

On the Translation of the Chapter 31 of *A Dream of Red Mansions* from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

Lu He

Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu 610500, China

Abstract: As one of the four famous works in China, *A Dream of Red Mansions* enjoys reputation of all over the world and gains numerous readers. It reflects the background and conditions of Chinese ancient feudal society. To this end, it remains a great work in Chinese literature. Moreover, its language is simple, natural, beautiful and humorous. There are many Chinese cultural words in it, which need the translator to think deeply, and then translate, figure out the tone of the article and combine the context to achieve the harmony among the author, translator and reader. This paper aims to analyze the translation of words and sentences in Chapter 31 of *A Dream of Red Mansions* under the guidance of the Relevance Theory. And it seeks to find the translation methods and strategies that can be adopted when using the Relevance Theory, with the aim to achieve the optimal relevance between the source text and the target text.

Keywords: *A Dream of Red Mansions*; Relevance Theory; Translation methods; Optimal relevance.

1. Introduction

Translation is one of the most important activities in human society, which builds bridges between people for their communication and exchanges. At present, with the rapid path of globalization, China is deeply integrated into the momentum of the whole world, so it is becoming more and more important to spread Chinese culture and let people from other countries get to know more about our culture. As the saying goes, "cultural confidence" is necessary. In this paper, the author will discuss the guiding role of related translation theory on the work, *A Dream of the Red Mansions*, one of the four great Classic masterpieces in China, which reflects the characteristics of the feudal society from its prosperity to its decline. In addition, it is of profound significance for other countries to understand the history and culture of China in this period. It is known to all that there is a need to be justified in translation, that is to say to be supported by theories, and the theory of Relevance brings the translation to a better level. Sperber and Wilson are the proponents of Relevance Theory. Their student Gere put forward Relevance Translation Theory by combining Relevance Theory with translation studies. He believes that relevance is the primary principle that translators need to pay attention to in the process of translation.

The novel generally takes the social environment of the protagonist as the background and narrates his main experience, mainly through the development of the plot, highlighting what the protagonist sees and thinks, including the description of the environment and psychology. Through detailed description, portray the characters, reflect or criticize the social life of a certain period. As one of the four classical masterpieces in China, *A Dream of Red Mansions* has also become an encyclopedia of Chinese society. It contains many statements describing characters, environment and psychology, as well as many classical quotations and the use of rhetoric. It was created at the end of China's feudal society, describing various complicated contradictions in the feudal aristocratic family, shaping a series of tragic images of aristocrats, civilians and women of slave origin, exposing the corruption and evil of the feudal aristocratic class and its rule, and tortuously reflecting the historical trend of the inevitable

collapse and decline of the feudal society. In order to facilitate readers to understand the culture and characteristics of China in a specific period, the author believes that it is of great significance to use relevance theory to guide translation. Therefore, this thesis will study the 31 chapters of Yang Xianyi's translation under the guidance of relevance theory.

2. Relevance Theory

2.1. Relevance Theory

Relevance theory is a theory of cognitive pragmatics. It summarizes the research results of contemporary cognitive science, language philosophy and human behavior science, and is a criticism and development of Grice's conversational principle. Wilson and Sperber first put forward relevance theory, which includes the concepts of communication and cognition. It regards verbal and nonverbal communication between people as a cognitive activity. Whether both parties can understand each other's words depends on the cognitive environment between them. Relevance theory holds that the communication process includes ostensiveness and inference, and its particularity lies in that translation activities involve two different languages and cultures, involving three parties, namely, the author of the work, the translator and the target language reader. That is, the speaker gives the hearer an explicit expression of his or her own ideas, and then the hearer combines his or her own knowledge and the speaker's words to infer the content of the speaker's expression and the implied meaning of the speaker. The cognitive process of human beings aims to achieve the greatest cognitive effect with the smallest possible processing effort. To do this, individuals must focus on the most relevant information available to them. There are several constructions under relevance theory. First, the speaker's language may produce different understanding. The hearer may not fully understand all the meanings expressed by the speaker. These unreasoned contents can only be obtained with his own efforts. The hearer will generally understand the speaker's meaning in a simple way without great effort.

