

A Study on Translator's Subjectivity in Julia Lovell's Translation from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore Julia Lovell's subjectivity in the English translation of Lu Xun's short story of *My Old Home* from linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions based on Eco-translatology. It is found that the translator has paid attention to both linguistic characteristics of the targeted language and reading habits of the target readers. And translators' subjectivity is reflected on her own translation attitude and methods during the translation process.

Keywords: Lu Xun's short story; my old home; Three-dimensional Transformation; Eco-translatology; translator's subjectivity

I. Introduction

Julia Lovell is a British sinologist and translator and her translations of Chinese literature are highly regarded overseas. Some of her translations have been included in the famous Penguin Classics (Zhang Gu, 2019: 110). Julia Lovell and the American translator Howard Goldblatt can be considered Gemini of contemporary Chinese literature translation in the UK and the US (Qin Jianghua, 2010: 117). Based on her own interests and research, Julia Lovell takes contemporary Chinese literature as a translation object, bringing Lu Xun to the world. In recent years, the academic community has paid great attention to Julia Lovell's English translation of Lu Xun's short stories. Current studies cover comparative studies of different translation versions, interdisciplinary studies, translation criticism studies, and translation studies based on the corpus. Wang Shuhuai explored translator intervention, translator regulation, and translator restraint in three English translations of Lu Xun's short stories by Lyell, Julia Lovell, and Yang Xiangyi (Wang Shuhuai, 2013); Wang Hongtao and Wang Haizhu explored the translator's habitus of Julia Lovell from the perspective of Bourdieu's sociology (Wang Hongtao and Wang Haizhu, 2018); Cao Xinyu et al. explored the meaning deviation behind the readability of Julia Lovell's English translation of Lu Xun's short stories; Zhu Yan explored the translator's style based on corpus (Zhu Yan, 2020); Wang Qin explored the creative application of temporary words in Julia Lovell's translation of Lu Xun's short stories based on the corpus (Wang Qin, 2022). With the rising status of the strategy of Chinese culture going global, it is essential to explore the English translation of Lu Xun's short stories, which can help promote the overseas dissemination of Lu Xun's works. The translator is at the center of translation

activities. Thus in the process of translation, he or she must adapt to the translational eco-environment including original work, readers, publishers, patrons, mainstream poetics, and ideology and make corresponding textual and translation strategy choices (Hu Weihua, and Guo Jirong, 2017). From the perspective of Eco-Translatology, this paper explores the subjectivity of Julia Lovell in the English translation of *My Old Home* from three aspects: linguistic dimension, cultural dimension, and communicative dimension.

II. Theoretical Framework of Eco-translatology

In the field of translation studies, eco-translatology has developed into a research paradigm with Chinese characteristics. Professor Hu Gengshen first proposed the term "Eco-translatology", which is an interdisciplinary research that integrates translation studies and ecology. Thanks to the continuous exploration of Professor Hu and other team members, the positioning and connotation of Eco-translatology have been increasingly clarified. Taking a problem-oriented approach, Eco-translatology covers three core concepts including "translation as text transplantation", "translation as adaptation and selection", and "translation as ecological balance". (Hu, 2019: 2). The research on Eco-translatology studies has been developed for two decades. The theoretical system of Eco-translatology has been continuously improved. Domestic research on Eco-translatology are mainly theoretical research, application research, and translation teaching issues research from the perspective of Eco-translatology and literature review. Some international conferences on Eco-translatology show that it has also received increasing attention from foreign scholars. Based on the theory of adaptation and selection, Eco-translatology points out the translation principle of multidimensional adaptation and adaptive selection of translators, focusing on realizing the transformation in linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension.

