

Further Reflections on Faithfulness Criterion of Translation Criticism from the Perspective of Information Science

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Abstract: *The article attempts to elaborate the principles of translation criticism by exploiting the definitions, characteristics and rules in Information Science. It is shown that in translation criticism, the influence of the intentionality, consciousness and the non-neutrality of value of the target text as information on translation strategies should be taken into full considerations which bring the traditional faithfulness criterion into a more tolerant and more multiple dimensions.*

Keywords: Information Science socioinformation translation criticism faithfulness

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From the mid 20th century, owing to the boom of the communication, manipulation, the technology of the computer science, and especially their wide use in the whole science field, the whole structure of the human scientific knowledge system have changed a lot, which have also hastened the occurrence of the large amounts of inter-disciplines and new disciplines. Information Science is one of these disciplines emerging under such circumstances.

In the book *An Introduction to Theoretical Information Science*, Professor Li Zongrong illustrates the definition of Information Science as following: Information Science is a discipline group that consists of many disciplines which studies the information and its dynamic modality from different points of view. This is the broad explanation of Information Science, which also can be expressed as Information Sciences. (Li Zongrong, 2006) Information

Science is a comprehensive discipline, which involves Information Theory, Computer Science, Communication Science, Library Science Semeiology, Semantics, Logic, Mass Communication, Sociology, Psychology, Science of Law and so on.

In the book *The Profound Meaning of Information Theory* (Miao Dongsheng, 2006), Miao Dongsheng illustrates in detail the concept and features of Information Science and brings forward the idea of the Informatization of Discipline. He points out that the task of informatization includes two aspects. One is the Tool Informatization and the other is the Concept Informatization. The Tool Informatization is a process that equips every discipline with the use of information technology and products of communication, calculation and manipulation. The Concept Informatization aims to observe the inherent information process in the discipline of liberal arts and summarize their respective principles with the use of the concept, method and mode of the information process. (Li Zongrong, 2006) The Tool Informatization has already begun to take shape in current English teaching. For example, Multi-media teaching method which is mainly composed of computer and network makes English teaching change from the unitary traditional teacher-centered teaching mode into the interactive student-centered teaching mode involving teachers, students and multi-media all together. However, the Concept Informatization is seldom used in English teaching and research. We should not only apply the technology of Information Science and implements into the field of English teaching and research, solve the information problems in this discipline with the

use of computer network system, but also use the concept and theory of Information Science to reveal the information rules in the discipline as well.

Translatology, taking translation as its research object, is an open interdisciplinary humanity full of connotations. Translation is one of the most dynamic and keen field in the human civilization. Translation activities are full of information conversion, generation, dissemination, exchange and etc. The research objects of Information Science are information phenomenon of society and human being's information exchange process. It aims at studying the emergence, expression, organization, processing, transformation of information and the principle, method and rules in the process of application. In the meantime, it also studies the relations among the information, society and economy, and the social management of information. Because translation activity includes abundant phenomenon of information and human information exchange process, it should be the part of research object of Information Science. Therefore, explaining the phenomenon of translation with the use of research fruits in Information Science is to analyze the translation studies from a brand new perspective. This paper attempts to explain the translation and information rules of translation criticism with the use of concept, characteristics and principles of Information Science.

1. The Self-consciousness and Purpose of the Social Information and Translation Criticism

In Information Science, information can be divided into two basic types according to its

information sources. They are Natural Information and Social Information. The world we live is actually an entity of both natural and social information, which exists as a natural existence, and thus constantly sends the natural information to the outside world. At the same time, people and society also send out the humanities and social information. The sending of natural information is existent and natural, while the sending of humanities and social information is conscious and purposeful. (Ouyang Kang, 2007) The Social Information is different from the existent, natural information. It is the information which is associated with people's activities of independent innovation, social cultural inheritance, people's spiritual interaction and their emotions. (Ouyang Kang, 2007) In short, Social Information is not the in-itself information, for-itself information and re-generating information, but the highest integration of these three forms of information.

