International Journal of Academic and Applied Research (IJAAR)
ISSN: 2643-9603
Vol. 10 Issue 10, October - 2026, Pages: 149-153

An Analysis of Peter Newmark's Communicative Translation Perspective in a Broad Sense: Taking Zhang Peiji's Essay Translation as a Case

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Abstract: *This study analyses Newmark's communicative translation perspective in a broad sense based on Newmark's interpretations of communicative translation, i.e. conveying the core message, the sense and the communicative force; being simpler, clearer and smoother in linguistic form; highlighting the response of the target language readers; and achieving the equivalent effect at the target language readers' level. Newmark's interpretations of communicative translation and V-shaped diagram of the contrast between semantic translation and communicative translation indicate that there are four tiers, i.e. adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation and communicative translation in a broad sense in terms of communicative translation perspective and methods. These communicative translation methods could be well adopted to analyse the communicative translation examples in Zhang Peiji's essay translation in his edited and translated Selected Modern Chinese Essays (1-3).*

Keywords—Newmark's communicative translation perspective; V-shaped diagram; four tiers; essay translation; cross-cultural translation

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation, as a means of conveying content, culture, information, idea, thought, sense, style, form and etc., is both semantic and communicative by nature (Newmark, 2001a). Translators are invariably supposed to strike a balance between linguistic option and communicative option (Zhang, 2023). And sometimes it is necessary to work out the kernel or core message from the source language text, e.g. literary text to communicate it with the target language readers when the translation is conducted beyond the lexical or syntactic levels. As one of the earliest translation theorists, Marcus Tullius Cicero in ancient Rome, argued that he did translation not as an interpreter but as an orator; not in a word-for-word way to "count" the original word one by one, but in a way of keeping the overall style and "weighing" the weight of the original text to readers (Tan, 2004, p. 19). Desiderius Erasmus, one of the representative translators in the Renaissance of northern Europe, followed Cicero's translation notion, and on the basis of respecting the original text, he highlighted the style of translation, i.e. poetry for poetry, plain language for plain language, elegant style for elegant style and the response of readers in translation (Tan, 2004). That is to say, Erasmus bore much in mind the importance of both the text style and communication with target readers in translation. John Dryden, one of the greatest translators in the 17th century, also argued that translation is one kind of art and translators should know the expressive characteristics of the source language text, and translation could be categorized into metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation (Tan, 2004). Theodore Horace Savory also emphasized the communicative nature of translation (like "a translation must give the ideas of the original; a translation may add to or omit from the original") in the translation rules he put forward (Newmark, 2001a, p. 38; Savory, 1968, p. 54). Eugene A. Nida admittedly gave much priority to the communicative nature of translation, like "reproducing the message", "equivalence rather than identity" in terms of the nature of translation (Nida & Taber, 2004, p. 12-13) and posited that it was efficient to convey the evident semantic meaning or original message with simple structures in translation (Gentzler, 2004). Based on K. Buhler's language function theory, Peter Newmark categorized texts into expressive text, informative text and vocative (Yuan & Guo, 2022). And the major contributions of Newmark to translation theory are the concepts of semantic translation and communicative translation. Newmark distinguished semantic translation from the interlinear translation and literal translation and argued that semantic translation tries to render the exact contextual meaning message of the original. However, if there are conflicts in conveying meaning, message or content, communicative translation could be used to emphasize the "force" of the message (Newmark, 2001a, p. 39). That is to say, communicative translation, though often used in informative text, could also be used as an effective approach in translating expressive texts like literature text or essay.

Selected Modern Chinese Essays (1-3), edited and well translated into English by Zhang Peiji (2007), are characterized by faithful, fluent and elegant semantic

translation with adequate and appropriate notes of translation after each translated essay. The translation notes of each essay, as the supplements of Mr. Zhang's thought processes in terms of analyzing, interpreting and translating text, also demonstrate definitely the translation methods he adopted. For most of the translations, Mr. Zhang pulled out all the stops to translate the original essays into English at the lexical and syntactic levels semantically. However, Mr. Zhang also highlighted the target language readers when coming across cultural words with connotations or complex syntactic structures and he adopted the communicative translation methods like adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation or comprehensive communicative translation. Therefore, this paper will analyze some examples picked from Mr. Zhang's essay translation from Newmark's communicative translation perspective.

2. NEWMARK'S COMMUNICATIVE TRANSLATION PERSPECTIVE

Newmark argued that "all translation must be in some degree both communicative and semantic, social and individual" and, and communicative translation is done by simplifying and emphasizing the basic message to some extent (Newmark, 2001a, p. 62). As the central problem of translation is invariably to translate literally or freely (Newmark, 2001b), it is hard to define the communicative translation alone clearly and comprehensively without the contrast of semantic translation.

