



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

A STUDY ON TRANSLATION METHODS OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE-LOADED EXPRESSIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SKOPOS THEORY IN GOLDBLATT'S *WOLF TOTEM*

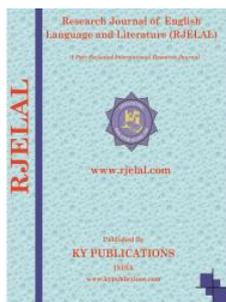
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<https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.7119.102>



ABSTRACT

With China's growing influence in the world, more and more foreign people are eager to know more about contemporary China and Chinese culture. Culture-loaded expressions, as a part of culture, have always been difficult for foreigners to understand. It is well-known that translation has always played an important role as a tool of external communication. This paper studies the translation of institutional culture-loaded words in *Lang Tu Teng*. Institutional culture-loaded words occupy an important position in the dissemination of Chinese culture. In *Lang Tu Teng*, there are many essential and indigestible institutional culture-loaded expressions. The translation of institutional culture-loaded expressions in *Lang Tu Teng* is one of the difficulties in the process of translation. This paper takes Howard Goldblatt's translation of *Wolf Totem* as the research object and takes skopos theory as the guidance, aiming at analyzing the translation methods of institutional culture-loaded expressions in *Wolf Totem*.

Key words—Skopos theory, translation methods, institutional culture-loaded expressions, *Wolf Totem*,

Introduction

In the context of globalization and China's peaceful rise, cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries are becoming more and more frequent. Translation serves as a medium for cultural exchanges and plays an important role in cultural exchanges. With China's growing influence in the world, increasing foreigners are eager to know more about contemporary China and Chinese culture. As a result, translation has assumed the task of communicating and spreading Chinese culture and become one of the most important ways of

cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. *Lang Tu Teng* has been popular with readers since its publication. It is not only popular at home, but also praised by foreign readers abroad. There are many culture-loaded expressions in *Lang Tu Teng*. At the same time, it is very difficult for foreign readers to figure out the meaning of culture-loaded expressions. Therefore, translation will play an important role in cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. Through reading *Lang Tu Teng* written by Jiangrong, a lot of institutional culture-loaded expressions were found. Institutional

culture-loaded expressions not only include expressions of human social institution, religious institution, production institution, education institution, labor management and distribution institution, but also include family institution expressions, kinship relationship expressions, etiquette and customs expressions, behavior mode and other social regulations expressions. It is not difficult to find that institution culture-loaded expressions have strong Chinese cultural characteristics and are also the key and difficult points in translation. Goldblatt flexibly adopted a variety of translation methods in the process of translating institutional culture-loaded expressions in *Wolf Totem*. These translation methods play a vital role in the translation of *Wolf Totem*.

1 Introduction to Skopos Theory

Skopos theory is the core of German functionalism (Lv Lin, 2017: 18). Skopos means purpose in Greek. The skopos theory school is a school developed in the late 1970s in German. The core concept of skopos theory is that the purpose of translation is the main factor influencing translation behavior.

1.1 Skopos Theory

Skopos theory is one of the most influential translation theories in Germany since the 1970s. The founder of the theory is Hans J. Vermeer. In the process of translation, the purpose of translation determines the translation strategy used by the translator (Mao Yongbing, 2012: 120). Translation is not a transcoding process, but a specific form of human action. Before any translation activity begins, the purpose of it must be clear, otherwise the translation activity cannot start. The emergence of skopos theory in Germany provides a new perspective for the study of translation theory and challenges the status of the original text. Vermeer believes that the translator has the right to choose and reject the original content according to the purpose and function of translation. In addition, he holds that translation must have purposes and the purposes of translation determine how the translator translates the original text (Liu Junping et al., 2012: 163).

