

A Report on E-C Translation of English Humorous Novels

-- A case study of this may hurt a little

Chenyuan Meng

School of Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu 610000, China

Abstract: This translation practice report selects a short humorous novel: This May Hurt a Little as the translation material and case selection scope. This translation practice report is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background and significance of the translation task. Chapter Two introduces the source text and the author. The third chapter introduces the translation process in detail. Before translation, the translator carefully studied the original text and determined the translation tools and translation theories, namely Newmark's semantic translation and communicative translation. The fourth chapter, under the guidance of semantic translation and communicative translation, carries out specific case analysis from three levels : vocabulary, syntax and discourse. The last chapter summarizes the experience and gains of the translation practice.

Keywords: Humorous Novels; Semantic Translation; Communicative Translation.

1. Task Description

This translation practice report selects a short humorous novel: This May Hurt a Little as the translation material and case selection scope. This chapter introduces the translation tasks from two aspects of background and significance.

1.1. Background

As a kind of narrative literary genre, the novel has become a literary form deeply loved by many readers with its fascinating story plot, distinct characters and distinctive language. With the increasingly frequent cross-cultural communication, more and more English novels are introduced into China. As an important branch of literary translation, the translation of English novels has received more and more attention. In the translation of many English novels, the translation of English humorous novels is not an easy thing. Humor often appears in the language of various nationalities, and often plays the role of lubricant in the daily communication with people. Especially in the novels with strong plot, humor appears more frequently. However, because different countries or regions in the world have different historical regions and different historical backgrounds may make people in different countries understand humor differently, and the expression of humor will also be large or small differences. For the English and Chinese languages, because of their different language systems and many cultural differences, the interpretation of humor and its expression forms are also very different. At present, the research on the translation of English humorous novels is not comprehensive and systematic enough, and there are many difficulties in the research process. How to convey the humorous effects of English humorous novels completely and effectively in Chinese has always been a concern and research topic of many scholars.

1.2. Significance

This translation practice report selects the text: This May Hurt a Little, written by Eric Nicol. In this text, the author described the terrible experience of seeing the dentist with

humorous sentences.

This translation practice report takes the translated text as an example, trying to explain the application of semantic translation and communicative translation theory in the specific translation practice from the aspects of vocabulary, sentence, and culture. It is expected to provide some reference for literary translation on the old question of how to be loyal to the author while being loyal to the readers. This study has certain reference value for literary translation practice[4].

2. Introduction to the Source Text

2.1. Author and Content

This May Hurt a Little is the work of the famous Canadian humor writer Eric Nicol. Born in 1919 and died in 2011, Eric Nicol was the husband of a female writer and father of three children. He devoted his life to writing, wrote more than 60,000 newspaper column, several plays, some radio and television scripts and 34 works, including three works won the Stephen Leacock Award. In 1995, he won the British Columbia Literary Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding contributions to literature.

In this article, the author maintains his usual style of humor, telling the story of the protagonist "I", who has to see the dentist due to his bad tooth brushing habits. In the process of seeing the dentist, the author uses humorous language to describe "my" fear, anxiety, nervous inner activities of tooth extraction. The author describes the character of the hero image, character psychology and character through different angles. This description shows the author's superb literary accomplishment and strong cultural accomplishment, and this good article is worth us to seriously interpret, research, translation.

2.2. Linguistic Features

This may Hurt a Little is a short and humorous novel. The text has the following features: (1) In terms of language style, the words are humorous and rich in rhetoric. In order to vividly depict the psychology of the character, in the article, the author used a lot of metaphors, exaggeration,

personification, irony, comparison and other rhetorical devices. All of that vividly depicts the horror of the protagonist's fear of seeing the dentist. (2) Sentence patterns are complex, changeable and diversified. A large number of verb-free clauses, with compound sentence patterns, independent main clause, non-qualified clauses, and various subordinate clauses are used in this text. The text is rich in vocabulary, accurate and vivid words, using a large number of modifiers. The richness and accuracy of vocabulary are the basic requirements and elements of a good article, and they are the prerequisite for coherent, logical, prominent theme and distinct character depiction. However, the use of a large number of modifiers also adds much difficulty to the translation.

3. Translation Process

This chapter introduces the translation process, which is divided into three stages: pre-translation, while-translation and post-translation.

3.1. Pre-translation

3.1.1. Pre-translational Preparations

There are also a lot of professional expressions in the text. Due to the lack of knowledge in related fields, the translator will inevitably encounter problems in translation. Therefore, in the process of translation, the translator has to find relevant information through various methods, such as searching for parallel texts, consulting relevant background and reference materials on the Internet, asking the friends who have learned the relevant courses for help, so as to make the translation more perfect than before.

