Original Paper

A Study on the English Translation of "Taipei People" from the Perspective of Adaptation Theory

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Abstract

The collection of short stories, Taipei People, is one of the representative works of the famous writer Pai Hsien-yung. In this book, Pai portrays characters from different regions and fields vividly, displaying a contrast between the past and the present. The stories in this book are rich in Chinese culture and customs, which is concerned in this paper. This paper compares and analyzes the English translation of Taipei People from four aspects from the perspective of the adaptation theory, namely, contextual correlates of adaptability, structural objects of adaptability, dynamics of adaptability, salience of the adaptation processes. It is found that the translators consider the differences in language, culture and social environment between China and western countries, and make translation choices of different degrees of salience of adaptation. They adopt different translation strategies to dynamically adapt to the original book and target readers, make flexible choices according to different contexts, which show the salience and purpose of translators in the translation process. In view of the literary value of Taipei people, this paper hopes to provide some reference for more translators to translate and disseminate Chinese literature.

Keywords

English translation, Taipei People, adaptation theory

1. Introduction

In recent years, more and more attention has been paid to promote Chinese culture to go global, and translation plays an increasingly important role in cultural exchange and mutual learning. Domestic translation studies are more concerned about Chinese-English translation. Since the Cultural Turn in translation studies, scholars have been more aware of the influence of cultural factors on translation, and translation studies have been conducted in interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches. In 2001,

Nida also stresses the significance of cultural factors and context in translating (Nida, 2001). As a classic work in Taiwan's modern literature and even in the whole overseas Chinese literary circle, Taipei People is a collection of short stories written by Pai Hsien-Yung, a novelist and playwright. It has been ranked seventh among "the top 100 Chinese novels of the 20th century" by Asiaweek. It contains 14 stories, such as The Eternal Snow Beauty, The Last Night of Taipan Chin and Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream, and some of them have been adapted to movies, TV dramas and plays. With a great sense of contrast between the present and the past, the so-called "Taipei people" in the fiction are actually mainlanders who have had an unforgettable past in the mainland, while living in Taipei at that time. Taipei People actually displays the life stories of people from different regions and different classes.

The original English translation of this book was published in 1982 by Indiana University Press under the title Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream. In 2000, The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press published a Chinese-English version of it, revising the title to Taipei People. The book was translated by Pai Hsien-Yung and Patia Yasin, with the participation and edition by George Kao. The newest bilingual version was published by Guangxi Normal University Press in 2013, which is the basis of this study.

According to Verschueren's adaptation theory, this paper focuses on the English translation of Taipei People from four aspects: contextual correlates of adaptability, structural objects of adaptability, dynamics of adaptability and salience of the adaptation processes. Through a comparative analysis of the original text and the English version, this paper will discuss with examples how the translator achieves adaptation, the translation strategies and methods adopted and the effects of adaptation. In view of the representativeness and literary value of Taipei People, this paper hopes to provide some reference for the English translation and dissemination of Chinese literature to the globe.

2. Adaptation Theory and Translation Studies

In 1987, Jef Verschueren first proposed adaptation theory in Pragmatics as a Theory of Linguistic Adaptation, and the adaptation theory became more mature and complete in his book Understanding Pragmatics, in which he specifies pragmatics as "a general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behaviour" (Verschueren, 2000). According to Verschueren, the use of language is a process of making constant linguistic choices, which may be a conscious or unconscious activity, for internal or external linguistic reasons (Verschueren, 2000). Understanding the choices made in language use requires an understanding of three characteristics: variability, negotiability and adaptability, and it is because of these characteristics that language users can constantly make appropriate choices. Variability is "the property of language that defines the range of possibilities from which choices can be made", which is not static or stable, but constantly changing, on both diachronic and synchronic dimensions (Verschueren, 2000). Negotiability means that choices

are made "on the basis of highly flexible principles and strategies" instead of "strict rules or fixed form-function relationships" (Verschueren, 2000). Negotiability suggests indeterminacy on the side of the producer and interpreter of language. Once a choice is made, the choice can be renegotiated constantly, which reflects the dynamic nature of language use. Adaptability enables language users to "make negotiable linguistic choices from a variable range of possibilities" to meet communication needs. These three characteristics of language are inseparable and interrelated (Verschueren, 2000). Variability and negotiability are the conditions for adaptability.