2.1 Interpretations of Communicative Translation

According to Newmark (2001a), semantic translation highlights the exact content and contextual meaning, the original culture, the thought process, tends to overtranslate, and is usually more complex, more detailed, and more specific linguistically. However, communicative translation could be interpreted from the following aspects. First, in terms of translation purpose, communicative translation could be used as a translation means of conveying the core message, the sense and the communicative force when there are conflicts between translating exact but hardly comprehensible contents and more comprehensible messages in translation. Second, in terms of translation form, communicative translation is "simpler", "clearer", "smoother" in terms of linguistic form. That is to say, communicative translation would narrow down the original content and deliver the kernel message or sense to the target language readers in a more comprehensible way. And communicative translation would reduce the obscurities or ambiguities in translation that the target language readers could accept a more comprehensible transfer of foreign elements into their cognition in culture or norms. Third, in terms of translation end, communicative translation is emphatically done at the target language readers' level. That is to say, communicative translation highlights the response of target language readers. Finally, the overall "equivalent effect" as the desirable result in communicative translation should be achieved in the first place at the target language readers' language and cognition (Newmark, 2001b, p. 48). That is to say, communicative translation is supposed to produce the same or similar equivalent effect on the target language readers as the effect the source language readers would gain in reading the source language text.

2.2 Four Tiers of Communicative Translation Perspective in a Broad Sense

According to the above analyses of Newmark's interpretations of communicative translation, it is safe to conclude that communicative translation as a method could also be used for the translation of expressive texts, especially when it is extremely hard for translators to convert the original cultural words, idioms, or syntactic structures into those in the target language, provided that the translation by the means of communicative translation method could achieve the same or similar "equivalent effect" at the level of the target language readers. Ideally the perfect translation should be both semantic and communicative, there is emphasis in the actual translating procedures though. On the one hand, the source language emphasizes a deepening process from word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation to comprehensive semantic translation. On the other hand, the target language emphasizes a deepening process from adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation to comprehensive communicative translation. Newmark (Newmark, 2001b) put it in a V-shaped diagram as follows:



As illustrated in the above V-shaped diagram, there are actually four tiers of communicative translation in a broad sense, i.e. adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation and comprehensive communicative translation. These deepening processes of communicative translation could broadly be the effective translation methods in coping with translating difficult cultural words, idioms, syntactic structures of the source language into the target language in the target language readers' favor. Adaptation, the most flexible form of translation, could be widely used to convert the cultural words or the original syntactic structures into those familiar or easily acceptable for the target language readers. The translators could rewrite the original text to adapt to the target language form, provided that the adaptation is just a little change of nuance in the original text. Free translation underscores the prominence of "matter" or "content" instead of "manner" or "form" usually by the usual means of paraphrasing in translation, and there might be a process of "intralingual translation" before the interlingual translation (Newmark: 2001b, p. 46). Idiomatic translation could be conducted usually by two means, i.e. transferring the core explicit meaning or borrowing appropriately the equivalent idiom in the target language to convey the core message of the idiom or just to

use the equivalent idiom in the target language. Communicative translation, strictly defined at four levels, i.e. conveying the contextual meaning in general, reproducing the original content, adopting the appropriate target language, translating in an acceptable way, may seemingly be abstract. However, this definition is more inclusive as far as adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation are concerned in terms of the communicative translation perspective.

3. Examples in selected modern Chinese Essays (1-3) from Communicative Translation Perspective

Though he adopted semantic translation in general in his edited Selected Modern Chinese Essays (1-3), Mr. Zhang adopted communicative translation methods (adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation and comprehensive communicative translation) off and on intuitively reflected in his translation notes when encountering difficult cultural words, idioms or syntactic structures.

3.1 Adaptation

To make translation more comprehensible and sometimes with a sense of resonance, Mr. Zhang would carefully rewrite some sentences in terms of syntactic structure before translating so as to adapt to the target language readers.

Example 1

燕子去了，有再来的时候；杨柳枯了，有再青的时候，桃花谢了，有再开的时候。但是，聪明的，你告诉我，我们的日子为什么一去不复返呢？

（朱自清《匆匆》）

If swallows go away, they will come back again. If willows wither, they will turn green again. If peaches shed their blossoms, they will flower again. But, tell me, you the wise, why should our days go by never to return?

