Translation Techniques of *Chinese Union Version*: From the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract

With the development of modernization and opening up and reform policy, Christianity has the opportunity to prosper in China. *Holy Bible*, the sacred scripture of Christianity, is one of the brilliant crystals of western culture. As a predominant translated work, *Chinese Union Version (CUV)* is widely spread in Christians and its publication marks the forerunner of vernacular campaign, which sets an example for the replacement of classical Chinese. *CUV* has been popularized extensively and intensively in China, which is closely related to its high quality of translation and techniques. Three rules of Skopos theory, including Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule are applied in the paper to prove that the three rules of Skopos theory should be taken into account when analyzing translation techniques of *CUV*. Fidelity rule is discussed first in a broader perspective, conforming to its feature of faithfulness. As a result, literal translation dominates the whole translational process. In addition, the specific techniques are concluded based on Skopos rule level and coherence rule level. The techniques of *CUV* translation include: diction, repetition, conversion, inversion and amplification.

Key words: Skopos theory; *Chinese Union Version*; Translation techniques

INTRODUCTION

In western countries, almost all the translated versions of *Bible* have impact on the unification and standardization of their languages. Compared to the study of *CUV*, the researches on its translation techniques are far from enough. With Skopos Theory as a theoretical basis, the paper discusses and categorizes the techniques of translation in accordance to the three rules of Skopos Theory. In a broader sense, the fidelity rule conforms to the literal translation of *CUV* to preserve the original meaning. While the techniques of *CUV* translation, including diction, repetition, conversion, inversion and amplification are discussed from the perspective of Skopos rule and Coherence rule, which demonstrates the particularity of *CUV*.

1. SKOPOS THEORY

When it comes to the connection between functionalist approaches and translation, Skopos Theory of Vermeer plays an indispensable role. Vermeer holds that translation is a kind of action or an intentional and purposeful behavior which changes according to specific situation. It also depends on the source text. As for Vermeer, any action has its aim or purpose, the same as translation. "Skopos", a Greek word, was introduced into translation theory by Vermeer in the 1970s, which refers to the goal or purpose of a translation, namely what a translator is aiming at in the translation process. The Skopos Theory holds that the way the target text eventually shapes up is determined to a great extent by the function, or "Skopos", intended for it in the target context. (Hatim, 2005:74) Therefore, the goal or purpose of translation determines the methods, techniques and process of translation so as to realize a functionally adequate translation. The theory introduces the idea that a translation should always be conducted to realize the purpose of the target text in the

target text's situation. The main purpose contributing to any translation process is the purpose (Skopos) of the overall translational action.

Vermeer first put forward Skopos theory in his paper *Frame Work for a General Translation Theory* (1978), giving three main rules: the Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. The Skopos rule means that translation is determined by the prospective function or purpose of the translated text as determined by the translation initiator, which is the paramount rule among the three rules. There are three branches affiliated to the Skopos rule including the Skopos of translator, communicative Skopos of the translated text and Skopos fulfilled by specific translational tactics and approaches. In the common ground, Skopos refers to the communicative Skopos. The initiator determines the communicative Skopos. Out of some special purposes and needs, he meanwhile provides the reasons of translating a given text, the addressee, the environment for the use of translated text and the function of translated text. The coherence rule formulates that the translated text should be coherent enough to let the intended addressees understand it in the scope of their assumed background knowledge and situational circumstances. Translator should conform to the ethnic rules and standards in the target language and culture, and convert the information provided in the source text efficiently and acceptably to the reader, taking their background knowledge and situational circumstances into account. The fidelity rule implies the connection between translated text and source text. There must be an intertextual coherence between the source text and the target text, which is similar to the fidelity to the source texts.

Vermeer's Skopos theory contributed a lot to translation studies. It moves beyond the static linguistic typologies of translation. According to his understanding, translation is no longer considered a merely linguistic process, but a purposeful action. The translator is no longer a mechanical copier from a source language to a target language, but an expert in translational action, responsible for commissioned translation task and for ensuring the result of the translation process. The translated texts also vary with different Skopos.

