, translation is interconnected with all culturally relevant aspects, mutually influencing and constraining each other.

As a result, it is concluded that translation is not a direct word-for-word conversion from one language to another. It must be influenced by social and cultural factors beyond the linguistic level, such as ideology and poetics. The rewriting theory breaks away from the traditional closed and static paradigm of translation research and shifts towards conducting translation research at the cultural level.

By emphasizing the cultural dimension, the rewriting theory provides a more comprehensive understanding of translation as an activity deeply intertwined with cultural influences. It acknowledges the crucial role of social and cultural factors in shaping the translation process, going beyond the linguistic aspects and considering broader contexts. This approach broadens the scope of translation research and encourages a deeper exploration of the cultural dynamics that impact translation.

3. Characteristics of Petroleum Technology English

With the rise and development of the oil industry on a global scale, there has been a corresponding growth in the field of Petroleum Technology English and its translation. Petroleum Technology English is an important genre of text that combines a large number of specialized terms with English knowledge. It is characterized by two main aspects: vocabulary and discourse. (Yang, 2021)

In terms of vocabulary, petroleum English texts contain a plethora of specialized terminology, along with the frequent usage of common words in a specialized context. This situation can be referred to as the specialization of everyday vocabulary, which differs significantly from the usage of words in daily life. On the discourse level, petroleum technology texts are predominantly based on scientific facts, providing objective descriptions of technological logic and applications. To emphasize objective phenomena, these texts often employ noun-oriented sentence structures, making the sentences more concise to enhance the expression of facts. Furthermore, passive voice is widely used in petroleum technology English. Additionally, the concepts described in petroleum technology English are complex, necessitating the expansion of sentence modifiers and qualifiers. As a result, these texts contain numerous long and complex sentence structures.

Based on the characteristics of Petroleum Technology English, it can be inferred that the direction of translation theory should meet two guiding principles. Firstly, it should guide the translation of vocabulary and terminology, and secondly, it should guide the translation of objective facts in the discourse. The feasibility of a translation theory needs to be discussed based on these two points, and whether it can meet the aforementioned guiding requirements will be the principle for evaluating the suitability of the translation theory. If both requirements can be fulfilled simultaneously, then the feasibility is high. If only one requirement is met, it still holds value as a guiding method, even if it cannot serve as a comprehensive theory exclusively for guiding the translation of scientific and technological English. It can be employed as an approach to refine the initial translated version, making the translation more natural. However, if none of the requirements can be met, the translation theory cannot serve as a guiding theory for Petroleum Technology English translation.

The following discussion primarily focuses on exploring theories suitable for guiding the translation of scientific and technological English, analyzing the steps and methods for guiding the translation of Petroleum Technology English. By applying the analytical logic of the selected theory, namely the "manipulation" and "rewriting" theories, and combining the methods and steps derived from the theory's own content analysis, the effectiveness of guiding the translation of Petroleum Technology texts can be examined.

4. Comparative Analysis in Practice

a comparative analysis can be conducted between the "Rewriting" theory and the Interpretive Theory, which is one of the important theories born from the French translation theory school. Initially, the Interpretive Theory was mainly used for guiding interpretation, analyzing the reception, understanding, transformation, and expression of information. However, its research scope gradually expanded to literary

translation, scientific and technological translation, film subtitle translation, sign language translation, and other fields. Therefore, the Interpretive Theory is recognized today as a translation theory that can be applied to guide the translation of scientific and technological English. It is important to analyze its feasibility and compare it with André Lefevere's "Manipulation" theory and "Rewriting" theory in terms of their differences.

4.1. The analysis of the Interpretive Theory in Practice

The translation model program established by the Interpretive Theory involves the following steps: understanding the source text and conveying the understood content and emotions in another language, while detaching oneself from the shell of the source language. Based on the first step, understanding the source text is crucial, especially for translating scientific and technological English which contains numerous specialized vocabularies. Misunderstanding the source text can lead to ambiguity in translation. For example, in petroleum engineering English, "trap" should be understood as "圈闭" rather than "陷阱". Similarly, "cuttings" should be translated as "岩屑" and "cores" should be translated as "岩心". These are specialized terms that need to be understood and applied correctly in the context of petroleum engineering English. Therefore, understanding the source text is essential, satisfying the first characteristic of translation in scientific and technological English.