III. Translators' Subjectivity

The translator is the intermediary between the original work and the translated version and between the culture of the language of the original text and the culture of the translated text. It has been called various names—"the dragoman", "the rebel", "professional matchmaker", "the brilliant photographer", "the dancer with chains" etc. (Tangpei, 2003). In the 1970s, Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere formally raised the issue of "cultural turn" in translation studies for the first time in their co-edited book *Translation, History and Culture*. In the book, the cultural transformation was raised. Since then, translators have begun to occupy an important position in translation research. Since the study of translator's subjectivity emerges, some scholars have discussed the connotation of translator's subjectivity. The translator's subjectivity refers to the translator's conscious personality consciousness embodied in the translation process and his or her creative consciousness in the translation process (Xu Jun, 2003: 9). Tu Guoyuan explains the translator's subjectivity as a kind of subjective initiative expressed by the translator in the translation activity to meet the cultural needs of the translated language under the influence of the marginal subject, external environment and his own horizon, which has the characteristics of initiative, motivation, purposiveness, and creativity (Tu Guoyuan, 2003: 9). Translator's subjectivity refers to the subjective initiative of the translator as the translation subject, which is

manifested in the translation activities for the purpose of translation on the premise of respecting the translation objects. The basic characteristics are the conscious cultural consciousness, humanistic character, and cultural and aesthetic creativity of the translation subject. The translator's subjectivity runs through the whole process of translation activities (Chamingjian and Tian Yu, 2003: 22).

IV. Translators' Subjectivity Embodiment from the perspective of Eco-translatology

The translator is the subject of translation and the object of his translation activity is the original work. To accomplish the task of translation, the translator has to give full play to his or her subjective initiative, which is reflected in the translation selection, translation strategy, and interpretation of the work (Cha mingjian and Tian Yu, 2003: 22). Julia Lovell introduces Lu Xun's classic status in China to Western English readers and promotes Chinese literary works out of the country (Zhu Zhenwu and Tang Chunlei, 2015: 108). Julia Lovell brings the translator's subjectivity into full play in the English translation of *My Old Home*.

1.1 Translators' Subjectivity Embodiment from the Dimension of Language

语言维	原文	译文
方言俚语	阔	rich and important
	鬼见怕	Ghost Charms
	观音手	Buddha's Hands
	小户人家	Ordinary people
	八抬大轿	A sedan car with eight carriers
称谓	老爷	Sir
	老太太	Madam
	杨二嫂	Mrs Yang
	水生	Shuisheng
	闰土	Runtu
	宏儿	Hong'er
拟声词	迅哥	Mr Xun
	呜呜的	省译
	愤愤的	indignantly
	絮絮的	省译
	痴痴的	省译
	潺潺的	省译
	松松爽爽	Relaxed and happily

The translator's adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic dimension are carried out in different aspects and at different levels (Hu Genshen, 2006: 50). In the linguistic transformation, many figurative words bear strong national or specific cultural connotations, and it is often difficult to translate them (Lian Shuneng, 1983: 31). Looking at Julia Lovell's translation, in the linguistic dimension, in order to reproduce the linguistic characteristics of the original work, Julia Lovell gives full play to her subjectivity, especially in the translation of dialect, slang, appellations and onomatopoeic words and sentences. When translating dialect and slang, Julia accurately understands the meaning of words and translates them into authentic English. “阔” means rich and luxurious, and “rich and important” corresponds exactly to the original meaning. The word “小户人家” refers to a humble family. “ordinary people” means exactly the same. In translating the dialects with national characteristics such as “鬼见怕”, “观音手” and “八抬大轿”, the translator adopts literal translation, and the intention is to preserve the exotic atmosphere. The “狗气杀” is a common apparatus in the rural areas of the Southeastern area where chickens, ducks, and poultry are raised. It is domestication translation, which is more in line with the context and satisfies the aesthetic expectations of readers, reflecting the translator's initiative to the cultural system of the translated language.

In translating the appellations in the original language, the translator takes the reader into consideration and uses the common honorifics in English such as Sir, Madam, Mr, and Mrs. When translating “水生”, “宏儿”, and “闰土”, The translator used transliteration, which has an exotic atmosphere and stimulates reader's interest in reading. In regard to some onomatopoeic words in the original text which lack corresponding English expressions, Julia Lovell gives full play to her subjective initiative and chooses to omit or adverbialize the translation, which avoids cultural communication barriers and enhances the fluency and readability of the translation.

There are some morphological changes in English (person, number, tense, morphology, etc.) to express certain grammatical meanings, while Chinese generally does not use morphological changes. Instead, it implies the grammatical meanings between words, and it sometimes uses word and word order to express (Lian Shuneng, 1983: 114). In the conversion of Chinese-English syntactic structures, translators give full play to their subjectivity.

