

On Translation Strategies of Biographies under Variational Translation Theory

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Abstract: A biography is a form of literary work that systematically describes and introduces typical characters' life, spirit, and other fields. The works require "truth, faith and life" to achieve the expression and reflection of the character characteristics and deep spirit. Biography is an effective recording form of people or people's information, which is of great significance to the study of history and the change of times. This paper selects Li Yanlu, a biography of Mudanjiang Party history of the Communist Party of China, as the research object, and tries to analyze the application of the theory in biographies from the perspective of the theory of variation translation from three aspects: increase, decrease, and compilation.

Keywords: Biography; Variational Translation Theory; Li Yanlu.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, great changes have taken place in the field of translation in the world, and the foreign translation of national culture has become an increasingly important field in the translation activities of many countries. In the past 20 years, along with the "going global" strategy of Chinese culture, we should give full play to the important role of translation in international communication, constantly improve the ability and level of international communication, and tell the story of China and the story of the Communist Party of China to the world. The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression is a memorable chapter in the history of the Chinese people's struggle for independence and freedom in modern times, and a chapter that has experienced many vicissitudes in the historical development of the Chinese nation. It is necessary to strengthen the study of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, adhere to historical materialism to understand and record history, strengthen the collection and collation of historical materials, let history speak for itself and speak with historical facts, bear in mind the great history of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, which was forged by blood and life, and safeguard national dignity and honor.

The premise of culture going global is the push and dissemination of cultural products outside the region, among which the translation of publications is the most important. In fact, since the 1950s our government has been vigorously promoting the foreign translation of Chinese cultural writings, including translations of leaders' works, policy documents, ancient and modern literature, philosophical and historical texts, such as *Deng Xiaoping*, *Mao: A Biography* and *A Concise History of The Communist Party of China*; In addition to the single volume, there are also multi-language translations of the *Chinese Literature* journal and a series of publications such as the Panda Series. Similar state-sponsored translation and publishing projects increased at the turn of the new century, with unprecedented input of human and material resources, and even the country's top leaders personally paid attention to them and personally promoted them on diplomatic occasions. Therefore, this paper is of great significance to the translation study of Party history figures.

2. Characteristics of the Translation Task

This article is selected from *the Biography of the CPC Mudanjiang Party History Figure, Li Yanlu*, edited by Chen Xueliang and included in *the Biography of the CPC Mudanjiang Party History figure* published by the CPC Party History Press in 2015. The full text of this material contains 10,307 words. General Li Yanlu, a native of Yanji County, Jilin Province, joined the Communist Party of China in 1931 and was the founder and leader of the 4th Army of the Northeast United Resistance Army, joined the Northeast Army as a soldier in 1917 and later served as a platoon leader and company commander. He also served as a member of the Standing Committee of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th National People's Congresses, and died in Beijing on June 18, 1985, after a long illness. Before 1934, Li Yanlu commanded less than 1,000 troops in the Jidong area and often defeated the Japanese Kwantung Army with fewer troops, and Peng Xunhou, an expert from the Academy of Military Sciences, once said, "Li Yanlu often fought in the battles of the gods". At the beginning of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, General Li Yanlu could be considered to have outstanding war achievements, and the Battle of Wall Seam was his most famous battle.

From the beginning of the last century, when the Communists sought a way to pioneer amid the national crisis and threw their heads and blood, to the founding of New China, when they ruled China and explored reforms. In the journey of a nation's rise and rejuvenation, we can see the whole group of heroic communists. Chinese history has always attached importance to the style of chronicles, and the biographies of people are the most important and interesting part of historical works to understand and taste history. *The Biography of Mudanjiang Party of the Communist Party of China* is a great biography of the local historical figures of the Communist Party of China. The biography *Li Yanlu* written by Chen Xueliang collects a large amount of information, selects the material strictly, discards the crude and extracts the essence, removes the falsehoods and keeps the truth, after deeply understanding the historical environment and the background of the times in which Li Yanlu lived, makes a

specific and convincing explanation of many important issues with informative historical materials, correct historical view, and the historical virtue of unity of party spirit and science. The biography of *Li Yanlu* reproduces the touching and heroic deeds of the revolutionary martyrs in the Red Era, showing the true and pure faith and will of the Chinese Communists. This series of books is not only a rare series of historical materials, but also a complete set of patriotic education materials, as well as a necessary book for building a Marxist learning party, a desk book and a tool book for Party members and cadres, which is worth collecting and reading by Party members and cadres, Party history enthusiasts, researchers, research institutions and libraries.

