

On Translation Strategies of Chinese North-eastern Dialect in Tracks in the Snowy Forest Under Eco-translatology

Dandan Wu, Zhulin Han

School of Applied English, Mudanjiang Normal University, Mudanjiang, China

Abstract

Intercultural communication has become an important way to promote mutual understanding and cooperation among countries around the world. Chinese north-eastern dialect is a regional dialect with a narrow meaning and attracts the attention of numerous readers from home and abroad. Under Eco-translatology, this thesis aims to investigate the translation of the Chinese north-eastern dialect in Tracks in the Snowy Forest to summarize translation strategies for the Chinese north-eastern dialect, to enrich the research corpus on Chinese north-eastern dialect, and to promote Chinese culture to the world.

Keywords

Chinese North-eastern Dialect; Tracks in the Snowy Forest; Eco-translatology; Three-dimensional Transformation.

1. Introduction

The language expression of the Chinese north-eastern dialect is unique, humorous, and highly infectious, making it easier to understand compared with dialects from other regions in China. Since the new era, scholars have conducted more extensive and in-depth research on the emerging topic of studying the culture of Northeast China and have written and published many related papers and monographs. And most domestic scholars pay great attention to the translation of the Chinese north-eastern dialect under certain theories.

At present, domestic scholars have adopted different theories to conduct research on the translation of the Chinese north-eastern dialect. For example, In this article, The English Translation of Chinese North-eastern Dialect Under Thinking Aloud Protocols: An Interpretive Theory Perspective, Xu Dan analyzes the translation of a paragraph composed of the Chinese north-eastern dialect under Interpretive Theory, to provide a useful reference for the English translation research of the Chinese north-eastern dialect. Other scholars, starting with linguistic research related to the Chinese north-eastern dialect under Functional Equivalence Theory and so on.

To sum up, there is a certain foundation for the translation research of the Chinese north-eastern dialect in China, and it can be seen that the translation research of the Chinese north-eastern dialect has good academic research value. Under Eco-translatology, this article intends to study the translation of Chinese north-eastern dialect in Tracks in the Snowy Forest from three-dimensional transformation, which can provide new directions for the translation research of Chinese north-eastern dialect.

2. Previous Studies on Tracks in the Snowy Forest

This article chooses Chu Po's work Tracks in the Snowy Forest as the research work. Tracks in the Snowy Forest, one of the most influential novel in contemporary literary history, was published in September 1957. It depicts the small detachment in Northeast China that successfully completes the mission of suppressing bandits in Tracks in the Snowy Forest. This

novel is an important work in the development of “seventeen-years literature”. In 2019, it was selected as one of the “Collections of 70 Long Novels in the 70 Years of New China”. Since its publication, it has been supported by many readers at home and abroad. This section will review studies on Tracks in the Snowy Forest both domestically and internationally in chronological order.

Domestic scholars have actively conducted research on Tracks in the Snowy Forest from the perspective of translation. The fervor for translation studies of this work domestically has laid a solid foundation for its dissemination overseas, bringing profound impacts to readers around the world. A search on China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) with the theme of “Tracks in the Snowy Forest” reveals that from December 2011 to May 2023, there are a total of 405 references related to this theme. Among them, 17 are related to the translation study of the novel. It can be seen that domestic scholars have gained some achievements in the study of the original text.

Firstly, some scholars analyze Tracks in the Snowy Forest based on translation strategies and techniques. For example, [5] analyze the representation of name memes, idiom memes, and swearword memes in folk language memes in Shapiro’s English editions of the three novels represented by Tracks in the Snowy Forest from viewpoints of surface equivalent meme, deep equivalent meme, pragma-linguistic equivalent effective meme, and socio-pragmatic equivalent effective meme. Secondly, many scholars have adopted different translation theories to analyze the English translation of Tracks in the Snowy Forest. For instance, Based on Toury’s Preliminary Norm Theory, [1] makes a comparative study between the original text of Chu Po and the English translation of Sidney Shapiro and points out that a good translation cannot be achieved without a translator with professional translation literacy and the support of a strong country. In addition, some scholars, from the perspective of rewriting theory, have studied how the translator Shapiro adapts and adjusts the original text, making it conform to the mainstream ideology and poetics of the time, and acceptable to the target readers as much as possible.

In summary, the translation value of the novel is worthy of further study. Therefore, based on three-dimensional transformation, this thesis studies the translation method of the Chinese north-eastern dialect in the English translation of the novel, which has a certain research value and belongs to a theoretical innovation.

