

A Study of Translation Methods Adopted in the Yangs' Version of "Master Gao" from the Perspective of Manipulation Theory

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Abstract

Soon after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, foreign translation of Chinese culture was put on the agenda. Lu Xun's short stories were selected as representative works and translated into English by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (hereinafter referred to as "the Yangs") in the 1950s and 1960s under the special international and domestic environment, and they have played an important role in spreading Chinese culture to the world. Based on André Lefevere's Manipulation Theory, especially its three elements, namely, poetics, ideology and patronage, this paper examines the translation methods adopted by the Yangs in their translation of Lu Xun's short story "Master Gao". Through example analysis, the article concludes that the Yangs mainly adopted literal translation under the influence of poetics, ideology and patronage in the then special social background. It is hoped that the research aims to provide a theoretical and practical reference for future translation and dissemination of Chinese literary works to the world.

Keywords: André Lefevere, Manipulation Theory, "Master Gao", the Yangs, translation methods

1. Introduction

"Master Gao", a short story in Lu Xun's collection *Wandering* (or *Panghuang*), aptly depicts Master Gao as a pompous feudalist hypocrite. Despite anointing himself as a "decent man" who keeps a close eye on new learning, he is actually an ignorant "hollow head" indulged in sensual pleasures. The highly satirical story criticizes the maladies of the time and reveals the reactionary ambitions of the survivals of feudalism during the New Culture Movement.

Among the English versions of Lu Xun's stories, popular were the ones done by the Yangs, William A Lyell and Julia Lovell. A literature search on the CNKI (Note 1) database reveals that there are eight academic papers on the English translations of Lu Xun's *Wandering* but only one focuses on "Master Gao" (as of February 1, 2021, the same below). Compared with studies on Lu Xun's other fiction collections like *Outcry*, there is fewer researches on the English translations of *Wandering* and much fewer on "Master Gao". The popularity of the English translations of Chinese classics lasts over time because of their undeniable aspects that are worthy of people's comments and study.

In view of this, applying André Lefevere's Manipulation Theory, this paper focuses on the Yangs' translation of "Master Gao" to analyze the underlying reasons for their choice of translation methods in terms of poetics, ideology and patronage.

2. Theoretical and Analytic Framework: André Lefevere's Manipulation Theory

2.1 Major Views of Manipulation Theory

André Lefevere (2017, p. 30) regards translation as "the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting that is influential in projecting and disseminating the image of original writers and their works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin". In simple words, translation is rewriting. Regardless of its purpose, rewriting inevitably reflects a certain ideology and poetics, and thus manipulates literature to function in a given way in a given society. He also argues that rewriting is twofold: on the one hand, it brings entirely new concepts; on the other hand, it also inhibits innovation and produces biases. He points out that in order for readers to accept translated works, "all translators manipulate to some extent the originals, often to adapt translated texts to the current mainstream ideology and poetic trends" (Lefevere, 2017, p. 29).

Lefevere also puts forward three elements that manipulate translation: ideology, patronage and poetics. To his mind, ideology is not limited to the political domain, but it more specifically refers to “the conceptual grid that consists of forms, customs and beliefs that guide people’s actions” (ibid., p. 38). Ideology affects a translator’s choice of major translation methods. Not only does social groups’ ideology manipulate translation activities, but ideology held by individual translators also influences their translation activities. Lefevere defines patronage as the “powers (persons, institutions) which help or hinder the writing, reading and rewriting of literature, which consists of three components: an ideological component, an economic component and a status component; receiving patronage means the necessity to fit in a certain patronage organization and its lifestyle” (ibid., pp. 37-38).

Poetics consists of two components: first, an inventory component comprising of literary devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters, situations and symbols; second, a functional component, which concerns the issue of how literature has to or can function within society (ibid., p. 48). If a work is to stand out, its literary motif needs to be adapted to the social system and the poetic function plays an important role in motif selection.