2.2. Relevance Translation Theory

Relevance translation theory, put forward by Speer and Wilson's student Ger, is a translation theory developed on the basis of relevance theory, which can guide practice, especially in literary translation. Translation is the process of transforming one language into another. Under the guidance of relevance theory, translation is also a dynamic process of interpreting the source language, including ostensiveness and inference. Gutt believes that "translation is a process of inference, which is actually a cognitive behavior and is the center of communication activities, therefore it is also the center of reading or translation activities. Relevance theory suggests that to understand natural language correctly, it is necessary to find relevance through context, relying on reasoning. Because every discourse in natural language can have multiple interpretations, it is necessary to find the relevance of information through context, and then infer based on the correlation between discourse and context. Firstly, as a translator, you should understand the content the author wants to convey and infer implicit meanings from the context. Then, translate in a way that is easy for readers to understand, convey the information that the original text wants to show to the target readers. This requires translators to establish the best connection between the source text and the target text, and to reduce readers' cognitive effort. In addition, the context referred to in relevance theory not only refers to language characteristics and environmental characteristics, including socio-cultural norms, but also refers to a series of assumptions made by language users to accept the objective world, namely the "cognitive environment". As Sperber and Wilson pointed out that the context in this sense is not limited to the direct external environment of both parties in communication, the preceding paragraph, but also includes expectations for the future, scientific hypotheses, religious beliefs, memories of anecdotes, various assumptions about culture, and various beliefs about the speaker's thinking state. All of these may play a certain role in the process of discourse comprehension.

2.3. Case Analysis

According to Relevance Theory and Relevance Translation Theory, the author believes that in order to achieve the best relevance between the source text and the target text, and to reduce the cognitive effort of readers, as an interpreter, we should fully understand the context. The target text must first have the same contextual effect as the source text, and the target text must be expressed clearly and naturally, without the need for readers to work hard to understand, and we should fully consider the communicative intention of the source text and meet the expectations of readers. If there are implicit meanings in the original text, it can be properly translated to provide the best contextual effect. This is because there must be cultural differences between languages. Some implicit meanings cannot be expressed in another language, so they need to be explained directly to reduce the reading pressure of readers. Therefore, in the translation process, different translation strategies can be applied, so as to realize the best translation effectiveness, such as free translation, literal translation, omission and so on. In this section, the author will give many examples to illustrate how relevance theory can guide translation practice.

Example 1:

ST: 岂不是宝玉只有三分不是, 姑娘倒有七分不是。

TT: That put you more in the wrong than Master Bao.

Analysis: In line with the content of the book, in this part, the original text said that Lin Daiyu was wrong in this matter, while Jia Baoyu is better than Daiyu. The Chinese characters "三分不是" and "七分不是" in the original text meant that. In Chinese "不是" means "wrong, mistakes or error". In this case, therefore, the translator adopts the method of free translation, translating it into "Put someone more in wrong than another", which is more convenient for readers to understand, reduces the reading pressure of readers, and achieves the best correlation between the original text and the target text to a greater extent.

Example 2:

ST: 这么热天毒日头地下, 晒坏了他如何使得呢!

TT: It's a scorching day. We don't want him to get sunstroke."

Analysis: In Chinese, some repetition is commonly used to emphasize, and these techniques are commonly used in the use of reduplicated words. And this sentence is an example. After reading this part, it is easily to know that the original is expressing that Lin Daiyu is worried that Baoyu is locked out of the door and the outside temperature is scorching. She is afraid of Baoyu's illness. This sentence is mainly to say that the weather is hot and the heat is unbearable. "热天毒日头地下" is to express this meaning. Therefore, the translator here adopts the translation method of free translation to translate "热天毒日头地下" into "a scorching day". This makes it easier for readers to understand, retains the vividness of the original language to the maximum extent, and achieves the best relevance between the original and the translation.

