

The Manipulation of Ideology on Translation: Taking Ku Hongming's Confucian Translation as an Example

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Abstract: Translation is a combination of manipulation and rewriting, and it is carried out in a specific social, political, cultural and historical context subject to the translator's ideology. Based on Andre Lefevere's Manipulation and Rewriting Theory, this paper takes Ku Hongming's Confucian translation as a case study, and places Ku Hongming's translation activities in a specific historical context to explore the manipulation of ideology on translation activities from the aspects of text selection, target audience restrictions and original text rewriting.

Keywords: Ideology; manipulation; rewriting; Confucian translation; Ku Hongming.

1. Introduction

Ku Hongming (1857-1928) is one of the most important figures in the modern translation history of China, and he was the first person in China to translate the Confucian classics to the Western countries. His translations of traditional Chinese classics, such as *the Analects of Confucius*, *the Doctrine of the Mean* and *the Great Learning*, have aroused great repercussions in Western countries. Moreover, Gu regularly published articles in major newspapers around the world promoting Chinese Confucianism. In short, he devoted his whole life to learning from the east to the west and tried his best to maintain the dignity of traditional Chinese culture, spreading Chinese Confucian culture to the West, and had a profound influence on both the Eastern and Western cultural circles.

The cultural turn of translation studies has exerted a significant influence on contemporary translation studies. It has made translation studies undergo a profound paradigm revolution and placed it in a broader cultural context. It focuses not only on internal translation studies, that is, the transformation process from text to text, but also on external translation studies, emphasizing the influence of ideology, culture and history on translation activities. Therefore, it expands its field of research. Taking Ku Hongming's Confucian translation works as an example, this paper puts Ku Hongming's translation activities in a specific historical context, and discusses the manipulation of ideology on translation activities from the aspects of text selection, target audience restriction and original text rewriting.

2. Ideology and Translation

The concept of ideology first emerged in the late 18th century, but initially it was used to express modern criticism of religion as the main body of worldview and philosophical thought. The word itself is derived from the Greek words *idea* and *logos*, which literally mean *ideo-logos*, the doctrine of ideas. Lefebvre's understanding and cognition of ideology went through a process. Initially, he defined ideology simply as the world view, agreeing with Eagleton's definition of ideology: "Ideology is a set of discourse problems. It refers to a problem of practical interaction between subjects in the historical context, not just a problem of language" (Lefevere,

1987)^[5], and he believed that ideology can constrain literary translation. Later, he quotes Jameson's definition: "Ideology is in a sense not limited to politics, but rather a lattice pattern of forms, practices, and beliefs that guide our actions" (Bassnett & Lefevere 2004)^[2]. Finally, he describes ideology as "a conceptual grid of ideas and perceptions accepted in a particular society and period" (Bassnett & Lefevere 1998)^[1]. It can be seen that ideology is a multidimensional, intangible and unavoidable existence, and its construction is often inseparable from language^[14]. It covers politics, culture and many other aspects, and has a behavior-oriented role to a certain extent, influencing and restricting people's views on the world and society.

Translation is a kind of cultural rewriting, but also a kind of cultural manipulation^[6]. According to Lefevere's view of translation manipulation, manipulation means that the translator adapts the text according to his personal needs in the process of processing the original text and generating the target text. He maintained that translation is to rewrite the original text and create another text. Rewriting is the manipulation of the text, so that the text according to the manipulator's choice of the way in a particular social culture to produce influence and function. All adaptations, regardless of their intent, reflect certain ideologies (Bassnett & Lefevere, 2004)^[2].

3. The Manipulation of Ideology on Ku Hongming's Confucian Translation

3.1. Manipulation of text selection

3.1.1. The manipulation of text selection by individual ideology

The selection of the translated text is the first step in the ideological or political struggle involved in translation, and the selection of the text for translation must be screened so that the message conveyed or the value promoted by the translated text can contribute to the progress and development of the target language society.

Ku Hongming's individual ideology is closely related to his era background, family education and personal experience, and his understanding of Chinese and Western civilization constitutes his cultural conservatism characteristics and the core of his thought. He was born in an era of chaos and gunfire—the Second Opium War. He grew up in a family

