

The Functions of Literature Works Translation Versions Under Cross-Cultural Background: Taking *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an Example

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Abstract

As one of cross-cultural communication actions, translation is a kind of human society cross-cultural communication and exchanging process at the same time. Since the generation of culture, the communication activities have never ended, and it has always promoted the continuous growing of culture. The exchanging of different language and the communication of their background culture can only be realized under the assistance of translation activities, and translation is the required conditions for cultural cohesion and shock, as well as communication and developing of different languages. When overlooking the overall developing history of the human society, the role of translation played in the cultural change can not be ignored. This paper has taken the translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an example, discussed the functions of translation versions for literature works, and also set forth the significance of literature works translation versions in social culture from the perspective of macroscopic.

Key words: Cross-culture; Literature works; Translations

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INTRODUCTION

The functions literature works translation played has mainly displayed in the aspect of social culture, when

we looking back the human society developing history, it is not difficult for us to find that, the significant cultural development and social reform have often coped with the booming of translation activities, as far as the birth of Latin Literature directly triggered by translation of Greek literature, as near as the generation and development of modern writings in the vernacular irritated by Chinese eastward transmission of western sciences translation activities, and the objective historical facts have demonstrated that translation had caused significant effect to the culture, even to the social system, and indirectly demonstrated the role translation played in social culture aspect. Under the background of present globalized age, as a kind of information communication action for cross culture, translation has been affected by the cultural features and demands on the one hand, and on the other hand, it also generated significant effect to the changes and development of social culture, and the functions translation exerted are unable to be replaced by the machine.

Uncle Tom's Cabin is a full-length novel created by American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe, it has depicted a variety of negro slaves and slave owner images with different characters and expression around the miserable experiences of the dramatis personae Tom, and it also displayed to common people the two different ways taken by the negro slaves, one is fighting braves, another is being forbearing and forgiving under the slavery environment, the former way will make them get new born, while the latter one will only bring inescapable death to them. The complaint made by this works to the ruthlessness of slavery in the United States has stimulated strong desire of the people to abolish slavery, and it also promoted the outburst of the War between the States, and this works have been translated into more than twenty different languages and spread widely in different countries of the world, as well as generated profound influence to them. And *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the first

American novel which has been translated into Chinese, and this works have significantly widened the view of the public in China, and it has established a basis for the input of western culture, this excellent literature works with era significance has embodied multiple functions of the translation, and taking it as an example to be used in the research will gain powerful typicality.

1. CULTURAL FUSION

The translation of literature works will promote the mutual fusion of different cultures efficiently. In this aspect, the definition of fusion doesn't mean a random combination of different components in different cultures, but means the mutual adaptation and breaking in of different cultures realized through communication. The objective reality has demonstrated that, the smooth realization of cultural fusion and the generation of new cultural structure and cultural mode, the decisive factor will lie in the communication and spreading, and the human civilization development history can be regarded as a kind of cultural fusion process under the supports of translation actions to a certain extent.

Relying on the translators' cross-cultural communication sense, cultural perception and comprehension ability, they will try to understand the information carrier in the translated literature works, such as environment, events, languages and other factors to realize reconstruction, through this process, the translation of the literature works will make the target version be equipped with image and features coming from different cultures. In addition, the translated literature works will inevitable contact with local culture during the spreading social environment, further exchanged, shocked, and finally mutually affected and mixed together, and the new component element, image as well as new features of the culture will be generated at the same time. From this we can find that, the translation of the literature works will play an important role in cultural fusion, and under the function of translation, different cultures are able to be compatible and recombined, as well as mutually used for reference and mutually influenced, communicated and absorbed, it can also display integration tendency. Bourgeoisie Constitutional Reform and Modernization happened in 1898 was failed, while during the communication process of Chinese and Western cultures, the Chinese people began to realize the value of western science and literature. After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, all the big powers would like to carve up China under Qing Dynasty, and Qing Dynasty was weak and incompetent, can only bow its head and went down without a fight, when facing national crisis, all the people with lofty ideals went around campaigning for a help, under this background, Lin Shu, Wei Yi had translated *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Former the name of the works was

translated into "Negro Slaver Calls for a Fight") into Chinese for the first time, and they hope they can rouse national consciousness and promote national fight with the help of this literature works. On the premise of considering Chinese politics, cultural situation and the Public literature preference and a variety of other factors at that time comprehensively, the translators have adopted a narration mode of traditional classical style Chinese writing, and conducted widely deletion and transformation to the quotation related to "Bible" and the complaint to slavery system and other contents in the original version. The translation version of this literature works by Lin Shu and Wei Yi had faded religions thoughts and humanitarian spirit, highlighted a political feelings being concerned about our country and our people, and transformed the anti slavery system thought of the original writer into the call on of Chinese people to fight against class exploitation, and national oppression, which become the concentrated reflection of the cultural fusion function of the literature works translation (Pan, 2013).