3. Translation Strategies of Chinese North-eastern Dialect in Tracks in the Snowy Forest Under Three-dimensional Transformation

Eco-translatology believes that linguistic dimension, cultural dimension, and communicative dimension are three important aspects to ensure the smooth progress of translation activities. This chapter will analyze the translation strategies of the Chinese north-eastern dialect in Tracks in the Snowy Forest from the following three perspectives respectively: linguistic dimension transformation, cultural dimension transformation, and communicative dimension transformation.

3.1. Adaptive Transformation from Linguistic Dimension

In the process of translation, the adaptive transformation of the linguistic dimension refers to “the translator’s adaptive transformation of language forms in the translation process, which is carried out in different aspects and at different levels.” [4] The focus of the transformation of linguistic dimension is reflected in vocabulary usage and sentence structure, or language forms such as style. The lexical characteristics of the Chinese north-eastern dialect are reflected in address terms, adverbs of degree, and general verbs. This section mainly analyzes the adaptive transformation of the linguistic dimension of the Chinese north-eastern dialect in Shapiro’s translation work Tracks in the Snowy Forest from the aspect of address terms.

Address terms refer to the names that communicators refer to each other or call themselves. They reflect the status, identity, cultivation, emotions, and mutual relationships of both communicators. The address terms in the Chinese north-eastern dialect are deeply influenced by the culture of Northeast China, which has undergone corresponding changes, in the development process of the ever-growing era. The address terms mainly focus on three aspects: kinship address terms, spousal address terms, and non-kinship address terms. They reflect the identities of communicators and certain social structures. This section conducts a comparative study between the original text and translated text of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, so as to study how translators achieve the selection and adaptation of two address terms, that is, address terms between spouses and relatives from linguistic dimensions.

Example 1

Source Text A: 人群中一个白发苍苍的老太太，穿着一身单薄的破衣衫，两眼直瞪着，两手张开着，像疯了一样地叨念着：“儿子没了！没了……媳妇也没了，没了……天哪！谁养老？谁养老……你们说！说……”[2]

Target Text A: A grey-haired old lady, clad in a thin tattered garment, eyes staring, her hands spread wide, was muttering insanely, “My son. He’s gone. My **daughter-in-law**. She’s gone too....Heaven. What shall I do? I’m old and alone.... Tell me, what shall I do?...”[6]

Source Text B: “别嚎叫！”许福跳了一个高，向着悲愤交集的人群，“谁再哭，和她一样，给他个大开膛。”他指着程小武新媳妇的尸体，把手中的战刀向群众头顶一挥，嗖的一声掠过。[2]

Target Text B: “Stop your bawling,” raged Hsu Fu at the tragically weeping villagers. “The next one that cries will get the same as her.” He pointed at the young **bride** he had disembowelled and advanced threateningly on the crowd with his bloody sword. [6]

Analysis: Example 1 is selected from Chapter 2 of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, titled “House Cudgel and Butterfly Enticer”. In this case, there is an address term “媳妇” which has been refined in the Chinese north-eastern dialect. The first underlined address term “媳妇” belongs to the address term among relatives, and the second underlined address term “媳妇” belongs to the address term between spouses. The same address term “媳妇” represents different meanings, which reflects the phenomenon of polysemy in the words of the Chinese north-eastern dialect. Shapiro translates these two underlined address terms into “daughter-in-law” and “bride” respectively. Guided by the principles of adaptive transformation in the linguistic dimension, Shapiro adopts the method of free translation, pays attention to the differences in language expression between Chinese and English, and fills in the gaps and deviations, so as to facilitate the understanding of the target language readers. In his book *The Art of Translation*, Qiao Zenrui believes that free translation refers to using expressions in the target text that have the same or similar functions as the original text, to replace the interrelationships between content and form that cannot be preserved in the original work due to the lack of understanding between the two different languages. Firstly, the address term “‘媳妇’ means ‘妻子’, which belongs to the Northeastern Mandarin.”[8] The first underlined address term “媳妇” in this case, according to the context, refers to the wife of the old lady’s son. Therefore, the translator translated it into “daughter-in-law”. In the West, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, and sister-in-law are considered “relation by marriage”, which are generally referred to as “in-law” in English. Here, the translator adds “daughter” to the word “in-law”, so as to make the translation more precise. Secondly, the second underlined address term “媳妇” in this case also belongs to Northeastern Mandarin, meaning “wife”. If translated directly into “wife” here, it is also understandable, but it does not conform to the context. According to the context of the original sentence, it refers to the newlywed wife. The translator translates the second address term “媳妇” into “bride”, which means “新娘” in Chinese, so as to make the meaning of the

translation consistent with the original sentence. This approach ensures a clear translation expression and avoids causing misunderstandings among target language readers. Finally, the translation method of “free translation”, adopted by the translator, interprets the original and extended meanings of the address term “媳妇” through context, and also shows the linguistic and cultural connotations behind the “polysemy” of the Chinese north-eastern dialect to readers in the selection process. This kind of translation fully considers the differences in understanding of the address term “媳妇” between the East and the West in terms of thinking and achieves a linguistic ecological balance in the text.

