

An Analysis of Communicative Translation & Semantic Translation of Peter Newmark

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Abstract

Peter Newmark, an English translator and translation theorist, introduced the theory of semantic and communicative translation in 1981, two of his most famous theories of translation methods. This paper discusses the relations and differences between the two translation methods through examples, and considers that each method has its own advantages.

Keywords

Peter Newmark; Semantic translation; Communicative translation.

1. Introduction

In the long history of translation, whether to prefer the source language or the target language, to prefer the original author or the target reader, to emphasize faithfulness or beauty, and to choose literal translation or free translation, these have always been the points of constant debate in the translation field, and every translator has different views on this. To solve these problems, Peter Newmark, a contemporary English translator and translation theorist, has come up with his own interpretation. His translation theory is not as complicated as Nida's, but short, precise and concise (Yang, 1998). His semantic translation and communicative translation are the most important contributions to translation theory and practice. At the same time, with the progress of the times and the development of science and technology, Peter Newmark kept pace with the times and constantly improved these two concepts. To a certain extent, these two concepts have solved the debate in the translation community, whether to use literal translation or free translation, and also provided a new direction for translation practice and translation research.

2. The Definition of Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation

Peter Newmark, born in 1916, is a renowned translator and translation theorist. According to his study, translation theory's main concern is to determine appropriate translation methods for the widest possible range of texts or text-categories (Newmark, 2001: 19). Newmark divided texts into three types: expressive text, vocative text and informative text. Newmark believes that different text types should adopt different translation strategies and methods, and Newmark's "semantic translation" and "communicative translation" become the core of his translation theory based on the above three main text types.

2.1. The Definition of Semantic Translation

Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original (Newmark, 2001: 39). Semantic translation remains within the original culture and assists the reader only in its connotations if they constitute the essential human (non-ethnic) message of the text (Newmark, 2001: 39). Therefore, semantic translation regards the words and sentences of the original text

as unchangeable. Even if the original text is ambiguous or difficult to understand, the target language text should be as consistent as possible, and the word, short sentence and clause should be taken as the basic translation units as far as possible (Liao, 2000). At the level of semantic translation, Newmark also tried to show that semantic translation is different from literal translation, because literal translation needs to be similar to the original text in terms of vocabulary and sentence pattern, while semantic translation is more inclined to the context of the original text (Liu, 2009). Moreover, Newmark views that semantic translation is mainly used in expressive texts.

2.2. The Definition of Communicative Translation

Communicative translation attempts to produce in its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original (Newmark, 2001: 39). Communicative translation addresses itself solely to the second reader, who does not anticipate difficulties or obscurities, and would expect a generous transfer of foreign elements into his own culture as well as his language where necessary (Newmark, 2001: 39). Generally, a communicative translation is likely to be smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional, conforming to a particular register of language, tending to undertranslate, i.e. to use more generic, hold-all terms in difficult passages (Newmark, 2001: 39). The key of communicative translation is to convey information, to make readers think, feel and act, and to "tailor-made" for readers (Liao, 2000: 133), which gives play to the function of language in conveying information and producing effects. Newmark believes that in communicative translation, translators can break through the limitations of the original text, make appropriate adjustments and changes to the translation, make the language more fluent, simple, clear and direct, and make the original idea and cultural content more acceptable to the target language readers. Combined with the characteristics of text types, communicative translation is more suitable for informative texts and vocative texts.

3. Similarities and Differences Between Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation

3.1. The Differences

First, in semantic translation, the basic unit is word, and its expression is faithful and objective and based on the source language. In communicative translation, the basic unit is the sentence, which is relatively subjective and not limited to the cultural background of the source language. Second, in semantic translation, the translator takes the source text as the background and cannot be separated from the source culture. On this basis, the translator analyzes the content and meaning of the source text to help the target language readers understand the meaning of the source text. And its translation is usually more complex and difficult to understand, even more difficult to pronounce, is usually said to have a "translationese". Communicative translation focuses on the translated language readers, as far as possible to eliminate the understanding of the text or communication problems for them, so that communication can proceed smoothly, and its translation usually conforms to the writing habits of the translated language, which is relatively simple and easy to understand.

Third, in order to express the form and creation of the original text, semantic translation should keep the sentence style and special expression of the original text as much as possible, so as to give full play to the expressive function of language. The purpose of communicative translation is to convey information and make the target readers think and feel, which gives full play to the function of language to convey information and communicate.

Fourth, semantic translation and communicative translation are also different in expression and form. Semantic translation makes the target text similar to the form of the original text, and

translates as much as possible into various phonological or syntactic effects similar to the original text. Communicative translation is more inclined to re-translate, using common words to make sentences and texts more understandable, and the translation is fluent and authentic, in line with the translation language specifications. When the content and information of the text are inconsistent with the effect of its expression, semantic translation prefers content and form over effect, while communicative translation prefers effect over content and form (Luo, 2020).

