

A Probe into Translation Techniques of Literary Works under the guidance of Functional Equivalence Theory

-- A case study of *Before We Were Yours*

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Abstract: Literature is the art of language, and it contains rich literary nature, artistic and aesthetics value. Literature translation is a special form of translation and translators need to help target readers fully perceive the artistic charm of literary works in the way the source text readers do. Due to this uniqueness, Functional Equivalence theory can provide scientific guidance for literature translation. Various translation techniques are utilized in order to realize the functional equivalence when translating literary works. In this article, the author explores how the translation techniques are used when translating *Before We Were Yours*.

Keywords: Literature translation; Translation techniques; Functional Equivalence theory; *Before We Were Yours*.

1. Introduction

Literary works, as an indispensable part of the culture, is the spiritual wealth of human society. Translation of Western literature can not only help readers in China understand different culture and social environment in western countries, but also guide them fully perceive the artistic charm. Thus, it is of great significance to translate Western literature. Literature is the art of language, and it contains rich literary nature, artistic and aesthetics value. Translators need to guide target readers fully perceive the artistic charm of literary works in the way the source text readers do. Due to such uniqueness, Functional Equivalence theory can provide scientific guidance for literature translation. This theory emphasizes the response of target readers to translation is basically the same as that of the original readers to the source language. Various translation techniques are utilized in order to realize the functional equivalence when translating literary works. In this article, the author explores how the translation techniques are used when translating *Before We Were Yours*.

2. Overview of functional equivalence theory

In the 1960s, there was a heated debate between literal translation and free translation. In 1964, Eugene A. Nida, a famous linguist, translator and translation theorist in America, put forward “formal equivalence” and “dynamic equivalence” and liberates the translation from this circular dispute. [1] In his view, “formal equivalence” means that the features of the form of the source text are reproduced in the receptor language, and it concentrates on word-to-word equivalence. “Dynamic equivalence” requires that the response of target readers to translation is basically the same as that of the original readers to the source language. “Dynamic equivalence” has the priority over “formal equivalence”. In 1986, “functional equivalence” was put forward to replace “dynamic equivalence” to emphasize the concept of function and there is little difference between “functional equivalence” and “dynamic equivalence”. The core concept of Nida’s

theory is Functional Equivalence and readers’ response is at the heart of the functional equivalence.

3. The features of literature translation

Functional Equivalence theory emphasizes the equivalence in terms of content and the function of language instead of the equivalence in terms of form. Its purpose is to make the relationship between the target language reader and the translated text equivalent to the relationship between the source language audience and the original text. Functional Equivalence theory can provide scientific guidance for literature translation. Literature is the art of language, and it contains rich literary nature, artistic and aesthetics value. The translator needs to consider these factors when translating literal works. By doing this, the translated literature images can conform to those in the original work and the translated text can retain the artistic and aesthetics of the original works.

Various translation techniques are utilized in order to realize the functional equivalence when translating the literal works. The author explores how the translation techniques are used when translating *Before We Were Yours*.

4. Translation techniques and methods adopted in translating *before we were yours*

Before We Were Yours is written by Lisa Wingate, the bestselling author of more than twenty novels. Her works have won or been nominated for many awards, including the Pat Conroy Southern Book Prize, the Oklahoma Book Award, the Utah Library Award, the Carol Award, the Christy Award, and the RT Reviewers’ Choice Award. *Before We Were Yours* is a work of historical fiction. The book was first published in 2017 in the United States by Ballantine Books. *Before We Were Yours* tells a story based on an American scandal which happened at the Tennessee Children’s Home Society orphan houses in 1930 and 1940. Thousands of children were taken away from their parents by the orphanage and lived a miserable life. The author reveals to us a cruel event; however, it is also a story which is full of love.

Publisher's Weekly believes that her novels is masterful and Foreword Magazine points out that her novels are filled with lyrical prose, hope, and healing. The group Americans for More Civility, a kindness watchdog organization, rewarded her with the National Civics Award, which aims to praise public figures who promote greater kindness and civility in American life.

She began to write when she was in her first year at primary school and her teacher, Mrs. Krackhardt, encouraged her to write. Since then, she has firmly believed that stories have the power to change the world.