Example 1: 那时我的父亲还在世，家景也好，我正是一个少爷。

Back then, my father had still been alive, the family finances tolerably healthy and I the spoilt youngmaster of the house.

In this example, although there are no words indicating past time in the original text, it can be seen that the narrative is about past events. And the corresponding morphological changes have been translated by the translator in the English-Chinese translation. This is a reflection of the translator's initiative, and the characteristics of the two kinds of languages and the regulations of conversion determine that the translator does not translate haphazardly and comply with certain constraints.

Example 2: 我冒了严寒，回到相隔二千余里，别了二十余年的故乡去。

After a twenty-year absence, and a journey of seven hundred bitterly cold miles, I returned home.

Since there is no morphological change in Chinese, the grammatical relationship between words is mainly expressed by word order. Compared with Chinese, word order in English is more flexible (Lian Shuneng, 1983: 115). Due to the characteristics of English grammar, in the above translation example, the translator flexibly adjusts the word order to conform to the reading habits of the target readers, reflecting the translator's subjectivity.

1.2 Translators' Subjectivity Embodiment from the Dimension of Culture

There are various differences between Chinese and Western cultures mainly in terms of history and culture, natural and geographical environment, modes of thinking, customs and habits, which also cause differences in the expressions of the two languages. In order to express accurately in the translation process, the translator needs to pay attention to the conversion of the original language, the whole cultural system to which the language belongs, and the transmission of the bilingual cultural connotation (Hu Genshen, 2006: 51). The translation process of the translator is actually an exchange between different cultures. The aim is to integrate them and objectively convey the cultural connotation of the source language.

Adaptive selection and transformation in the cultural dimension mean that the translator should be culturally aware in the translation process and realize that translation is a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication. The translator should pay attention to the obstacles caused while overcoming cultural differences to ensure the smooth realization of information exchange (Hu Gengshen, 2006: 51). Translators need to give full play to the initiative in how to maintain the balance of textual ecology in the process of transplanting some cultures unique to Chinese society to the Western world. Julia Lovell gives full play to her creativity and achieves an adaptive selection of cultural dimensions in the English translation of traditional Chinese culture, ancient official culture, and Shaoxing regional culture by means of foreignization and domestication as well as creative interpretation to accurately convey the cultural connotations of the original language text.

Example 3: 而且知道他和我仿佛年纪，闰月生的，五行缺土，所以他的父亲叫他闰土。

I knew he was about the same age as me, and how he'd got his name: after he'd been born in a run, a leap-year month, the fortune-teller had said his horoscope was short of one of the five elements, tu (earth). To make up for it, his father called him Runtu – Leap Year Earth.

The translator was influenced by the whole cultural system of the original language when translating. “五行缺土” means that has gold, wood, water, and fire in the five elements but not earth according to the birth date and the zodiacal geography. The five elements are the philosophical ideas of the ancient Chinese people. It has distinctive local characteristics. Chinese cultural traits are very attractive to English readers. They want to see the exotic thing and are eager to learn something different. (Louie, 1994: 217). By adopting the strategy of foreignization, Julia Lovell preserves the cultural traits of the original text and gives readers who lack relevant Chinese cultural background the opportunity to experience traditional Chinese culture, fully reflecting the translator's subjectivity.

Example 4: “阿呀呀，你放了道台了，还说不阔？”

‘What are you talking about? You work for the government.’

It was an independent official position that the court in ancient times sent to each province and county to supervise the local officials. The translational environment is composed of multiple dimensions and elements (Hu Gengshen, 2006: 50). Many Chinese people are still unclear about what kind of official position “道台” was. How to make the translation acceptable to readers requires the translator to take the initiative. The author adopts the domestication strategy, translating it into “You work for the government”. It neither burdens the reader's understanding nor loses the meaning of the original text, reflecting his subjective consciousness of adapting to the translational environment and the initiative of caring for the cultural consciousness of the translated language.