2.2 Previous Studies on the Manipulation Theory

By placing translation in a broader cultural background, Manipulation Theory has facilitated the development of translation studies and drawn broad attention from domestic and foreign scholars. Search results of CNKI reveal that there are 100 academic papers containing the keywords of “manipulation theory” and “translation”, and 156 papers containing the keywords of “rewriting theory” and “translation”. Specifically, theoretical researches only take up a small fraction of the literature; the majority present analysis of one or a few translations of fictions, prose, poems, news, scripts of TV and film works, tourist texts and political documents, which prove that Manipulation Theory has been applied to various analyses of translated texts. While there are 46 papers containing the keyword of “translation methods” in manipulation theory-based literature, no research of the Yangs’ translation of “Master Gao” or *Wandering* has been found.

3. Analysis of Translation Methods in the Yangs’ Translation of “Master Gao”

3.1 Literal Translation

The definition of the term “literal translation” remains divided in the translation circle, but it is close to some extent. “Literal translation is the most basic approach whether for semantic or communication translation because it is where translation begins” (Newmark, 2001, p. 70). Huang et al. (2013, p. 57) state that “literal translation is a complete translation method that not only gives consideration to the form of the source language (SL) but also acceptable for the audience of the target language (TL)”. They argue that the forms adopted in literal translation can be either absolute or relative, with the latter taking up the main part.

This paper draws on the definition and classification of literal translation by Huang et al (2013) to analyze how literal translation is employed in the Yangs’ translation.

3.2 Free Translation

Free translation is also defined differently in academic circles. *A Dictionary of Translation Studies in China* defines free translation as “producing a translation that has consistent content but in different forms” (Fang, 2011, p. 101). Xu Yuanchong (1984, p. 798) holds that “free translation is a translation approach that puts faithfulness to the source language in the first place and idiomatic TL in the second, without being confined by the form of SL”. Huang et al (2013, p. 59) define free translation as “a method of complete translation that conveys the meaning of the SL without being confined by its forms”. Chengfa Yu (2014, p. 23) points out that “free translation is a method of complete translation emphasizing a full reproduction of the pragmatic value of the SL and accurate conveyance of its meaning without being confined by its expressive forms”. Free translation fall into six types: addition, omission, transference, conversion, division and combination. The following sub-section provides a statistical analysis of the translation methods adopted in in the Yangs’ version of “Master Gao”, presented in SL-TL sentence pairs.

3.3 Statistical Analysis of Translation Methods Adopted in the Yangs’ Version of “Master Gao”

3.3.1 Statistical Results

189 sentences in the translation of “Master Gao” were calculated by taking punctuation marks at the end as a criterion of a sentence. The results of translation methods in the Yangs’ version are as follows:

Table 1. Statistical analysis of translation methods adopted in the Yangs' version of "Master Gao"

Literal translation	Free translation						
	equivalence	addition	omission	transference	conversion	division	combination
101	5	4	4	66	31	5	

The above statistical results show that all sentences adopt a certain translation method; however, in some sentences where the free translation is employed, the co-translators may have used two or three methods. Sentences that involve one or a combination of multiple approaches are shown as below:

Table 2. Statistical results of sentences with one, two and three methods in the Yangs' version of "Master Gao"

	Translation methods		total
One method	addition	2	63
	omission	2	
	transference	1	
	conversion	42	
	division	14	
	combination	2	
Two methods	addition+conversion	2	23
	omission+conversion	2	
	transference+conversion	2	
	division+conversion	14	
	combination+conversion	2	
	division+combination	1	
Three methods	transference+conversion+division	1	2
	addition+conversion+division	1	

According to the complete statistics, 101 sentences adopt literal translation in the Yangs' version, accounting for 53.44%, and free translation is used in 88 sentences, accounting for 46.56%, so literal translation is more frequently used than free translation.

3.3.2 Analysis of Translation Methods and Skills

3.3.2.1 Literal Translation

Huang et al. (2013, pp. 58-59) holds that absolute correspondence mode refers to "a one-to-one correspondence between TL and SL at all language units organized in consistent structures and the same word orders", while relative correspondence mode refers to "a general TL-SL correspondence with slightly different word orders". Based on the above two modes, sentences with literal translation in the Yangs' version of "Master Gao" are classified, and the effect of the translation methods is analyzed in the framework of Manipulation Theory.

