

The Influence of Lu Xun's "Hard Translation" Concept on the Transformation of Modern Chinese Culture

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Abstract: Many celebrities in translation circles criticize Lu Xun's hard Translation concept more than praise. It is really not flattering to evaluate Lu Xun's translated works from a linguistic perspective alone. However, translation studies from the cultural turn forced the translation community to analyze the hard translation concept of Lu Xun, which had been criticized for a long time. This paper begins with the cultural context in the specific historical period of Lu Xun's life, and expounds and probes into the changes and causes of Lu Xun's view of translation from liberal translation to hard translation. On the basis of affirming Lu Xun's hard translation, it further points out the important historical significance of Lu Xun's hard translation to promote the transformation of Chinese traditional culture.

1. Introduction

The controversy over Lu Xun's hard translation (literal translation) has a long history in translation academic circles and depreciation is more than praise. In the 1930s, many academic celebrities such as Liang Shiqiu and Qu Qiubai published articles criticizing Lu Xun's translation. Liang(1997), in his essay "the hard Translation of Lu Xun, called that Lu Xun's translation is "stiff" and "awkward"(Lefvere, Andre. 1992). In fact, the evaluation of Lu Xun's translation is not inappropriate from a linguistic perspective alone. Contemporary scholars comment on Lu Xun's translation in the same way, saying that his writing is really not flattering(Liang, 1997). As a well-versed writer in Chinese, It's impossible for him to fail to realize the linguistic problem of his own translation, but why would he persistently adopt the "hard translation", which was widely criticized at that time and made readers almost inexplicable(Niu, 2004). The cultural turn of translation studies tells us that all translated texts are generated in cultural contexts. Therefore, we can't only explore Lu Xun's "hard translation" merely from the linguistic perspective, but have to objectively examine the motivation of translation in a specific cultural context, and then objectively and rationally analyze the profound cultural significance of Lu Xun's hard translation. Because "translation is not done in a vacuum"(Chen, 1989) .

2. From the Liberal Translation to "Hard Translation": The Formation of Lu Xun's "Hard Translation" Concept

Lu Xun had devoted himself to translation since 1903, and his translated works account for more than half of his writings. According to the cultural context and social surroundings in which Lu Xun experienced, his translation can be divided into three stages (Chen, 1989). Correspondingly, influenced by the cultural context, Lu Xun's translation strategy had also gone through a process of development and changed from domestication to alienation, and his translation concept had also changed from liberal translation to "hard translation".

Lu Xun's early translation was deeply influenced by Liang Qichao and Lin Shu, and failed to break away from the ethos of "free translation" in the late Qing Dynasty (Niu, 2004). The translators at that time either arbitrarily tampered with the theme, structure, characters and characters of the original for the purpose of enlightenment and political propaganda, or freely

abridged or changed to meet the expectations of Chinese readers, or added some characters that didn't exist in the original texts according to their own understanding of the works, but the new that was not in the original text, or translated the works of names of places and people, appellations and even allusions into Chinese style (Lu, 1903b). Lu Xun said that his earlier translated works were actually a work of rewriting in the form/disguise of translation. ".....Especially *the Soul of Spartan* (which was translated by Lu Xun), now it was a hugely shameful thing. But this was the ethos of that time. Melodious modulation in tone is what makes an article a good one." (Lu, 1958). *The Soul of Spartan* is difficult to find the translation by Lu Xun, while the *Yuejievxing* was substantially deleted by Lu Xun. A total of 28 chapters of the novel were cut into only 14 chapters, and the article was deleted. The wording and writing style are suitable for Chinese readers" (Lu, 1903b). It is the influence of enlightenment of the people's wisdom, national salvation and the style of free translation in the late Qing Dynasty on him, from the cultural context, and the his own "sinocentrism" that lead to that Lu Xun's translation let the free translation dominate this period.