2. FEATURES OF *CHINESE UNION VERSION*

Holy Bible is usually regarded as a religious law and lively oracle of God. It deserves a special attention because it plays a fairly important role in analyzing the history, culture and creed of Christianity. Faithfulness, namely the accuracy of translated text, is the top priority in *CUV* translation. With the changes of translation principles, the accuracy of meanings counts. In the 13 years of translation, *The New Testament* has been revised for several times. Therefore, its language is clearer and more fluent. *CUV* provides a more popular version for ordinary people, thus becoming the prevailing Bible version for churches and followers. Its translation principles include: mandarin required; free from dialect; understandable and readable; keep accordance to the original text; the difficult points should be clearly defined instead of expressing main idea. Due to its refined language, *CUV* becomes the forerunner of mandarin campaign and a sign of replacing ancient Chinese prose. The language is serious and clear in laws, vivid in histories, acute and incisive in proverbs, tender and soft in poems, miserable in prayers, sacred in eulogy, sincere in instructions. Its authority in Christianity also contributes to more unique Christian words in the language system.

Chinese translators' attention to *CUV* is an important sign in the history of Chinese *Bible* translation. Firstly, it had accumulated the translation experiences since the first Chinese *Bible* translated by Robert Morrison a century ago. Absorbing all the advantages of the former versions, it is the crystal of numerous Chinese and western scholars, and turns out to be the version with most literature values. Secondly, *CUV*, one of the earliest vernacular *Bible* versions, is the crystal of numerous creation and experiments, which contributed to the the New Culture and Literature Movement.

3. APPLICATION OF SKOPOS THEORY IN *CUV* TRANSLATION

Based on Skopos Theory discussed above, translation techniques of *CUV* should be analyzed on the levels of Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. Fidelity rule is discussed first in a broader perspective, which conforms to the feature of faithfulness. In the meantime, the specific techniques are concluded based on Skopos rule and coherence rule.

3.1 Translation Techniques on Fidelity Rule Level

Since a translation is an offer of information about a preceding offer of information, it is expected to bear some kind of relationship with the corresponding source text. Vermeer calls this relationship intertextual coherence and fidelity. This is postulated as a further principle referred to as the 'fidelity rule' (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984, p.114). As in the case of the Skopos theory, what's more important is that intertextual coherence should exist between source and target text, while the form it takes depends both on the translator's interpretation of the source text and the translation Skopos. In other words, faithfulness should be adopted as the top rule in translation. When it comes to the translation methods of, literal translation is basically followed throughout the all the genres of *Bible*, including narration and poem.

Example 1

Source Text: Then the whole company of them arouses and brought him before Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king." And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" "And he answered him, "You have said so." (Luke 23:1-3)

Translated Text: 众人都起来，把耶稣解到彼拉多面前，就告他说："我们见这人诱惑国民，禁止纳税给凯撒，并说自己是基督，是王。"彼拉多问耶稣说："你是犹太人的王吗？"耶稣回答说："你说的是。"

In the original, there are some direct speeches, so the paragraph is translated by using literal translation, not any translation technique listed in the former part of the paper.

Example 2:

Source Text: Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud. (Proverbs 8:20)

Translated Text: 智慧岂不呼叫？聪明岂不发声？她在道旁高处的顶上，在十字路口站立，在城门旁，在城门口，在城门洞，大声说。

The source text, drawn from proverbs, featured by short and paralleled pairs of sentences as poems. The literal translation is adopted to fully convey the precise meaning, complying with the fidelity rule.

Example 3

Source Text: TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS; ACCORDING TO THE SHEMINTH. A PSALM OF DAVID. (Psalms 6)

Translated Text: 大卫的诗，交与伶长。用丝弦的乐器，调用第八。

Psalm collects songs and poems composed by David, Solomon, Moses and other prophets. At the beginning of most songs, the introduction of the song as example 3 is provided. However, the translated text in example 3 hinders understanding of readers who are not familiar with *Bible*. To conform to the fidelity rule, the translator translates the sentence literally though it is not comprehensible. Even at the expense of fluency and elegance, the translated text attempts to reach the intertextual coherence.