In Professor Liu Junping's book *General History of Western Translation Theory*, there is a very clear table to compare semantic translation and communicative translation:

Table 1. Comparison between semantic translation and communicative translation of Newmark

Parameter	Semantic Translation	Communicative Translation
The focus of the transmitter and the receiver	Focusing on the thought process of the transmitter and the part involving key information can help the target language reader understand the meaning of the text	It is subjective and focused on the target language and the reader is centered on a particular language and culture
Culture	Preserve the original culture	Transfer of foreignizing elements in the target language
Time and source	It's not fixed to a specific space and time Each generation needs its own translation	The translation has a short lifespan Translations are rooted in contemporary contexts
Relationship with the original language	Always inferior to the original text, and the meaning is lost	Better than the original text, but lost semantic content, but more power and clarity than the original
The use of primitive forms	If you deviate from the original text specification, you need to be "faithful" to the original author	Respect the linguistic form of the original language and regard "faithfulness" to the target language specification as the overriding task
The form of the target language	Relatively complex, difficult to understand, attention to details, information concentration, and tend to over-translation	Fluency, conciseness, clarity, directness, compliance with the conventions of the target language, tend to under-translation
Scope of application	Suitable for serious literature, autobiography, personal lyrical works and important political text	Suitable for most texts, non-literary, technical, informative texts and popular fiction
Evaluation standard	Accurately reproduce the meaning of the original text	Accurately convey the communicative information of the original text in the target language

According to the table information, the difference between the two is that the semantic translation should keep the cultural particularity, lexical and expressive features of the original text as much as possible, and be faithful to the original author. Communicative translation focuses on the readability of the target text and takes the textual habits of the target language

as a reference. When textual information conflicts with the purpose of communication, communicative translation will prefer the equivalent effect (Liu, 2009).

Based on the culture of the source language, semantic translation only explains the meaning of the original text and helps the target language readers understand the meaning of the text. Compared with literal translation, it pays more attention to the translation method, pays attention to the context connection, and retains the linguistic characteristics of the original work as much as possible. However, because semantic translation attaches importance to the reproduction of the original form and creation, the translation is easy to be not smooth and natural, and may lead to over-translation. Communicative translation pays more attention to the target language and emphasizes on accurately conveying the content and context of the original text. At the same time, the language is more easily accepted by the target language readers and is more consistent with the style habits of the target language. Different from free translation, communicative translation pays more attention to the communicative function of the original text, focuses on the communicative information carried by the text and its influence on society. Therefore, the translation is more smooth and conforms to the style habits of the target language, but it is easy to cause under-translation.

3.2. The Similarities

First, semantic translation and communicative translation are both opposite and unified, which is a contradiction in philosophy. As the basis of cognitive translation, both translation theories require the translator to follow the grammatical structure and some fixed stylistic features of the target language, and both of them require the accurate expression of the ideas and formal content of the source text in the target text. Therefore, in English-Chinese articles, due to the differences in syntactic structure, expression and writing habits between Chinese and English texts, they generally need to be translated into short sentences to make them conform to the expression ways and habits of Chinese. In Chinese-English translation, due to the characteristics of the English style itself, long sentences will be used to make the translation conform to the English style habits.

Second, if the original text content does not have cultural particularity, the text content itself and the way of expressing the text information are equally important. When the knowledge level and interests of the target text readers are similar to those of the original text readers, semantic translation is close to communicative translation, because the translator is faithful to both the author and the reader.

Third, when translating an entire text, there are parts where the translator may use communicative translation, and some parts that use semantic translation. The relationship between these two translations should be both antagonistic, unified and complementary. Therefore, the boundaries between semantic translation and communicative translation are not very clear. In a text, whether to use more semantic translation or more communicative translation depends on the purpose of the translator, the type and function of the text and the differences in register and other factors. In general, it needs to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

3.3. Some Examples

Example 1: to shed crocodile tears.

Analysis: "Crocodile tears" refers to a hypocritical, insincere display of emotion, such as the tears shed by a hypocrite pretending to be sad. This idiom comes from an old story about crocodiles shedding crocodile tears as they devour their prey. If the idiom is translated semantically as "shedding the crocodile's tears", perhaps many Chinese do not understand it and have not heard the story of crocodiles shedding tears when they swallow their prey. The use of communicative translation method translated as "mao ku hao zi" corresponds to a

Chinese idiom, which is a metaphor for false compassion and disguised sympathy. Therefore, the communicative translation here is more appropriate and more acceptable to Chinese readers.