The collection of *Stories from Abroad* published in 1909 marked a major shift in Lu Xun's translation concept. In A brief example of collection of *Stories from Abroad*, Lu Xun slammed the "deliberate deletion of the translation ethos" in the late Qing Dynasty, that is, "dishonesty". In the preface, Lu Xun clearly puts forward the translation strategy of that The style and words of the article are easy to understand, the current translation does not lose the style of the time and the translation purpose of introducing a new genre of foreign literature and art to China, clearly it shows its view of claiming literal translation. Certainly, it could be said that the extraterritorial collection of stories had laid the foundation for Lu Xun style of literal translation. In "*After Translating Workers* ", Lu Xun claimed that "except for a few places, it is almost impossible to translate verbatim" (Lu, 1958). In the postscript of *Out of the Ivory Tower*, he said: "The translation of the sentence is still the same method of literal translation as I have always done." (Lu, 1958). In 1929, Lu Xun formally proposed the concept of "hard translation" in *The Supplement to the Translators of Literature and Criticism*:

But because the translators' inadequate ability and the shortcomings of the Chinese text, the translation is obscure and thus making it difficult for readers to comprehend many parts of the translation. If the text were translated word for word, its original refined tone will be lost. For me, there is no way out other than this hard translation. The only remaining wish is that the readers are still willing to read it in spite of difficulties (Lu, 1958).

The transformation of Lu Xun's concept of translation is a change from obedience to resistance which is not only in stylistic mode, but also in culture and politics. The introduction of extraterritorial collection of stories, which focuses on the original text of western culture, is the result of this cultural and political resistance. Since then, Lu Xun had always adhered to his "hard translation" and linked it to the class nature of literature. Obviously, for Lu Xun, it is not only a translation method, but also a cultural value. It is a sharp tool for analyzing traditional culture and constructing new culture.

3. Hard Translation----Lu Xun's Deconstruction of Chinese Traditional Culture and the Construction of New Culture

A modern Chinese history is a history of Chinese cultural transformation. The direction of cultural development is the orientation of translation, while translation is the intermediary and epitome of cultural transformation. Therefore, we must stand at the height of cultural history to correctly and rationally evaluate the historical position of translators. Digging out the transformation of Lu Xun's concept of translation from the perspective of cultural transformation is conducive to discovering the cultural significance of Lu Xun's translation. This paper holds that Lu Xun's "hard translation" concept contains his analysis of Chinese traditional culture and exploration of Chinese new cultural construction, mainly reflected in the following three aspects.

3.1 "Preserve western ethos" and reject the rewriting of ethnocentrism in foreign cultures

Translation usually reflects the position of domestic culture towards foreign culture, and the

choice of translation strategy is often the result of the interaction between domestic culture and foreign culture. In the history, most translators tended to use domestication to transform the "alien" of foreign culture. In the long-term translation of Buddhist scriptures, the "analog" method is popular, which using the principles of the country to match the ideas of other countries. The free translation of the original text in the late Qing Dynasty can be said to be an extension of the translation method of the Buddhist scriptures of the Tang Dynasty. Even Lin Shu, who did not understand a foreign language, translated in this way did not surprise and puzzle people when the English translation idea of Liang Qichao was so welcomed at the time, which was that translating meanings not words. When Lu Xun adopted the literal translation which closes to the original text, he was attacked by people. The prevalence of free translation stemmed from enrooted ethnocentrism of the Chinese people, which due to the national pride, seemingly, but the deep reason was that the hubris of the ethnocentrism was hard to get rid of. The Chinese believed that the translation of the Western was only to absorb Western mathematics and machine to defend our country's traditions (Xie, 1992). Even the advanced elites at the time also always showed hubris of the sinocentrism in their writings. Kang Youwei once made a "*Patriotic Song*" boasting the bright future of China's dominance of the world: "Only China has the power to rule the world and there will be no match for it. I am so lucky to live in the greatest country, my majesty!" (Qian, 1986)