Example 3:

ST: 我的五脏都碎了, 你还只是哭, 走罢, 我同你往老太太跟前去。

TT: You're breaking my heart with your weeping.

Analysis: In "A Dream of Red Mansions", it can also be said that in Chinese classical works, there are many exaggerated statements, which are used to emphasize emotions and strengthen tones. For example, in this case, the original sentence used "五脏都碎了", which is to express Jia Baoyu's heart is hurt, because Lin Daiyu has been crying, and he tried every way to persuade her, but it only came into useless. Therefore, the translator here translated "五脏都碎了" into "breaking me heart", which adopted the translation method of free translation. In this end, it can reproduce the information intention and communication intention of the original text, reduce the cognitive effort of the reader, and achieve the best relevance between the source text and the target text.

Example 4:

ST: 一天大似一天的, 还这么赖皮赖脸的连个道理也不知道。

TT: "You're not a children anymore, yet you still carry on in this shameless way.

Analysis: "一天大似一天的" means that Jia Baoyu is getting older and he is no longer a child. Thus, it is not suitable to be unreasonable. Therefore, the translator here treats it as "you are not a child any more" and further explains its meaning. In the second sentence, "赖皮赖脸" is often used in Chinese to express someone who has no sense of shame. The context of this sentence is that Lin Daiyu asked Jia Baoyu to go to seek help from Lady Jia to judge and ask Baoyu not to pull and push with each other. Combined with the context, the

translator translated it into "shameless way", which can make the communication intention of the original and the translation consistent.

Example 5:

ST: 有这会子拉着手哭的, 昨儿为什么又成了乌眼鸡呢!

TT: Now you're holding hands and crying, but yesterday you like fighting cocks.

Analysis: The sentence is about Lin Daiyu and Jia Baoyu, which is mentioned by Wang Xifeng. They often fight in jest or for fun. "乌眼鸡", also known as "五眼鸡", comes from the work "Water Fairy" written by Zhang Mingshan, a Chinese writer, which means aggressive and fierce. In this context, the translator translates it as "fighting cocks", which has the same meaning to its Chinese, referring aggressive and riotous. This can achieve the unity of the original text and the translated text, and to a certain extent, it also reappears the style of the original text and the meaning of the words to be conveyed by the original text, which is in line with the communicative intention of the original text. In addition, the style of the original text is not damaged, but also make the sentence vividly.

Example 6:

ST: 对笑对诉, 倒象黄鹰抓住了鹤子的脚, 两个都扣了环了, 那里还要人去说合。

TT: I found they'd already asked each other's forgiveness, were clinging together like an eagle sinking its talons into a hawk. They didn't need any help."

Analysis: There are many idioms in the original text of A Dream of Red Mansions, which have their own language characteristics, and these idioms with cultural characteristics do not exist in other languages and cultures. The use of these idioms adds a wonderful stroke to the language of the original text. Therefore, when dealing with these words with distinctive national characteristics, the translator should try to use literal translation without affecting translation. Therefore, the translator translated "倒象黄鹰抓住了鹤子的脚, 两个都扣了环了" into "were clasping together like an eagle Singing its talons into a hawk". In literary works, there are often some cultural words in the native language, which have their own characteristics and are different from other languages and cultures. In this case, it is important to consider whether to use interpretation or literal translation and annotation, so that readers can simply understand their ideas.

Example 7:

ST: 我看的是李逵骂了宋江, 后来又赔不是。

TT: One was that piece," she answered, "in which Li Kui abuses Song Jiang and then apologizes.

Analysis: China has a cultural heritage of over 5000 years, during which there are many classic stories and cultures. And these contents with distinct Chinese characteristics are not found in English culture, resulting in cultural default during translation. For this type of translation, translators often adopt different translation strategies, and this sentence is one example. It is featuring by Chinese characteristics, as it uses the knowledge of classical culture, which makes the original work more splendid. Although there is no such allusion in English culture, in order not to affect the cultural connotation of the original text, the translator adopts the literal translation method here. In this way, the target readers can basically understand the text and the original text is protect from destroying. Thus, it realized the best correlation.

