

On Translation Strategies of THE GOLD DIGGER under Skopos Theory

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Abstract

This practical translation is based on the short fiction THE GOLD DIGGER by Australian author Glen Phillips. Through this translation practice, the translator hopes to provide some feasible translation strategies and methods for other literary translators in the title translation of literary works and the translation of English adverbial participle structures from the perspective of skopos theory.

Keywords

Short Fiction; Skopos Theory; Translation Strategies.

1. Introduction

This translation practice project is based on the translation practice of *THE GOLD DIGGER*, which is written by a famous Australian writer Glen Phillips. Glen Phillips has published more than a dozen works of short fictions and holds a place in Australian literature. Glen Phillips is currently a honorary professor at Edith Cowan University, president of the Western Australian Branch of the Australian Writers' Association and a trustee of the Peter Cowan Writers' Centre. *THE GOLD DIGGER* tells a story of protagonists Harold and Jess, who are involved in a car accident on their way to the office when the Ford they are driving collides with a minivan that is carrying several gold robbing robbers. The bandits almost kill Harold and Jess before the gold squad arrive. As the gold squad arrives, the bandits flee, leading to a series of investigations and searches for the bandits. Set in Australia during the gold rush, this short fiction introduces the Australian landscape and society, showing the history of the country and the character and mindset of its people during this period.

The translator chose that for this translation practice for the following three reasons: firstly, from a stylistic point of view, the text belongs to the genre of fiction, which is centred on the portrayal of characters, and the short fiction has complete story lines, distinctive characters, realistic descriptions of the environment and sophisticated conceptual angles. The translator needs to understand the translation from the character's heart and statement, so the translation of the text can further improve the translator's ability of literal translation. Secondly, due to the particularity of the fiction style in terms of diction, syntax and discourse and the majority of dialogues in the novel, it is a challenge for translators to achieve the purpose of conveying meaning, so the translator can further study the translation methods and strategies with the help of relevant translation theories.

2. The Concept of Skopos Theory in Translation

This translation practice is guided by the skopos theory, which was proposed by Hans Vermeer, and it is a representative theory of the German functional translation school. Hans Vermeer proposed this theory in *Framework for a General Translation Theory* (Hans Vermeer, 1978) and elaborated the famous three principles of skopos theory. They are skopos rule, intra-textual coherence rule (coherence rule), and inter-textual coherence (fidelity rule) which constitute the main structure and foundation of skopos theory. Moreover, skopos theory selects the

purpose of the translation for the specificity of each text, using the time, place, person and period information provided by the text to select the appropriate translation strategies based on the understanding of this textual information.

3. The Embodiment of Skopos Theory in *THE GOLD DIGGERS*

In the translation process of this Australian short fiction, skopos theory can be used as translation guidance in terms of vocabulary and syntax. In terms of vocabulary, in order to facilitate readers' understanding, specific words should be explained clearly to prevent readers from having doubts when reading the translation. In the aspect of syntax, the adverbial participle structure is one of the more widely used sentences in English, and particular attention should be paid to the translation methods of this type of sentence in the translation process. In translating the participial structure, it is important to pay attention to its relationship with the logical subject, otherwise there will be logical confusion and illogicality. The translator uses the translation of participial phrases and participial independent structures in this short fiction to study them, using two methods to solve these problems: one is translating it into adverbial clause, the other is translating it into compound sentence. Generally speaking, the gerund structure does not indicate emphasis, and the order of the original text is usually only for stylistic reasons. Therefore, when translating such structures, once the logical relationship between branch and stem has been identified.

3.1. The Application of Skopos Theory in Vocabulary

In short fictions, due to their short length and compact narrative, the language of short fiction is more concise and accurate. The translation of many words should be deliberated, and the appropriate translation strategies should be chosen. The title of a literary work has special characteristics compared to other titles, it is different from the translation of news titles that focus on the function of information, and is not as rigid as the title of an academic paper, but can be freely played according to the content or the translator's preference, and the style of title is varied. (Wang Li, 2015: 77)

Example 1: *THE GOLD DIGGER*

Target text 1: 《守金子的人》

Target text 2: 《挖金子的人》

Target text 3: 《淘金者》

In terms of this title, it is clear that the topic is relatively short. And it is generally clear that the content of the article is related to gold mining. In the target text 1, the translator has slightly adopted the free translation method to expand the semantic content, while in reading through the whole text it is understood that the word “守” is not used very accurately and the translation does not conform to the content of the original text. In the target text 2, although it is a literal translation, it lacks beauty in form and is not concise, and the language is rather verbose, which is not in line with the pursuit of literary beauty under the rule of skopos. In the target text 3, on the other hand, it is based on the rule of fidelity guided by the skopos theory, and the translation is not only relevant to the content of the original text, but also more concise and easy to understand. Every literary work or piece of literature is the result of a long creative process in which the author has incorporated unique literary techniques and artistic aesthetics, and every word and phrase has its own special meaning and unique charm. Therefore, when conducting translation activities, translators must ensure that the original author's works are presented to readers in the most authentic form. (Wang Li, 2015: 77)

Example 2

Source text: "They shot out of that bush track straight in front of us, sir. This is Mr Stevens, Electricity Manager of the Coolgardie Goldmine," Jess supplied breathlessly.

"Oh, we know Mr Stevens. Believe he's in the Rifle Club. Tell us what's going on."