1.2 Rules of Skopos Theory

There are three rules, named skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule, in skopos theory. Skopos rule holds that all translation activities should give priority to the rule of purpose, that is, in the context and culture of the target language, the translator's translation should be able to meet the needs of the target language readers. The purpose of translation plays a decisive role in the whole process of translation. The skopos rule is the primary rule that translators should follow (Mao Yongbing, 2012: 119). Coherence rule requires that the language in the translation must be coherent and fluent, and the reader or listener can understand the meaning of the translation according to the context. In addition, Coherence rule requires that the translation must follow intra-textual coherence. However, if the requirement of the rule of purpose is inconsistent with intra-textual coherence, the concept of intra-textual coherence no longer works (Wang Jun, 2017: 102). The rule of fidelity refers to that there should be interlingual coherence between the original text and the translation. Exactly speaking, the translation should be not only consistent with the style of the original text, but the degree and form of fidelity are determined by the purpose of the translation. Fidelity rule emphasizes that inter-textual coherence should be observed between the source text and the translation.

2 Culture-Loaded Expressions

Language is not only a tool for human thought, emotion expression and communication, but also a cultural carrier of different nationalities. Therefore, there are inevitably huge cultural differences in language, and a certain number of culture-loaded expressions are produced.

2.1 Definition of Culture-Loaded Expressions

Language and culture are closely related. As a result of the emergence and development of language, human culture can be generated and inherited (Hu Wenzhong, 2014: 57). Nida contends that changes in culture often give rise to new types of discourse and the popularity of certain types of discourse may also reflect cultural concerns (Eugene

A.Nida, 1993: 109). That is to say, culture and language can influence each other. Culture-loaded expressions are words with specific national cultural connotations, which reflect the life style, values and thinking mode peculiar to different nationalities or cultures in the process of social development. In other words, culture-loaded expressions are accumulated by ethnic groups in the long historical process (Liao Qiyi, 2000: 232). They are different from other ethnic groups in their unique ideological and cultural connotations and profoundly reflect the regional and cultural characteristics of a nation.

2.2 Classification of Culture-Loaded Expressions

The classification of culture-loaded expressions is based on the classification of culture. Language and culture depend on and influence each other. Language is an important carrier of culture. Culture has a restrictive effect on language. Xing Fuyi agrees with the broad definition of culture and divides culture into three levels: material culture, institutional culture and mental culture (Xing Fuyi, 2000: 8). Chen Hongwei also adopted Xing Fuyi's classification method of culture. Chen Hongwei holds that material culture is the material civilization created by human beings. It refers to all visible or perceptible material and spiritual products. The cultural branches of material culture include food culture, clothing culture, architectural culture and opera culture. Institutional culture refers to human social institution, religious institution, production institution, education institution, labor management and distribution institution, family institution, kinship relationship, etiquette and customs, behavior mode and other social regulations and theories related to them. Mental culture refers to the mode of thinking, habits of thinking, values, aesthetic tastes, beliefs, mentality and so on (Chen Hongwei, 2004: 22). Therefore, culture-loaded expressions can be divided into material culture-loaded expressions, institutional culture-loaded expressions and mental culture-loaded expressions.

3 An Introduction of Chinese Version of *Lang Tu Teng* and Howard Goldblatt's English Version of *Wolf Totem*

Lang Tu Teng, written by Chinese famous author Jiangrong, mainly tells the story of an educated youth who lived with wolves and people on the grasslands of Inner Mongolia in the 1960s and 1970s. The book is made up of dozens of coherent "Wolf stories" with intense and mysterious plots. Readers can grab intense pleasure from the chapters and details in the book, which makes them unable to stop reading. It seems that those elvish wolves that live in Inner Mongolia can jump out of the book at any time. In addition, *Lang Tu Teng* was once hailed as the world's only "rare book" depicting and studying wolves in Inner Mongolia. *Wolf Totem*, translated by Howard Goldblatt, has been welcomed by readers at home and abroad after its global release. Howard Goldblatt is a famous translator of contemporary Chinese literature (Lu Congmei, 2013: 11). The book's idiomatic English translation has attracted numerous scholars to its discussion and research. This paper takes the culture-loaded expressions in Howard Goldblatt's translation as the research object, and aims to explore the translation methods he used.