1) Absolute Correspondence

Absolute correspondence includes correspondence between morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, composite sentences and sentence groups. Words that form absolutely corresponding pairs in meaning include a majority of nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Most common nouns, descriptive adverbs and adjectives in the Yangs' version of "Master Gao" form absolute correspondence with those in SL. For instance, Examples [1] and [2] are absolute correspondences of nouns and adverbs between SL and TL. However, there are no English equivalents for certain Chinese words with specific cultural connotations. To address this, phonic equivalents are used to retain the sounds of Chinese words. For instance, the word "麻将" (*mahjong*) in Example [3] is one of the traditional Chinese games for which no strict equivalent can be found in English, and thus the co-translators use its phonetic correspondence.

[1] 麻将 (*mahjong*) — *mahjong*

[2] 门房 (*menfang*) — gatekeeper

[3] 高傲地 (*gaoao de*) — disdainfully

Faithfulness is the core principle that the Yangs adhere to in their translation. In order to be faithful to the cultural essence and values of the Chinese nation, the couple's selection of translation methods is influenced by several factors. The Chinese culture boasts a long and profound history. Born and raised in a traditional Chinese

family, Yang Xianyi was an avid reader well-versed in Chinese classics. Gladys Yang lived in China for many years and held an intense interest in and admiration for the traditional Chinese culture. They had a sense of mission to introduce the Chinese culture to the outside world. This facilitated them to consider the SL culture as a criterion and destination of their translation. Additionally, most of the texts they worked on were classical Chinese literature with an extremely high artistic merit, prompting them to try their best to present translations of these classic works in their most authentic forms.

At the level of phrase, especially the treatment of noun phrases, the translators strive to keep the TL consistent with the form of SL phrases. For example, in Examples [4] and [5], the translators strictly follow the SL word order by translating these phrases in a sequential order. These are typical absolute correspondences at the phrasal level:

[4] 新学问、新艺术 (*xin xuewen, xin yishu*) — new learning, new art

[5] 驼背的老门房 (*tuobei de lao menfang*) — (the) humpbacked old gatekeeper

Example [6] presents an absolutely corresponding simple sentence, where each word in the SL is matched with its counterpart in the TL in exactly the same order. “学生” (*xuesheng*), the subject of the SL corresponds to “our pupils”, the subject of the TL; the linking verb “是” (*shi*) in the SL corresponds to “are” in the TL; the adverb of degree “很” (*hen*) corresponds to “very”; and the complement “驯良” (*xunliang*) corresponds to “well-behaved”. These translations not only convey the meaning of the SL but also fulfill a consistency with the SL in terms of expression form.

[6] 学生是很驯良的。

Our pupils are very well-behaved. (Lu, 2000, pp. 208-209)

Example [7] is also an absolute correspondence of clause, in which a one-to-one correspondence between the SL and TL words is formed in the same word order. Specifically, “这” (*zhe*), the subject in the SL corresponds to the subject of the TL “this”; the linking verb “是” (*shi*) corresponds to “is”; “本校的植物园” (*benxiao de zhiwuyuan*) corresponds to “our school’s botanical garden”. To express a possessive relationship, the translators chose the form “’s” to ensure that word order of the TL and SL is the same and avoid displacement. In treating this sentence, the translators achieved faithfulness to both the content and form of the SL to adequately convey the spirit of the original text.

[7] 这就是本校的植物园!

This is our school’s botanical garden! (Lu, 2000, pp. 206-207)

With their high attainments in the two languages and literatures, as well as rich experience in translation practice, they formed their own translation style, including: faithful conveyance of connotation of the original text based on an exact understanding; excavation of the implicit meaning hidden in the original text; concise and accurate expressions; lifelike and vibrantly shaped characters; flexible forms of translation; intensive use of literal translation; concise, comprehensive, smooth and lively writing.

