

Study on Culture-Loaded Words in Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's English Translation of Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard from Hermeneutic Perspective

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Abstract. As one of the important cultural carriers, culture-loaded words are always one of the focus of translation research. Chinese abounds in words and phrases with rich cultural connotations. In order to explore culture-loaded words more deeply, this paper, under the guidance of George Steiner's four translation motion theory (FTMT), takes the perspective of hermeneutics and conducts a study on the culture-loaded words in the English version of Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang. Through a theoretical analysis of the work, it is found that the English version of Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang is a comprehensive and vivid completion of the four steps of translation: trust, aggression, incorporation and restitution.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard, Culture-loaded words, George Steiner.

1. Introduction

Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard is a popular classical travel writing authored by Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) in Northern Song Dynasty. With "pleasure" (le) as its focus, the full text shows the beautiful nature and simple customs of Chuzhou (a prefecture-level city in China). Moreover, Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard created a new style different from the ancient prose of the Tang Dynasty, exerting a great influence on the ancient prose style of later generations for its "dream of heaven" (Ma Maojun, 2014: 43-45). At present, the research on Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard is mainly subsumed under three categories. Firstly, it's the research on its English translations (Yuan Jinxiang, 1987; Huang Danying, 2019). Secondly, it's the literary study of its text connotation and language art (Dong Xiaowei, 2018; Yang Maowen, 2019). Thirdly, it's its application research in Chinese teaching (Chen Yan, 2015; Lu Wangjun, 2014). However, the research on its English translations is insufficient as well as lacks in-depth and comprehensive analysis, especially the research on the culture-loaded words in its English translations from the perspective of hermeneutics. Therefore, this paper uses George Steiner's Four Translation Motion Theory (FTMT) to interpret Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's English translation of Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard, which aims at broadening the study of culture-loaded words in the English translation of Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard and provides a reference for the translation study of Chinese classical travel writing from the perspective of hermeneutics.

2. Hermeneutics--Translation Art of Interpretation

Hermeneutics is a discipline that discusses understanding, interpretation, and methodology. With a long history, its main development has gone through three important stages. It was classical hermeneutics in the Middle Ages. Hermeneutics in this period, as a branch of Bible study, explained God's intention in religious classics to people by means of annotation and explanation. In the 18th and 19th centuries, classical hermeneutics formed objectivism hermeneutics of epistemology and methodology through systematic integration of many fields (Xie Tianzhen, 2018: 85). Friedrich Schleiermacher (1813) holds that translation should be done by making readers approach the author actively and vice versa since translation and hermeneutics are naturally intertwined. In the 20th century, hermeneutics was changed from epistemological methodology to ontology. According to

Martin Heidegger who believed that translation equaled to interpretation, translators need to fully understand the meaning of the original text, trace the etymology, and then explain the inner ideas. Hans-Georg Gadamer, absorbing Heidegger's viewpoint, came to the conclusion that the hermeneutic phenomenon embodies the human universal experience, which established hermeneutics as a philosophy (Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1960). It can be seen that hermeneutics has gradually become a philosophy with understanding as its core after long-term accumulation and development. Besides, translation theory guided by hermeneutics also puts forward strict requirements for understanding and interpreting the original text.

One of the vital representatives of hermeneutic school is George Steiner. Steiner (2001) holds that "understanding is also translation" and translation mainly consists of four motions, namely, trust, aggression, incorporation, and compensation. Trust is the affirmation of the original text value based on past experience. Aggression is a predatory understanding of the original text and a collision between two languages. Meanwhile, incorporation is to inject new vitality into its core meaning after getting rid of its literal meaning. Finally, compensation is to supplement and restore the missing original styles in the translation. Therefore, the actual process of translation is that the translator proactively gets across the original text, extracts its core meaning, and reproduces its attractive characteristics.

3. Culture-Loaded Words--Cultural Carriers with Intense Characteristics

Words in a language often contain unique features in the environment in which the language was born. Eugene Nida (1945: 196) believed that translation can be dealt with from five aspects, that is, language, material, ecology, religion, and society. Since then, Chinese scholars have developed this view and gradually formed the concept of culture-loaded words. The so-called culture-loaded words refer to words, phrases, and idioms that mark the unique things in a certain culture, reflecting the distinctive activities of a specific nation which are different from other nations in historical development (Liao Qiyi, 2000: 232). We can see that culture-loaded words are predominantly language carriers with distinct features of local culture in five aspects, including language, material, ecology, religion, and society.

4. Interpretation of Culture-Loaded Words from the Perspective of Hermeneutics--A Case Study of Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's English Translation of Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard

Culture-loaded words mainly include ecological culture-loaded words, material culture-loaded words, social culture-loaded words, religious culture-loaded words, and linguistic culture-loaded words. Chinese classical travel writings are one of the crucial carriers of culture-loaded words. In order to make a further study of culture-loaded words, this paper analyzes five aspects of culture-loaded words from the perspective of George Steiner's Four Translation Motions Theory. The theory of trust, aggression, incorporation, and compensation put forward by George Steiner is one of the most important approaches to studying culture-loaded word translation from the perspective of hermeneutics, which is of great significance. Under the guidance of George Steiner's four-motion translation, this part is carried out from five aspects of culture-loaded words.