"In accepting another culture, a culture that claims to be the center of the world usually treats the behavior of its own culture as natural and the only correct one. The elements of foreign culture are 'naturalized' without any doubt or restriction" (Gu, 1999). Fortunately, when foreign culture threatened the survival of domestic culture in the early 20th century, a few translation scholars led by Lu Xun deeply realized that the translation and mistranslation of the ethnocentrism translators would make the advanced ideas and cultures of the foreign countries 'naturalization' without limit, and this 'naturalization' was bound to seriously affect China's modernization process. Lu Xun made a pungent irony of hubris of the sinocentrism revealed in the translation: "The literati who introduced the world literature to get rid of the traditional ideas, but prefer to let foreigners use Chinese surnames. Gogol is Guo; Wilde is Wang; I really don't expect *the Hundred Family Names* possesses such a great force now" (Lu, 1992).

Lu Xun's promotion of hard translation during the transformation of Chinese culture is not a whim. With the increase of translation practice and comprehensive contact with western culture, Lin Shu and others in the late Qing Dynasty distorted the original works and wantonly added and deleted randomly had seriously hindered the further dissemination of western learning in China and aggravated the narcissism of Chinese culture. Lu Xun believed that if we want to achieve "the desire to explore the root causes of corruption and depravity of our nation and compare it with the developed or advanced in other countries, so that the people will know where the disease lies and promote self-improvement with self-warning" as put forward by Liang Qichao in the *NEW PEOPLE SAID*, a new genre of foreign literature and art entered China. Thus, Lu Xun advocated hard translation to oppose the localization of the cultures of other nations and eliminate the narcissism of Chinese culture. As far as Lu Xun is concerned, although hard translation is difficult to understand at the most, if you think about it, you may still understand it. If you translate it, you can't understand it. if your translation is not faithful but fluent, your translation can be confusing then you depart there from, if you already how to get it. (Lu, 1981)" Lu Xun knew that "faithfulness but not fluency" at best puzzles the reader, but with the aim of "fluency but not faithfulness" and blindly transforming and rejecting foreign cultures in translation, it will only lead to the misinterpretation of foreign culture by the Chinese people and further strengthen sinocentrism, thereby hindering the process of Chinese cultural modernization transformation.

3.2 "A new genre of foreign literature and art enters China", absorbing exotic primitive culture

In the transformation of modern Chinese culture, Chinese intellectuals showed three distinct cultural psychological value orientations: they either clinged to the rigid cultural concept of Influencing other regions with Chinese Cultural, or adhered to the principles of traditional Chinese

values aided with modern Western ideology or advocate the establishment of a new type of culture adapted to the survival and development of the nation(Guan, 1997). Under the influence of cultural narcissism, most intellectuals at that time could not abandon the “China ethnocentrism” in their minds, deeply in love with local culture, and firmly believed that China's spiritual civilization is superior to the West. Therefore, the popular translation of the late Qing Dynasty makes it easy for people living in the world to accept the Western culture that has been modified by Chinese culture, thus creating a sense of identity. Scholars who advocate the establishment of new culture are eager to introduce and understand the deep meaning of western culture, they call for foreignization. In fact, the concept of "hard translation" advocated by Lu Xun was a revolution in the history of translation in modern China and a milestone in the introduction of foreign culture to China” (Lei, 2002). Our view of Lu Xun's "hard translation" cannot simply be a general methodological understanding, which contains profound cultural significance. He advocated hard translation, which was a search for the original nature of foreign culture: "every translation must take into account both sides, of course,one strive to be easy to understand, and the other is to preserve the original style. So, some still prefer to translate poorly (Lu, 1981)".