of overseas Chinese, his mother was a Western and received a Western education since childhood, and his adoptive father Brown taught him to read Andersen, the Green brothers, Shakespeare and other works, so very early by the Western culture. In addition, he also studied in an English-speaking environment, at the British Prince's Central School in Penang for three years, and around the age of 13, he was taken by the Browns to study in Europe. Before he left, his father told him to burn incense and kneel before the ancestral monument and solemnly warned him: "No matter where you go, don't forget that you are Chinese." Since then, he has spent a total of 14 years abroad, mastering many languages and understanding many cultures. However, even though he studied abroad and traveled around the world when he was young, in Ku Hongming's mind, Americans are broad and simple, but lacking in esoteric; the English are profound, simple, but not broad enough; Germans are profound, broad but lack simplicity; only the Chinese are profound, broad and simple temperament. Ku Hongming, who was well versed in Western learning, made a comparison after studying Chinese studies, which produced a lifelong opinion. He thought that the Confucian doctrine of benevolence and justice could save the ruthlessness and destruction in the competition of the jungle. He believed that traditional culture, which was being abandoned by the Chinese, was the solution to saving the world, and that Confucianism was the essence of this culture. Under the influence and manipulation of his personal ideology, he chose Confucian classics for translation in terms of text selection. And he not only worshipped himself, but also spared no effort to promote our culture to the world, shouldering the heavy responsibility of strengthening China and educating Europe and America.

3.1.2. The manipulation of text selection by social ideology

The translation of the Four Books and the Five Classics began in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. At that time, foreign missionaries and sinologists coming to China translated the *Book of Songs*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Analects of Confucius*, *Lao-Tzu* and other ancient Chinese cultural classics into various languages and sent them to Europe and the United States, with translations in Latin, English, Italian, French and so on. To translate ancient Chinese classics into Western languages, one must be proficient in both languages and have a thorough understanding of the two cultures, which is not something ordinary people can do. However, most of these missionaries and sinologists only have a rudimentary knowledge of Chinese, so there are many shortcomings in the translated works, some of which even accumulate words into sentences and articles, and cannot reflect the essence of Chinese culture as a whole. In addition, China was a culturally weak country at that time, and the translation activities of missionaries were affected by their cultural prejudices, and their translations were often raw and took the strategy of cultural substitution. For example, substituting the Christian Jesus for Confucius, or mechanically adhering to the original text, cannot adequately convey the profound knowledge and high morality of the Chinese people that Confucian culture exhibits (Huang Xingtao, 1996)^[10]. Moreover, in view of the declining status of Chinese traditional culture at that time, not to mention the Western powers' disdain for Chinese traditional culture, many Chinese people themselves began to be skeptical and began to abandon traditional culture and learn Western science and technology. For example, Yan Fu and Lin Shu, translators of

the same period, began to translate foreign works. In this social and historical background where Chinese traditional culture was basically in a state of aphasia, in order to oppose the trend of Westernization, Ku Hongming went against the tide and chose to translate Confucian classics to save the country. In fact, translating Confucianism was a challenge to the mainstream ideology of the society at that time. However, based on his strong patriotic feelings and support for Confucianism, and in order to increase Chinese people's cultural self-confidence and identity, and make Chinese culture exude new vitality, Ku Hongming resolutely chose to re-translate the Confucian classics, so that Western readers can reflect on the existing stereotypes of Chinese people after reading the translated book.

3.2. Restrictions on the target audience

Ideology not only plays a role in the selection of translated texts, but also plays a crucial guiding role in their acceptance and dissemination. Restricted by ideology, translators always establish readers in their minds during the translation process, "making their translations cater to readers" (Bassnett & Lefevere 1998)^[1]. Ku Hongming regards thoughtful, intellectual and educated people as his target audience, "I hope that a thoughtful British gentleman can patiently read this translated work..." (Huang Xingtao 1996)^[10]. The meaning of a gentleman with brains and thoughts should include two layers: first, the gentleman is the same as Confucius said of the gentleman without class, that is, a real gentleman, there is no racial difference between educated people, such a gentleman should be a person who wishes to promote the opening of the world's knowledge and the expansion of morality; Without intellectual opening, there can be no real expansion of the mind, and without real expansion of the mind there can be no social progress and human civilization. Secondly, having a mind and thinking means having systematic and scientific knowledge, which includes both material and spiritual knowledge, which includes both material and spiritual knowledge. Without profound knowledge, one cannot have correct thoughts, and without thoughts one cannot explain reality and distinguish right from wrong. Only people with thinking can see the essence of things, see the connotation of things, and see the internal moral characteristics and spiritual values of materials. Therefore, Ku Hongming limited his readership to thoughtful and intelligent gentlemen, hoping to change Westerners' biased understanding of China and make Western people of insight re-understand China and Chinese culture.