4 Translation Methods of Institutional Culture-Loaded Expressions in *Wolf Totem* from Perspective of Skopos Theory

4.1 Institutional Culture-Loaded Expressions in *Wolf Totem*

Institutional culture-loaded expressions are derived from the institutional culture. Institutional culture refers to human social institution, religious institution, production institution, education institution, labor management and distribution institution, family institution, kinship relationship, etiquette and customs, behavior mode and other social regulations and theories related to them (Chen Hongwei, 2004: 22). In *Lang Tu Teng*, a lot of institutional culture-loaded expressions were found. To be exact, they encompass many aspects. There are many examples of institutional culture-loaded expressions in the following part: human social institution

expressions (供销社, 贫下中农, 上山下乡, 批斗),

religious institution expressions(腾格里, 大命, 小命, 灵魂), production institution expressions(插队), education institution expressions(知青), labor management and distribution institution expressions(工分, 二大队), family institution expressions, kinship relationship expressions(阿爸 阿嬷), etiquette and customs expressions(掩狼崽), behavior mode and other social regulations expressions. Institutional culture-loaded words are the prominent linguistic features of *Lang Tu Teng*. Goldblatt flexibly adopted a variety of translation methods in the process of translating them in *Wolf Totem*.

4.2 Translation Methods of Institutional Culture-Loaded Expressions from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

Translation methods appear with the emergence of translation and develop with the development of translation. The main methods used in institutional culture-loaded expressions of *Wolf Totem* include literal translation, free translation, transliteration, omission and literal translation plus annotation. Each translation method has its own necessity and advantages.

4.2.1 Transliteration

According to skopos rule of skopos theory, it requires that in the context and culture of the target language, the translator's translation should be able to meet the needs of the target language readers. The intended purpose of the translation determines what translation skills the translator uses. Under the guidance of skopos rule in skopos theory, transliteration is used here. Transliteration refers to the translation of the sounds of a source language into a similar or identical language. Nowadays, transliteration is used by more and more translators and has become an indispensable translation method in the process of translation.

Example 1 这个战机是腾格里赐给狼王的。

Translation: *Tengger* has presented the wolf leader with this opportunity.

The Mongolian people regard "heaven" as the eternal supreme god, so it is called "everlasting heaven", that is, *tengger*. *Tengger* is the highest god

among the Mongolians. It is regarded as the master of the world and human beings. The word *tengger* is very strange to target language readers, because there are cultural and language gaps between Chinese and foreign cultures. However, transliteration method can make up for the language gap between Chinese and foreign languages to some extent. As a result, Howard Goldblatt uses transliteration to translate *tengger*, which made up the gap between Chinese and English. The pronunciation of *tengger* is very similar to the pronunciation of "腾格里" in Mongolian language.

Transliteration can not only preserve the exotic atmosphere, but also enrich the native language. The reason why English is one of the most idiomatic languages in the world is that it absorbs a lot of foreign words. In addition, transliteration can avoid cultural loss or semantic incompleteness as much as possible. For example, the Chinese expression "腾格里" contains rich cultural connotations, and transliteration maybe more appropriate than other translation methods here.

4.2.2 Free Translation

According to coherence rule of skopos theory, it requires that the translation must follow intra-textual coherence. Translators should take full account of the cultural background and social environment of the target readers to create a meaningful translation for the target language readers. In addition, coherence rule requires the maximum readability of the translation. Under the guidance of coherence rule of skopos theory, free translation is used here. Free translation refers to the translation method that the translator translates the original text according to the general idea of it, rather than deal with it through word-for-word translation. When there is a great difference between the original text and the translated text, translators usually use free translation to help target readers better understand the general idea of the text.

Example 2 两年前陈阵从北京到达这个边境牧场插队的时候,正是十一月下旬。

Translation: Two years earlier, in late November, he had arrived in the border-region pasture as a production team member from Beijing.