3.2. Adaptive Transformation from Cultural Dimension

Hu Gensheng suggests that “translators focus on the transmission and interpretation of bilingual cultural connotations in the translation process. The adaptive selection and transformation of this cultural dimension lies in paying attention to the differences in nature and content between the source language culture and the target language culture, avoiding misinterpretation of the original text from the perspective of the target language culture. Translators pay attention to the entire cultural system to which the source language belongs while converting the source language.”[4]

Based on the standards of five different types of cultural-load words proposed by Eugene A. Nida. This thesis uses material culture as the basis for categorizing the examples to be analyzed. It aims to select a representative example from *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* for detailed analysis, in order to convey the unique culture of Northeast China to readers of the target language. Material culture refers to all tangible material products that condense human inspiration and wisdom, including clothing, food, housing, transportation, and technological equipment. The differences in production, lifestyle, and way of thinking have formed different material cultures.

Example 2

Source Text: 过足了瘾，两人做起来。小炉匠鬼头蛤蟆眼地说：“三舅，今天带来二百两。”说着他走下地来，从挑子里拿出黑忽忽的十大块。[2]

Target Text: When the two men had satisfied their craving, they sat up.

His eyes bulging like a frog’s, the Tinker said, “I’ve brought two hundred ounces today, Third Uncle.” He walked over to **his tinker’s equipment and from a compartment** took out ten large black packages.[6]

Analysis: Example 2 is selected from Chapter 4 of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, titled “Yang Tzu-jung Meets the Tinker”. In this case, “挑子” is a tool for transporting goods, belonging to the unique material culture of Northeast China. Shapiro translates it into “his tinker’s equipment and from a compartment”. Under the guidance of adaptive transformation in culture dimensions, Shapiro adopts the translation method of variation to change the expression form of the original content, and to convey the specific meaning of “挑子” to target language readers in that context. “Variation refers to adopting content or themes that are different from the original text to meet the specific needs of the target language readers.”[9] Firstly, in this case, “the address term ‘挑子’ comes from Heihe, Heilongjiang Province. It means ‘shoulder pole’ and belongs to the Northeastern Mandarin.”[8] The forms of “挑子” usually are square or circular baskets, as well as wooden small cabinets. The transportation tool “挑子” has one to two compartments for easy storage and retrieval of items. People in mountainous areas usually use the transportation tool “挑子” to transport goods. Secondly, due to the differences in geographical environments, the West lacks the transportation tool of “挑子”. If a literal translation is chosen, it will create comprehension barriers for the target language readers. The translator converts “挑子” into “his tinker’s equipment and from a compartment”, adding the pronoun “his tinker’s equipment”, which points out that it was the “挑子” brought by the Tinker.

Here, “compartment” is used, which means “隔层” in Chinese. According to the context, it can be seen that it is the compartment of “挑子”. The translator uses “compartment” to replace the “挑子”, which uses synecdoche as a rhetorical device, with some replacing the whole. This kind of rhetorical device enhances the symbolism and depth of the target text and also increases its expression effect. Finally, Shapiro adopts the translation method of “variation” to explain the meaning of “挑子”, which belongs to material culture. In this way, it not only avoids causing difficulties in understanding the target text but also preserves the cultural characteristics of the novel. Moreover, the way of variation reproduces the original cultural connotations of the source text and achieves a linguistic and cultural ecological balance of the text. Therefore, this way of translation achieves adaptive selection and transformation at the cultural level.

3.3. Adaptive Transformation from Communicative Dimension

In the translation process, the adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension refers to “translators pay attention to the adaptive selection transformation of bilingual communicative intention in the translation process.”[4] The transformation of the communicative dimension pays great attention to reflecting the communicative intention of the original text on the basis of conveying the language and cultural information of the original text. This section, from the perspectives of emotional expression, mainly analyzes Shapiro’s adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension in *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*. Emotional expression is the exchange of information related to emotions. The way different people express their emotions is different and can have an impact on people’s happiness.