Example 2: Wet paint!

Analysis: There are two translations of this sentence. This is a public sign, the first translation adopted the communicative translation method, embodies the warning effect of the notice, namely, people should be careful with the paint, because it is wet! The second translation uses semantic translation to provide readers with literal information only.

Example 3: My God! My Guinness.

Analysis: This is an AD for Arthur Guinness, the world's largest brand of dark beer. If the slogan is translated into semantics, then the vast number of Chinese consumers will not be able to connect the importance of "God" in Western Christianity with Guinness beer, and even feel ridiculous. The use of communicative translation here, to paraphrase the famous sentences in the poems of the Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu, such a translation not only makes the advertisement rich in Chinese charm and conveys a strong Chinese cultural heritage, but also shows the superior quality of the beer brand, giving Chinese consumers a psychological hint, so that they have the desire to buy and consume. Such translations are undoubtedly successful.

Example 4: stewed chicken with tortoise soup

Analysis: This is a traditional dish in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province. It comes from a Chinese proverb "Farewell My concubine", which is based on the love story between Xiang Yu and Yu Ji, the king of Western Chu, surrounded by Han troops in Gaixia. The main ingredients of this dish are chicken and soft-shelled turtle. The homonym of "ji" and "chicken", "bie" and soft-shelled turtle, vividly sets off this historical theme, with euphemistic meaning and wonderful artistic conception. The communicative translation method is used here so that foreign tourists can understand the main ingredients of the dish at a glance. It would be better to explain the origin of the dish when introducing it to foreign tourists.

Example 5: Four Happiness Meatballs / diced meatball braised with soy sauce

Analysis: It is one of the classic traditional dishes of the Han nationality. It is composed of four meatballs with good color, aroma and taste. It is used for wedding and birthday banquets, which combine happiness, wealth, and longevity in life. If the semantic translation is used here, foreign tourists will be confused and even misunderstood, thinking it is "four happy meatballs", while the meaning of the dish cannot be reflected by the communicative translation. I think combining the two methods translates as four diced meatballs braised with soy sauce (Symbol of happiness). This not only explains the main ingredients and cooking methods of the dish, but also highlights the communicative function.

Example 6: Man proposes, God disposes. / Man proposes, Heaven disposes.

Analysis: In Western culture, the eternal existence of "God" is the belief of those who believe in Christianity, while in Chinese culture, "heaven" is the core of the traditional cultural belief system. Therefore, the translation of "God" in the communicative translation is more acceptable to readers with Western religious backgrounds, while "Heaven" more faithfully preserves traditional Chinese culture, so as not to cause confusion in Chinese and Western cultural views.

Example 7: The rice is already cooked. / The rice is cooked and know that it can't be uncooked.

Analysis: This means "it is too late". The first sentence uses semantic translation to retain the meaning and syntactic structure of the original text. The second sentence uses communicative translation to express the implied meaning, which helps readers of the target language better understand the original text, but to a certain extent makes the original text lose the beauty of idioms.

Example 8: It is hardly possible for ordinary people to follow their mind while living in such a hectic, materialistic world where one struggles to meet subsistence needs while struggle with sensual temptations and deals with a perplexing mix of lofty aspirations and worldly distractions. / However, living in a materialistic society and bustling about all day long, ordinary men like us burdened with the provision of daily necessities for our family and tempted by material and sensual pleasure. As our pursuit of personal gains is invariably accompanied by worries, it is extremely difficult for us to have our own way (Yan, 2020).

Analysis: "The subsistence needs" and "sensual temptations", these two words express their implicit meanings through communicative translation, which can help readers better understand the original text.

Example 9: There is another widespread Chinese saying that goes, "business are invariably dishonest." Businessmen are traditionally viewed as being solely profit ---- driving. They are deemed to be poles apart from true gentlemen who put justice before material gains. Business, in this sense, is a profession that is conventionally frowned upon. / In China, there is another widely circulated saying, called "no business without treason". It is believed that the merchant's "profit-seeking" runs counter to the gentleman's pursuit of righteousness over profit, so doing business is a despised profession in traditional culture (Yan, 2020).

Analysis: "Business are invariably dishonest" and "no business without treason", both are used to describe a businessman who is very cunning. However, the first translation use "invariably" to deepen the language. So I think first version is better than the second one.

Example 10: I have yet to see a single sign of it.

This is a typical Chinese idiom that means there is still one step to be done. In other words, there was no evidence that anything was going to happen, or that he was far from it. As for this idiom, the translation does not attempt to express the style and meaning of Chinese hieroglyphics (Yan, 2020).