Considering the adaptability of language, pragmatic description and interpretation can be made from four aspects, namely, contextual correlates of adaptability, structural objects of adaptability, dynamics of adaptability, salience of the adaptation processes. These four aspects are not separate research topics, but should be regarded as research focuses in a coherent pragmatic approach.

In domestic academic circles, professor Qian Guanlian first introduced Verschueren's adaptation theory as a new pragmatic theory. Qian (1991) reviewed Verschueren's Pragmatics as a Theory of Linguistic Adaptation, discussed the relationship between linguistic adaptation, choices and the functional pragmatic perspective, and compared the new theory with traditional pragmatics (Qian, 1991). With the deepening of the study of pragmatics, Jef Verschueren's pragmatic perspective has been applied to the field of translation, providing a new perspective for translation studies. Many scholars affirm that the adaptation theory has a strong explanatory power for translation (Song, 2004; Cao, 2007), and explain the adaptation in literary works (Deng, 2019). On the other hand, it is also thought to have guiding value for translation practice as many researchers apply it to practical language use, including translation of advertisement, subtitles and so on (Ouyang, 2003; Sun, 2011). Wang (2015) proposes that when following the guidance of adaptation theory, translators can not only consciously pay attention to their subjectivity and initiative, but also bear in mind the purpose and strategy of the whole translation process (Wang, 2015).

3. Translation of Taipei People from the Perspective of Adaptation Theory

In this section, the translation of Taipei People is analysed from four aspects, namely contextual correlates of adaptability, structural objects of adaptability, dynamics of adaptability, and salience of the adaptation processes.

3.1 Contextual Correlates of Adaptability

There is no such thing as using language out of context. Contextual correlates of adaptability include "all the ingredients of the communicative context with which linguistic choices have to be interadaptable (Verschueren, 2000). Context can be divided into communicative context and linguistic context. On the one hand, the ingredients of communicative context include language users, namely utterers and interpreters, the mental world, the social world and the physical world. An utterer may have many voices and an interpreter can play different roles. Utterance would be influenced by the

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types and number of utterers and interpreters involved. The mental world includes cognitive and emotive factors. The factors that make up the mutual adaptation of the social world and linguistic choice involve social settings or institutions, culture and the norms and values it generates. The physical world includes temporal reference and spatial deixis. On the other hand, linguistic context includes contextual cohesion, intertextuality, and sequencing in the linguistic channel chosen for communication and in the language selection process. Cohesion refers to "the overt marking of relations within a discourse or text" (Verschueren, 2000). Cohesion markers include conjunctions, anaphora, exemplification, ellipsis, substitution and so on. Intertextuality means that texts are related to each other and are influenced by the theme and genre of the text. Sequencing refers to the linear arrangement of the constituent components. In addition, Verschueren believes that context is generated in the process of language use (Verschueren, 2000).

Contextual correlates of adaptability requires translators to consider the communicative context and linguistic context, and to translate what the author wants to express properly on the basis of understanding the specific context of the original text.

Example 1

ST: 一品香老板娘笑道, "我们这里都管朱小姐叫 '赛白' 呢。"

"老板娘又拿我来开胃了," 朱青说道……

TT: The boss-lady of the general store laughed. "We all call her 'Superior Pai Kuang'".

"Now Boss-Lady, you're pulling my leg again", said Verdancy Chu. (Pai, 2013)

Example 1 is extracted from A Touch of Green. The literal meaning of the expression "开胃" is to whet or stimulate appetite. However, in the original text, it means to tease and joke in the dialect, which is embedded with unique cultural connotation. The translators grasp the extended meaning of "开胃" and render it as "pull my leg" in an idiomatic way. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "pull sb's leg" is an informal expression, meaning "to play a joke on sb, usually by making them believe sth that is not true". This English idiom corresponds to "开胃" to a large extent. Therefore, this translation not only expresses what the author wants to express, but also conforms to the language habits and reading habits of the target language readers. It shows translators' adaptation to communicative context to achieve efficient communication.