(Zhu Ziqing: Transient Days)

In order to reproduce the beauty and power of the three parallel sentences in the essay to make a contrast between natural changes with the fleeting time, the translator thought of the famous quote of "If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" by the British poet Percy Shelley and used "if" to rewrite the syntactic structure in the translation, and in the translation note, the translator argued that this rewriting would consolidate the aroma of the original sentences (Zhang, 2007, p. 59). As the target language readers are usually familiar with Shelley's quote, Mr. Zhang's translation here would adapt well to the target language readers and trigger the resonance of the target language readers.

Example 2

几天的阳光在柳条上撒下的一抹嫩绿，被尘土埋掩得有憔悴色了，是需要一次洗涤。还有干裂的大地和树根也早已期待着雨。雨却迟疑着。

（何其芳《雨前》）

The willow twigs, daubed with a light green by several days of sunshine, are now covered all over with dust and look so sickly that they need to be washed. And the parched soil and tree roots have likewise been dying for rainfall. Yet the rain is reluctant to come down.

(He Qifang: Praying for Rainfall)

If the above underlined sentence is literally translated, it might be confusing and difficult for the target language readers to comprehend that "a light green" color looks gaunt and weary. Therefore, the translator reorganized the above underlined sentence and rewrote it as "柳条经过几天的阳光被抹上嫩绿色，现在却满是尘土，看起来有些憔悴，因此需要洗涤" (The willow twigs, daubed with a light green by several days of sunshine, are now covered all over with dust and look so sickly that they need to be washed). The translator rewrote the sentence syntactically by changing the modifier and translated it with added logic connection "so...that..." to adapt to the target language readers.

3.2 Free Translation

To convey the content, message, sense of the essay, Mr. Zhang adopted numerous paraphrases as explained further in his translation notes in each translated essay. These paraphrases are excellent reflections of Mr. Zhang's translating process and would produce effective contextual equivalence for the target language readers.

Example 3

若是在鄙野的乡间，这时令满耳是虫声了。..... 它们高、低、宏、细、疾、徐、作、歇，仿佛曾经过乐师的精心训练，所以这样地无可批评，踌躇满志，其实他们每一个都是神妙的乐师；众妙毕集，各抒灵趣，那有不成人间绝响的呢？

(叶圣陶《没有秋虫的地方》)

At a time like this, if I were in the lowly countryside, I would hear insects all around me. ... Their performance, with a voice high or low, sonorous or piping, quick or slow, sustained or suspended, is flawless and skilful, as if they had undergone thorough training under a music master. In fact, each and every one of them is a consummate music master all by itself. As a constellation of fine artists, they each give full play to their unique talent. No wonder their performance has reached the peak of artistic perfection.

(Ye Shengtao: A Place Without Autumn Insects)

The above underlined four-Chinese-character terms, if literally translated, would be hard to comprehend for target language readers. However, if paraphrased appropriately based on the contexts, these terms would be abundant in tangible meaning. Therefore, the translator paraphrased these terms as "a constellation of artists give full play to their talents and their performances have reached the peak of artistic

perfection". As an effective means of free translation, paraphrasing prioritizes the target language readers' acceptability and comprehensibility.

Example 4

初冬的天，灰黯而且低垂，简直把人压得吁不出一口气。前天一场雪还给居民一些明朗，但雪后的景象可不堪了！峭寒的北风将屋檐瓦角的雪屑一起卷到空中，舞过一个圈子以后都极善选择地向路人脖项里钻。街道为恶作剧的阳光弄成泥淖，残雪上面画着片片践踏的痕迹。

（萧乾《古城》）

It was early winter. The gloomy and low sky made one feel suffocating (suffocated). A fall of snow a couple of days before had brought to the city dwellers a touch of brightness, but now what an ugly scene reigned! The raw wind sent the snow on the tiles along the eaves whirling in the air in tiny bits and adroitly making its way down the necks of the pedestrians by way of their collars. The streets had become slushy by exposure to the prankish sun, and the thawing snow was dotted with traces of footsteps.

(Xiao Qian: The Ancient City)

In the above translation, the translator paraphrased the three underlined parts into easily comprehensible contents based on the respective contexts. Though translated in a free way, the translator underscored the core sense of each underlined part in the sentences by the vivid words like "suffocating (suffocated)", "reigned" and "adroitly", which would be more brief, acceptable and comprehensible for the target language readers.

3.3 Idiomatic Translation

As "idiomatic translation reproduces the 'message' of the original" (Newmark, 2001b:47), the priority in idiomatic translation is to transfer the cultural connotation. To convey or transfer the core explicit meaning or sense of Chinese idioms with abundant cultural connotation, Mr. Zhang adopted the communicative translation method, i.e. transfer the core meaning or cultural connotation instead of the linguistic form. Meanwhile, Mr. Zhang also borrowed the source language idioms in translation if allowed.