3.3. The rewriting of the original content

The content of the original text is also influenced by ideological factors. As a text rewriter, translators often take into account the acceptability of target readers in their translation activities, reflecting a certain translation standpoint and purpose. In the preface to *the Analects of Confucius*, Gu made it clear that his purpose was to "make accessible to the ordinary English reader this Chinese pamphlet which gives the Chinese intellectual and moral character," and that he therefore sought to "make Confucius and his disciples talk in the same manner as the educated English express the same ideas as these Chinese masters." In the preface to the translation of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, he further clarified his views on translation: "To fully grasp its meaning, not only to translate the original text, but also to reproduce the style of the original." In his specific translation work, he really tries to practice this translation purpose. In

order for Western readers, especially English readers in general, to fundamentally understand the spirit of Confucian culture, first of all, the strangeness caused by heterogeneous cultural factors must be eliminated as much as possible. Therefore, he chose the domestication translation strategy [18]: either omit the names and place names that affect readers' understanding, or make cultural analogies and quote a large number of Western celebrities to explain the essentials of Confucian culture, such as the famous people familiar to European readers: Goethe, Clare, Emerson, Arnold, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, etc., so that readers can understand them in comparison. For example:

(1) ST: Xing yu shi, li yu li, cheng yu yue. (Yang Bojun, 2006) [17]

TT: Confucius remarked, "In education sentiment is called out by the study of poetry; judgment is formed by the study of the arts; and education of the character is completed by the study of music." (Translated by Ku Hongming)

In an attempt to remove cultural barriers, Gu cited the famous English poet Wordsworth, who believed that poetry breeds imagination and empowers the mind so that it can quickly identify the categories and characteristics of things, while Confucius said that the three stages guide interest, ability and sublimation. Western readers were very familiar with Wordsworth and his poems and readily accepted his theories. Ku Hongming quoted his famous comment on the *Analects*, expressing the same meaning. In this way, Western readers could find from the commentary that Confucius and their great poets shared the same views, and that China also had profound educational theories.

(2) ST: Cheng zhe, wu zhi shi zhong. Bu cheng wu wu. (Li Yuhua, 2003) [13]

TT: Truth is the beginning and end (the substance) of existence. Without truth there is no existence. (Translated by Ku Hongming)

Among them, the metaphysical concepts such as substance and existence elevate this simple sentence to the metaphysical level. Ku Hongming's translation of "tian" as God, "shengren" as saint or holy man, and "jiao" as religion are all examples of Confucian concepts interpreted in Western terms. Strictly speaking, Confucian "jiao" means "humanization", which is different from Western religion. Confucian "shengren" is a model of humanity rather than a model of faith. As a scholar well versed in Chinese and Western cultures, Gu cannot be unaware of the difference. His intention is to explain Confucianism with Western learning, reduce the dyslexia of Western readers, let them understand Confucianism in their own conceptual system, and make them understand that Confucianism is not inferior to Western religion and philosophy.

In addition, Ku Hongming's omission and deletion of the original text can also be seen everywhere, such as his omission and deletion of a large number of Chinese proper names and place names that affect readers' understanding. In *the Analects of Confucius*, he translated "zi" into Confucius, and all others, whether Zengzi or ordinary disciples, he translated into a disciple to Confucius. When encountering a relatively important person like Yan Hui, he would add supplementary notes along with the translated name.

It can be seen that as a creative practice, translation is inevitably controlled and interfered with by ideology. As the interpreter of the original text and the producer of the target language text, the translator Ku Hongming adjusted and rewrote the content of the original text by deleting and adding

annotations, so as to achieve the purpose of making Confucian culture accepted and respected by Western readers.

Although the cultural exchange between China and the West was two-way in modern times, the influence of "Western learning to the East" was always much stronger than that of "East learning to the West", and Westerners always make their choice of East learning with the lofty disdain of colonizers, so they had a deep separation from Eastern culture [15]. It is fair to say that Gu's translation strategy is undoubtedly of great significance to help Western readers understand Chinese culture.

4. Conclusion

All in all, Ku Hongming's choice of texts and strategies in translation is closely related to his historical context. In the process of translation, in order to make his translation conform to the ideology of the target language society, the translator intentionally adopts appropriate translation strategies to meet the expectations of the readers. However, as the subject of creation and interpretation, the translator's practice is inevitably characterized by his personal style and the color of *The Times*, that is, the translator has a consciousness of anti-manipulation of the target language ideology. Therefore, translation can be regarded as the organic unity of manipulated and anti-manipulated processes [8]. However, the theory of manipulation and adaptation relies too much on the social and historical conditions of the translation, thus ignoring the factors of the translator's subject. Therefore, when we make an objective evaluation of the translation and the translator's practice, we must combine the specific historical context, see that the mainstream ideology affects the manipulation of translation, and also take into account the translator's subjectivity, such as the translator's cultural identity and translation stance. That is, the ideology that the translator himself identifies with.

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