Example 8:

ST: 凤姐故意用手摸着腮, 诧异的说道: "既没人吃姜, 怎么这么辣辣的?"

TT: "No one's been eating ginger." Xifeng put both hands to her cheeks with a show of astonishment. "In that case, why are some people so red in the face? "

Analysis: In Chinese, there are many adjectives related to taste used to describe people's emotions, such as sweet indicating happiness and satisfaction, sour indicating jealousy, bitter indicating sadness and sadness, and spicy indicating anger or anger. If the translator don't have a thorough understanding of these, he won't be able to translate well. The context of the original text is that Lin Daiyu and Baochai taunted each other, while Baoyu was on the side, and Wang Xifeng looked at them and made fun of them. The original "怎么这么辣辣的" is actually talking about how everyone should be so angry. Therefore, here, the translator translates it into "so red in the face" in combination with the context before and after, realizing the best relevance between the source text and the target text, which is easy for readers to understand.

Example 9:

ST: 一时宝钗凤姐去了, 林黛玉笑向宝钗道。

TT: Presently Baochai and Xifeng left. Then Daiyu turned with a smile to Baoyu.

Analysis: In Chinese, there are many individual verbs with multiple meanings, and their meanings are not necessarily related, which requires the translator to select the correct meaning of the words in combination with the context and the content before and after the encounter of such verbs. For example, the word "去了" in this sentence has many meanings: "left", "died", "set out somewhere" and so on. Therefore, here the translator combines the context, knowing the fact that Baochai and Wang Xifeng left, and then translated it as "left". By doing so, the content to be expressed in this sentence is clearly presented in front of the target readers, achieving the best relevance and reflecting the important role of relevance theory,

Example 10:

ST: 下作小娼妇, 好好的爷们, 都叫你教坏了。

TT: It's low creatures like you who lead the young master astray.

Analysis: Chinese culture has a long history, and many idioms have distinctive cultural characteristics. When dealing with these idioms, the test is the translator's understanding of Chinese culture. In this example, "小娼妇" refers to a woman with low moral character and no status. This is Wang Xifeng saying that Lin Daiyu Baochai and others have damaged Jia Baoyu, so they are taunting them. The translator here translates it as "low creation" in combination with the context. Creation means not only biology, but also pity and shame when referring to people. It achieves the best relevance between the source text and the target text.

Example 11:

ST: 太太要打骂, 只管发落, 别叫我出去就是天恩了。

TT: Whip me, scold me or punish me as you please, but for pity's sake don't send me away!

Analysis: As we all know, in Chinese culture, people often say "天", "天老爷", "老天爷" and other words to express an exclamation or prayer. It is also similar to English culture, as in English, people often say "my god", and "god" refers to God to show there aspirations or prays. This is because most people believe in Christianity and think that as long as they

pray faithfully enough, God will answer their requests and help them fulfill their wishes. Therefore, in order to achieve the best correlation between the source text and the target text, the translator here translates "天恩" into "pity's sake". Pity's sake means "看在上帝的面子上" in Chinese. It is in line with the cultural characteristics of the target language, and this translation is more appropriate here. This is a prominent example to show the best effectiveness of the relevance theory.

Example 12:

ST: “难道这也是个痴丫头，又象鬟儿来葬花不成？”因又自叹道：“若真也葬花。可谓东施效颦。”

TT: Can this be another absurd maid come to bury flowers like Daiyu?

Analysis: This is what Wang Xifeng is saying about this woman. She thinks that this woman will bury flowers like Lin Daiyu, and that this behavior is absurd and stupid. As is well known, the reason why Lin Daiyu buries flowers in this work. Firstly, she cherishes flowers the most and feels that they are buried cleanly in the soil after they fall, indicating her unique perspective on beauty. Secondly, she is originally sentimental and often laments her own background. So here we translate "痴丫头" into "abused maid", which illustrates the emotion of Wang Xifeng and reappears the meaning of the original text, reduces the reading pressure of readers, and better realizes the best relevance.

