

Factors Influencing the Choice of Translation Strategies Based on Think-Aloud Protocols

LUO Mengyan^{[a],*}; ZHAO Yushan^[a]

^[a]School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

As a complicated social activity, translation provides the translators with a variety of choices in the translating process. The choice of translation strategies is influenced by all kinds of factors. In this paper, the translation strategies are investigated based on think-aloud protocols, which aims to discuss the main factors influencing the translator's choice of strategies, such as types of source text, purpose of translation, ideology, translator's way of thinking and their aesthetic orientation.

Key words: translation strategies; Choice; Factors; TAPs

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INTRODUCTION

Translation is a very complicated social activity and translation strategies are very important to translators. Traditional translation studies have been focusing on the fact whether the translated text is faithful to the original version, and have adopted a single model from the original version to the translated text, aiming to discover a kind of translation strategy or method with absolute

rightness and infinite truth. However, it is hard to say what the right translation strategy or method is and what the faithful translated text is. Nowadays, the translation studies have shown clearly that the original version is not the only decisive factor for the translated text and in the translation process, the translators make constant choices. From the translation criteria, the goal of translation and the translation strategies, all these are closely related to the translators' choices. And many factors such as objective and subjective ones, including such things as the types of source text, goal of translation, target text readers, the translator's way of thinking, value orientation and cognition of source language culture and target language culture, have a significant influence on the choice of translator's strategies.

Based on such research background and through adopting the TAPs, the translation strategies are investigated in this paper, which aims to explain the main factors influencing the choice of translation strategies.

1. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, the research design is mainly discussed. It describes the research questions, the subjects, testing material for the subjects and the research method. And it explains the research procedure, including the think-aloud training before the experiment, the records and transcriptions after the TAPs experiment and the data coding systems.

1.1 Research Questions

The study will answer the following questions: a) which translation strategies have been adopted in the translation process of translators? b) what the factors are in the process of choosing translation strategies?

1.2 Research Design

In this study, a literary article is selected as the testing material, think-aloud protocol method is used to explore

the translation strategies in the translation process, which aims to explore the translators' performance related to above-mentioned questions, and especially the main factors influencing the choice of translation strategies.

1.3 Research Method

1.3.1 Subject

Two post-graduate students are selected in this study, their mother tongue is Chinese and they have received two-year translation courses in college, who agree to act as testing subjects.

1.3.2 Testing Material

According to the following criteria: length, internal coherence, new words, and the level of difficulty, the passage "*How should one read a book*" is selected as the testing material. It is a literary text and consists of eight sentences with a total of 234 English words. Some long sentences are involved in the text, which are not too difficult, and it also includes some problem-solving sentences for strategic translation.

1.3.3 Research Procedure

The researcher explains to the subjects the definition of TAPs and how to verbalize their thoughts and the researcher records or videotapes their thoughts. Then, the researcher shows an example and tells the subjects how to translate with the TAPs. After the demonstration, the researcher asks the subjects to translate a paragraph with TAPs, and gives some suggestions during their translating process. After this, the subjects are asked to translate with the TAPs in a self-study classroom, with dictionaries and some reference books provided.

1.3.4 Analytical Method

The researcher transcribes the exact words of the think-aloud protocols, and codes them according to the twenty strategy indicators proposed by Kiraly (1997), other strategies are also identified during the analysis process, and the main factors influencing the choice of translation strategies are identified particularly.

2. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the data analysis and discussion is mainly described. Firstly, it provides the translation strategy indicators, including the Kiraly's strategy indicators and other translation strategies employed in this experiment. Then, it describes the frequency and distribution of translation strategies in the translating process. At last, it provides the factors influencing the choice of translation strategies, which is the main part of this thesis.

2.1 Translation Strategy Indicators

Translation strategies in the translating process have been the major concern of this study. Donald Charles Kiraly (1997) reported the studies on the strategies in the translating process. The problems and strategy indicators

are found and more strategies are differentiated. He had investigated the mental aspects of the translation process. The translation strategies drawn from Kiraly's research will be used in the present experiment. Before the researcher transcribes the exact words of the think-aloud protocols and analyzes the data based on TAPs, twenty translation strategy indicators proposed by Kiraly will be introduced in Table 1 and other strategies investigated by the researcher after transcribing the recorded words of the two participants will be listed in Table 2.