4.1 Ecological Culture-Loaded Words

Ecological culture-loaded words are related to natural features, regional characteristics, flora and fauna, as well as climate and environment. As a travel writing, Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard focuses on the natural features of Chuzhou. It's difficult for the target readers to associate the words with Chuzhou's scenery, so it is necessary for translators to dig into the original text and restore the genuine natural features and cultural background of Chuzhou.

Example 1

Original Text: 峰回路转，有亭翼然临于泉上者，醉翁亭也。

Translation: Rounding a bend you see a hut with a spreading roof by the stream, and this is the Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard.

The Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard, built by the monk Zhixian and nominated by Ouyang Xiu, is located in the unique geographical environment of Langya Mountain. As a big lover of entertaining guests in this hut, Ouyang Xiu was often drunk, so he laughed at himself as the old drunkard. Therefore, Ouyang Xiu wrote Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard in this hut and named it “roadside hut of the old drunkard”. It can be seen that the naming origin of the roadside hut of the old drunkard has specific cultural value, which is worthy of “trust”. After the aggression and incorporation of the original text, it’s translated into “Hut of the Old Drunkard”, giving a vivid breath to the image of the drunkard in the translation.

Example 2

Original Text: 山行六七里，渐闻水声潺潺，而泄出于两峰之间者，酿泉也。

Translation: When you penetrate a mile or two into this mountain you begin to hear the gurgling of a stream, and present the stream—the Brewer’s Spring—comes into sight cascading between two peaks.

The brewer’s Spring is a characteristic scenic spot on Langya Mountain. The translator “trusts” the cultural value contained in this word and chooses to translate its inner meaning. By aggressing and incorporating the original text, the translator understands that the reason why Brewer’s Spring got its name is that people in Chuzhou loved to brew wine with the spring water of Brewer’s Spring in ancient times. Brewer means beer maker, and the translator skillfully embodies the Chuzhou people’s behavior of brewing springs in this word, which makes it easy for the target readers to understand.

4.2 Material Culture-Loaded Words

Material culture-loaded words refer to daily necessities and tools closely related to people’s daily life. The activities in the governor’s banquet in Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard contain many material and culture-loaded words. These activities and the related tools are unique to Chinese culture. Thus, translating them into English requires the translator to deeply understand the specific content and process of these activities, and then transform them into English for the target readers to understand.

Example 3

Original Text: 宴酣之乐，非丝非竹....

Translation: There they feast and drink merrily with no compliance of strings or flutes.

“丝” and “竹” refer to Chinese stringed instruments and flutes respectively. Experiencing the aggression of the original text, their literal meanings are translated to realize the incorporation of the original text with similar musical instruments strings and flutes, which made it easier for the target readers to understand and empathize. In addition, the translator compensated the word "accomplishment", which reflected the characteristics of Chinese culture with “丝” and “竹” as banquet accompaniment, and demonstrated the complete four motions of translation.

4.3 Social Culture-Loaded Words

Social culture-loaded words are related to the political system, civilized etiquette, and social customs in a specific nation. The main social activity described in Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard is the governor’s banquet. In the Song Dynasty, scholars often gathered to talk about poems and songs, drink, and enjoy the scenery. Therefore, as a typical social activity, the governor’s banquet actually bears the distinct poetry culture of the Song Dynasty and the Chinese banquet culture. Many of the classic scenes need to be transformed into specific historical and cultural backgrounds before they can be understood by the target readers.

Example 4

Original text: 山肴野蔌，杂然而前陈者，太守宴也。

There the governor gives a feast with a variation of dishes before him, mostly wild vegetables and mountain growth.

The governor's banquet was held by Ouyang Xiu, the governor of Chuzhou, who was the chief executive in charge of the county in the ancient Chinese feudal system and had the function of governing people's litigation. The word “太守” is translated into “governor” after incorporating its actual meaning and compensating for its main functions.

Example 5

Original Text: 射者中，弈者胜，觥筹交错，坐起而喧哗者，众宾欢也。

Translation: When someone wins a game of touhu or chess, when they mark up their scores in drinking games together, or raise a cheerful din sitting or standing, it can be seen that the guests are enjoying themselves.

The word “射” in the original text, combined with “觥筹交错” in the following text, can be seen that this refers to the common wine table game pitch-pots in ancient China. Pitching pot is a game favored by ancient Chinese officials. Whoever hits more wins, and the loser needs to drink the set amount of wine. As a unique Chinese wine table culture, the word is worthy of “trust”. The “射” translated into “touhu” here is a literal translation of the noun, which shows that the translator has deeply incorporated its meaning of “射”. However, the sheer literal translation cannot make the target readers understand. Therefore, the translator compensates by adding “mark up their scores in drinking games” to achieve the whole process of translation.

