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The Differences Between Translational Communication and Translation

Jiajin Yu
College of Foreign Languages, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, 200093, Shanghai, China
Email: 2503384044@qq.com

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the differences between translational communication and translation, and then expound theoretical basis and practical meaning of translational communication as a new research paradigm. Based on the definitions of communication, translation and translational communication, the paper makes a comparation from subject, purpose, theory and method, content and research focus of translational communication and translation, which reveals that translational communication not only expands the scope of translation, but also puts emphasis on comprehensive research of interdisciplinary study and communicational effect of translation. With the growing globalization, translational communication offers new theoretical support and practical method for translation practice and cross-cultural communication.

Keywords

Communication; Translation; Translational communication; Differences

1. Introduction

Translation has been bridging the gap of language barrier so that information exchange is able to be achieved. Conventionally, the focus of translation revolves around “how to translate”, namely pursuing accuracy, fidelity and elegance of translation. However, growing globalization and revolutionary innovation of communicational technique led to dramatic shifts of translation’s functions and forms. Nowadays, confronted with increasingly fierce competition of national soft power, translation has been turned into a kind of tool that spreads information, shapes national image and leads public opinion.

Consequently, translational communication, a new compound term, was coined, which makes translator think out of the box and consider some insightful questions: “how is translational behavior influenced by internationally political or economic changes?” “how do the target audiences know translation?” “how do the target audiences understand and accept translated information?” and “what will be the ultimate sociocultural impact?”. These questions are beyond the scope of

conventional translatology, so a more comprehensive subject is needed.

Indeed, being aware of the trend, Feizhou Yin [1], Ke Xie [2] and Yun Wu [3] appealed for and dedicated to the construction of "Translational Communication Studies (TCS)".

2. Communication, Translation and Translational Communication

Clear definitions of communication, translation and translational communication are prerequisite for the differences of translation and translational communication. Communication provides a focus on the spread of information, and translation puts emphasis on the transformation of language symbols. Translational communication, however, as their combination, lays stress on information spread and social interaction achieved by translation within intercultural exchange.

2.1. The Definition of Communication

Owing to long-lasting changes and various functions of "communication", its categorical definition eludes a lot of researchers. Slightly different definitions were made by them from dissimilar perspectives and practical needs. Sarah Trenholm remarked that communication has become a sort of "portmanteau" term. Like a piece of luggage, it is overstuffed with all manner of odd ideas and meanings. The fact that some of these do not fit, resulting in a conceptual suitcase much too heavy for anyone to carry, is often overlooked [4]. Specifically, communication is a social process in which individuals employ symbols to establish, interpret, and co-create meaning in their environment(s) [5].

2.2. The Definition of Translation

Simply put, translation is the transformation from one language to another language. Based on the basic meaning, its connotation has been enriched and extended for deep research and rapid development. Therefore, scholars put forward more systematic definitions from many aspects. Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language [6]. Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style [7]. It is clear that these perspectives put a focus on equivalence, especially dynamic equivalence. A good translation underlines natural expression in target language and should be natural and fluent to the target readers.

From the perspective of translator, it is an indispensable part of translation. The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), however, triggers a change of translator's identity, which means AI becomes a new translator. As a result, changing identity led to changing definition. Translation constitutes an intelligent and inter-semiotic activity whereby humans and/or machines transform the

cultural elements of language A into language B to achieve comparable information content [8]. It is clear that "translator" is no longer confined to humanity. Additionally, it stresses that the nature of translation is an inter-semiotic, intercultural and intelligent activity, which shows the transformation of translation affected by AI.

Although these definitions focus on many aspects, translation is always the transformation of symbols, especially language symbols. Based on the definition of translation, its function means information exchange or information spread. From this point, communication and translation have something in common, both of which boast the function of information exchange. The difference, however, lies in scope. Specifically, translation focuses on the information transformation and spread of different languages, but communication covers process of all information exchange, including same language and different ones and inter-media and inter-semiotic symbols. In consequence, communication bears greater scope than translation, and the latter can be considered as a special form within inter-linguistic context.

2.3. The Definition of Translational Communication

The commonality between communication and translation gives birth to the translational communication, an interdisciplinary concept. After deep comprehension of communication and translation, the simplest form of translational communication was put forward: To communicate effectively, parties A and B who speak different languages must rely on a third party C to perform translation (symbol conversion) [1]. This communication is called as translational communication. In this case, extra translator C brings communicational element, making communication special. Then the integration of universality of communication and particularity translational communication forms the nature of translational communication [1].

In conclusion, communication is a spread activity of human information, including information spread of same and different languages; translation is an inter-semiotic (mainly interlingual conversion) activity; translational communication refers to information spread achieved by humanity through translation within different languages context; which involves inter-semiotic (mainly interlingual conversion) communication. In terms of translational communication, "translation" and "communication" are not "translation is communication" or "translation + communication", but are "translation's communication", namely "translational communication" [1].