Example 2

ST: "还早呢，干爹，下四圈就该你摸清一色了。"

TT: "It's still early, Godpapa—in the next four rounds you're bound to make a Pure All-of-a-kind,"...

ST: "阿囡，快来！快来！ '四喜临门'！这真是百年难见的怪牌。……"

TT: "Baby, come here! Come look! I've got 'Four Happinesses at the Gate'! This is a hand that comes once in a lifetime!..."

ST: 那一盘徐壮图便和了一副 "满园花"，一下子就把输出去的筹码赢回了大半。

TT: Hsu Chuang-t'u won that very game with a "Garden Full of Flowers" and got back at one stroke more than half the chips he had lost.

Notes: In the "New Mah-jong", Shanghai-style, the winning hands were given various fancy names. "Pure All-of-a-kind" is one that scores high, as are the "Garden Full of Flowers" and "Four Happinesses at the Gate" mentioned later in the story. (Pai, 2013)

Example 2 is from The Eternal Snow Beauty. "清一色", "四喜临门" and "满园花" are mahjong terms, belonging to the social dialect. Through these winning patterns players can gain several times more chips than usual. In English, there is no equivalent terms, so the translator used literal translation and annotation when translating these words. The form of literal translation conforms to the original mahjong terms, but considering that readers are very likely to lack understanding of mahjong, the translator adds a note at the end of this story to further explain "清一色", "四喜临门" and "满园花", so as to facilitate the understanding of target readers and enhance their understanding of Chinese mahjong culture. This practice conforms to both the author and the reader, as it conveys the original terms, conforms to the cultural background of the reader, and reflects the translator's awareness of adaptation.

Example 3

ST: 一上台，一亮相，最要紧。那时在南京梅园新村请客唱戏，每次一站上去，还没有开腔就先把那台下压住了。

TT: When one goes on stage it's essential to create a presence instantly. In those Nanking days, when she herself gave opera dinners at Plum Garden, every time she got up to sing, her presence would hush the audience and hold it spellbound even before she uttered a note. (Pai, 2013)

Example 3 is from Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream. The story happened when Madame Ch'ien, honourable in the past while comes down in the world at present, is invited to the Tou villa. She recalls the past, especially the days of her glory on the stage. Chinese is a typical analytic language and emphasizes parataxis. In this example, the sentences in ST are loosely connected, and the subjects of the sentences are omitted. Chinese readers can understand the sentences naturally. However, English stresses parataxis which relies on structural cohesion. The translators adapt to the linguistic context of target readers by using cohesive devices. In TT, conjunctions "when" and "and" are used to indicate subordination and coordination, adjusting the order of clauses to make the logic of the sentence clearer. Anaphora "it" is also used to refer to "the audience"; a repetition of "presence" is applied since "亮相" and "站上去" have quite similar meaning. The translators also add "one" and "she" as the subjects of the sentences respectively, so as to clarify the logical relation. By doing so, they realise contextual cohesion in the translation and make it more understandable for readers.

All in all, the translators not only adapt to communicative context but also to linguistic context, making the translation readable and comprehensive to target readers. The characters in Taipei People come from different regions, so there are many dialects and idioms in the book, which can reflect our national culture but are unknown to English readers. If we blindly emphasize the preservation of our national culture and use literal translation to present these special expressions, it is likely to hinder the understanding of target readers. It can be seen that translators adapt to communicative context and convey the meaning of ST when dealing with idioms, culture-loaded terms and so on. On the other hand, since Chinese and English have different linguistic features, translators also adapt to the linguistic context through following the cohesion and coherence of the target language.

3.2 Structural Objects of Adaptability

The structural objects of adaptability include "structures at any layer or level of organization as well as principles of structuring" (Verschueren, 2000). Since communicative choices are always made at the level of linguistic structure, pragmatic phenomena can be associated with any structural level. Using a language involves choosing a specific language, such as English. In terms of the macro structure of language, it is necessary to choose a code, such as standard dialect, regional dialect, sociolect, and idiolect, and choose style, that is, the variability in formal and informal dimensions. The ingredients of building utterance are also selected, namely, sound structure, morphemes and words, clauses and sentences, propositions and suprasentential units. Thus, utterances or utterance clusters can be constructed according to utterance-building principles, which language users should pay attention. The choices of different structural levels and based on different principles are always interdependent and interadaptable.