Before translation, sufficient preparations should be made to ensure the quality of the translation. First of all, the translator got familiar with the characteristics of the text, and determined that the text type of this paper is humorous novel, which belongs to the expressive text; after understanding the characteristics of this kind of text, the translator consulted the relevant literature and had a general understanding of the author; by reading the full text, the translator has an overall grasp of the content of the article. On this basis, the translator selected the translation tools, collected and read the parallel texts. A lot of preparation can not only improve the efficiency of translation, but also avoid some errors caused by the lack of professional knowledge, so as to improve the quality of translation.

Effective translation tools can help translators improve their efficiency and accuracy in the translation process. This translation practice mainly used reference books and selected some other kinds of online translation tools to improve the quality of translation, including CNKI translation assistant, DeepL and Youdao translator as auxiliary tools.

Reading a large number of parallel texts is helpful for translators to understand the background of related topics, so as to deepen their understanding of translation topics. It can also provide translators with commonly used expressions, so as to improve the fluency of translation. For this reason, the translator read some relevant parallel texts of this paper. In the process of reading, the translator marked out the places related to the content of the translated text, collected the relevant language expressions, and used them as a reference for translation. Moreover, through the reading of parallel texts, the translator has a corresponding understanding of the style and translation methods of humor novels. While learning relevant knowledge, it also improves the enthusiasm,

confidence and efficiency of translation.

3.1.2. Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation

Whether the wonderful parts of literary works can be conveyed to the readers is the main task of translation. To accomplish this task, many translators have proposed their own translation theories. There are corresponding suitable translation theory for different language translation. The use of the corresponding appropriate translation theory can maximize the highlights of literary works.

Peter Newmark, one of the representatives of the linguistic school of English translation theory. In 1981, according to the discussion of language philosophers Bühler and Jakobson on language functions, Newmark divided language functions into six categories: the expressive function, the informative function, the vocative function, the aesthetic function, the phatic function, and the metalingual function. A text may have one function or several functions at the same time, but one of them is the main function [1].

According to the six language functions, Newmark divided the text into three types: the expressive text, the informative text and the vocative text. Different types of texts focus on different translation strategies. Newmark believes that the discussion of translation in the early translation theory, that is, the pre-linguistic period, ignored the relationship between translation and meaning, thinking and language universality. How to translate should be determined by the purpose of translation, the characteristics of readers and the type of text.

Accordingly, Newmark put forward the concept of semantic translation and communicative translation in *A Textbook of Translation*. "Semantic translation" means "reproducing the contextual meaning of the original text as accurately as possible, under the premise that the semantic and syntactic structure of the target language allows." The translator must first be loyal to the original author, obey the culture, and explain the source text only when the connotation of the source text constitutes an obstacle to understanding. The translator should not only convey the literal meaning of the text, but also express the connotation of the text, the author's writing style and the expression method as completely as possible. "Communicative translation" means "the effect of the translated work on the target readers should be as equal as that of the original work on the original readers [2]."

Newmark also advocated that communicative translation and semantic translation should not be viewed in isolation, but should be combined together. When translating an article, it should be used and complement each other, rather than simply using one kind, but with different emphasis on use according to the different types of text. When translating an article, it should be used together and complement each other, rather than simply using only one. According to the different types of text, there are different emphases in use. At the same time, Newmark emphasized that the criterion for measuring a translated work is always accuracy, which can reproduce the meaning of the original text to the greatest extent [1,2]. The humorous novel to be translated this time belongs to the expressive text. Accordingly, in translation, it should be flexibly processed according to the type of text. The translation should maintain the same humorous style as the original text. The language should be vivid, interesting, and be easy to understand, accept by target readers. Therefore, this translation practice combines communicative translation with semantic translation as a guide.

3.2. While-translation

After clarifying the language style and preparing for translation, the translator began to carry out the translation task. In the initial stage, focusing on combing the meaning of the text. With the help of paper dictionaries and online translation tools to solve the translation of professional terms, and marked out the translation difficulties. The second stage is to review the translated text and further modify it. In the third stage, the translator only read the translated text, and focused on modifying the improper content, so as to improve the coherence and readability of the translated text. At the same time, in order to achieve the same humorous effect as the original text, the inappropriate words in the translated text should be replaced.