Example 13:

ST: 只见这女孩子眉蹙春山，眼颦秋水，面薄腰纤，袅袅婷婷，大有林黛玉之态。

TT: With her finely arched eyebrows, limpid eyes, her delicate slender features, waist and graceful movements striking resemblance to Daiyu.

Analysis: Four-character words or four-character idioms are often used in Chinese classical masterpieces to describe items, making the writing smooth and beautiful as well as making sentences poetic and picturesque. Therefore, in order to achieve the best correlation between the original text and the translation and not destroy the beauty of the original sentence, the translator here will deal with adjectives and nouns, such as "fine arched eyebrows", "limpid eyes", "delicate slender features", and "Graceful movements". In this way, the translated version embraces a strong sense of visuals that allows the target readers to construct corresponding beautiful images in their minds.

Example 14:

ST: 可恨我不能替你分些过来。

TT: I wish I could share her troubles.

Analysis: In Chinese, "分" has many meanings, including "separate" and "share". In the context of the original text, Jia Baoyu was somewhat moved when he saw the "痴丫头", looked at her pitiful appearance, and wanted to help her by sharing some unhappy things, which demonstrated that Baoyu is deeply feel touching to her experiences. Therefore, here the translator translates "分些过来" into "share troubles", which enables the translator to better understand the original text and achieve the best correlation between the original text and the target text.

Example 15:

ST: 下流东西们! 我素日担待你们得了意，一点儿也不怕，越发拿我取笑儿了。

TT: You low creatures!" he stormed. "I treat you so well that you've lost all sense of respect. Now you dare make fun of me!"

Analysis: The scene in the original text is that Jia Baoyu is locked out by Xiren, Lin Daiyu and other girls. Baoyu enters the door angrily, then kicks Xiren, and Xiren cries angrily. As in the example above, "下流的东西们" refer to people with low morals. Here, the translator also treats them as "low creation" to achieve the best connection between the original and the translation. By doing so, the target readers can have a better understanding and will have a corresponding emotions like Baoyu.

Example 16:

ST: 袭人从来不曾受过大话的。

TT: Xiren had never had so much as a harsh word from Baoyu.

Analysis: A Dream of Red Mansions is a classic Chinese work. Its language is biased towards ancient Chinese, but it is much simpler than ancient Chinese. Therefore, some parts need to carefully analyzed and combine with the corresponding context. The meaning of this sentence is that the protagonist Xiren never heard harsh or even cruel language from other people. Therefore, in order to facilitate readers' understanding, the translator translates it as "harsh word". In this example, the translator also change the passive clause into active one, Together, it realized the best relevance, helping the target readers have a clear understanding of the text.

Example 17:

ST: 袭人见了，心也得凉了半截。

TT: Xiren's heart failed her at the sight of the blood.

Analysis: Many rhetorical devices, such as exaggeration, contrast, parallelism and personification, are used in Chinese classical masterpieces or novels to make the article more attractive or interesting. The same is true of A Dream of Red Mansions, which uses exaggerated rhetoric to emphasize emotions, and here is an example. In Chinese "心凉了半截" means that the hero is devastated and unhappy, so the translator treats it as "one's heart failed", which can reproduce the emotion of the original text and make the reader have emotional resonance. In this way, the best relevance is realized.