3.2 Translation Techniques on Skopos Rule Level

The application of Skopos Theory on Skopos rule level is divided into historical Skopos, religious Skopos and language Skopos. Diction is the major technique for historical Skopos, repetition for religious Skopos and conversion, inversion for language Skopos.

3.2.1 Diction

Due to the differences between English and Chinese on language system, the complete correspondence is hard to achieve. Two characteristics of diction include words of classical Chinese and four-character phrases can be analyzed as follows:

The translation of *SUV* met up with the evolutional changes of Chinese society and language. During the May 5th movement, evolutionists championed new literature by objecting out-dated literature featured by classical Chinese, feudal style and banal ideas. New literature is embodied by fresh ideas and concepts with evolutional intentions. Thus the Mandarin Chinese was widely applied in the 19th century. In 1905, with the abolishment of state examinations, Mandarin Chinese, particularly spoken Chinese, became the language in written works. The translation of *SUV* was proposed by Shanghai Missionary Conference in 1890, when the translation period coincidentally met the revolution of Chinese society and language. To meet varied demands of Chinese people, the Conference made three translated versions including *Wenli*, *Easy Wenli* and *Mandarin*, among which *Mandarin* gained the popularity and finally became the standard version of most churches. Thus, *SUV* is mostly translated in Mandarin. In the meantime, the mandarin remained immature at the beginning of evolution, with classical Chinese words occasionally preserved.

Example 4

Source Text: Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. (Isaiah 5:8)

Translated Text: 祸哉！那些以房接房、以地连地，以致不留余地的，只顾自己独居境内。

In the translated text, the character"哉"is an auxiliary word in classical Chinese, expressing exclamation. In addition, *SUV* uses the four-character word frequently which is a common written style in classical Chinese so as to make the expression laconic and succinct.

Example 5

Source Text: The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand for ever. (Isaiah 40:8)

Translated text: 草必枯乾，花必凋残，惟有我们神的话，必永远立定！

Example 6

Source Text: And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis: 17-18)

Translated text: 就把这些光摆列在天空，普照在地上，管理昼夜，分别明暗。神看着是好的。

Example 4 is an excerpt from *Woe to the Wicked*, which mostly describes the misbehavior and misconduct of people. "以房接房"and"以地连地"are two four-character phrases, which preserve the features of classical Chinese. In addition, the antithesis formed by the two phrases emphasizes the sins of the people, warning people not to appropriating all the land given by God.

The phrase "The grass withers, the flower fades" in the original text of example 5, is marked by conciseness. To achieve fidelity while preserving the historical Skopos, the character "必" is added in the translated text"草必枯乾，花必凋残"to form four-character phrases. Besides, the two four-character phrases are in stark contrast to the following words"惟有我们神的话，必永远立定"in meaning and forms. In this way, they highlight the eternity and perpetuality of God's words.

Example 6 also gives expression to the historical settings and reaches the historical Skopos. "管理昼夜,分明黑暗" describes the design of the world by God.

3.2.2 Repetition

Holy Bible, the sacred scripture of Christianity, is one of the brilliant crystals of western culture. There are four basic religious Skopos of *Holy Bible*: to record the history of Christianity; to record the words of God, Jesus and saints; to set up creeds for Christians and followers, in this way adjusting and improving their behaviors; to persuade people to believe in God. To reach the religious Skopos, the translators adopted repetition technique frequently.

Example 7
Source Text: But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. (Psalm 3:3)
Translated Text:但你耶和华是我四围的盾牌，是我的荣耀，又是叫我抬起头来的。

In the source text, the predicate "are" appears only once, while in the translated text the predicate "是" is repeated twice. By applying repetition, the translator intends to emphasize the mightiness of God. Also the translation achieves the fourth religious Skopos: to persuade people to believe in God.

Example 8
Source Text: I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. (Exodus 6:7)
Translated Text: 我要以你们为我的百姓，我也要作你们的神。你们要知道我是耶和华你们的神，是救你们脱离埃及人之重担的。

In the translated text, the character "要" is repeated for twice as the counterparts of "will" and "shall". The translator intends to express a sense of commanding with repetition, which concords with the third religious Skopos: To set up creeds for Christian and followers, in this way adjusting and improving their behaviors.