When the translator makes choices during translation, the translator should take into account the elements of various structural levels.

Example 4

ST: "总算你有福气！" 罗伯娘伸出肥大粗黑的手，拍了一下顺恩嫂的肩膀，"有个孝顺儿子送你的终。像我无儿无女，日后还不知道死在什么街头巷尾呢。"

TT: "Now you've just to count your blessings!" Mamma Lo stretched out her big, plump, work-coarsened hand and patted Nanny Shun-en's shoulder. "Why, you've got yourself a mighty fine, dutiful son to carry you to your last resting place. Now me, I got no son, I ain't got no daughter; when the day comes I don't know where I'll be laying my body down, in the head of a street or in the tail of an alley."

ST: "桂喜和小王溜了不打紧，可就坑死了我这个老太婆。这一屋，里里外外，什么芝麻绿豆事不是我一把抓？清得里面来，又顾不得了外面。单收拾这间厨房，险些没累断了我的腰。"

TT: "It ain't only that Cassia and Little Wang run off, but they done cast this old woman into the pit. This whole house, inside and out, every little sesame seed of a thing, ain't I the one who lays my hand to it all? Soon as I get to fixing up the inside I have to leave the outside go. Just cleaning this here kitchen alone is enough to break my weary back." (Pai, 2013)

During translation, translators need to choose specific codes and may switch codes. Example 4 shows Mamma Lo's words, taken from the dialogue between Mamma Lo and Nanny Shun-en in Ode to Bygone Days. After leaving Li Mansion for many years, Nanny Shun-en went back again and met Mamma Lo who has been working in Li Mansion. The dialogue between the two old maids reflects the decline of the Li Mansion. The translators use the American Southern dialect to translate the dialogue between the two old women who have not seen each other for a long time. The use of "ain't" and "they done cast" in the translation reflects the typical dialect of the American South. In terms of language style, the translation adopts informal colloquial expression and uses common words, so that readers can easily understand the words of the characters in the text. Pai Hsien-Yung thinks that Mamma Lo is somewhat similar to Mammy in Gone With the Wind and Dilsey in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury (Xu, 2001). At the same time, the southern American dialect as an identity marker, serves a sociocultural purpose and shows translators' adaptation to communicative styles. It can shorten the distance between readers, reminding readers of the master-servant relationship of some families in the South of the United States, which is similar to the relationship between the characters in the Li Mansion and the status of the two maids.

Example 5

ST:

东山哪，一把青。

西山哪，一把青。

郎有心来姊有心，

郎呀，咱俩儿好成亲哪——

TT:

On East Hill, a touch of green.

On West Hill, a touch of green.

If you've got the fancy,

        your fancy is mine,

Darling! We two would make

        a pair so fine—(Pai, 2013)

Example 5 is a lyric fragment of "A Touch of Green" sung by Verdancy Chu. In the original text, "心" rhymes with "亲", make the lyrics sound harmonious and easier to remember and recite. It also adds aesthetic value to the lyrics. In the English translation, the translator takes this into account and rhymes

"mine" with "fine", making the lyrics vivid in an artistic manner. By retaining rhyming sounds, the translators represent the phonological effect of the original text, and create memorable expressions. The translation adapts to the pronunciation of the structural object, and enables the target readers to feel the musical and rhythmic beauty of the lyrics.

3.3 Dynamics of Adaptability

The dynamics of adaptability is "the unfolding of the adaptive process in interaction" (Verschueren, 2000). The generation of meaning is dynamic and interactive, which occurs in the process of activities and events, and occurs with the help of strategies. Dynamics is "located in relation to both contextual correlates and structural objects of adaptability" (Verschueren, 2000). The dynamics of adaptability is embodied in three aspects, that is, temporal dimension, other contextual dimensions, and structural properties of discourse. The temporal dimension "provides the raw material for communicative dynamics" (Verschueren, 2000). Time can affect the presupposition and conversational implicature of utterers and interpreters. Since language is different in different stages of language acquisition and in different generations, language users should adapt to the temporal factors. Different contexts restrict language choice, and social relationships and personal states of mind are dynamic. Therefore, language users should make choices according to context. The dynamic structure features the linearity of language, and people can flexibly arrange the information structure and choose different utterance types.