“插队” usually refers to a living actuality of urban educated youth in China before 1980. It belongs to collective ownership. There is no need to go through procedures such as political examination and physical examination, and there is no strict quota limit. In other words, it refers to that educated youth join a production team in a rural area and earn their work points, dividends and rations as ordinary members do. Obviously, it is difficult for target readers to figure out the meaning of “插队”. As a result, Howard Goldblatt translates “插队” into “as a production team” by means of free translation. In his translation, Howard Goldblatt explains the meaning of “插队”, which was interpreted as a member of the production team, reducing the difficulty of understanding of the target language readers. In addition, Goldblatt adopts another Chinese characteristic expression, production team, to try not to lose the flavor of the original text as much as possible. This approach not only conforms to the requirements of skopos rule for the translation, but also adheres to the requirements of the coherence rule for the translation.

Through free translation, Howard Goldblatt further removes the obstacles of understanding for the target language readers. Target language readers can read the novel more easily and smoothly. Because of the accessibility of reading, target language readers can understand the meaning of the original text more deeply and accurately. In addition, barrier-free reading can not only further stimulate readers' interest in reading, but also spread Chinese culture to the world.

4.2.3 Omission

Coherence rule requires the maximum acceptability of the translation. In order to avoid the phenomenon of redundancy in the reading process, it is necessary to omit some unnecessary or previously mentioned expressions. Under the guidance of coherence rule, omission is used here. Omission refers to that it removes words that do not conform to the thinking habit, language habit and

expression mode of the target languages so as to avoid redundant translation. Due to the differences between Chinese and foreign language backgrounds and ways of thinking, excessive translation may result in verbose sentences or deviation from the original text. On the contrary, appropriate omission of some words is precisely to achieve the effect of faithful to the original text or smooth expression of the original text.

Example 3 人家是贫下中农 而他却是上山下乡来接
受再教育的“狗崽子”。

Translation: Ershun, after all, was a peasant, while he was one of the “mongrel bastards” sent “up to the mountains and down to the countryside” for reeducation.

“贫下中农” is the combined name of poor peasants and lower-middle peasants. According to the division standard of Chinese rural class, poor peasants are the semi-proletariat in the countryside. They lack or have no land, possess incomplete farm tools, and must rent land for farming or sell part of their labor force to maintain their livelihood. The lower-middle peasants are a part of the middle peasants. They earn their living from their own labor, have a lower economic status and live in conditions below those of ordinary middle peasants. It is obvious that the meaning of “贫下中农” is too complex to be understood for target readers. Besides, the aim of this sentence is to make a contrast of their identification, that is, Ershun is a high-ranking peasant but Yangke is a low-ranking student from city. Therefore, the exact meaning of “贫下中农” is not necessary for readers. On the contrary, if “贫下中农” is translated completely, there may be some reading and understanding obstacles for readers. Therefore, Howard Goldblatt translates this expression by means of omission so that the translated expression could be better understood.

On the premise of not affecting the meaning of the original text, omission can help target language readers reduce the pressure of reading. In example 3, the word “peasant” is enough to transmit the meaning of original text. If “贫下中农” are explained too much, they will increase the burden of reading of target readers. Therefore, the method of omission is indispensable in the process

of translating institutional culture-loaded expressions.

4.2.4 Literal Translation Plus Annotation

Coherence rule requires the maximum comprehensibility of the translation. As there are many differences between English and Chinese cultures, some culture-loaded words in Chinese cannot find corresponding words in English, so semantic vacancy occurs. In this case, the translation method of literal translation plus annotation is usually used under the guidance of coherence rule. Literal translation plus annotation refers to that translators should add explanatory annotation on the basis of literal translation. To make reading easier for foreign readers, it is necessary to adopt this translation method.

Example 4 红卫兵“破四旧”的狂潮还没有破到老人壁毯地毯上来。

Translation: Destroy the Four Olds—*old ideas, cultures, customs and habits*—had not yet claimed Bilgee’s tapestries or rug.

The expression of “破四旧” is not strange for Chinese readers, but it is difficult for target readers to figure out its meaning. It is an expression that occurs in the Great Cultural Revolution. Four Olds refers to old ideas, cultures, customs and habits. Only when “四旧” is clearly stated can the coherence rule could be realized. What’s more, foreign readers can better understand the content and cultural background of the original text.