The overarching elements of translational communication include subject, object (the original and target messages), translator, medium, receptor and effect (feedback). [1]. Notably, many elements—the choice of medium, psychology of recipient, evaluation and feedback of spread effect and so on—are beyond the scope

on which conventional translation focuses. They cannot be resolved only by translation, and need to resort to a more macro communication framework. This reveals the theoretical and real necessity of the construction of TCS.

3. The Differences of Translational Communication and Translation

There are some fundamental distinctions between translational communication and translation, namely subject, purpose, theory and method, content, and research focus.

3.1. Subject

Translation belongs to translatology, which researches activity, phenomenon, and regularity of translation. Its theoretical basis stems from linguistics, comparative literature and so on. It focuses on text and "equivalent relationship" between the original and target texts. Everything revolves around text.

Translational communication, however, belongs to TCS, which is integrated by translatology and communication studies and related with semiology, linguistics, culturology, intercultural communication, international communication study and mass communicology [1]. TCS is a subject that investigates translational communication phenomenon and its regularity, serving as a knowledge system that elucidates how humanity transmits and exchanges information through diverse symbols [1]. Although TCS focuses on translation activity as its subject matter, its theoretical basis, research paradigm and methodology mainly originate from communication studies, and combine other social sciences, such as sociology, psychology, political science, media studies and big data science. Its focus lies in whole process and system of communication, and text (translated text) is just a part of the whole process. TCS pays more attention to: "who launches this translation activity?" "why was the particular text selected for translation?" "how does translator who is affected by all kinds of factors make a decision?" "what are the media channels through which the translation is disseminated?" "who are the target audiences and how do they accept and understand the translation?" and "what social influence is caused?". TCS introduces the concepts and categories of communication studies to translatology in order to construct a new system. Specifically, the system is formed by the newly introduced subject, message, receptor, medium, and effect of the communication studies, explaining new understanding of communicative nature of translation activity [2]. Compared with the conventional translation, TCS shapes a new translation paradigm which makes translation focus biased towards communication studies. Translation is just a kind of method achieving intercultural communication.

3.2. Purpose

The core purpose of translation is to achieve "accuracy" and "elegance" of language conversion, which pays more attention to how to maximize the reproduction of the source texts' semantic content, stylistic features, and aesthetic value in the target language—that is, achieving "a good translation". Translation objective varies with specific text type. The goal of translation activity is to convey source-language information, and often seeks to exert influence on them by knowledge, attitude, or behavior [2]. In short, the purpose of translation activity is translated text-oriented.

Translational communication aims to fulfill effective information spread within intercultural context. Its judgement is often external, recipient-oriented and social. In other words, whether the information is accessible to the target audiences, is understood and accepted by them, and whether it gives rise to social influence as communication subject expected.

In the face of globalization, it is necessary to turn conventional translation purpose into translational communication's goal, or the translation will be subject to a dilemma that good translation fails to be disseminated outside, draw attention and be understood.

3.3. Theory and Method

There are many translation theories with the development of translatology, such as Fu Yan's faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance, Eugene Nida's functional equivalence theory, and Peter Newmark's communicative translation. It is fair to say that translation theory provides a standard for translation, but the standard is not the only. Theory offers a variety of choices for translation and embodies different perspectives.

Instead of a simple mix of methods from translatology and communication studies, the methods of TCS are skewed towards communication studies, and create innovation with the knowledge of translatology. The methodology and concrete research methods of TCS are derived from the communication studies, and make corresponding adjustments according to specific translation situations [2]. In terms of communication studies, there are now the Experience School and the Criticism School. The former mainly adopts quantitative study method, and the latter focuses on qualitative method [2]. On the basis of the methodology of communication studies, TCS's methods are the integration of quantitative and qualitative ones.

When it comes to qualitative method, the conventional translation research, devoid of rationality and systematicness, extremely relys on subjective explanation of researchers. Every researcher may draw a unique conclusion so that the reliability of conclusion sometimes will be doubted. Additionally, it is time-consuming, and difficult to test and compare its research fruit. TCS's qualitative research, however, is more reasonable and systematic because its method is based on the communication studies. TCS's qualitative methods involve literature analysis, independent summary, case study, focus group interview, in-depth interview, expert

evaluation method and field method [2].

Conventional quantitative methods in translation studies primarily serve to uncover linguistic regularities, validate theoretical hypotheses, and compare characteristics of translations. Their analysis focuses mainly on the texts themselves and translator behavior. Its key methods encompass corpora, questionnaires, and scales. Quantitative research in TCS primarily analyzes the quantitative characteristics, relationships, and changes of the subjects under investigation, forming insights into these subjects based on such analysis [2].

TCS's methodology and research methods bring innovation to the conventional translation research, which introduce systematic research methods and make the translatology more scientific. Besides, TCS's fruits are able to provide some reference for cultural industries, international communication and diplomatic policies, enhancing its social clouts.