3. Overview of Variational Translation Theory

As a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural interlanguage conversion activity, the ultimate goal of translation is to faithfully and completely translate the original message into the translated text without adding or subtracting anything, and in a consistent style. However, in concrete translation practice, not all translators can fully convey the information of the original text to the translated text. Due to the influence of many subjective and objective factors such as their own quality and social and cultural environment, translators often selectively translate the information in the original text to suit specific translation purposes and readers' needs, and the result of these translation methods is an incomplete translation.

According to Professor Huang Zhonglian, translation methods can be divided into two categories: full translation and variant translation, where variant translation is "the translation activity in which the translator takes in the relevant contents of the original work using such adaptations as addition, omission, edition, narration, deletion, combination and adaptation according to the special needs of a specific reader under specific conditions" (Huang Zhonglian, 2001:19). From this concept, it can be seen that translation is not done at the whim of the translator, but is a process of translating the content of the original text into the target language through a series of adaptations under the influence or constraint of specific socio-historical conditions and with due consideration to the special needs of specific readers.

With the continuous development of the theory of variant translation, many scholars nowadays have used it to explore the translation of Chinese classics. Among them, some of the most representative ones are: Cheng Jing analyzes the three English translations of *Fusheng Liuji* using the variation translation theory, and suggests that the extent of using this theory depends on "the readers' acceptance in different cultural contexts and the translators' purpose"; Huang Zhonglian and Ni Lulu analyze the English translation of *Evolution and Ethics* using the strategy of reduction in the theory of variation translation, and believe that the readability of this translation is "inextricably linked to Yan Fu's good use of the strategy of 'reduction'"; Che Mingming takes Xu Yuanhong's English translation of classical plum blossom words as an example and examines and analyzes the explanatory power of imagery and context reproduction in classical Chinese poetry based on the theory of variation translation, thus proving that "After a comprehensive review of the above-mentioned representative research literature", it is found that the theory of variable translation has strong applicability to the study of translation of Chinese classical

texts, but it has rarely been applied to explore the translation strategy of the culturally exclusive item of the biography *Li Yanlu*.

The practice provides valuable reference data for theory, and theory in turn guide's practice. Professor Huang Zhonglian's translation theory is a valuable translation system derived from such a process of repeated alternation between theory and practice, which has an indelible and important influence on the development of translation in China. In today's increasingly intense global civilizational exchanges, it is of great significance for the development of nations and countries to better understand the differences between different nationalities and the cultures of different peoples. Therefore, it is of great significance to apply Professor Huang Zhonglian's variation translation theory to guide this translation practice.

4. The Application of Variation Translation Theory to the Biography of Li Yanlu

The biography of the Mudanjiang Party of the Communist Party of China, Li Yanlu, is not too straightforward in language expression, but also has a literary color. It is free in length and focused to show the richness of the characters. In terms of vocabulary, this translation practice has obvious local characteristics and a large number of cultural load words, including names of people, places, officials, organizations, four-character idioms, periodicals and newspapers. In terms of syntax, the text is mostly composed of Chinese topic sentences and running sentences, among which topic sentences are divided into fourteen kinds of Chinese topic sentences, including existential topic sentences, passive topic sentences, resulting topic sentences and displaced topic sentences; running sentences are divided into single-subject running sentences and multi-subject running sentences. The essay is an objective account of Li Yanlu's personal experience from the third-person perspective in chronological order with a clear structure. Although there are many paragraphs in this article, the transition between them is clear and logical. This article discusses the application of the three variations of "addition, omission, and edition" in this text.

