

Research on Chinese Translation of the Beach Man's Words from the Perspective of Eco-translatology Theory

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Abstract: Patrick Modiano, winner of the 2014 Nobel Prize in Literature, is a famous contemporary French writer, whose works often take the beach man as the protagonist, and express the writer's thinking on the fate and existence of human beings, as well as the confusion about the identity of modern people. *In the Café of Lost Youth* is the twenty-fifth work written by Nobel Prize winner Modiano, and the protagonist Louki is one of the author's many "beach men".

From the perspective of the three-dimensional transformation of eco-translatology theory, this paper comprehensively interprets the translation strategy of Jinlongge's Chinese translation through Louki's words, trying to show the characteristics of the ecological existence of the translation, points out that the translator's role is very important, and the application of the three-dimension transformation benefits the improvement of the quality of translation, so as to achieve good communication effects.

Keywords: Eco-translatology theory; Three-dimensional transformation; Beach man

1. Introduction

Winner of the 2014 Nobel Prize for Literature as well as some of the most prestigious literary prizes in France, Patrick Modiano is considered one of the most fascinating French novelists alive today. He shows great care and compassion for living individuals. "The beach man" epitomizes the typical figures he created. "The beach men" who cannot find their roots in reality are in a floating state. At the same time, they are burdened with heavy internal and external pressures, struggling in an environment full of crises, and anxious about their fate and situation. Louki, the image of "the typical beach man" in *In the Café of Lost Youth*, is constantly searching for her identity and looking for her belonging. Based on the three-dimensional transformation perspective of eco-translatology theory, this article uses literature research to analyze Louki's words in *In the Café of Lost Youth*. By comparing her words in the original and the translation of Jin Longge, some reference suggestions are provided for translators to create more high-quality translations of novel.

2. Theoretical Overview

Eco-translatology theory is based on the Chinese harmonious thought of harmony between man and nature. The three theoretical foundations of eco-translatology are its important premises and rationales for objectivity, existence, and sustainability. Translation ecology and natural ecology are connected and common.

Hu Gengshen put forward a new translation method called "three-dimensional transformation", respectively transformation in the linguistic dimension, cultural dimension, and communicative dimension. The transformation in the linguistic dimension means the translator's adaptive choice and conversion of linguistic form in translating. The transformation in the cultural dimension means that the translator tries to transmit and interpret the bilingual cultural connotation by overcoming the differences between the source culture and the target culture and avoiding the distortion of the original text. The transformation in the communicative dimension means that the translator pays attention to the bilingual communication intention of the original text and its effective interpretation.^[1] There is an internal logical relationship between linguistics, culture and communication, and translators mainly show their important role in the construction of a harmonious translational eco-environment through three-dimensional transformation.

3. Research Analysis: Taking Louki's words in *In the Café of Lost Youth* as an example

3.1 The beach man and Louki

The image of beach man appeared in *Missing Person* for the first time. “This man had spent forty years of his life on beaches or by the sides of swimming pools, chatting pleasantly with summer visitors and rich idlers. He is to be seen, in his bathing costume, in the corners and backgrounds of thousands of holiday snaps, among groups of happy people, but no one knew his name and why he was there. And no one noticed when one day he vanished from the photographs.” The most prominent characteristic of the beach man is to lose himself. In *In the Café of Lost Youth*, Louki seeks the essence of life, but during the process, she gradually feels lonely, confused and has an overwhelming sense of loss, has misfortune, loses herself, and finally gives up her life. Louki’s words are most present in the third part of the book which is also the highlights. Louki tells her life experiences of childhood and youth to reply to the first two narrators’ questions: What has she been through? Why does she flee again and again?

3.2 The transformation in the linguistic dimension

The transformation in the linguistic dimension aims to adapt to the semantics of the original text and make consequent language choices, such as vocabulary and sentences. The problem of whether the translation is ideally adapted at the linguistic level can be painted in the two basic conditions of fidelity and readability. Readability means that the translated text must conform to the expressive habits of foreign languages, so that readers can read without irritation, feel authentic and resonate under the ecology of the original language. Fidelity requires that the translation accurately expresses the information of the original language.

E.g. 1:

SL: Ça y est. Laisse-toi aller.^[2]

TL: 都准备好了。你尽管去吧。^[3]

“Ça y est” has two different meanings in French: “what is in question is over” or “what happens is to be expected”. In the source text, these words are the last words of the book and appear before Louki commits suicide. It is necessary to pay attention to the descriptions of her words and behavior before committing suicide: “Elle avait eu le temps de prononcer quelques mots, comme si elle se parlait à elle-même pour se donner du courage”. A psychological preparation of Louki is planned to give herself courage by herself. “都” is added to stress her full preparation for facing mortality. The Chinese version “都准备好了” fits the context, is semantically adaptable and also in line with Chinese expression habits. As for “Laisse-toi aller”, Jin adds the adverb “尽管” in Chinese, which means “no need to consider other things”, so that the target readers can easily understand that for Louki, nothing is important even her life. “你尽管去吧” does not semantically hinder the expression of the original information but ensures readability. To sum up, the translation ensures an adaptive choice in the linguistic dimension.