According to WuKun's explanation, the social information is the general term for the information that human has been cognized and grasped, as well as part of the information world which created by human being. (WuKun, 2005) Judging from the broad perspective, translation is also the part of the information world which created by human being and it changes this part of information from one language into another. Judging from the narrow point of view, translation is a cross-cultural communication activity translating one language into another and also a conversion activity of Social Information among different cultures. Translation, as a medium of language communication and cultural exchanges, meets the needs of different people's spiritual contacts, undertakes the obligations of cultural communication and cultural inheritance and thus it is consistent with the characteristics of Social Information.

The translation text is the translator's

conscious and purposeful product of their independent innovation activity in the translation process. Therefore, translation shows its features of consciousness and purposefulness in this interlingua exchange of social information rather than the existent and natural features of information. This consciousness and purposefulness have been reflected from the translator who acts as the principal part of translation, and specifically in translation activity they are mainly reflected from the translator's translation purpose and the translation strategy serving for his translation purpose.

From the perspective of Information Science, translation can be classified and studied in the scope of Social Information. The purpose of the translation should be one of the evaluation factors that can not be ignored in the standard of translation criticism. It's unscientific and unilateral to judge the quality of one translation version simply based on the comparison between the translated version and the original version and it is not consistent with the nature and characteristics of Social Information as well. In the traditional translation, the translators have long been seen as a vassal of the author and their identities are compared to the servants, transmitters and etc. They are required to follow the original text closely and regard the original text as the only tenet to obey. Having such a concept of translation, a good translation version should be the most equivalent to the original text in semantic, syntactic, the whole discourse level and so on. The version which is beyond the original text a little is evaluated as unfaithfulness. The conscious and purposeful subjectivity of the translators is defiled under the theory of strong emphasis of the faithfulness.

Fu Donghua's translation of *Gone with the Wind* is the first translation of the best-selling

novel in America. In a very long time, his translation strategies that consciously catered to the reader's expectation and purposefully chose the domestication translation was seen as unfaithful to the original text, and were criticized by the translation commentators. In his translation, the name of main characters and places were all translated into the typical Chinese names. Some four-character idioms and proverbs full of Chinese characteristics appeared in his translation. Many typical long English sentences were changed into short sentences as well. In addition, the translation also omitted long paragraphs describing the psychological activities of the characters in the book. Such of his domestication strategy has been ruthlessly censured by the people who worked at translation field. Liu Yingkai has ever criticized: The failure of the translation of *Gone With the Wind* is that the translator distorts the objective reality of United States. In the translated version, the characters look like leaving their hometown environment, the United States during the Civil War, and entering the nondescript foreign country. (Yang Zijiang, Liu Xueyun:1999) However, the translator Fu Donghua had ever explained the reason why he chose this controversial domestication translation strategy in his preface as following: Even the people's names, place names, I now make them more like Chinese, and have also sought to translate the dialogue like Chinese. Many humorous, sharp, indecent idioms have been transformed into our typical Chinese, with a view of having a better and more vivid effect while reading. My aim is to be faithful to the internal spirit of the book, not simply to be faithful to the surface word meaning. (Fu Donghua, 1979)

The concept that Social Information has the characteristics of consciousness and purposefulness in Information Science is

helpful for the reasonable explanation of Fu's translation strategy. And the case enlightens us to re-examine the traditional concept of faithfulness which we long time obeyed in translation criticism. Before the Fu Donghua's translation of *Gone with the Wind*, the foreign film *Gone with the Wind* which was adapted from the original work had already been in great vogue for a long time in China. From the film the audience's understanding of the work was an exceedingly sentimental love story. At that time the film entered China earlier than the original work, the public opinion generated by the film more or less affected Fu's translation purpose and his specific translation strategies. Therefore, under the premise that the reader's minds had been dominated by their first impression from the film, the translator chose the domestication translation which was more suitable for the culture of the target language in order to conform to the reader's presupposition. "It's totally different to translate such a book and the classic one, so one would feel tedious while reading it if the translator just limited himself to the word-to-word translation." (Fu Donghua, 1979) Such opinion was the embodiment of the translator's readers-centered concept and his coordination between the social needs and translation purpose, that is, the translator consciously obeyed the needs of the social environment at that time and the reader's expectation which was established on the foundation of film. Consequently, the translator purposefully chose the domestication translation strategy in his translation version. Having read the whole translated text, Mr. Fu exploited the smooth translation of the domestication, which made the version easy and natural and humorous, made the reader feel it was purely a love story. All of these catered to the audience's expectation, so Fu's translation was warmly welcomed by lots of readers, even made a hit.

