

Cognitive Process of Translation Based on Fillmore's Scenes and Frames Theory

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Abstract: It is Documented That the Activity of Translation Can Be Traced Back to the Year 2000 Bc, However, It Was Only Several Decades Before Translation Studies Was Founded to Make a Further Research. in 1974, the American Translation Theorist James Stratton Holmes, Who is Considered as the Founder of the Translation Studies, Puts Forward the Three Branches of the Descriptive Translation Studies (Dts), Including the Product-Oriented, Function-Oriented and Process-Oriented Studies. and the First Two Has Been Made the Greatest Progress While for the Latter One, There is Still a Long Way to Go in Order to Decrypt the "Black Little Box" in the translator's Brain. by Illustrating the Domestic and International Status Quos of Cognitive Process and the Traditional Methods of Cognitive Processes, the Author Tries to Analyze What Has Been Achieved and Their Weaknesses. However, Not All of the Translation Sentences Are the Copies of Grammars But Rather the Creative Translation. with the Fillmore's Scenes and Frames Semantic Theory, the Author Puts Forward Another Way of How translator's Mind Works in Their Translation.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Complex Definition of Translation

The Definition of Translation Varies. Theorists Disclose the Mystery in Different Perspectives. None of Them Have Ever Found the Core of How Translators Work in Their Minds Like Followings.

Translation is the expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences[1].

Just as Nida's definition of translation--translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style [2].

1.2 Research Significance & Purpose

Professor Huang Zhonglian wrote in his article *On Outlook and Progress of Translation Thinking Research* "The research of the translation nature is nothing but the one of thinking and language and besides this, other relevant study is just periphery [3]." He puts forward that it is important to study the thinking in order to touch the nature of the translation because language is the nutshell of the thinking. So it seems to be very crucial for one who cares the future of translation theory to be concerned about how translators think when they analyze the original texts and express the results of mind activity. Many experts and scholars have been trying their best to explore the "fort" of translation core. The author of the paper intends to make a contribution for exploring the secrets of translation from another aspect, the mental process of a translator' mind, which is named cognitive psychology in professional term. It is necessary to develop a new way to illustrate how the translators' minds work. To sum up, the author hopes to come up with a model which will provide students as well as later-to-be translators with a "tool" for preparing translation not only in the classroom but also perhaps later in their professional life, and which may also serve as a stimulus for further research in the field of the translation studies.

2. Cognitive Process of Translation Model

The subject of translation studies has been established in 1970s and more and more mysterious puzzles have been found out. Nowadays, the investigation of mental processes is increasingly gaining recognition as a new field of research with the translation studies. More specifically, there is a growing interest in translators' mind activity.

Any who has tried to develop the area of cognitive process will know the difficulties involved. More than a thousand-year translation activity has not been completely explored further than the human-beings' evolution. The related studies are still superficially explained and relevant studies about translation have just been floating above the water. No more data and theories are provided to benefit other investigators. The main theories of the cognitive translating process are originated by ITT (interpretive theory of translation), cognitive psychology and cognitive semantics [4]. Cognitive abilities include one's memory, attention span, creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis etc [5]. It, as is seen, is too abstract for investigators to imagine what really goes on in people's mind. Mental processes cannot be directly observed and the internal workings of the mind can only be inferred from the external behavior of its owner. It is as if we asked a small child to describe the car engine without ever opening the bonnet, but just watching and listening to the car in action. Even so, some values will still be found by just watching the running cars. E.g. filling up the petrol will quickly establish that the engine is not powered by water or firewood, and car exhaust forms the idea that the engine is powered by burning the petrol. The author makes the point to make comparisons between car's engine and human's brain. Like car's petrol and rear gas, when we visualize metal processing, we tend to start from something that is familiar to us to deduce the "answer". Therefore, the author starts from the easiest and most fundamental point---what is done for translators when they translate and in what criteria?

2.1 Cognitive Process of Traditional Translation

Roger Bell thinks that the translation unit is considered the smallest language component that can be translated in the source language. It means a translator usually starts to translate from the translation unit[6].