The same expression may convey different meanings in different contexts. With the dynamic changes of the above factors, translators are expected to make correct dynamic choices according to the specific context, so that readers can know the changes of meaning under various context. The translator should make accurate selection, timely addition and deletion, and realize dynamic adaptation.

Example 6

ST: 这碗米粉，是我送给卢先生打牙祭的，我这么巴结他，其实还不是为了秀华。

TT: Well, I gave Mr. Lu that dish as a special treat. To tell the truth, the reason I was trying so hard to get in good with him was on account of Hsiu-hua.

ST: 我看他一张脸瘦得还有巴掌大，便又恢复了我送给他打牙祭的那碗冒热米粉，哪晓得他连我的米粉也没胃口了，一碗总要剩下半碗来。

TT: When I saw how thin and drawn his face had gotten - it was no bigger than the palm of my hand—I went back to my old habit of feeding him my piping-hot noodles. I never imagined he'd lose his appetite for those noodles of mine, but he did; time after time he'd leave half his bowl untouched. (Pai, 2013)

The two sentences in Example 6 embody dynamic adaptation to different contexts, which are both from Glory's by Blossom Bridge. "打牙祭" is an idiom in Hakka dialect, which means eating meat or good dishes, and the translators have made different choices in the translation of "打牙祭". In the first

sentence, it is rendered as "a special treat", which not only conveyed the meaning of the original word, but also suited the psychology and purpose of the character at that time. Mr. Lu is a decent, cultivated gentleman, and among all the customers he is the only one from "my" home town, who leaves "me" very good impression. Therefore, compared with other customers, "I" favored Mr. Lu and wanted to give him special treatment, adding more materials to his noodles. It is not only because of his decency, but also because of "my" hope to promote the relationship between Mr. Lu and "my" husband's niece Hsiu-hua. It is in this sentence that the idiom "打牙祭" appears for the first time in the source text. Translating it as "a special treat" accurately grasps the context and conveys its meaning, which is helpful for target readers to understand, reflecting translators' adaptation to the context.

In the second sentence, the translator did not translate "打牙祭", because the noodles, which is specifically added more ingredients, has been already introduced in the previous text and readers are expected to have a certain understanding of it. In addition, the context of this sentence is that Mr. Lu was cheated out of his money which he had saved for his fiancee for 15 years, lost hope, and gradually fell into depression. Since this sentence focuses on describing Mr. Lu's state of despair and lack of appetite, the translator has omitted the translation of "打牙祭" to avoid repetition. In addition, it is worth noting that the translator added "my old habit of", which was not in the original text, to make the translation more cohesive and coherent and in line with the habit of English expression. With the change of contexts, the translators have made different dynamic adaptation to contexts and made different translation choices according to the specific context.

3.4 Salience of the Adaptation Processes

Salience of the adaptation processes is the status of those processes associated with cognitive apparatus (Verschueren, 2000). Different choices have different consciousness and purposes. Some choices are made unconsciously, while others involve "mind in society". The most obvious mental activities in language use are perception and representation, planning and memory, which promote language choice, and these choices have different degrees of salience. Perception and representation involve devices like categorization, association, abstraction, generalization and reification. Planning and memory are opposite processes: planning is forward-looking and linked to intentions or goals, while memory is interpretive and retrospective, taking the form of recognition or recall. In addition, the more marked something is, the more salient it is. Language users have reflexive awareness of the choices, and the metapragmatic awareness also shows different degrees of salience.

Translation is also a choice, reflecting the translator's different consciousness and purpose. Translators' different translation purposes and consideration of readers' reactions will influence translators' translation choices. In Taipei People, the translation of characters' names is a typical manifestation of salience of the adaptation processes. Generally speaking, Chinese names are often presented through transliteration, but many characters' names in the original work are created intentionally by the writer, thus containing rich cultural connotations and reflecting characters' image and personality. From the

different translation methods of the characters' names, we can see the different degrees of salience of the translators.