4.1. Addition

The addition of information to the original text. There are three ways of addition: "interpretation, commentary and writing". Interpretation is to translate the implied meaning in the text or to express it in the form of in-text notes, without adding additional footnotes or end-notes to interrupt the fluency of reading for the target language readers. Commentary means adding the translator's own opinion to the translated content in order to help the target language readers understand the translated text more deeply, but its disadvantage is to generalize the text with one's own words or shackle the target language readers' understanding of the original text, so it should be used with caution in the translation of biographies of party history figures. Writing refers to the addition of relevant content in the translation by the translator, either for background introduction or for subsequent expansion, either before, during or after the translation.

Example 1: 1931 年“九一八”事变后, 受中国共产党的派遣, 到抗日爱国武装部队工作, 任抗日救国军参谋长。

Translation: After the September 18th Incident (on

September 18, 1931, the Japanese Kwantung Army stationed in Northeast China suddenly attacked Shenyang and occupied Northeast China by force) in 1931, Li Yanlu was dispatched by the CPC to work in the Resistance against Japanese Aggression Patriotic Armed Forces and served as the chief of staff of the National Salvation Army of Resistance against Japanese Aggression.

Analysis: The “September 18th Incident” is the name of a major historical event with Chinese characteristics. Since the target readers are English readers, it is necessary to explain it specifically so that the target readers can also understand the process and significance of this historical event. Therefore, the translator adopts the method of translation with notes in the text. The translator has adopted the explanation of the September 18th Incident from the *Encyclopedia of China*, which summarizes the event in the most concise language, with great accuracy and authority.

Example 2: 在抗日军政大学开办的干部班中, 抗大四期第二大队第四队就是东工委在抗日军政大学内办了一个东北干部队, 共有学员 100 余人。

Translation: In the cadre class run by the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese Military and Political College (a school set up by the Communist Party of China to train military and political cadres during the War of Resistance), the Fourth Team of the Second Brigade of the Fourth Phase of the college was the east working committee to run a northeast cadre force in the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese Military and Political College, with a total of more than 100 students.

Analysis: It is recorded in the *Dictionary of Chinese Educational Events* that Mao Zedong delivered a speech at the first inaugural meeting on June 1, 1936, stating that the Anti-Japanese Red Army University was founded to prepare for the advent of the national revolutionary war. In order to adapt to the new situation and solve new problems, cadres would need to be re-studied and re-trained. Anti-Japanese Red Army University is the predecessor of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University. The school mainly trained party and government cadres to cope with the war against Japan. The translator uses an additional translation technique to explain the function of this school so that the reader can understand the term more directly and clearly.

4.2. Omission

It is the overall removal of the information contained in the original text that the reader does not need in the translator's opinion, which is expressed in the translation of the original text. In Chinese rhetoric, prose is used more often, but in English, repetition should be avoided. In this case, the Chinese to English translation should reduce the repetitive part of the prose and give the English reader a clear statement; or use the corresponding pronoun to refer to it.

Example3: 10 月, 吴平在密山主持召开了密山县委扩大会议, 决定将密山县创建的密山游击队与正在密山活动的李延禄领导的人民革命军合并, 组成东北抗日同盟军第四军。

Translation: In October, Wu Ping chaired an enlarged meeting of the Mishan County Party Committee and decided to merge the Mishan Guerrilla force with the People's Revolutionary Army led by Li Yanlu, to form the Fourth Army of the Northeast Resistance against Japanese Aggression Alliance.

Analysis: The original text mentions “Mishan” five times,

and a word-by-word translation into English would make the translation complicated and verbose, so the translator adopts the deletion method in the variant translation theory to reduce the original text into English. In the first clause, the word “Mishan” is an adverb of place and the name of the meeting, which is a proper noun and therefore cannot be omitted, so the secondary adverb of place is omitted. The second clause also omits the word “Mishan”, which indicates the location, and the name of the guerrilla group, in general, is created by the county committee of a certain place, so when translating the name of the guerrilla group, it is already expressed that it is the guerrilla group in “Mishan” and not elsewhere, so it can also be translated by the word “Mishan” mentioned earlier. The name “Mishan County Committee” can be omitted.