2) Relative Correspondence

Due to the differences between Chinese and English, absolute correspondence can only be achieved in a small fraction of translations; and the bigger a language unit, the more difficult it is to achieve absolute correspondence. In most cases, when dealing with sentence constituents like attributes and adverbials in Chinese-English translation, certain adjustments to the word order are often made to ensure sentence coherence and smoothness, and it is more in line with the expression habits of the target language. For instance:

[8] 而且这不平之意，是他从来没有经验过的。

And this sense of injustice was one he had never experienced before. (Lu, 2000, pp. 194-195)

In Example [8], corresponding expressions can be found in the TL for each word or phrase in SL. Specifically, the phrase “不平之意” (*buping zhi yi*) corresponds to “sense of injustice”, in which the use of the preposition “of” indicates proper changes to the word order in the TL. The SL phrase “从来” (*conglai*) means “in the past; originally”, which corresponds to “before” in the TL. Due to the difference in the position of adverbs between Chinese and English, the translators adjust the position of the adverb to increase the readability of the TL. Apart from minor word-order difference in these two places, the remaining part generally follows the form of expression of the original text, and thus the translation is a literal one with relative correspondence.

Factors like the translator’s attitude to the Chinese culture, the impact of traditional translation theories and the constraints of social environment interacted with each other and invisibly affected the Yangs’ selection of

translation methods. As translators of Foreign Languages Press, the Yangs were able to maintain a more objective attitude in terms of work selection and translation criteria and systematically translate and introduce Chinese works to foreign readers. This happens to echo the effect of ideology, patronage and poetics in Manipulation Theory on the translator's translation methods.

3.3.2.2 Free Translation

“With an adequate understanding of the original text, the translator expresses the intended meaning in a straightforward manner. However, free translation does not mean free expression; rather, disorderliness and distortion in meaning should be avoided” (Huang & Li, 2004, p. 25). Free translation involves methods like addition, omission, transference, conversion, division and combination. In practice, the above six methods can either be applied individually or jointly. Given the fact that conversion and division are the most frequently adopted methods in the Yangs' version of “Master Gao”, examples relating to these two methods are analyzed and discussion on the other four is omitted.

1) Conversion

Conversion refers to “a complete translation method by which the translator exchanges the means and methods of expression of source and target languages based on the SL's pragmatic value, linguistic meaning and the TL forms of expression in” (Yu, 2014, p. 171). Conversion involves parts of speech, sentence components, sentence types, static and dynamic expressions, affirmative and negative sentences, and active and passive voices. Take Example [9] for instance:

- [9] 他烦躁愁苦着；从繁乱的心绪中，又涌出许多断片的思想来：上堂的姿势应该威严；额角的瘢痕总该遮住；教科书要读得慢；看学生要大方。

He was on tenterhooks. In this state of mental confusion, some disjointed ideas crossed his mind: in class he should adopt an imposing attitude; should conceal the scar on his temple; should read the textbook slowly, should look at the students in a dignified way. (Lu, 2000, pp. 206-207)

The phrase “烦躁愁苦着” (*fanzao chouku zhe*) serving as the predicate of the clause gives a heightened sense of dynamics; however, it is translated into “was on tenterhooks”, where the weak verb “be” serves as the predicate in the TL, resulting in an increased level of static state. Thus, the method used here is dynamic-static conversion. The clause “又涌出许多断片的思想来” (*you yongchu xuduo duanpian de sixiang lai*), with its subject missing, should be “(脑海中) 又涌出许多断片的思想来” (*naohai zhong you yongchu xuduo duanpian de sixiang lai*). The subject “some disjointed ideas” in the TL is originally the object in the SL, while the implicit subject of the SL is transformed into the object in the TL. Thus, the method of conversion of sentence components is used here.

2) Division

“Division refers to splitting and recombination of SL sentences to meet the needs of reproducing the semantic value and conveying the semantic meaning of the original text, as well as the expression of the TL” (Yu, 2014, p. 281). For example:

- [10] 他最熟悉的就是三国，例如桃园三结义，孔明借箭，三气周瑜，黄忠定军山斩夏侯渊以及其他种种，满肚子都是，一学期也许讲不完。

The Three Kingdoms period was the one he knew best. For instance, the stories of how the three heroes became sworn brothers in the Peach Orchard, how Zhuge Liang borrowed an arrow, Zhou Yu was enraged three times, Huang Zhong killed Xia Houyuan at Mt. Dingjun, and so on—he knew them all by heart. He might have held forth on these for a term or more. (Lu, 2000, pp. 196-197)

The SL sentence can be roughly divided into three layers: the first layer is “他最熟悉的就是三国” (*ta zui shuxi de jiu shi sango*); the second layer is “例如桃园三结义...满肚子都是” (*liru taoyuan sanjieyi...man duzi doushi*); and the third layer is “一学期也许讲不完” (*yixueqi yexu jiangbuwan*), which serves as a summary. The translators split and relocated the original sentences to improve readability without undermining the content of the SL.