Example 3

Source Text: “小妹妹,”姜青山这样纯朴地称呼白茹,“你看看,我姜青山要不干出两下子来,我怎么有脸回去见三妹,我又有何脸见我的表哥。”[2]

“走吧!”姜青山急不可耐地向剑波请求道,“马希山的匪巢我全熟识,三天就到,咱干个痛快的。”[2]

Target Text: “If I don’t **get in a couple of licks against those devils**, how will I be able to face her and cousin Yung-chi?” the youth countered simply. He turned to Chien-po impatiently. “Let’s go. I know the whole layout of Ma Hsi-shan’s camp. We can be there in three days and **do** a quick, clean job.”[6]

Analysis: Example 3 is selected from Chapter 27 of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, titled “A Young Hunter Leads a Leap from a Cliff”. In the novel, Hunter Chiang Ching-shan endures bandits as enemies, who would rather die than yield, and his martial arts are excellent, leaving a deep impression on readers. So, he feels extremely excited when there is an opportunity to suppress bandits and kill enemies. In this case, the underlined sentence “干出两下子来” and the verb “干” express the special emotions of the character. Shapiro translates them into “get in a couple of licks against those devils and “do” respectively. Under the guidance of adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension, Shapiro adopts the methods of variation and literal translation to explain the precise connotation of the underlined two parts, and to convey the emotions of the character. “Literal translation refers to a word by word translation that does not change any grammatical structure of the source text.”[3] Firstly, in this case, the verb “干” in “干出两下子来” belongs to the general verbs of Chinese north-eastern dialect. When it means “做” in Chinese, it is equivalent to Mandarin. When it means “打架,吵架” in Chinese, it has a strong subjective emotional color, which is usually used with a sense of anger and urgency, and the language is more colloquial. “The noun ‘两下子’ means ‘能力,方法.’” [7] According to the context, the first verb “干” in the first underlined sentence means “打架” in Chinese, which expresses Chiang Ching-shan’s urgent desire to quickly complete the bandits suppression task in order to extinguish his anger. Secondly, the translator changes the expression form of the

original text and adds missing information by adopting the translation method of variation. The translator converts the first underlined part “干出两下子来” into “get in a couple of clicks against those failures”. The verb “lick” is “打” in Chinese, which conveys the meaning of the general verb “干”. The fixed collocation “get in” in English means “成功完成某事” in Chinese, which explains the meaning of “两下子”. At the same time, the translation “again these evils” is added to supplement the information of what was successfully accomplished, making the action of the original text clear, and better conveying Chiang Ching-shan’s disgust towards the Kuomintang bandits. Thirdly, the second underlined verb “干” represents “做”, which is equivalent to Mandarin. The translator converts it into “do” by using the way of literal translation. In this way, the meaning of the generic verb “干” is explained, which is in line with the context. Finally, the translator adopts the translation techniques of “variation” and “literal translation”, which not only faithfully portrays Chiang Ching-shan’s urgent desire to suppress bandits, but also restores Chiang Ching-shan’s fearless and courageous character image. The translation also achieves a harmony of communicative ecology.

4. Conclusion

Eco-translatology, as a systematic translation theory, not only expands people’s understanding of translation from an ecological perspective, but also guides translation studies in an all-around way by emphasizing the integrated research methods of interrelation and interaction. Under Eco-translatology, this thesis makes a tentative study of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* translated by Shapiro. It adopts the method of three-dimensional transformation to analyze how the translator achieves the adaptive selection and transformation of the Chinese north-eastern dialect in the target text from the linguistic dimension, cultural dimension, and communicative dimension. First of all, from the perspective of the transformation of linguistic dimensions, it mainly involves one aspect of the Chinese north-eastern dialect address predicate. Shapiro adopts free translation methods to achieve the ecological balance between the source language and the target language. From the perspective of culture, taking into account the rich local culture contained in the Chinese north-eastern dialect, Shapiro flexibly uses the way of variation to make the translation beneficial for target language readers to understand and appreciate. Finally, from the perspective of communicative dimensions, dialogue, and emotional expression are the core communicative content of literary works. Under the guidance of adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension, Shapiro adopts variation and literal translation methods to vividly convey the emotions of the characters, and achieves the same presentation effect as the original text. In this way, the promotional purpose of foreign translation has been achieved. Therefore, this thesis, under the guidance of Eco-translatology, conducts a multi-angle study of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* translated by Shapiro.

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