3.4. Content

The overarching elements of translation activity constitute translator, source text, target text and target reader. The fundamental elements of communication, however, are communicator, message, medium, recipient and effect. In terms of elements, the number of communication's elements are more than that of translation's ones, and the contents are slightly different. Although the theories of communication studies are cornerstone of TCS, the elements of TCS also vary. They include subject, translator, object, medium, receptor and effect.

In terms of translator, the translator was initially human beings. With the advancement of technology, machine translation and today's AI translation, the translator has expanded its role beyond humans to machines and AI. The source text and target text exist in translation and translational communication. As for translational communication, communicator, also known as communication subject, refers to individual or organization that launches, sponsors, and controls the whole translational communication activity, such as governmental institution, publisher, media group, multinational company, international organization, non-governmental organization. The communication subject varies, individual, group or organization [1]. For translational communication subject and translator, sometimes both of them are identical.

Translational communication medium is an exclusive concept of TCS, which is a main difference between translational communication and translation. Simply put, medium is a communicative channel. Generally, after translator finishes transforming the source language, the subject needs to ferret out a medium to spread the target language message to recipient. The medium boasts three meanings: the first is the channel, intermediary and tool of message communication (collectively referred to as carrier media); the second is the technique of the message communication (collectively referred to as technical media); and the third

is the social organization that is engaged in message collection, processing and dissemination (collectively referred to as institutional media) [1]. The medium serves not only as technical tools or carriers for linguistic conversion, but also as pivotal hubs through which translation activities are realized, disseminated, and generate social impact.

The concept of the target reader is the same as that of the communication recipient. In short, both of them refer to audiences who accept transformed message. The audiences are not confined to a specific group.

Finally, translational communication effect stems from communication effect of communication studies. Compared with translation, this is also an obvious difference. The effect is the research focus of TCS. Translation is not merely a linguistic conversion; it is a deliberate communicative act regulated by multiple forces and aimed at influencing the audiences. The focus on effect ultimately seeks to enhance the social efficacy of translation, fostering more effective, responsible, and ethically mindful cross-cultural dialogues.

3.5. Research Focus

The focus of translation lies in working out how to translate. Consequently, there are a number of translation theories and strategies, methods and techniques to address it. In terms of translation theories, the functional equivalence theory emphasizes that translation is not literal correspondence, but rather that the response of the target text's readers should be consistent with that of the original text's readers to the original. Dynamic equivalence is therefore to be defined in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language [7]. The skopos theory constitutes the skopos rule, the coherence rule and the fidelity rule. Skopos is a Greek word for "purpose". According to Skopostheorie (the theory that applies the notion of Skopos to translation), the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (skopos) of the overall translational action [9]. All translation activities are determined by their purposes. And translator should choose corresponding translation strategies according to expected function of translation.

Generally, translation strategies are divided into domestication and foreignization. The core principle of domestication is to prioritize the target language readers. During translation, translator should minimize the exoticism of the original text in order to ensure that the translation can be read fluently, naturally and familiarly as if it were originally written in the target language. It makes the target readers feel that they are not reading a translated work. On the contrary, foreignization prioritizes the author. During translation, translator should consciously retain the exotic, linguistic characteristics and cultural features of the original text, and change the conventional expression of the target language so that the readers can feel that

they are reading a foreign work. Subordinated to translation strategy, translation methods include literal translation, liberal translation, transliteration, zero translation, idiomatic translation and so on. Subordinated to translation method, translation techniques are divided into addition, omission, division, combination and so on. In conclusion, all kinds of translation theories, strategies, methods and techniques are to serve "how to translate". On the basis of them, translators rack their brain to produce a good translation.

Translational communication, however, focuses on communication. It pays more attention to how message is disseminated to the target recipients by translation as a medium and whether the translation can acquire expected effect. The focus has been turned from translation to communication. It reveals that instead of language skill, the real challenges of translation lie in how to bridge a gap between cultural differences and communicative process.

So, to conclude, "translation" is a basic part of intercultural message communication, but "translational communication" is a systematic framework that integrates communicative strategies and translation practice. Facing the growing globalization and cross-cultural exchanges, "translational communication" provides essential theoretical support and practical pathway for effective external communication and enhancement of cultural soft power.

4. Conclusion

The main differences between translational communication and translation are subject, purpose, theory and method, content, and research focus. Conventional translation places emphasis on language conversion and quality of translation, and translational communication lays great stress on function, channel and effect of translation in cross-cultural communication. The shift from translation to translational communication not only expands boundary of translatology, but also makes a response to the need of international communication. As an interdisciplinary subject integrated with methods of many subjects, TCS provides a broader perspective for understanding and practicing translation, which holds paramount reference value for the international communication of fine traditional Chinese cultures and the enhancement of China's voice.

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