Readers' response is at the heart of the functional equivalence. According to the functional equivalence theory, the translator should guarantee that the response of target readers to translation is basically the same as that of the original readers to the source language. To realize the functional equivalence, various translation techniques are employed when translating *Before We Were Yours*.

4.1. Translation techniques at lexical level

4.1.1. Amplification

During the translation process, translators sometimes find the structure of the original sentence is relatively simple, but the meaning the sentence conveyed is relatively complex. The real meaning usually needs to be understood within the context. In this case, translator should not use word-for-word translation. [3] Instead, amplification should be adopted. That is, translators need to add some words, phrases or clauses in the target language. In this way, the meaning and spirit of the original sentence could be faithfully conveyed. For example, when translating "We sit, and sit, and sit", a few words should be added in the target text to supplement the implied meaning. The use of amplification makes the sentence more vivid and enhance the attraction of the article.

4.1.2. Free translation

Free translation need not pay attention to the original form, including the structure, rhetoric and etc. However, free translation does not mean deleting or adding the original content. In the process of translation, the translator must consider the original text carefully and grasp the emphasis of the original text. For example, when translating "My skin turns cold", the translator should use free translation and thus the target text will be more vivid and show a stressful atmosphere.

4.1.3. Omission

Omission is one of the useful techniques used in translation from English to Chinese and vice versa. Omission do not mean "cutting the feet to fit the shoes", it refers to the translation method of deleting some words or phrases in the translating process. [2]

English is a morphological language, and most of the relationships are directly reflected in the form of language forms. Therefore, English pays more attention to the integrity of sentences. In general, the English sentences has a complete subject-predicate. However, in Chinese, there are many non-subject sentences. In order to avoid the repetition of redundancies, the subject will be omitted to avoid redundancy.

Using omission can make our translation more expressive. The principle of omission is to reduce some words or phrases and it will not reduce the meaning of source text. What's more, it can give an intelligible version to the target language readers. For example, there is an original sentence in the novel: "...and I scoot across, my knees knocking into the brown-eyed boy and girl". "my knees knocking into the brown-eye boy

and girl" means that I crashed into the boy and girl. It will appear cumbersome if "my knees" are translated into Chinese. In this case, the whole sentence looks more concise when the unnecessary words are deleted. Besides, it can satisfy the Chinese expression habit.

4.2. Translation method at syntactic level

4.2.1. The sequential method

Some long English sentences are always arranged in chronological order, spatial sequence or logical order. When the sequence and logical relationship of events in English are similar to those in Chinese, the translator does not need to change the original order of the original sentence. In these cases, the translator only needs to understand the original text thoroughly and then express it in its original sequence, without changing the formal structure of the original sentence. The sequential translation method is one of the commonly used methods.

4.2.2. The splitting method

The splitting method means that a part of an English sentence is arranged into a single component in the target language, such as a word group, phrase, or even an independent sentence. It is also a common translation method. According to the features of Chinese sentences, the translator can arrange the long sentence into several short sentences.

4.2.3. The embedding method

Embedding refers to translating post modifiers into pre-modifiers in translation. This method is used to compact sentences and enhance the sense of wholeness, which is also in line with the feature that the emphasis in Chinese is later. However, this method is not suitable for the case of too long modifier score; otherwise it is easy to cause Chinese sentence expression procrastination.

4.2.4. The restructuring method

The differences in sentence structures between English and Chinese make it difficult to achieve complete equivalence in translation. At this point, the translator needs to reorganize the sentence. Restructuring means that the translator completely gets rid of the original word order and sentence pattern on the basis of clarifying the structure and original meaning of long English sentences, and then recombines them into sentences that conform to Chinese expression habits.

All the above methods serve to make the translation more fluent and conform to the Chinese way of expression. It is worth noticing that the above method can be used alone. But most of the time, they can be used in combination.

5. Conclusion

Literary works is an indispensable part of the culture. Translation of Western literature can help readers in China understand different culture and social environment in western countries and guide them fully perceive the artistic charm. Therefore, it is of great importance to translate literary works. Literature translation is a special form of translation. Translators need to guide target readers fully perceive the artistic charm just like original readers do. Therefore, translators need to adopt various translation techniques to ensure that the response of target readers to translation is basically the same as that of the original readers to the source language.

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