3.3. Post-translation

As the last step in the translation process, the importance of post-translation revision cannot be ignored. Through the revision after translation, the omissions and errors of the translated works can be found. Post-translation revision includes two parts: self-revision and others' revision.

4. Case Analysis

Based on the characteristics of the text, this translation practice combines communicative translation with semantic translation. This chapter summarizes the difficulties in the translation process from the levels of word, syntax and discourse, and selects the typical cases found in the translation process to discuss the specific translation methods adopted in the translation practice. Through case analysis and method induction, the feasibility of communicative translation and semantic translation theory as translation guidance is confirmed again.

4.1. Lexical Level

Whether it is English or Chinese, words usually have multiple meanings rather than a single meaning. Because this is a humorous novel, there are many uncommon words and a large number of metaphorical words, which brings a lot of difficulties to translation. The translator needs to search the deep meaning behind the words and find the most appropriate corresponding expression in the target language. If the translator chooses the most common meaning of the words without thinking, it will cause mistranslation. The translation process is inseparable from the selection of words from beginning to end. Therefore, the proper selection of words is one of the most important elements of translation. The choice of word meaning needs to consider the whole context to ensure the accuracy of word meaning expression[3].

Example 1:

ST: Dr. Burcher comes in while Nurse is bibbing me for the slaughter.

TT1: 护士正在给我的脖子戴围兜, 为即将到来的“屠杀”做准备时, 伯彻医生走了进来。

TT2: 护士正在给我围脖子, 为即将到来的“屠杀”做准备时, “屠夫”医生走了进来。

Analysis: The whole article described “my” worry, fear, tension and fear of seeing the dentist. The author named the dentist “Burcher”, which was thoughtful and contained certain cultural connotations. Generally, this name can be translated into “伯彻医生”, according to the principle of transliteration of the name. However, Burcher and Butcher

are extremely similar in both form and pronunciation. Semantic translation tries to convey the precise contextual meaning of the primitive as much as possible as the semantic and syntactic structure of the target language allows, so we can translate Burcher into Chinese as “屠夫”. The word “屠夫” can vividly show “my” fear, even hatred of dentists. Moreover, it can restore the communicative purpose of the original text, to achieve the same humorous effect as the original text.

Example 2:

ST: For instance, I have been bothered by pink tooth-brush.

TT1: 例如, 我一直被刷牙出血所困扰。

TT2: 比如有一阵子, 我一直深受粉红色牙刷的困扰。

Analysis: The word “pink” is a metaphor here. It is not really saying that the toothbrush is “pink”. The toothbrush itself may be white, yellow or other colors, but it wants to tell the reader that the protagonist “I” often bleeds a lot when brushing teeth. The author uses the word “pink” to express this image very implicitly and humorously, creating a suspense and laying a good foundation for the development of the storyline. If we do not use semantic translation to literally translate it into “粉红色”, but use communicative translation principles to translate it into “刷牙流血”, it is not only unfaithful to the original text, but also detrimental to the author's humorous style and language style. It does not reflect the vivid and vivid artistic conception of the original text, and the target readers and the original readers do not have the same effect on the understanding of the same work. Therefore, the semantic translation is chosen here to guide the translation of metaphorical words.

Example 3:

ST: With all my heart I hoped the new Pockle would be born with two heads and four sets of wisdom teeth.

TT1: 我全心全意地希望新布库尔生来就有两个头和四颗智齿。

TT2: 我真心希望小布库尔生下来有两个头, 四对智齿。

Analysis: The use of exaggeration here reflects the disgust of Mr. Pockle. It is precisely because Mr. Pockle cancelled his appointment that “I” met the dentist in advance and suffered such “excruciating torture”. The author exaggerated the degree of disgust. The protagonist of the story has a problem with wisdom teeth. Cursed other people's child born with two heads and four pairs of wisdom teeth, was to curse others to suffer twice as much as “me”. This expression can also show “my” fear and hatred of seeing a dentist. Here, “the new Pockle” refers to the newborn baby of Mr Pockle, so we should translate it into “小布库尔” rather than “新布库尔”. Using communicative translation, translating the whole sentence into “我真心希望小布库尔生下来有两个头, 四对智齿” rather than “我全心全意地希望新布库尔生来就有两个头和四颗智齿”, not only maintains the humor in the original text, but also makes the whole sentence more fluent.

4.2. Syntactic Level

Example 4:

ST: I hooted, two longs and a short.

TT1: 我叹了一口气, 两长一短。

TT2: 哦, (我的) 天哪!