4. Analysis of the Selection of Translation Methods in the Yangs' Version Based on Manipulation Theory

4.1 Poetic Factors Influencing the Yangs' Selection of Translation Methods

4.1.1 Poetic Morphology and Translation Methods

Poetic morphology involves literary device, genre, motif, typical character, situation and symbolism. Rewriting, especially translation, profoundly affects the mutual penetration between literary systems and allows the introduction of new techniques of expression into poetic morphology. To effectively transmits Chinese literary

works for foreign readers, the translators aspire to retain the authentic cultural factors in the SL and thus adopted literal translation whenever possible in order to reproduce the expressions unique to the Chinese language.

However, when translating texts involving linguistic and/or cultural differences, especially culture-loaded words, the translators adopt free translation.

4.1.2 Poetic Functions and Translation Methods

Poetic functions are closely related to ideology that falls outside of the realm of poetics, and in the meantime, they also arise from the ideological power hidden inside the literary system. Poetic functions play an important role in making the work more noticeable through the selection of literary motifs related to the social system (Lefevere, 2017, pp. 48-49). In this regard, external ideology plays the most significant role in the selection of literary motifs. Poetic functions are influenced by ideological factors that fall outside of the poetic realm and play an important role in selecting literary motifs closely related to the social system. They can be classified as manipulation of ideology, and will be discussed in the next sub-section.

The Yangs started to translate Lu Xun's works into English in the 1950s and 1960s, and were influenced by mainstream ideology—the socialist realism at the time. To a great extent, they adopted literal translation and followed the basic structure of the original texts to represent the literary style of Lu Xun's works as authentically as possible.

Further, literary translation also reflects the requirements of mainstream poetics in current times. In China, “literary translations in the 1950s were completely conducted in accordance with the political and artistic principles of ‘socialist realism’”. It was not until 1958 when Mao Zedong proposed the ‘combination of revolutionist romanticism and revolutionist realism’ did the ‘combination principle’ start to replace the former in the translation field in China. However, there are no essential differences in terms of theoretical and fundamental questions between the two...” (Cheng, 2003, p. 4). The poetics of “socialist realism” emphasizes the notion that “literature in itself is not the purpose; instead, literature must serve politics” (Wang, 2012, p. 1). The Yangs adopted literal translation wherever possible and ensured a high level of consistency of forms with the SL, enabling their translations to effectively communicate the spirit of the source texts. Committed their lives to the introduction of the unique Chinese culture to the West, the Yangs truly facilitated the exchange and integration between Eastern and Western cultures. Building upon such cultural confidence, they always adhered to the principle of faithfulness in their translation of Chinese literary works, and tried to retain the forms, structures and word orders of the original texts in order to maintain the SL literary images, thus resulting in a high level of correspondence between SL and TL and heightening effectiveness of transmitting the Chinese culture.

4.2 Ideological Factors in the Selection of Translation Methods

4.2.1 Social Ideology and Translation Methods

Rewriting, regardless of its purposes, reflects certain ideology and poetics. Specifically, ideology imposes a limit on the selection of motifs and forms.

The Yangs were employed by Foreign Languages Press affiliated to China International Publishing Group (CIPG), a state organ responsible for outbound communication. Thus, the stance of the country was fundamental principles that they must observe (Zhang & Hu, 2015, p. 1). In the 1950s and 1960s, works translated by Foreign Languages Press invariably bore a certain political mark. In terms of motif selection, the rivalry of the two major camps in the international realm and the purpose of consolidating and constructing the newly-founded governments dictated that the majority of translated works were revolutionary and advanced, and could adequately reflect the image of the new government. The forms of translation were also affected by the necessity to elevate Chinese culture to the same level as its western counterparts in order for the newly-founded government to gain a stronghold among the nations. The translators adopted literal translation wherever possible to maintain to the highest extent the Chinese charms and convey unique Chinese characteristics.