Meanwhile, the original work got a wide spread and acceptance in China. All in all, Fu's English translation reflects the consciousness and purposefulness of the translation version as Social Information as well as the translation strategies under the influence.

The writer do not intend to assess the merits or demerits of Fu's translation, but just use his translation version as an example to show the enlightenment of translation criticism from Social Science's angle, that is, it's one-sided and unscientific faithfulness to evaluate the translation version according to the word-to-word equivalence. It's unreasonable to simply consider the translation version of domestication as unfaithful without regard to the translation purpose generated from the social environment and time in which the translator lives. As Professor Yang Xiaorong puts forward, the faithfulness is no longer the only or the highest standard while evaluating one translation version. Various adjustments including the consideration of readers' expectation that the translator makes to meet the social needs of the target language, even to serve a specific purpose are all acceptable. (Yang Xiaorong, 2001) In fact, looking from another angle, the so-called unfaithfulness to the original text is both the faithfulness to the readers in the target language and the faithfulness to the translation purpose which is affected by the socio-cultural environment.

Therefore the standard of translation should also include the full consideration of the translator's purpose which is affected by socio-cultural factors. In translation criticism, we should not only refer to the translator's translation purpose, but also need to re-examine his translation purpose by considering the influence that the outside world puts on him. This kind of dialectical research thinking way can help people avoid either put

the translator into the marginal place, or flattering the translator to the highest omnipotent status. The best way to make a fair and comprehensive translation criticism is to treat the translator and his translation work dialectically and impartially which is also the ultimate aim of translation criticism.

2. The Non-neutrality of Value of the Social Information and Translation Criticism

Social Information is an integration of Fact Information and Value Information. Its biggest feature that differs from the Natural Information is the infiltration of the Value Information, which makes the fact information of society have a deformation in value, also makes people necessarily have strong value selectivity during their mastery, collection and acceptance of the social information. The value of Natural Information is neutral, so it is relatively easy for people to achieve an objective and scientific cognition and reach comparatively reasonable evaluation when they are dealing with the natural information. Social Information is an intrinsic intertexture of Fact Information and Value Information. The non-neutrality of value is often included in social fact, which is bound to contain its own evaluation and attitude of the information during the acceptance and collection of the social information, and is affected by the attitudes of the subject towards the information. Thus people often have different value judgments when having their cognition and evaluation of the social information, or even have a bigger contradiction and conflict. (Ouyang Kang, 2007)

The translation dispute between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu which long lasted for eight years in the May Fourth Movement, is actually the conflict of two different value judgments

that the translation subjects have towards the translated text which belongs to the Social Information. The furious debate between them is not so much the occurrence arising out of the translation strategies as the contradiction of different value judgments of the translation subject on whether the translated texts as Social Information should serve for politics by featuring foreign cultures or they should reflect the human nature by retaining the characteristics of art. Lu Xun believes that the translated text "must be exotic ... In fact, there's not completely domestication translation. If there's one, its looks must be inconsistent with the spirit, and can not be called translation at all if one strictly distinguishes it. In any translation, it must take into account of the two sides, one seeks the easy understanding, and the other preserves the charm of the original text. (Luo Xinzhang, 1984)

Lu Xun as a representative of the leftist writer was aware that the lagging literature tradition limited the development of Chinese literature. In order to reform the old form of literature in China for adapting to the requirements of the New Culture Movement, he used lots of European syntax and vocabularies which were faithful to the original text rather than readable sentences with the intention of improving the modern Chinese in the early stage of development. Lu Xun had intended to retain the dual effects of understandability and exoticism, but in the heated debate with Liang Shiqiu who was a representative of the Crescent School writers, his excessive use of the translation method which focused on the faithfulness for the sake of his highlight of maintaining the exotic culture caused him to make some clumsy and difficult-to-understand translations, which also made him criticized by some articles, especially satirized by the people on the side of Liang Shiqiu.