Target text 1: 杰斯上气不接下气地补充说道：“他们径直冲进了我们正前方的灌木丛，这是史蒂文斯先生，这位是库加迪尔金矿的电力经理史蒂文斯先生。”

“噢，我们对史蒂文斯先生的名字早有耳闻，知道他在步枪俱乐部。请告诉我们这里究竟发生了什么事。”

Target text 2: 杰斯上气不接下气地补充说道：“这几个混蛋径直的逃进了我们正前方的灌木丛，这位是库加迪尔金矿的电力经理史蒂文斯先生。”

“噢，我们对史蒂文斯先生的名字早有耳闻，知道他在步枪俱乐部。请告诉我们这里究竟发生了什么事。”

In this dialogue, it is Jess and Harold who respond to the questioning of the men of the gold squad after their encounter with the bandits. In this dialogue, it should show Jess state of shock at the bandit encounter she had just had, and the concern of the search party's men for Jess and Harold. The context suggests that Jess and Harold had just escaped from the gold robbers. And the situation and experience of the protagonists should be considered. They had just experienced a life-threatening situation, so they must have been in a state of shock and excitement. In the target text 1, the translator translates "they" into "他们", which is very plain, does not show too much emotion, and does not accurately express the excitement and anger of the two protagonists according to the original author's intention. In target text 2, on the other hand, the translator translates it into "这几个混蛋". According to the analysis, the two main characters must have been angry and humiliated, and afraid of the gold robbers who had threatened their life. They had just had a life-or-death moment, and Jess must have hated the robbers so much that she dared to speak out in anger. The translator should consider Jesse's emotional state and experience as much as possible in the translation process, and try to restore the intonation and vocabulary she should use when speaking. So the translator expands the semantic meaning of them and translates them into these change orders. Jess was running around under the threat of the robbers. When the gold search team came, she should verbally vent her anger by cursing the robbers. Therefore, the semantic extension of the character's state of mind has positive implications for the restoration of the character's image and the portrayal of the character, so that the translation achieves the skopos rule of enabling the general readers to understand the character of Jess, and is also faithful to the content of the original text, fulfilling the skopos rule and the fidelity rule.

3.2. The Application of Skopos Theory in Syntax

The translation of a sentence is always a global translation, if the translation of a word is a point, then the translation of a sentence is from point to point, in the case of understanding the general meaning of the sentence, how to control the sentence structure, especially in the literary text becomes particularly important. Good sentence structure rearrangement can achieve unexpected and amazing effect. Under the guidance of the purpose theory, how to translate the sentence clearly and vividly express the meaning of the sentence under the condition of clear translation purpose is the primary problem that the translator should consider. The translation of adverbial structure will make the text coherent and specific, in line with the rule of coherence and the language characteristics of Chinese. (Liu Miqing, 2012: 222)

Example 3

Source text: Jumping out, he tried to swing over the starting handle out the front.

Target text 1: 他跳出车外，用力地摆动着前面的操纵杆。

Target text 2: 在他跳出车外的时候，哈罗德使出浑身解数，挪动着前面的操纵杆。

This sentence is also a sentence with an non-predicative verb. In the whole sentence, the logical subject of the verb “jump” is “he”. In the first sentence, the translator only translates the meaning of the sentence by literal translation. And in the target text 1, the logical relationship is missing and the expression is also lack of coherence. In the target text 2, the translator analyses the relationship between non-predicative verb “jumping” and the main clause, and finds that this adverbial participle structure can be used as the adverbial clause of time. On this basis, the translator translates “jumping” into the adverbial participle structure as: “在他跳出车外的时候”, which makes the sentence more clearly and logically. The target text 2 therefore has a biased relationship in the Chinese expression, and the preceding adverbial participle structure is treated as the adverbial clause of time, which better expresses the logic and rationality of the logical subject in performing this action.

Example 4

Source text: “What about you then?” shouted Harold, surveying the scattered vehicle parts on the road.

Target text 1: 当哈罗德看着散落在公路上的汽车零件时候，他喊道：“你们不也一样？”

Target text 2: “你们不也一样？”哈罗德一边吼叫着回击，一边看着道路上零碎的汽车配件。

In this sentence, the translator also finds that the logical subject of the non-predicative verb is “Harold”, and the two verbs “shouted” and “surveying” in this sentence have a logical relationship. In the target text 1, the translator translates the participle structure into a adverbial clause of time. In the target text 1, it is logically sound and conveys the basic meaning of the sentence, but it is somewhat wordy and cumbersome for the target language readers. In the target text 2, it is linked up by two actions. The sentence is translated as “哈罗德一边吼叫着回击，一边看着道路上零碎的汽车配件”. The translator, having analysed and understood that the logical subject of the non-predicative verb is “Harold”, directly translates the sentence into a compound sentence, using “一边.....，一边.....” to indicate that two actions are taking place at the same time, which makes the text coherent and concise. The translator also adds the word “回击” to the translation of “shouted” to make the translation more fluent and specific. This is in line with the rule of coherence in translation skopos theory. The principle of coherence means that the translation must meet the criteria of intra-linguistic coherence, and the translation must be readable and acceptable, understandable to the recipient and meaningful in the translator's language. (Qiu Zhipeng, 2017: 227) The translation also conforms to the reading and language habits of the target language readers.

4. Conclusion

In the translation of Australian short fiction, on the basis of an in-depth understanding of skopos theory, and taking the communicative function of the target language readers as the premise, the difficult problems encountered in the process of translating short fiction are solved through the rule of skopos, coherence and the fidelity. And the solution measures are

proposed, expecting that this analysis will provide a useful reference for the translation of Australian short fictions.

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