3. Summary

According to relevance theory, in order to obtain the best relevance, the translator must pay attention to the communicative intention of the original text and the cognitive environment of the target language reader. Different from some translation theories, under the guidance of relevance theory, translation no longer emphasizes the direct equivalence between the original text and the target text, but emphasizes the important role that the translator plays in the process of translation, namely, the understanding of the original text, the proficiency of the source language and the target language, the proficiency of the source language and the target language cultural background, etc. The translator needs to combine the context of the original text, On the basis of fully considering the differences between the two languages and cultural backgrounds, the implicit meaning contained in the original text is clearly conveyed to the reader. Therefore, translators can adopt different translation strategies and techniques to achieve optimal relevance, which is regarded as the link between readers of different cultures. At the same time, the translator can play a positive role in making the translation easier to be accepted by the target

language readers

The original language is fluent, logical, practical and informative. Therefore, based on relevance theory, the author has adopted a variety of translation methods and techniques to complete this translation task. At the lexical level. Adopt literal translation and free translation. When the original text adapts to the cognitive environment of the target language reader, the author adopts the literal translation method to retain the characteristics of the original text. In other cases, free translation is chosen to convey the expected meaning of the source text, which can reduce the processing efforts of the target readers and make the target text more readable. At the syntactic and textual levels, free translation and word order adjustment, structural transformation, addition and deletion are adopted to convey the original information and cater to the reading habits of the target language readers. In addition, the author also pays attention to the handling of the style and logical relationship of the punctuation text to accurately convey the original information and reproduce the original intention or function. In short, these translation methods and techniques have been flexibly applied to achieve the best relevance of translation.

References

- [1] Gutt,E.A.Translation and Relevance:Cognition and Context.Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.2004.
- [2] Gutt, Ert -August. Translation and Relevance -Cognition and Context [M].Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1991.
- [3] Wang Jianguo. On the Limitations of Relevance Theory in Translation Studies [J]. Language and Translation (Chinese), 2003 (1): 37-40.
- [4] Li Yin, Luo Voter. Relevance and Translation [J]. Foreign Language and Foreign Language Teaching, 2004 (1).
- [5] Zhu Yan. Relevance Theory and Stylistic Translation Research [M]. Changsha: National University of Defense Science and Technology Press, 2007.
- [6] Li Xianjin. Cultural Default and Translation Strategies from the Perspective of Relevance Theory [J]. Foreign Languages, 2013,29 (03): 112-116.
- [7] Lin Kenan. Introduction to Relevance Translation Theory [J]. Chinese Translation, 1994, (04): 8-11.
- [8] Li Zhanxi, Research on Translation for Foreign Languages in China: A Review, Commentary, and Prospects, Shanghai Translation, 2008: 20-26.
- [9] Meng Jianguo, "The Explanatory Power of Relevance Theory on Translation Standards", published in "Translation of Science and Technology in China", Vol. 14, Issue 1, 2001,9-11.
- [10] Ma Li, The Influence of Contextual Culture on the Translation of British and American Literature [J]. Journal of Heihe University, 2021,12 (3): 124-126.
- [11] Wei Taina, Context Analysis and Translation Word Selection [J]. Campus English, 2017 (7): 244.
- [12] Wang Kefei and Wang Yingchong, On the Translation of Cultural Vocabulary with Chinese Characteristics IJ1. Foreign Language and Foreign Language Teaching, 2016 (6): 87-93149-150.
- [13] Wang Jianguo. Review and Prospect of Relevance Translation Theory Research [J]. China Translation, 2005 (4): 21-26.
- [14] Meng Jianguo, The explanatory power of relevance theory on translation standards [J]. China Science and Technology Translation, 2001 (1): 9-11, 47.
- [15] Xu Xinrui. Translation of Chinese Characteristic Expressions in Press Conferences from the Perspective of Relevance Adaptation Model [D]. School of Foreign Affairs, 2020.
- [16] He Ziran, A Cognitive Study of Speech Communication [J]. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2006.
- [17] Ramos YF, A Decade of Relevance Theory. [J] Journal of Pragmatics,1998.
- [18] Malmkjaer, Kirsten. Review: Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context by E.A.Gutt Mind and Language, 1992(7):298-309.
- [19] Newmark Peter. Paragraphs on Translation [M] Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1993:105.
- [20] The explanatory power of Meng Jianguo's Relevance Theory on Translation Standards [J]. China Science and Technology Translation 2001 (01): 9-11+47.