3.3 The transformation in the cultural dimension

The translation process is the conversion between the original language and the target language under eco-translationology. The translator should get used to the cultural ecology of the source language, but also pay more attention to the transmission of the culture of the original in this conversion process. There are many special cultural words in French culture. Therefore, translators are not only obliged to converge on the conversion between the source language and the target language, but also to grasp and understand the differences between the two cultural and linguistic systems.

E.g. 2:

SL: ...(J’avais l’impression que si je traversais la place,) je tomberais dans les pommes. (J’avais peur.)^[2]

TL: ... (我觉得我若是穿越那个广场的话,) 我会晕倒在地。(我好害怕。)^[3]

“Tomber dans les pommes” is an idiom and a colloquial language specific to the French language. According to its literal translation, if it is translated into “掉在苹果里”, it is inappropriate and the target readers could not understand it. “Tomber dans les pommes” refers to the fact that someone faints, so in the Chinese translation “晕倒在地” the target readers can not only have a better understanding of Louki’s state, but also learn French culture.

E.g. 3:

SL: Comme si le rendez-vous avec ces gens n’était qu’un prétexte et qu’on avait chargé Roland de me ramener en douceur au bercail.^[2]

TL: 就好像是有人派了罗兰过来, 把我悄悄地带回我的老家。^[3]

In addition to the colloquial meaning “hometown”, there is another religious meaning in the word “bercail”, an allusion to the parable of the Good Shepherd: the church where the believers can find safety and peace, outside of which they will feel lost. After reading this novel, we can find the typical image of Louki losing herself as a believer who hopes to find safety and peace. “老家” only demonstrates its colloquial meaning, but loses religious characteristics.

In fact, the idiom and the word also concern the linguistic dimension, because in the process of representative translation, lin-

guistic, cultural and communicative factors, and so on, will be closely linked, even if difficult to separate. And this also applies to the other two dimensions.

3.4 The transformation in the communicative dimension

The type of expression of the translated text is obliged to reduce the distance from the public, to pierce the linguistic and cultural level and to arrive at the goal of communication between the author and the readers. And then we observed in 3.1 an image of the “beach people” to the reader that the author is trying to convey and the summary of Louki’s words. We can see the loneliness, loss, unhappiness and confusion in Louki’s image. So, this section will focus on the image of Louki which expresses the communicative intention of the author in the translation of Louki’s words.

E.g. 1:

SL: Ça y est. Laisse-toi aller.^[2]

TL: 都准备好了。你尽管去吧。^[3]

The ecology of the Chinese language and the French language is different, so the habits of expression are also different, and it is necessary to observe Louki’s psychological activities in the novel and the image of the “beach man” in order to understand the communicative intention that the original author can easily convey in the ecology of the French language. Louki was determined to commit suicide to end his life. But the expression of the translation “准备好了” means “someone to be ready”. In the ecology of the Chinese language, this expression is rarely used before suicide, although it is easy to understand. As a result, the intention of communication is weakened. It should be noted that “尽管” reinforces Louki’s determination to die conveyed in the original text, and compensates for the absence of previous communicative intentions.

E.g. 4:

SL: une vraie chambre de jeune fille...^[2]

TL: 一间名副其实的闺房啊.....^[3]

Louki and her husband slept in separate rooms, which is actually a clue to the characteristics of the “beach man”: loneliness, loss, misfortune and confusion. Louki failed to get a sense of security from her marriage and a truly intimate relationship with her husband. After the marriage, she also continued her escape and wandering in her youth. She ran away, because she had not found a place where she does not want to run away. Everything that will happen soon has already manifested itself in her relationship with her husband, the problems she had not solved before the marriage remained. In this context, she is almost the same girl she was when she wasn’t married, so her room is the room of the little girl. In the Chinese version, “闺房” refers to the room of an unmarried girl. This word alluded to Louki’s state of mind which is still like in adolescence, her loneliness, loss, misfortune and confusion have not disappeared, so her heart is still the same as when she was single. The adjective in the Chinese version before “chambre” is “名副其实”, which corresponds to “true”. This word in Jin’s translation has a little playfulness, because its tone is a little stronger, as if to accentuate that the marriage had not changed Louki and his state of the “beach man”, aiming at better realizing the cross-cultural communication between the source text and the target readers.

4. Conclusion

After all kinds of searching, Louki felt that in real life, whether in affection, friendship, marriage or love, whether in the material world or the spiritual world, she could not find true happiness, she always felt bound and suppressed. As a result, she ended her life to truly free herself from the shackles of her destiny and gain true liberation. Louki’s words often represent her independence and freedom.

Due to time and space constraints, this article fails to analyze Jin Longge’s translation in detail from syntax, rhetoric and other aspects. However, from the point of view of the “three-dimensional transformation”, we can find that the Chinese version of Louki’s words is not the literal translation of the original text, but the complete translation of the three dimensions of language, culture and communication, with an overview. Undoubtedly, the perspective of the three-dimensional transformation helps us better understand or choose translation. It is expected that this study will shed some light on eco-translation criticism of French-Chinese discourse translation.

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