Taken the story A Touch of Green as an example, translators use different methods to present names. The translation of some names is a combination of transliteration and free translation. For example, the name of "朱青" (Zhu Qing) is rendered as "Verdancy Chu". In the source text, her first name "朱" means vermilion, a shade of red, denoting energy, passion and rejuvenation. However, her given name "青" refers to a greenish-blue colour, which implies immaturity and youth. The two colours are in sharp contrast, and both have cultural connotations. "青" corresponds to her young life when she was a bashful and timid young lady. However, she became a seductive singer later and her personality changed dramatically, which is not shy at all. Since there is a wide disparity between her young life in Nanjing and her later life in Taipei, her name is somewhat ironic. Furthermore, as the protagonist of this story, the name of "朱青" also echoes the name of the story, "一把青", and the name of the song she sings, "东山一把青", making the name to be an allusion. Therefore, if simply render her name through transliteration, such a translation obviously can not convey the implied meaning of her Chinese name and the author's intention. In the target text, "朱" is rendered as "Chu" by transliteration, while "青" is expressed as "Verdancy" by free translation. The translators consider the adaptation to the sound through transliteration. But at the same time, the connotation of "朱" is lost during translation. On the other hand, the translators render the connotation of "青". "Verdancy" not only means green in colour, but also is used as a term to describe someone inexperienced or immature, denoting her youth. Thus, the translation realizes the representation of the pun in the original text, contributing to the characterization of Verdancy Chu. It can be seen that translators present the sound as well as the cultural connotation to target readers. Since Pai Hsien-Yung is both the translator and the author, he is conscious of his translation choices, which indicates a high degree of salience of the adaptation process.

When translating other names, the translators' degree of salience of adaptation processes is different. As for the names of less important characters, the translators' consciousness is not that salient, and they may adopt transliteration directly. For example, "郭轸" is translated to "Kuo Chen" and "伟成" is translated to "Wei-ch'eng". In Chinese, "轸" means sorrow and distress, which also implies his fate—he died young after marrying Verdancy Chu, leaving Verdancy alone. "伟成" means great success, but his group were likely to lose and their families fled, which shows a hint of irony. The transliteration fails to convey the meanings of the names and the names' implication of characters' destiny. Nevertheless, it can realize the appellation function of names, catering to target readers' reading habits, and making the translation more readable.

Generally speaking, the translation of Taipei People shows different degrees of salience as the translation adapts to phonological, linguistic and cultural factors in different degrees. The names of each character are not only appellation with sound, but also contain cultural connotations related to the

fate of the characters, reflecting the authors' deliberations in writing. No one understands the intentions behind the novel's creation better than Pai Hsien-Yung. Therefore, his free translation and rewriting are supposed to be consciously considered and balanced, maximizing the representation of the original work and striving for the highest possible equivalence between the source and target texts, while the transliteration may be presented in a lower degree of salience.

4. Conclusions

Applying Verschueren's adaptation theory as the theoretical framework to translation studies, more attention can be paid to the social, cultural, cognitive and other factors that influence translation as a linguistic choice. This paper analyzes the English translation of Taipei People from four aspects from the perspective of adaptation theory. Pai Hsien-Yung is not only the author of Taipei People, but also one translator of the English translation team. Due to this double identity, he can clearly know the meaning of the source text and makes more flexible translation choice based on the author's intensions. At the same time, he dynamically chooses translation strategies according to different contexts, adapting to context and structural objects. In the English translation of Taipei People, the translator adopts the southern dialect of the United States to adapt to the context, flexibly translates the rhythm, chooses different translations of the same idiom to express the meaning of the sentence, and adopts literal translation and annotation methods to retain the original form and adapt to the cultural background of the readers. No matter what kind of translation strategies and methods the translator adopts, the process of translation is a dynamic adaptation process of the translators consciously or unconsciously. When translating, the translators not only clearly express the content of the original text, but also takes into account the cultural background and language habits of the target language readers to make translation choices that are easy for readers to understand.

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