4.4 Religious Culture-Loaded Words

Religious culture-loaded words consist of religious beliefs, values, and ideas. There is only one sentence related to Buddhism in *Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard*.

Example 6

Original Text: 作亭者谁？山之僧智仙也。

Translation: This hut was built by the monk Zhixian.

The translator incorporated the meaning of Zhixian and translated “僧智仙” in the original text as “the monk Zhixian”. Since Zhixian is the Dharma name of a monk, it is appropriate to translate it literally as “monk Zhixian”. Because it explains both the meaning of monk and his name. For the target readers, the specific meaning of the Dharma number of the monk does not promote the understanding of this article. Therefore, there is no need for compensation.

4.5 Linguistic Culture-Loaded Words

Language is an important carrier of culture. Linguistic culture-loaded words refer to words with the characteristics of phonetic features, grammar, and rhetorical devices of Chinese, including the four-character phrase, non-four-character phrase, homophones, and puns. The language of *Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard* is exquisite and contains rich linguistic culture-loaded words. Four-character phrases in this article are neat in form and profound features, which is worthy of “trust” in Chinese characteristic expression. Four-character phrases abound in *Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard*.

Example 7

Original Text: 风霜高洁，水落而石出者。

Translation: until wind and frost touch all with austerity, the water sinks low and the rocks at the bottom of the stream emerge.

The word “风霜高洁” gives readers a rich visual sense with only four characters. By incorporating its origin and meaning, it's translated into “wind and frost touch all with austerity”. Its original meaning is that the sky is crisp and the frost color is white. The translator compensates for the word “austerity” and expresses his feelings towards “wind and frost” in the translated text so that readers

can understand the visual stimulation brought by the original text from the translator's point of view. In addition, there are several non-four-character phrases in Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard, that is, idioms or words that are not composed of four characters. Although their formats are not as fair as the four-character ones, it is often full of lasting features and styles, which attract people in an instant as an expression worthy of "trust".

Example 8

Original Text: 醉翁之意不在酒，在乎山水之间也。

Translation: "He delights less in drinking than in the hills and streams"

"醉翁之意不在酒" is a classic non-four-character phrase. In modern Chinese, it is used to refer to people with ulterior motives. The translator aggresses the mind of the governor in Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard and incorporates that the joy of the old drunkard not only lies in the joy of drinking but also that of enjoying the beautiful scenery of mountains and rivers. In the next sentence, the author also expresses this mind directly, so there is no need to compensate for its meaning in modern Chinese after translation. Choosing literal translation is more in line with the original context.

4.6 Table

In this paper, the numbers of five kinds of culture-loaded words in the text are counted respectively. Because abundant landscapes are described in Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard, ecological culture-loaded words account for the most. However, due to the short length of Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard, culture-loaded words are limited. Although their number is not large, they are all very representative.

Table 1. The numbers of five kinds of culture-loaded words in the text

Classification	Category	Words in Text	Total
Ecological Culture-Loaded Words	Scenic spots	酿泉, 醉翁亭	5
	Region	滁, 庐陵	
	Mountain Range	琅琊	
Material Culture-Loaded Words	Instrumental Music	丝, 竹	4
	Recreational Items	射, 弈	
Social Culture-Loaded Words	Official System	太守	2
	Social Style	太守宴	
Religious Culture-Loaded Words	Buddhism	僧	1
Linguistic Culture-Loaded Words	Four-Character Phrases	风霜高洁, 觥筹交错	2
	Non-Four-Character Phrases	水落而石出, 醉翁之意不在酒	
Total	--	--	14

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of hermeneutics, this paper analyzes the culture-loaded words in Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's English translation of Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard by using George Steiner's four translation motion theory. It is found that Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's English translation of culture-loaded words basically realizes all four motions of translation, fully embodying the happy atmosphere of the original text. The target readers can not only feel the rhythm of the original text but also fully understand the translated text, which fundamentally eliminates the comprehension obstacles caused by culture-loaded words.

Culture-loaded words have always been the focus in the translation, which are also difficult to deal with. Therefore, we can compare George Steiner's four motions of translation when translating. Meanwhile, analyze the core meaning of the original text according to the methods of aggression and incorporation. Then, choose specific translation strategies to finally supplement the distortion of the translated text.

Although this paper studies the culture-loaded words in Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's English translation of *Roadside Hut of the Old Drunkard* from the perspective of hermeneutics, there are few studies on culture-loaded words from this perspective. Due to the author's shallow and inexperienced qualifications, there may be deviations and omissions in the analysis. It is hoped that more and more scholars will do some research in the future to promote the development of the translation of culture-loaded words.

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