However, we are unable to agree with the accusations against him from the view point of Social Information Science. On the contrary, it's not difficult to understand his translation idea at that time. Social information has the value deformation because it contains of the infiltration of value information which is also the most prominent feature that differs from Natural Information. Accordingly the translation subject has a strong value selectivity and non-neutrality towards the Social Information. Such value selectivity and non-neutrality will be reflected in the translator's subjective attitude and evaluation in the translation activities, as well as his translation purpose of exploiting his translation to influence the culture of target language. Lu Xun thinks the value of translated works is using it to serve for politics and help people remold their society and themselves, and such value judgment determines his foreignization translation strategy. In Lu Xun's era, that is, the historical period of Chinese culture in transition, he expects to "change people's psychology of cultural narcissism through the translation." (Zhang Jinghua, 2006) , and search the "good medicine in medical treatment" for the rise of Chinese culture and the country. That is the value of the translation. The use of the literal and incondite translation can more directly bring in the foreign culture and promote the progress of the Chinese culture and the improvement of the Modern Chinese. In this way the value of translated text can be realized to a better degree. Therefore, it's inevitably incorrect to criticize his translation by only taking the elusive characters into consideration.

Liang Shiqiu was the representative who advocated human nature. He believed that "great literature is the literature based on the fixed and universal human nature; the good literature shows the feeling that flowed from the people's deep soul. Human nature is the only

standard to measure literary.”(Li Zhao, 1997) He insisted on the independence of the literature, strongly opposed the class nature of literature serving for politics, and held the view that only the works which could show the steadfast and universal human nature were the good works. Under the guidance of this concept of the liberalism of Literature and Art, Liang believed that the art of the translated text was the main value of Social Information, so preserving the charm of human and artistic beauty of the first-rate foreign works became his translation criterion. Consequently it is not difficult for us to understand his preference to the domestication translation strategy which can reflect the literature and readability of the translation works.

The understanding of translation literature as the Social Information between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu was various. If we say proletarian revolutionaries who were represented by Lu Xun understood it from the reality, then the people who advocated the liberalism of Literature and Art and focused on human nature represented by Liang Shiqiu understood it from the angle of history. Because of the differences of their subjective value judgment of social information, the two masters of translation chose their respective ways of the translation idea, even condemned each other in speech and writing. From the perspective of the current Social Information Science, the acceptance and reflection of the translation subject towards social information can not be as transparent as a mirror. Because the social information itself has the infiltration of the value information, as well as the value judgment and value choice of the subject towards information, the differences caused by the different value judgment of non-neutrality and value deformation among the different subjects becomes inevitable.

While the two masters of the translation

criticizing each other's translation works, if both of them are able to stand on the higher stance, to understand more of each other's value judgments, and realize that the different choices of value are the characteristics of Social Information in the translation activity, then the heated debate between them and even the personal attacks may and should be completely avoided. After all, they have the limitations of their times. In the present translation criticism, people should build the standard of faithfulness under the specific socio-cultural background and take the translator's intention and value judgment of his translation into consideration. To different translated texts, people should be more tolerant and multi-dimensional. We should build the faithfulness standard of translation criticism on the translator's value judgment towards the translation rather than build it on the comparison between the translated version and the original version or comparison among different translated versions. By doing so, we can break the narrow concept of faithfulness translation criticism, have more tolerant and rational evaluation attitude towards the different translated versions in the same era or the retranslated versions in different eras so as to avoid the either-or situation or the situation at daggers drawn, and create a harmonious situation of accepting differences. The purpose of translation criticism is also multidimensional, not only for making the specific criterion of the evaluation, not for determining the winning or losing result between the different translated texts, and not for determining a final best version or making a supreme goal, but to provide the theory perspectives, principles and methods of the criticism. (Hu Dexiang, 2004)

3. Conclusion

In translation activities, both the original

text and the translated text are conveying the information through the form of language, so the translation activities should also be consistent with the laws of informatics. It is shown that in translation criticism, the consciousness, intentionality and the non-neutrality of value of the translated text as social information should be taken into considerations, and the translator's purpose and strategy of the translation that affected by the specific social cultural background should also be taken into account. We should not only focus on the references of the social background of the times when the translator lives in, such as the influence of external factors like readers acceptance, mainstream ideology, and patrons on the choice of translated text and the translation strategies, but also need to consider the influence of internal factors like the translator's value judgment, translation intention on the translation choice. All in all, it's necessary for people to bring the faithfulness criterion of the translation criticism into a more tolerant and more multiple dimensions for strengthening the objectivity, scientificness, impartiality and validity of the translation criticism.

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