Table 1
Kiraly's Strategy Indicators

No.	Strategy indicators
S1	Accept interim solution
S2	Attempt syntactic reconstruction
S3	Back Translate
S4	Break off attempt
S5	Break off translation and start over
S6	Employ mnemonic aid
S7	Identify problem
S8	SL-TL dictionary search
S9	Make extra linguistic judgment
S10	Make intuitive acceptability judgment
S11	Monitor for TL accuracy
S12	TL-CL dictionary search
S13	Choose dictionary entry
S14	Recontextualize
S15	Reduce meaning
S16	Consider the translation's expected value
S17	Rephrase ST segment
S18	Uncertainty regarding acceptability
S19	Uncontrolled interim unit production
S20	Invalid dictionary search

Table 2
Other Translation Strategies

No.	Strategy indicators
S21	Read ST segment
S22	Read through the text
S23	Postpone attempt
S24	Self-correction

2.2 Application of Translation Strategies

Translation is a dynamic process including translators, different cultures, translation standards and so on. Think-aloud protocols are an experimental method frequently used in researches on translation strategies, translation units and in other fields. It reveals the translators' mental process. Subjects in the think-aloud protocols experiment are required to verbalize their thoughts as much as possible in the translation process, and researcher

records or videotapes the whole process. In order to dig into the translators' thinking process and the main factors influencing the translators' decision directly, the researcher employs the TAPs method.

In this experiment, the two subjects have got strong sense of translation strategies. Here are the translation strategies they applied in their translation process.

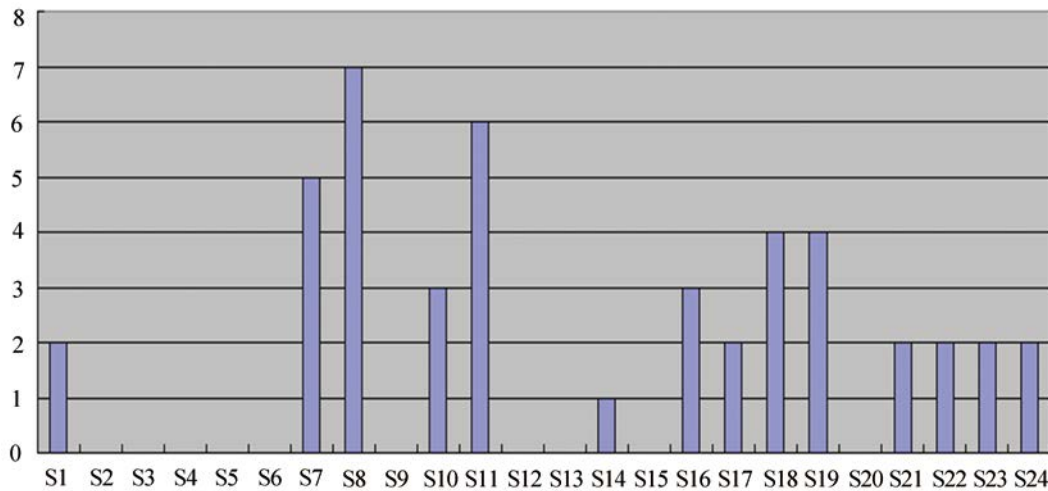


Figure 1
Statistic on the Application of Translation Strategies

From Figure 1, according to Kiraly's strategy indicators, most translation strategies have been employed by the subjects, the following strategies, such as S7 (identify problem), S8 (SL-TL dictionary search), S11 (monitor for TL accuracy), S18 (Uncertainty regarding acceptability), S19 (Uncontrolled interim unit production) are used repeatedly in this study. And the subjects also employed other strategies such as S21 (read ST segment), S22 (read through the text), S23 (postpone attempt) and S24 (self-collection).

Translation process is considered as a problem-solving process, during which the translators have always been identifying problems and trying to solve these problems. For example, when translating the second sentence "Yet few people asks from books what books can give us", both of the two subjects think it is a very easy sentence, then their translations are "很少人问过, 书籍到底给了我们什么东西", but after that they said in translating: "ask from" 好像是一个词组, 到底是不是"询问"的意思呢, 为什么不直接用"ask"呢. According to the recordings, the subjects employed S7 (identify problem), which also means that classifying the problems is very important and is a good solution to avoid mistranslation.

When the subjects are classifying the problems, they try to figure out how to solve these problems, S8 (SL-TL dictionary search) is one of the indispensable way to make sure of the TL production. For example, they search the phrases "ask from", "hang back", "far more". As for the application of S11 (monitor for TL accuracy), the first subject thinks the sixth sentence is harder to translate, he said: 凭借自己读书的经验, 可以翻译成"如果你的思维能够更加开放, 你就能发现那些细微的暗示, 这个读书之旅就能把你带到与众不同的人的面前", 但是实

在不能确定 "a human being unlike any other" 怎么翻译才正确. It seems that the subject wants to monitor the production of the native language, especially the literary translation and other specialized English. As for the application of S18 (Uncertainty regarding acceptability) and S19 (Uncontrolled interim unit production), both of them are employed by translators frequently. When they deal with easy and difficult translation tasks, they often employ these two strategies.