Under the guidance of coherence rule, the author adopts the methods of free translation, omission and literal translation plus annotation. After all, there are great differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, and cultural differences will bring obstacles of understanding. In this case, translators should consider the readability, acceptability and comprehensibility of target language readers. Translators are asked to obey coherence rule, so that readers can smoothly understand what the original text is intended to express.

4.2.5 Literal Translation

According to fidelity rule of skopos theory, the translation should be faithful to the original text. From the perspective of fidelity rule, the translation should be not only consistent with the style of the original text, but the degree and form of fidelity are determined by the purpose of the translation. Under the guidance of fidelity rule of skopos theory, literal translation is used here. Literal translation is not only faithful to the original form, but also must be faithful to the original content. Therefore, Howard Goldblatt uses literal translation many times in translating institutional culture-loaded expressions.

Example 5 怕怕。我怕狼把羊赶跑，工分就没有。

Translation: Of course I was. I was scared the wolf would drive the sheep out of the pen. I’d lose all my *work points*.

“Work point” is a specific vocabulary generated under specific social background conditions. It is the unit of measurement of remuneration. To be specific, it is the unit of calculating the members’ workload and labor remuneration in agricultural producers cooperation and people’s communes in Chinese history. The accountant of the production team records the reward score of the members who work every day. 工分 is a word with Chinese characteristics, therefore, the translator does not explain the meaning of the word “工分” too much. Such translation can arouse readers’ greater interest in language connotation. The purpose of literal translation is to be as faithful as possible to the original text so that readers can get closer to Chinese culture.

Example 6 这里是二大队冬季抗灾的备用草场。

Translation: The area was a winter reserve pastureland for the *Second Production Brigade*.

Example 7 :三组的一个老牛倌也来到这里。

Translation: An old cow herder in *Section Three* came up while Chen sat here.

Example 8 要是大队下了死命令，非杀小狼不可，那咱们就马上把小狼放跑。

translation: If an order to kill him comes down from brigade headquarters.

In example 6, example 7 and example 8, there are three institutional culture-loaded expressions about labor management and distribution which need to be translated without any changes. Because “二大队”, “三组” and “大队” are the forms of organization in the socialist agricultural economy of China, which were peculiar products of that era. To give the reader a sense of being there, it is helpful to reserve the original flavor in the translated version through literal translation. Here “二大队”, “三组” and “大队” are respectively translated into “Second Production Brigade”, “Section Three” and “brigade headquarters” literally, which fully retains the charm of the expression with Chinese characteristics. Such a translation method is not only conducive to the spread of Chinese culture, but also enables readers to understand Chinese culture more actively.

The above examples show that the translation of institutional culture-loaded expressions of *Wolf Totem* cannot be separated from literal translation methods. Literal translation can retain the characteristics of the original text, so that readers can further understand Chinese culture. Under the guidance of skopos theory, literal translation can help translators better complete the translation.

In the process of translating institutional culture-loaded expressions in *Lang Tu Teng*, Howard Goldblatt mainly adopts the translation methods of literal translation. At the same time, he adopts the translation methods of free translation, transliteration, omission and literal translation plus annotation. The comprehensive application of these translation methods makes Howard Goldblatt's translation outstanding. The book's idiomatic English translation has attracted numerous scholars to its discussion and research.

5 Conclusion

It has always been the focus of translators to break through the language barriers in different cultural backgrounds and convey the meaning of the original work more accurately. Therefore, the

translation of culture-loaded expressions is particularly important. This paper takes Howard Goldblatt's translation of *Lang Tu Teng* as the research object and takes skopos theory as the guidance, aiming at analyzing the translation methods of institutional culture-loaded expressions in *Wolf Totem*. Howard Goldblatt translated the institutional culture-loaded expressions in *Lang Tu Teng* by means of literal translation, free translation, transliteration, omission and literal translation plus annotation. It is not only proves the efficiency and feasibility of skopos theory for the translation of *Lang Tu Teng*, but also demonstrates that these translation methods are of great help in translating institutional culture-loaded expressions in *Lang Tu Teng*.

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