Example 5

真正的朋友，恐怕要算"总角之交"或"竹马之交"了。在小学和中学的时代容易结成真实的友谊，那时彼此尚不感到生活的压力，入世未深，打算计较的念头也少，朋友的结成全由于志趣相近或性情适合，差不多可以说是"无所为"的，性质比较地纯粹。

（夏丏尊《中年人的寂寞》）

Real friendship between two persons originates perhaps from the time of life when they were children playing innocently together. Real friendship is easily formed in primary or middle school days when, being socially inexperienced and free from the burden of life, you give little thought to personal gains or losses, and make friends entirely as a result of similar tastes and interests or congenial disposition.

(Xia Mianzun: Mid-life Loneliness)

It is hard for those who know little about Chinese culture to understand "总角之交" or "竹马之交" even when "总角" is translated into "the children's hairstyle with two tufts on either side" or when "竹马" is translated into "bamboo pole as a horse for children to ride". Therefore, the translator combined the two idioms and liberally translated them as "from the time of life when they were children playing innocently together" to transfer the explicit core cultural connotation of "playing innocently together" since childhood.

Example 6

他一定觉得我不太合理，不然怎么连看我一眼也没有，就把东西卷起来，他把包袱仿佛要丢在我的头上，他十分不耐烦的样子。.....

我伸手去接包袱，我一点也不怕，我理直气壮，我明明知道他故意作难，正想把包袱接过来就走。猜得对对的，他并不把包袱真给我。

（萧红《当铺》）

He must have thought me too unreasonable, for he rolled up the gown without even taking a look at me. Impatient was written all over his face as if he were about to throw the bundle onto my head. ...

I was aware that he was out to make things difficult for me. Therefore, bold and confident, I reached out my hand for the bundle. But, just as I had been doubly sure, he simply wouldn't let go of it.

(Xiao Hong: The Pawnshop)

To vividly transfer the mean quality of the pawnbroker or pawnshop clerk in the original text, the translator borrowed the idioms "be written all over one's face" (one's emotions or inner thoughts demonstrated evidently through one's facial expressions), "be out to do" (plan to do), "let go of" (release one's grip on something) and conveyed the contextual equivalence and sense and would trigger the linguistic resonance at the target language readers' level.

3.4 Communicative Translation

Though adaptation, free translation, and idiomatic translation are included as communicative translation in a broad sense, the strict and comprehensive definition of communicative translation by Newmark is represented at four levels, i.e. the contextual meaning, content, language, and being "readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership" (Newmark, 2001b:47).

Example 7

我不知道他们给了我多少日子；但我的手确乎是渐渐空虚了。在默默里算着，八千多日子已经从我手中溜去；像针尖上一滴水滴在大海里，我的日子滴在时间的流里，没有声音，也没有影子。我不禁头涔涔而泪潸潸。

（朱自清《匆匆》）

I don't know how many days I am entitled to altogether, but my quota of them is undoubtedly wearing away. Counting up silently, I find that more than 8,000 days have already slipped away through my fingers. Like a drop of water falling off a needle point into the ocean, my days are quietly dripping into the stream of time without leaving a trace. At the thought of this, sweat oozes from my forehead and tears trickle down my cheeks.

(Zhu Ziqing: Transient Days)

In the above underlined translation, the translator obviously adopted the communicative translation methods comprehensively by the means of free translation (paraphrasing), adaptation (rewriting), comprehensive communicative translation (simpler in linguistic form), and idiomatic translation (core message and sense). Simpler, clearer and smoother as the above underlined translations are, these translations mainly at the target language readers' level in terms of content, context, linguistic form, acceptability and comprehensibility could help the target language readers achieve the equivalent effects more efficiently.

4. Conclusion

Essay, as an expressive text, is often semantically translated for the sake of being more detailed and more specific in content and linguistic form, and transferring the exact contextual meaning (Fedorenko et al., 2023). However, based on Newmark's communicative translation perspective, i.e. his interpretations of communicative translation and his V-shaped diagram of the contrast between semantic translation and communicative translation, four tiers of communicative translation perspective, i.e. adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation and communicative translation in a broad sense could also be adopted as efficient translation methods to convey core message, sense and communicative force in a simpler, clearer and smoother way at the target language readers' level in essay translation. In analyzing some examples picked from Selected Modern Chinese Essays edited and translated by Zhang (2007), Newmark's communicative translation perspective and the communicative translation methods in a broad sense could justify the equivalent effect in the translation.

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