What is the translation unit? A word is usually a unit because it can express the complete meaning. Sometimes a phrase is a unit because the compounded words can express the basic meaning. So the unit is considered as the smallest component in a sentence. For example, a sentence "a pretty face has ruined an empire" has three units such as the "a pretty face", "has ruined" and "an empire" for the three units can express the dependent meaning respectively. Or even a sentence is thought as a unit like "is it necessary to shout?" for the whole words together can express meaning.

2.2 Creative Translation Process

Translation process is the one that converting source language into target language which reflects the creative way of thinking.

Paul Kussmaul describes, in his paper *A Cognitive Framework for Looking at Creative Mental Processes*, the main features of a translation as a creative product [7]. What is creative translation then? Creative translation is different from "creative writing" which is taught at some universities, such as poems, novels, short stories which were not produced before. Translators, however, are not free to produce their own texts but dependent on source texts. Some experts even stress the process of translation as the creative process. In essence, translating is the process of creative thinking.

In the early 1960s, Seleskovitch made the creative research on the cognitive translation. They think the translation process includes three stages as understanding, deverbalization and re-expression. Understanding the source text is the precondition of creative thinking.

Correct understanding makes re-expressions fluent and creative. Zhang Mengjing points out that the correct understanding is the foundation of creative translation. Sometimes, a translator's incorrect expression of the language is affected by his own social experiences and his own special feeling.

Considering the cultural context is necessary for translating the whole text. Cultural Context can

be defined by our upbringing and cultural background. This refers to thoughts, opinions and feelings that result from experiences. An example of this is when an artist painting reflects his schooling, or a specific time period from his/her life experiences. A text is the social form given by the writer for his or her experiences.

How does correct comprehension result in translation? What form does it take in translators' minds? How is sense verbalized in translation? Here is the model might help us to answer questions in detail.

2.3 Fillmore's Scenes and Frames Theory

Perhaps the most comprehensive model is Fillmore's scenes-and-frames semantics. What is scene and frame? A scene is created by personal associations and linguistically encoded by the frames. A frame in semantics is a series of facts that emphasize "characteristic, features, attributes, and functions of a denotatum, and its characteristic interactions with things necessarily or typically associated with it." (O\L) [8]. Frames are based on recurring experiences. Sometimes there are scenes that a person doesn't know what the frame is. To put it simply, if a person sees a picture, it is the "scene", which is in the person's mind while if he would like know more about the pictures, he or she should be filled more details by frames and the comprehension process forms.

The theory relates linguistic semantics to encyclopedic knowledge. The general idea is that one can't understand the meaning of a single word without getting to know all the essential knowledge that relates to the word. For example, one would not or couldn't understand the word "sell" without knowing anything about the situation of commercial transfer, which also involves, among other things, a seller, a buyer, goods, money, the relation between the money and the goods, the relations between the seller and the goods and the money, the relation between the buyer and the goods and the money and so on. The words we hear or read in texts, according to Fillmore, are the frames which stimulate mental pictures or scenes in our memory.

2.3.1 Scene and Frame in Creative Translation

In translation, the frame is represented by the source text in its linguistic components and the translator reads the text, the scene is evoked by frame. Kussmaul thinks it is important to see that Fillmore, by making use of the term 'scene', refers to our minds, i.e, our memories. Meaning is not just derived from a linguistic system but involves people's experiences. Moreover, the term 'scene' suggests that meaning has to do with 'images'. Arthur Koestler, in his rather famous book *The Act of Creation*, observed that creative thought is a visual thought. When one examines creative translation processes, he can observe that visualizing a scene plays an important part. It means what he reads forms an image in his mind. And a translator will depend on his knowledge and images that are formed to restructure the target language.

As the experiment the author has made shows, competent translators tend to imagine and "visualize" what they are reading, which makes the TT creative. But the less experienced translators prefer the word- for -word transfer. They both may make the recursive skills to enlarge the unit in order to grasp the understanding of semantics. It is nothing related to time, unfamiliar words or phrases. It is more concerned with the personal backgrounds and habitus. Consciously or unconsciously, they divide the passage or sentence into dozens of unit and try to re-express the semantics according to their comprehension of the original texts. As for the two limits put forward by Fillmore, from the frames to scenes, or from the scenes to frames, the appropriate degree between frames and scenes are difficult to deal with, especially for the translation students, according to the analysis of their transition product. It would be subtle to balance the frames and scenes

As one asks whether such a cognitive translation model can solve the practical problems in reality, it is hard to say, although it helps the author give some counsels on students doing the jobs, and it really works! But one point should be known that every translator is creative and is influenced by many factors like the followings.