In the second step, which is to detach oneself from the source language environment, it will be known that how this can be achieved through examples from petroleum engineering English sentences. For instance, considering the sentence: "In Europe, both in ancient times and in the Middle Ages, wells were sunk to obtain water and later for prospecting shallow ore lodes." A proper translation would be: "在欧洲, 从古代到中世纪, 人们凿井取水, 后来凿井探测浅层矿脉." In terms of time expression, the English word "both" connects the continuity of time, while in Chinese translation, it is necessary to express the time as a continuous period using "从.....到....." (from...to...). Additionally, the Chinese translation adds the subject "人们" (people) to express the intended meaning. In English, the sentence uses a passive construction, whereas in Chinese, it is more common to use an active construction. Therefore, adding the subject in the Chinese translation makes it sound more natural.

The aforementioned translation process demonstrates the ability to detach oneself from the source language environment and the linguistic conventions of the source language. Thus, it satisfies the characteristic of guiding the reasonable translation of objective facts in the discourse of petroleum engineering.

4.2. The analysis of the "Rewriting" Theory in Practice

In the "Manipulation" and "Rewriting" theory, the main point is to focus on the autonomy of the target language and conduct translation research based on the cultural level. In the first point, the emphasis is on highlighting the characteristics of the autonomy of the target text, rather than being subordinate to the source text. If the translation relies solely on the source text, it can easily deviate and lose the thinking patterns of the target language.

Taking the following sentence as an example: "But the study reckons there could be much more of this type of reshoring if Britain creates the right business conditions to compete with lower-cost countries." If the translated text is "有研究认为, 回岸的业务会越来越多, 如果英国政府能够创造出与低成本国家抗衡的贸易条件," this translation, which solely relies on the logical structure of the source text, exhibits problems of alienation and lack of fluency in the target language. To truly emphasize the centrality of the target text and its autonomy, logical changes need to be made. For instance, "study reckons" should not be translated as "研究认为" because it requires an agent who conducts the research in Chinese. Therefore, it should be translated as "专家认为" (experts believe). Additionally, the overall sentence structure also reflects whether the translation is centered around the target text. In the above example, the translated text "回岸的业务... 如果英国政府..." has a different word order compared to the natural Chinese structure. In Chinese, the conditional clause should come before the consequence, so it should be translated as "如果英国政府...回岸的业务..." (If the British government... the reshoring business...).

By focusing on the target text and its autonomy, it is possible to translate the objective facts in the discourse of petroleum engineering into the target language according to a reasonable logic.

Based on the cultural level, translation research requires placing translation in a macro cultural context for examination. The cultural context is influenced by various aspects such as traditions, daily life, and industry-specific practices. Therefore, in translating petroleum engineering texts, it is necessary to consider the cultural conventions of the petroleum industry in the target language. This places high demands on translators, as they need to have a good command of the language itself, as well as a clear understanding of the overview and cultural environment of the petroleum industry.

To highlight this aspect in the translation of petroleum engineering texts, consider the following example: "in distinguishing production engineering from, for example, reservoir engineering, the focus is often on specific wells and with a short-time intention." The accurate translation would be "但在将采油工程与其他领域——如油藏工程——相区别时, 就会发现采油工程常专注某几口井, 而且注重短期目标". In this translation, the use of the phrase "for example" is rendered using an addition and a dash, which is driven by the cultural environment. This conclusion indicates that translation based on the cultural level also guides the reasonable translation of objective facts in the discourse of petroleum engineering.

Therefore, André Lefevere's "Manipulation" and "Rewriting" theories cannot fully cover the characteristics of translating petroleum engineering texts and provide guidance. However, they can still serve the purpose of guiding translation with respect to one aspect. They can be used as translation theories with guiding significance to assist in refining the translation of petroleum engineering texts. It is important to note that the guidance process should occur after the initial translation of the petroleum engineering text, during the stage of modifying the translated text.

5. Conclusion

The core essence of André Lefevere's "Manipulation" and "Rewriting" theory lies in placing the translated text at the

center and conducting translation research based on a cultural level. However, the theory mainly fulfills the criteria of guiding the translation of objective facts in petroleum engineering discourse, without providing specific guidance on the vocabulary in petroleum engineering English. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge that when employing the theory to guide translation, it should be done during the process of revising the initial translation, rather than during the initial translation itself.

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