Example 4: 因此中共派党员进入救国军工作, 都避开党员的身份, 以同乡同学旧交的关系进行工作, 建立的中共党支部也都是秘密的。

Translation: Therefore, the CPC sent its members to work in the National Salvation Army, avoiding the identity of party members and working as old friends, and the CPC branches established were all secret.

Analysis: In the original text, “fellow countryman”, “classmate” and “old friend” can refer to a person who has these three relationships at the same time or to three different people, if they are translated as three separate words, the reader will think they are three people, rather than referring to them generally as “old friends”, the reader will understand the meaning, and will not struggle with whether it is a general or specific reference, the translation is also simpler and more fluent.

4.3. Edition

Edition refers to the original content of the organization, order, to make it more perfect and effective behavior. Commonly used specific editing methods are processing, extraction, narrative, generalization, rationalization, paraphrasing and so on. The most commonly used methods are: combining, summarizing and rationalizing. Combining two or two related things into one narrative has the advantage of being accurate and concise. To summarize is to convey as much information as possible with as few language symbols as possible, and to get the best effect. The word “smooth” in translation means that the chapters correspond to each other, the sequence of events, the text is coherent and the meaning is smooth.

Example 5: 宁安商会被李延禄的民族大义所感动, 在日军占领宁安县城的前一天晚上, 商会将 9 万元巨款提出送往救国军总部, 以支援抗日。

Translation: Moved by Li Yanlu's national interest, the Ning'an Chamber of Commerce offered a huge sum of 90,000 yuan to send to the headquarters of the National Salvation Army the night before the Japanese occupied Ning'an County to support the resistance against Japanese aggression.

Analysis: Due to the difference in language culture and expression habits between English and Chinese, English often puts the key information in the front of the sentence and the secondary information in the back. Chinese often places the key information at the end of the sentence and the secondary information at the front. This difference reflects the different ways of thinking and cultural and psychological structures between people. The translator, as a transmitter of information in both languages, needs to have an in-depth study of the source and target languages. In this case, the key information

expressed in the sentence is in the second half of the sentence, so when translating into English, the translator uses rationalization in the theory of variable translation to reorganize it and convey the key information to the reader first.

5. Conclusion

From the century-long translation history of the CPC, we can see that the Party's translation work involves all aspects of the Party's work in politics, economy, culture, diplomacy, etc. It is either related to the germination and growth of the Party, the armed struggle in the revolutionary era, the economic construction since the reform and opening up, the translation career since the period of the New Democratic Revolution, etc. Especially since the entry into the new socialism with Chinese characteristics Especially since the entry into the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the translation career of the CPC, especially the foreign propaganda career, has developed unprecedentedly. It can be said that promoting the development of the CPC translation business has always been one of the important contents of the work of Party building for a century. Serving the central work of the Party and the state is the purpose of the cause of translation of the Central Committee documents, and it is the starting and ending point for the selection and application of all translation principles, translation standards, translation strategies and translation techniques in the translation process. Only by firmly establishing awareness of the overall situation of serving the Party and the state can we do a good job in translating central documents and live up to the mission of central document translators in the new era.

The translation of *the Biography of the Mudanjiang Party's historical figure, Li Yanlu*, has enriched the translation of Party historical figures in China, and the translator has opened up a new research path with the theoretical guidance of the variation translation theory, which is very characteristic of Chinese translation, and promoted the dialogue and integration of Eastern and Western thoughts. In addition to correctly understanding and translating the original text, the translator must also convey the cultural context of Chinese characteristics, not just mechanically translating directly or liberally translating, but flexibly using translation techniques

to overcome the cultural contextual barrier, so that the audience can be infected, inspired and resonate in their cultural context. The translators keep pace with the times, constantly improve their translation ability, adjust their translation strategies, and optimize their translation skills so that the translations of CPC historical figures can be more and more readable, watchable, and disseminable based on ensuring political and accuracy.

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