There are other factors which influence the translators' strategy in translating, therefore the translation work Is greatly different form one to anther.

2.4 Factors for Cognitive Translation Process

Translation procedures involve far more than step-by-step procedures for producing a translation from a source text. There are a number of preliminary factors which must first be considered, e.g. the nature of the translation, the competence of a translator, the direction of the translation (e.g. from an acquired language to one's own mother tongue or from a text in one's own mother tongue to an acquired language), the type of the audience for which the translation is being prepared, the kind of publisher and editor, the marketing of the translation is being prepared, the kind of publisher and editor, the marketing of the translation, and how it is likely to be used by readers.

The actual translation process also involves a number of quite distinct factors, e.g. the pressures of time, work by a single translator or by a team, ideal vs. realistic procedures, testing the results, multiple translators of the same text, and the learning of the translation techniques.

3. Conclusion

Translation activities have been playing important role in national and international communication while it has been only several decades since the subject of translation studies was put forward by James Howard in 1974 because of its complexity. According to this founder of translation studies, James Stratton Howard divided three branches in his Descriptive Translation Studies such as product-oriented, function-oriented and process-oriented studies. It is worth mentioning that the former two has been made great progress while the latter one is progressing slowly for it is concerned with cognitive psychology. Therefore, the paper intends to disclose what is going on in translator's "the little black box" from the perspective of cognitive process of translation in order to contribute to this field and provide some help for the less experienced translation learners. This paper develops by five chapters to obtain the conclusion. The following is the major findings that the paper tries to get.

3.1 Major Findings

In order to decrypt the cognitive process of translation, this paper puts the related theory into practical survey. By probing into how mental process works in translator's mind the author deduces the model of cognitive process of translation. That's to say, a translator may tend to deal with a source text by adopting two cognitive processes. One is traditional translation process and the other is the creative translation process. In the traditional translation process, a translator might divide the sentences or the paragraphs into several units and restructure those units by analyzing within his remembering systems, including the grammars, experiences and habitus etc. he has mastered. But not all of the source texts are just word-for-word transfer and the French socialist Robert Escarpit thought translation is always a creative treason. It means a translator needs creative translation to complete the conversion from source text into target text. After separating each unit, what does a translator do in order to be creative? The author solves this question by applying to Fillmore's Scenes and Frames semantic theory. According to Fillmore, A scene is a picture created by personal associations and linguistically encoded by the frames. A frame in semantics is a series of facts that stress "characteristic features, attributes, and functions of a denotatum, and its characteristic interactions with things necessarily or typically associated with it" (O/L). Kussmaul thinks it is important to see that Fillmore, by making use of the term 'scene', refers to our minds, i.e. our memories. Meaning is not just derived from a linguistic system but involves people's experiences. Moreover, the term 'scene' suggests that meaning has to do with 'images'. A translator has to visualize what he reads. In conclusion, creative translation process is the one that a translator visualizes the source text and gets the balance between two limits, either from the scene to frame or from frame to scene.

3.2 Possibilities of Further Research

To be honest, it will be difficult to consider all the variables available. And the cognitive process is concerned with the linguistics and psychology. People have not gotten exact data of what on earth

the mind works and how language is spoken in their mind. There is still a long way for us to go in the future. As you may ask, can students and professional translators with this cognitive model at the back of their minds be creative on translating? This is a question worth considering, after all, every one's personality differs and so do the background knowledge and his performance in translating. A translator would be influenced by factors such as schema, habitus, the nature of the source text, which are discussed in this paper. Therefore, it is impossible to count on one model to solve all the problems in translation, and the model concluded is comparatively applied in the literature texts. It is certain that the cognitive process of translation will be developed greatly from other perspectives and theory.

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