Example 5: 杨二嫂发见了这件事，自己很以为功，便拿了那狗气杀（这是我们这里养鸡的器具，木盘上面有着栅栏，内盛食料，鸡可以伸进颈子去啄，狗却不能，只能看着气死），飞也似的跑了。

Exceptionally pleased with this discovery of hers, she flew out of the door, scooping up en route a wooden trough covered over by a grille that we'd once used to prevent dogs getting at chickenfeed. The gaps between the bars were wide enough for chickens to peck their beaks through to get at the grain inside, but too small for dogs, who could only look on, furious with frustration.

The “狗气杀” is a kind of apparatus used to raise chickens in rural areas of southern areas. There is no certain size of it, and it is made according to how many chickens are kept. Julia Lovell translates it as a wooden trough and then elaborates it creatively to further explain the characteristics of the apparatus, which improves readers' understanding and enhances the readability and acceptability of the translation. It demonstrates the translator's initiative in the cultural dimension. Julia Lovell flexibly selects different translation strategies and translation techniques according to the acceptance and reading habits of English readers and realizes the adaptive selection and transformation in the cultural dimension.

1.3 Translators' Subjectivity Embodiment from the Dimension of Communication

As each country differs in terms of history and cultural background, translators should be aware of cross-cultural communication to avoid cultural misunderstanding and successfully achieve cross-cultural communication. The purpose of translation is to achieve better communication. Translators should give full play to their subjective initiative to realize the communicative function between two cultures. In the translation of *My Old Home*, Julia Lovell fully conveys the communicative intention of the original text mainly in the translation of the repetition in the original Chinese and the theme of the whole text.

The first five paragraphs of *My Old Home* mention the hometown seven times, which fully expresses the author's deep love and longing for his hometown. From the perspective of the communicative dimension, translators should pay attention to the reading habits of readers. In the English language, repetition is generally avoided and the versatility of words is emphasized. Julia Lovell gives full play to her initiative, using “home”, “destination” and “place” consecutively, after which the word “hometown” is basically translated by the pronoun “it”. (Zhu Zhenwu, Tang Chunlei, 2015: 111).

Example 6: 他出去了，母亲和我都叹息他的景况：多子，饥荒，苛税，兵，匪，官，绅，都苦得他像一个木偶人了。

Once he had gone out, Mother and I sighed over his situation together: too many children, famine, taxes, soldiers, bandits, officials, corrupt local potentates-they'd all taken their pound of flesh.

In this context, the author's intention is to express the fact that Runtu has become a numb person under heavy pressure. His experience is the epitome of the toiling masses in ancient Chinese society to a certain extent. Julia Lovell who has studied Chinese society, history, and culture adopted the means of replacement by translating the phrase into the English term pound of flesh (an idiom derived from *The Merchant of Venice*, which describes the debt that costs the borrower a great deal of loss and suffering), reflecting the initiatives of the translator. Julia Lovell determines her own translation choice based on the cultural awareness of the translated language and the reader's awareness.

Example 7: 闰土在海边时，他们都和我一样只看见院子里高墙上的四角的天空。

While Runtu was at his seashore, it seemed, we had all been imprisoned within the high walls of our courtyard mansions, staring up at the sky.

As a teenager, Lu Xun lamented his childhood life, and “高墙上的四角的天空” implies the constrained life of the author, suggesting a narrowing horizon. The translator is the main figure of the translation process and should give full play to his or her creativity in order to achieve the communicative purpose. In the above translation example, Julia adds some words to the sentence, revealing the implicit message of the original text and realizing the communicative purpose.

Example 8: 我似乎打了个寒噤，我就知道，我们之间隔了一层可悲的厚障壁了。

I almost felt myself shudder with sadness at the thick wall sprung up between us.

According to the context, the author feels that things are changable and the relationship between himself and Runtu cannot go back to the past. Julia adds the prepositional phrase of shudder with sadness, which accurately conveys the author's mind and allows readers to empathize with him, helping them to deeply understand the theme of the whole text.

V. Conclusion

Today, with Chinese culture going abroad, it is essential to know how to promote and disseminate Chinese literature. It requires translators to give full play to their subjectivity. Based on the perspective of Eco-translatology, the translator's subjectivity when translating Lu Xun's short stories *My Old Home* is reflected in her flexible use of different translation means, realizing the transformation of language, culture, and communicative dimensions. And, the concept of "translation as ecological balance" is realized.

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