2. CULTURAL MULTIPLICATION

The cultural multiplication means the culture has newly developed additional value and significance during its spreading based on its original value and significance, which has expressed in two aspects, its quality and quantity, and cultural multiplication is a kind of innovative reproduction essentially. The culture which is lacking creativity and closed, behindhand will inevitable not be able to realize multiplication and will be eliminated by the history gradually, while the translation of the literature works will bring new different cultures, so as to make the multiplication of our national culture happen, and endow new living vitality to it, so as to guarantee our national culture get new further development.

The translation and spreading of the literature works under the cross-cultural background doesn't mean the simple addition, and it is not equal to the rough addition between different cultures, during the process of mutual communication and mutual influences of different cultures, within its irradiation scope, people who are affected by them will generate more powerful knowledge information pursuit and eager to explore, so as to cultivate and generate more innovative creativity, for this reason, the cultural multiplication effect of the literature works translation will be very complex and changeable, and it may make the culture where translation spread occur fundamentally change indirectly, even bring an essential reformation to the society as a whole.

Uncle Tom's Cabin translated by Lin Shu and Wei Yi has obtained tremendously success at that time, and many readers have generated affectional resonance with the translators, and they called on a voice to take the destiny of the negro slavers as the lessons drawn from their

mistakes, and withstand the foreign aggression together, which has played a practical role in improving national sense and motivate rebellious spirit. It must be emphasized that, the translation to this literature works have generated gigantic change to Chinese political and culture situation at that time, under its indirect influence, the first drama of China was born. Spring Willow Society began to perform *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in public officially in "Ding Wei Entertainment Show" in 1907, which has accepted a warm feedback from the audience, and it has played an active and powerful role in political propaganda, so that decades of years in Chinese history afterwards, Chinese drama were always taking social hotspots and important event at that time as its main materials, and always existed as a kind of tool in political propaganda. In mid-19th century, Ouyang Yuqian has recomposed this literature works into a drama named *Negro Slaver's Hate*, which has revealed the aggressive essence of colonial imperialism, criticized the hypocrisy of freedom, democracy, equality spirit promoted by the United States, so as to provide supports for the Asia Africa and American national liberation movement in the aspect of political culture (Sun & Ren, 2015). Based on its translation, the original cultural spreading intention of the literature works has been faded, but highlight powerful rebellious spirit and criticize feeling.

Although the cultural multiplication brought about from the translated literature works, we still shall have clear and confirmed attitude to them, we shall not only absorb the positive and healthy, useful knowledge and materials from them, we must also quit something that is harmful to our social development and the construction of spiritual civilization in modern times. Anyway, like the correct attitude towards our traditional culture, we also shall have a correct attitude towards translated literature works. As the translators, we particularly focus on the positive aspects of the translated works, and shall make every efforts to get rid of the bad effects of bad works coming from the foreign languages. Like learning the positive thoughts and materials from the great works, we shall try to select from the tremendous literature works in modern times.

3. CULTURAL ACCUMULATION

The translation of literature works has blended the cultural essence of original language into the target language cultural system and obtain a further inheritance and development, so as to gradually become an very important compose in its social cultural treasury, and it will be accumulated and precipitated continuously along with the growing and forward of the history, and this is one of the important functions of literature works translation. Being affected by social development objectively, the length of time history of the literature works translation will be

proportional to the depth degree of the target language social accumulation. And it is not difficult for us to find out after analyzing this phenomenon that, the cultural accumulation function of literature works translation will not be the simple and mechanized transmit happened between different centuries, but a kind of recreation which combined with domestic culture under the background of its history and during the process of its spreading, and the different language cultural accumulation brought by literature works translation will play an extremely important role in the mutual communication of the human being and the common growing of the civilization.