3.2.3 Conversion and Inversion

Because of the language barriers and the cultural differences between Chinese and English, it is difficult for target audience to get adequate cognitive context to understand the original correctly. Besides, the particularity of the religious meaning makes the translation more challenging and tough. The translation techniques conversion and inversion are frequently used to reach language Skopos.

Example 9
Source Text: The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked (Psalms 1)
Translated Text: 弃恶从善必蒙福

The example is the title of the first chapter of Psalm. The translator converted the noun "the Righteous and the Wicked "of source text into verb "弃恶从善", making the expression more concise. Besides, compared with English, verbs in Chinese are more commonly used than those in English. Converting adjectives into verbs, particularly the four-character Chinese idioms, keeps accordance to Chinese expression.

Example 10
Source Text: Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. (Psalm 6:8)
Translated Text: 你们一切作孽的人，离开我吧！因为耶和华听了我哀哭的声音。

The original sentence is drawn from a song of David, who is a faithful believer of God. In the translated text, the subject and predicate are inverted. The phrase "你们一切作孽的人"，as a specified target, is put before the predicate, which emphasizes and appoints the targets. With the technique of inversion, the Chinese version expresses David's determination to isolate from evil.

Example 11
Source Text: His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends. (Psalm 7:16)
Translated Text: 他的毒害必临到他自己的头上；他的强暴必落到他自己的脑袋上。

In the second half of the source text, the adverbial modifier "on his own" is put at the beginning of the sentence, while its Chinese counterpart"落到他自己的脑袋上"is moved to the end of the sentence.

3.3 Translation Techniques on Coherence Rule Level

Coherence rule specifies that a translation should be acceptable in a sense that it is coherent with the receiver's situation (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984, p.113). Being "coherent with" means being synonymous with being "part of" the receiver's situation. Subordinate to the coherence rule, intratextual coherence (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984, p.109) is developed, which means receiver should be able to understand the target text; it should make sense in the communicative situation and the culture in which it is received. To achieve the coherence in translation of *Holy Bible*, the translator uses amplification to make the translated text more understandable to the readers.

Example 12
Source Text: And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. (Genesis 2:12)
Translated Text: 并且那地的金子是好的；在那里又有珍珠和红玛瑙。

In the second half of the source text, there are no logical connectors. However, the translated text adds the

word "又"to indicate the sequence: The word "gold" ranks above bdellium and onyx. In this way the intratextual coherence is realized by the logical connector "又". As a matter a fact, gold appears many times in *Holy Bible*, including using it as ornament and the wares for rituals, which demonstrates its value. Since the source text is excerpted from the description of Garden of Eden, by emphasizing the relatively inferior bdellium and onyx with logical connector "又", the translator tends to provide a concept that Garden of Eden is full of wealth and precious treasures.

Example 13

Source Text: I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all round. (Psalms 3:6)

Translated Text: 虽有成万的百姓来周围攻击我，我也不怕。

A concessive conjunction "虽" is added in the translated text to inform the logic relation between the two sentences. This makes Chinese readers understand the relation clearly so that the intratextual coherence is fully accomplished.

CONCLUSION

An effective translation is the precondition to preserve the essence of *Holy Bible*. According to Skopos Theory, the paper tries to analyze how to use Skopos Theory—the Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule and the translation techniques on the three levels. Combined with the language features of *CUV*, the paper concludes that literal translation is used to achieve fidelity rule, translation techniques of diction, repetition, conversion and inversion are adopted to achieve Skopos rule, and amplification to coherence rule. The given examples explain the feasibility of the methods.

Due to the great difference between Chinese and English and the uniqueness of *Holy Bible*, it's hard to achieve complete equivalence by using the methods and approaches proposed in this paper. What the author has done is just a preliminary exploration of Skopos Theory for the translation of *CUV*, and the author still hopes that the paper can contribute a little to translation studies of *CUV*.

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