Analysis: The “two longs and a short” here cannot be translated literally, and we must try to explore its deep meaning. If we directly translate “two longs and a short” into “两长一短”, it will make the target readers confused and

affect their reading experience. In the Moss cipher, “two longs and a short” represent the letter “g”. The “two longs and a short” here are actually to avoid the traditional expression of “Golly/ Gosh”. So we can translate “two longs and a short” into Chinese as “（我的）天哪/老天爷啊”. Under the guidance of communicative translation, this way not only conforms to the expression habits of Chinese, but also conveys the original information, so as to achieve the purpose of communication.

Example 5:

ST: I brush my teeth once a day, with a brush whose few remaining bristles look hail-struck, and I never see my dentist until it's too late.

TT1: 我每天刷一次牙,我用的牙刷就像刚下过冰雹的庄稼地,上面只有稀疏的几棵苗。我也从来不去看牙医,除非是实在拖不下去了。

TT2: 我每天只刷一次牙,而且用的牙刷像是遭遇冰雹肆虐过似的,刷毛又少又乱,不到万不得已我才不去看牙医呢。

Analysis: The author likens the sparse toothbrush hair to the appearance of being ravaged by hail. In addition to translating the sentence literally with semantic translation, the translator added the expression: “又少又乱”, in order to make the sentence more coherent. In order to achieve the same humorous effect as the original text, under the guidance of communicative translation, the translator translated the second half sentence as “不到万不得已我才不去看牙医呢”. This not only conforms to the Chinese expression habit, but also retains the humorous effect of the original text, achieving the purpose of communication. The translation of this sentence also reflects the combination of semantic translation and communicative translation.

Example 6:

ST: I could even forgive Old Man Pockle.

TT1: 我甚至可以原谅老布库尔了。

TT2: 布库尔那个老东西,我可以原谅他了。

Analysis: Under the guidance of semantic translation, we can translate this sentence into “我甚至可以原谅老布库尔了”. However, such word-for-word translation is too dull and does not conform to the humorous style of the original text. In order to maintain the language style of the original text and achieve the same humorous effect, it can be combined with communicative translation as “布库尔那个老东西,我可以原谅他了”。

4.3. Discourse Level

Example 7:

ST: For some time, for instance, I have been bothered by pink tooth-brush, sometimes right up to the wrist. At first, I cleverly avoided the warning by using a pink toothpaste, but, as the washbasin and nearby wall continued to look as though they had been the scene of an axe murder, I realized that I would either have to see my dentist or have the bathroom done over in a shade to match my blood (a sort of greenish cinnamon — the family didn't care for it).

TT1: 比如有一阵子,我一直深受粉红色牙刷的困扰,刷牙时流的血不仅会把牙刷染成粉色,有时候还会流到手

腕上。一开始,我用了一款粉色的牙膏,来巧妙地掩盖牙龈流血这一预警信号,但是,洗漱台和周围墙壁上的血点越来越多,看起来很像是一个斧头谋杀案的血腥现场。我意识到我要么去看牙医,要么就得把浴室粉刷成暗色系,这样血溅上去就不那么显眼了(一种发绿的肉桂色——全家人都不喜欢)。

TT2: 例如,有一阵子,我一直被粉红色牙刷所困扰,有时粉色的泡沫流到了手腕。起初,我用粉色的牙膏刷牙,巧妙地掩饰了牙齿发出的警报,但是洗漱池及周围的墙壁,看上去越来越像是用斧头劈死人的凶案现场。我这才意识到:我要么去看牙医,要么就把浴室重刷一遍(刷成发绿的肉桂色——全家人都不喜欢),好跟我牙龈出的血搭调。

Analysis: Under the guidance of communicative translation, the translated text maintains the word order of the original text, to fit the meaning of the original text, convey the information of the original text, so as to achieve the same humorous effect as the original text. This can also reflect the respect for the original author and the reader. The author is a humorist, and the style of the original text is humorous and witty. We should retain the humorous style of the original text in translation to avoid being boring. The translation here also reflects the combination of semantic translation and communicative translation.

5. Conclusion

Through this translation practice, the translator found that in most cases, even the translation of a simple sentence may need to combine semantic translation with communicative translation, so as to achieve the desired translation effect. Therefore, when translating the whole text, the translator should use semantic translation and communicative translation flexibly to achieve the principle of “faithfulness and smoothness”. In addition, literary translation has strict requirements for the translator. To be a qualified literary translator, we must be familiar with both Chinese and English languages and make good use of translation skills. The most important thing is to have a lot of knowledge accumulation as support.

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