From here, we can easily see that Lu Xun also attaches great importance to "fluency" and strives for the translation to be "easy to solve", but "easy to solve" is more important than "preserving". The most important thing in translation is to "preserve the original style." Obviously, Lu Xun scoped the issue of translation from the perspective of cultural exchanges. He advocated hard translation in the hope of faithfully introducing and introducing new ideas in foreign literary works through translation. In the *Preface*, Lu Xun first put forward insightful insights at the time:The new genre of foreign literature and art came into China and took root and blossom (Lu, 1981). This is also what he has repeatedly stressed in *the Power of Mora Poems* and other articles. Through translation, Chinese readers feel the “self-consciousness voice of the world, each sound must be in the hearts of the people and be clear and unordinary” (Lu, 1981).

Lu Xun's later translations were mainly conducted by hard translation (Lu, 1981). Lu Xun believed that when the country and nation were facing crisis, the reconstruction of Chinese culture meant the breakage of the subject culture. In order to realize the reconstruction of the national culture, it was necessary to introduce and absorb the foreign culture. Therefore, in order to "look for different views from abroad", translation must "be faithful", while translation must "tolerate more or less fluency" if it was to "be faithful". Based on this choice, when Lu Xun was translating, he must choose Western culture-based literal translation. Only literal translation can minimize the defect and distortion of western culture in the process of transformation and reduce the dyeing of Chinese traditional culture.

3.3 “Introduce a new representation” to reform the traditional Chinese language and promote the modernization of the Chinese language

The hard translation of Lu Xun actually contains two meanings. One is to faithfully transplant the original content or ideas. The second is to emphasize language or, in particular, syntactic loyalty. Therefore, Lu Xun’s translation is not only introducing new content but also introducing new expressions.

While drawing on the advanced western thought and culture, it also creatively introduces new forms of expression to make up for the shortcomings of early vernacular Chinese in terms of thinking and expression. The early stage of Lu Xun's translation activities was an era in which the classical Chinese language prevailed. Although the vernacular movement has been carried out at this time, more and more people use the vernacular to translate, but the initial vernacular has its immature side. Using immature language to express many new things and new ideas in heterogeneous cultures, the difficulty can be imagined. It is no wonder that Yan Fu sent the feeling of "one name stands, ten months hesitating". When discussing translation with Qu Qiubai, Lu Xun pointed out that literal translation is a good medicine to solve the ambiguity of traditional language: “This kind of translation not only inputs new content, but also inputs a new expression. The Chinese word or sentence, the grammar is too imprecise, ... to solve this problem, I think I have to suffer a

little bit one after another and put it into strange syntax. Ancient, provincial, foreign, and later on, we can impropriate" (Lu, 1981).

It is because the Chinese grammar itself has defects, so it is natural to have a "new creation" through translation. As Lu Xun said, "...translation can indeed help us create many new words, new syntax, rich vocabulary and precise and precise expression." Obviously, Lu Xun's point of view draws on the translation of Chinese and foreign translation history. Formed by the successful experience of transforming the national cultural language, the translation of *Buddhist* scriptures in Tang Dynasty greatly enriched the vocabulary and syntax of ancient Chinese. Luther translated *the Bible* by using literal translation, which made a great change in the form of German and laid the foundation for the growth of modern German. When Japanese translated European and American books, they gradually "added a new syntax" to make Japanese easier, and easier to translate without losing the tone of the original text. German critic and translator Benjamin suggested that translation should center on a foreign language and try to use its own language to accommodate a foreign language: "I would rather say that it is more important to translate word for word to ensure the faithfulness of the translation.", because it reflects the desire of different languages to complement. Lu Xun's translation pursuit is completely consistent with Benjamin at this point.

4. Conclusions

The cultural transformation of modern China cannot discover the basis of modernization from the Chinese culture like the Renaissance. If the western culture is not introduced, China cannot enter the modern society, and the modernization of Chinese culture can only draw strength from the heterogeneous culture. It was with this insight that Lu Xun proposed the "hard translation" concept, which was criticized by people at that time. We must decipher his "hard translation" by analyzing and studying the cultural context in which Lu Xun lived. Only in this way can we comprehend the historical significance of Lu Xun's translation to the transformation of Chinese culture.

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