4.2.2 Individual Ideology and Translation Methods

Lefevere (2017, p. 63) argues that “ideology can come either from the social and upper level or from the individual level. Individual ideology is subject to a great extent to the influence of social ideology”. From the principles of “faithfulness to original text” proposed by Yang Xianyi and his “cultural translation view”, it can be found that individual ideology also exerts an impact on the selection of translation methods. “The SL-oriented principle” is one of Yang Xianyi's core views on translation, which argues that TL should not contain too many personal views and translators should restrain themselves and become invisible. He strives to achieve a high level of SL-TL similarity by adopting literal translation as much as possible, retaining the forms and conveying the styles of original texts so as to reduce the traces of the translationese in the TL. In the Yangs' version of

“Master Gao”, they adopted literal translation wherever it could be implemented; free translation and corresponding methods were only applied to places where literal translation may cause difficulty of understanding, such as allusions and culture-loaded words.

4.3 Patronage Factors in the Selection of Translation Methods

A patron can be either an individual or group such as a religious group, party, social class, royal family, publishing house and medium, who gives more attention to the ideological aspect of literature instead of poetics with a view of maintaining consistency between the literary system and their ideologies through professionals like critics, teachers and translators. Receiving patronage means translators must work within the parameters set by their patrons (Lefevere, 2017, pp. 37-40).

CIPG and its affiliate Foreign Languages Press were patrons supporting the Yangs’ translation activities. “The central task of China International Publishing Group (CIPG) has never changed—it undertakes the mission of communicating books and journals published by China and the Communist Party of China to the outside world. Essentially, CIPG was established for foreign communication of books and journals” (Zhou & Qi, 1999, p. 3). In the 1950s, the Yangs were professional translators employed by Foreign Languages Press and thus were subject to the impact or manipulation of their patrons throughout their translation activities, and thus their selection of translation methods was inevitably affected.

Firstly, the genre to be translated was special under patronage manipulation. In his memoir, Yang Xianyi (2018, p. 181) writes that “we were nothing more than translators employed by Foreign Languages Press. It was not up to us to decide what should be translated. The decision makers were often a few young Chinese editors who knew little about Chinese literature, and the works to be selected must be in line with the political climate and tastes of the time...” The major task of the Foreign Languages Press was to disseminate literary and cultural works with Chinese characteristics, a mission that is inseparable from the effect of ideology. This is essentially the same as the manipulation of social ideology over translation methods discussed in the above, and thus a detailed illustration is omitted here.

Secondly, the time for translation is limited under patronage manipulation. Yang Xianyi (2018, p. 182) recalls that “during the ‘Great Leap Forward’ period in 1958, we incessantly read books like crazy day in and day out. This would be bound to affect the translation quality. We spent just 10 days completing the translation of *A Brief History of Chinese Fictions*, a top-grade academic work by Lu Xun”. As such, with a tight schedule and massive workloads, the translators were unable to pay much attention to diction and sentence organization in their translations, and following a sequential order of the SL became a top choice for them.

5. Conclusion

This paper, by employing Manipulation Theory proposed by Lefevere as a theoretical framework, takes the Yangs’ version of “Master Gao” as a case. Statistical data are collected to analyze the Yangs’ preference in selecting their translation methods. Generally, the Yangs adopt literal translation more frequently than free translation in their version and make appropriate adjustments only when literal translation is far from enough to convey the original meaning, maintain the ST flavor and at once comply with the TL habits. In terms of poetics, ideology and patronage, this paper explores the in-depth causes of selecting literal translation in the Yangs’ version. Under the manipulation of these three factors, translation as a bridge connecting the two cultures is inevitably subject to the influences of the ST’s cultural system and social environment. Starting with the translation methods adopted by the Yangs in their English translation of “Master Gao”, a topic that has been less researched, this study explores, how the three elements manipulate the translation of literary works at cultural level. This research will expand the perspective that can be used in research of literary translations and provide theoretical and methodological references for the “going global” of the Chinese culture in the new era.

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Notes

Note 1. CNKI: China National Knowledge Infrastructure, launched in 1996 by Tsinghua University and Tsinghua Holding Group, is dedicated to mass digitalization of China knowledge resources as well as creating the platform for global dissemination and value-added services.

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