After the experiment and data analysis of the two subjects based on the TAPs, different strategies employed by the translators are identified. It is obvious that the translation process is a decision-making process, and translators choose different translation strategies. Then, what are the main factors influencing the two subjects' choice of translation strategies? In the following part, the author is going to analyze the factors influencing the translation strategies employed by the subjects.

2.3 The Factors Influencing the Choice of Translation Strategies

Based on the above-mentioned TAPs data, what has occurred to the translators during translation is investigated clearly. From the subjects' recordings, it is obvious that translation strategies can be understood as the guideline in translation process according to the changing of situations such as the translator's way of thinking, the translator's aesthetic orientation, the target readers, the positions of cultures and the like.

Eg. Curiosity enough, he prophesied with oracle accuracy to the amazement of all.

(a) 说也奇怪, 他料事真准, 像神启一样应验, 让所有的人都惊讶不止.

(b) 说也奇怪, 他像诸葛亮一样, 料事如神, 大家都惊讶不止。

Obviously, the translator's choice of translation strategies is influenced by the source language culture and target language culture. In translation practice, when the strong culture is introduced to other countries, the strategy of foreignization is always used to illustrate their political and social ideology. While, if the translators think their culture is weak culture, they tend to use the strategy of domestication, so the first example employs foreignization strategy, and "oracle" means "the advice of information that gods give in ancient Greece", that is "神启", and the second example employs domestication strategy, and "oracle" is translated into "诸葛亮" in Chinese traditional style.

Now, according to the subject's recordings, the factors influencing their choice of translation will be identified clearly. For example, before translating, both of the subjects employ S21 (Read ST segment), S22 (Read through the text), they said: 先读一遍, 了解文章的大概意思。(读了一遍文章)属于散文, 生词不是太多, 整体不难, 但是翻译的很地道有点难, 文字要优美, 一些词语和句子需要揣摩, 那么题目"How Should one Read a Book"不能逐字死译, 应该翻译成"如何阅读书籍", 这样才算是一篇散文的题目。So the types of texts play an important role during translating. When translating philosophy works, political, historical or local stories, essays or poems, they adopt different strategies to keep the style of the original texts. In addition, the purpose of translation is vital as well, the two subjects translate this text in order to finish the experiment of the TAPs and their translated text will be analyzed, so in some degree their translated sentences are not very beautiful.

From Chart 1, the subjects employ S7 (identify problem), S8 (SL-TL dictionary search), S11 (monitor for TL accuracy) very frequently. For example, both of them think the seventh sentence is a little difficult, they search the meaning of "imperceptible fineness", and have no idea of the meaning of "a human being unlike any other", based on their own experience, the first subject said: "如果你尽可能宽的打开你的思想", 有点翻译腔, 查查 "open your mind", 译成"开阔视野"好一点, 后面这句话有点难, 先找主语, "the signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness"应该是主语, "will"是谓语, 那么书籍当中的每一句话, 你将会体会到句子完美的标记, 这个标记会让你体会到活生生的人的存在, 而不是其他枯燥乏味的意思, 要适当增译. 这句话感觉翻译的还是不太对, 先写下来, 待会再修改. And the second subject said: 这句话不太好翻译, 根据我以往读书的经历, 第一反应应该是, 如果你的思维能够更加开放, 你就能够发现那些细微的暗示, 这个读书旅程就能把你带到与众不同的人的面前. 至于"human being unlike any other" 实在不太明白, 就先这么翻译吧. By comparison, the second translation is closer to the meaning of original text. Obviously, the two subjects have different ways of thinking, the translated texts are based on their own ideology. In addition, the second subject has

a better aesthetic orientation. So the translator's ideology and aesthetic orientation are important factors which can influence the translator's choice of translation strategies.

Since the subjects' first language is Chinese, they have a good knowledge of the source language culture, they can monitor for TL accuracy well. For example, when translating the third sentence, the second subject said: 读这句话后, 感觉汉语中也有相似描写的句子, 所以认为比较简单, 译成"大多数的时候我们读书的思绪复杂, 思维割裂, 认为小说应该是真实的, 诗歌应该是虚构的, 传记应该是赞扬某个人的, 历史应该是一己自见". 但是对"divided", "flattering", "enforce"的翻译还需要再斟酌一下. Obviously, the subject employed S11 (monitor for TL accuracy) based on his cognition of Chinese culture.