The works *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a opening flag for modern Chinese people starting translating the world, it has broken the wrong acknowledge of the scholars in old times who totally repudiated western literature, so as to make their acknowledge in the cultural and artistic scope receive extremely wide opening up. From this on and along with the development of the history, the styles, features, methods and types or forms of literatures and so on in the creation of western literature have introduced into China continuously, and the theme and materials of Chinese modern fictions were widely richened, some literature great masters including Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Mao Dun and so on have created a lot of classical literature works under the influence of these translations, which have richened Chinese literature treasury and started a new chapter for the development of Chinese modern time of China literatures, until present time, the excellent elements in western literatures have been absorbed, and further deposit and digested, become an inalienable constitute elements in the scope of our literatures (Lü, 2015), and among this, the role located by the translation to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

4. CULTURAL CHANGE

We can't deny that the cultural changing function of the literature works may bring positive and negative effect to the target language culture, such as the spiritual erosion and will attenuation and other harmful effect to the people, however, from a general view, the translations in most cases will bring the development of human civilization and the progress of social culture. The translation of literature works is a kind of cross-cultural spreading method essentially, and the introduction to the different culture will help to break in the inherent thoughts of the target language culture, and the construction of the brand-new mode of thinking will be good for the occurrence of the innovative creation. And any kinds of mode culture will be ever changing and developing, and in any case, it will experience production, developing, changing and recession, reproduction, and the translation of the literature works will be able to change the foreign language culture into a continuous engine body, we can

say that, the cross-cultural spreading action established based on the translation is one of the fundamental causes of the changing of different language cultures.

Until now, the literature works of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has gotten more than 1 million of amount of distribution with more than 40 versions. After entering into the new century, the thinking model of the people has been changed under the influence of multi-culture, and the reexamination to the literature works have made people find out a lot of new themes which are related to the religion, humanity, human rights and humanitarianism thoughts which were not paid attention to by people (Wang, 2016): Zhang Peiyun has pointed out in the preface of the novel that, slave transaction, racial discrimination and oppression issues are still existed in international community, protection of human rights shall be still further reinforced; Huang Jizhong set forth the cultural value and artistic appeal of the works in the preface; Xiong Yu has published a paper to do further confirmation to the cultural value of the novel, and regarded it as a milestone-like realistic literature masterpiece. From the originally translation version by Lin Shu and Wei Yi and the drama recomposing by Spring Willow Community, to the attack to American hypocritical democratic thought and the supports to Asia Africa and American national liberation movement in the mid-term of 20 century, then to the thinking about humanity nature and rights, humanitarianism and literature, history and other themes in modern times, the translation and understanding to "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has displayed the cultural changes of modern time society in China from the side view, and it also has played an irreplaceable role in the great historical developing process. Taking this works as an example, just because of the translation and introduction of a lot of excellent literature works, and taking this an a sally port, western democratic scientific thoughts can be cable to be widely spread in China, which has set a solid basis for the acceptance of Marxism thoughts and the formation of new cultural system, and Chinese social culture can be able to realize the transit from semi-colony and semi-feudalism to socialism successfully indeed.

We can conclude from the above analysis that, translators from different times will have different thoughts and understanding to this literature works, taking the literature works *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an example, the translators in old era will find out the background and the useful materials in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* after translation, and they make full use of it, then spreading it, so that to exert the great influence to the times at that time, while in modern China, we should find out more globalized knowledge and background, materials in the translated literature works, not only the commonsense and important knowledge, but also their thoughts and ideas. In modern times, the translators who are involved in the translation of foreign literature works shall be equipped with the

following qualities: Firstly, they should be familiar with the cultural history and background of the original language and target language, so that they can make full understanding to the original language; secondly, the translators shall have comprehensive knowledge and mastered the target language well, this is a very important skill and also a required condition for the translators of foreign literature works.

CONCLUSION

When we making a general survey to the history of human civilization development, several times of large scale events of translate, absorb and introduce foreign cultures have all bring about the booming of a certain culture and the overall progress of human civilization without exception, while the suppress to translation and cross-cultural spreading events have all caused the recession and decline of social culture without exception, it is thus clear that, the translation of literature works have indispensably important significance in the development of social culture. The globalization development tendency and the mass flooded in of foreign cultures have caused a unprecedented shock to our domestic culture, and also it has brought brand new development opportunities for us to move towards the international world, when facing the challenges and opportunities, the translation works of literature works are shouldering heavy responsibilities. And the paper has taken *Uncle Tom's cabin* as an example under the view point of cross cultural communication, and analyzed the roles that literature works played in the development process of social culture, and it is aiming at make more clear confirmation to the functions of literature works translations and exert more powerful social cultural driving functions, so as to provide more theoretic references for learning the foreign culture well and carrying forward of foreign culture under the cultural globalized environment.

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