From examples above, we find that translation is a complicated process which faces different choices. Such factors as the positions of cultures, the types of source text, the purpose of translation, the translator's ideology, the translator's way of thinking, the translator's aesthetic orientation and the translator's cognition of culture have a great influence on the choice of translation strategies.

CONCLUSION

Translation is a complicated activity, and no translator can absolutely claim that he or she only employs one translation strategy in the translation process. The translator's choice of translation strategies is restricted by many factors.

In this study, the translation strategies used by the subjects and the main factors influencing their choice of translation strategies have been demonstrated, the study will contribute to the translator training and translation teaching. However, there are also some limitations, for example, the number of subjects is limited and the subjective judgment during the analysis of the TAPs data, this research can be considered as an empirical analysis of translation process.

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APPENDIX I

Source text applied in the study (English vision):

How Should One Read a Book?

It is simple enough to say that since books have classes—fiction, biography, poetry—we should separate them and take from each what it is right that each should give us. Yet few people ask from books what books can give us. Most commonly we come to books with blurred and divided minds, asking of fiction that it shall be true, of poetry that it shall be false, of biography that it shall be flattering, of history that it shall enforce our own prejudices. If we could banish all such preconceptions when we read, that would be an admirable beginning. Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow-worker and accomplice. If you hang back, and reserve and criticize at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read. But if you open your mind as widely as possible, the signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness, from the twist and turn of the first sentences, will bring you into the presence of a human being unlike any other. Steep yourself in this, acquaint yourself with this, and soon you will find that your author is giving you, or attempting to give you, something far more definite.

APPENDIX II

Protocol excerpt from subject 1:

S1: 首先, 题目“*How should one read a book?*”其中, “*One, a*”都是虚指, 不用翻译出来, 所以题目应该翻译成: 如何阅读书籍。

先读一遍, 了解文章的大概意思。(读了一遍文章)生词不是太多, 整体不难, 但是翻译的很地道有点难, 一些词语、句子需要揣摩。

第一句, *Since* 应理解为“因为”, 根据英汉句子地位不一样, 先翻译*Since* 后面的断句, 书籍有不同的分类—小说、传记、诗歌, *we should separate them and take them from each what it is right that each should give us*, 我们应该把这些区分开来, 在这考略到直译的话, 不太顺, 所以想了想, 翻译成, “并从他们当中汲取营养”, 这样比较恰当。

第二句, 按照原句顺序就可以翻译, 很简单, 很少人问过, 书籍到底能给我们什么东西。

第三句, *Commonly* 就是*usually*, 首先从结构上看, *with* 是一个伴随状语, *blurred and divided minds*, 意思是“思维不清晰”也就是说我们读书的时候思维不清晰, 后面的“*of*”“可以看做是排比句, 我也用汉语中的排比句来翻译, 然后开始分析翻译, 我们要求科幻小说应该是真实的, 要求诗歌必须是假的, 要求自传必须是恭维人的, 最后一短句“*enforce our own prejudices*”, 如果翻译成“历史应该强化我们的偏见”, 有点不通顺, 想一下, 感觉译成“历史能够强化我们的认知”比较通顺点。

第四句, 这句话相对简单, 如果我们能摒弃这些假设的观念, *that* 是一个定语从句, 不是连接词是代词, 译成“这是一个很好的开始”。

第五句, “*dictate to*”这个词组不太确定, 查字典后, 应该是支配, 不要支配作者, 试着把自己当做作者。“*fellow-worker and accomplice*”这两个词语, 应该积极一点, 是褒义词, 译成“同伴和搭档”。

第六句是一个条件状语从句, 按照句子顺序翻译, 其中“*Hang back* 和 *reserve* 是一个意思, 意思是“犹豫不决”, 后面的译成“你就会阻止你自己”, 直接翻译太生硬, 应该意译翻译成“你就不会得到完整的价值”。

第七句, 如果你尽可能宽的打开你的思想, 有点翻译腔, 查查“*open your mind*”, 译成“开阔视野”好一点, 后面这句话有点难, 先找主语, “*the signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness*”应该是主语, “*will*”是谓语, 那么书籍当中的每一句话, 你将会体会到句子完美的标记, 这个标记会让你体会到活生生的人的存在, 而不是其他枯燥乏味的意思。要适当增译。这句话感觉翻译的还是不太对, 先写下来, 待会再修改。

最后一句话, “*steep*”应该是沉浸, 沉浸到书籍当中, 和书籍的作者交朋友, 很快你就会发现, “*that*”引导的是一个宾语从句, 查字典“*definite*”是“明确的”意思, 很快你就发现作者在给你或者试着给你一些非常明确的东西。觉得还行, 第一遍大概可以懂意思, 第二遍要根据汉语的习惯再修改。