Example 11: Like fish leaping about in the wide sea and birds flying in the vast sky, we can enjoy the maximum of freedom.

Analysis: This article is translated by Teacher Han Gang, who uses semantic translation to express the author's joy, so there is no need to do too much processing.

Example 12: Xiang Yun couldn't help laughing. "How could there be all yins and yangs? Yin and Yang are still just one. When one is done, the other becomes. It's not that after a yang is exhausted a yin comes in to beings, or the other way round (Yan, 2020).

Analysis: The two words "Yin" and "Yang" are the key and difficult points in the translation of this sentence. Because "Yin" and "Yang" are unique Chinese philosophical ideas, they have no corresponding translation language, and the two sides struggle with each other. A typical example of the "Yin and Yang" theory is the Chinese proverb "Things will develop in the opposite direction when they become extreme". According to Newmark's semantic translation method, this translation is transliterated according to Chinese Pinyin, which not only retains the great charm of Chinese culture, but also embodies the profound cultural thought of China's long history.

4. Literature Review

Through searching the papers and journal works of the past years with keywords such as "translation", "Newmark", "communicative translation" and "semantic translation" on the platforms of CNKI and Wanfang database, it is found that the domestic researches on them mainly include: In the early days, around the end of the twentieth century, when Newmark's theory had not yet been introduced to China, or when few people knew about his theory, many scholars published articles to introduce his theory, such as Yang Shizhuo (1998). In addition,

on the basis of these two theories, many scholars have compared the advantages and disadvantages of communicative translation theory and semantic translation theory in the process of practical translation, such as Tang Jie (2016). Under the guidance of the theory of communicative translation and semantic translation, Gao Shengbing and Liu Ying (2007) wrote the dialectics of under-translation and over-translation, and analyzed these two concepts to help people understand them. Some scholars, using the British translation theorist Peter Newmark's communicative translation theory from the four aspects of vocabulary, terminology, logic and expression, through the specific case analysis of English to Chinese, study the translation of technical literature, summarize the relevant translation techniques, and find that Newmark's communicative translation theory is suitable for the translation of technical literature, such as Fu Jing and Wang Yuehong (2014).

In addition to the introduction, evaluation and analysis of Newmark's theory, some scholars also use it to guide translation practice. For example, the original text of Wu Yaoyao's (2022) translation practice is tourism text. He wants to spread the culture of Chengdu temples and give priority to the reading experience of target language readers. In dealing with this problem, semantic translation and communicative translation provide great reference significance. Our country's traditional Chinese medicine culture is really profound, and those who want to learn traditional Chinese medicine are around the world. Especially in recent years, due to the emergence of novel coronavirus, every country has tried their best to formulate treatment methods, so that traditional Chinese medicine has regained the attention of the world. Meanwhile, China has also vigorously promoted the Chinese medicine to go out of the policy of entrance in recent years. Under the guidance of communicative translation and semantic translation, Guo Ziwei (2022) analyzed and compared Chinese medicine books. Under the guidance of communicative translation and semantic translation, Sheng Zhuoli (2006) analyzes the translation of movie subtitles and movie titles. With the deepening of international contact and interdependence, the trade between countries is also becoming more and more close, so the translation of business English letters is of great importance. Under the guidance of communicative translation theory, by analyzing the characteristics of business English letters, Wang Mengke and Huang Wenyi (2022) studied how to accurately and appropriately translate business English letters, in order to provide reference for letter translation and improve the quality of translation. With the increasing development of science and technology, the process of globalization is accelerating. Nowadays, the information exchange and cultural transmission between countries are inseparable from the news media, so the status of the news media in the new era is self-evident. As a universal language, English has obviously become an irreplaceable text for news media. Based on the communicative translation theory, Zhang Qinghua (2022) analyzes the standardization of news English translation strategies.

In foreign countries, many scholars have studied Newmark's theory. For example, Samer I. Mohamed's (2016) *A Brief Analysis of Peter Newmark's Communicative Translation Theory*. And Venny Eka Meidasari's (2014) *Teaching Communicative Translation: An Active Reception Analysis Between the Translation and Reader's Reception*.

All of these papers and journals, to some extent, promoted the spread and application of Newmark's theory.

5. Conclusion

Newmark said, "Translation is both an art and a science" (Liu, 2009). It is generally believed that a translator's understanding of the original text and the translated language text, as well as his flexible use of translation methods, can produce a nearly perfect translation. As for translation, both semantic translation and communicative translation have their own advantages. In our actual translation process, the translator chooses semantic translation or

communicative translation, which all depends on the translator's purpose and the effect he wants to achieve. However, in my opinion, no matter what text is being translated, translators should put readers first and properly use semantic translation and communicative translation to achieve a proper balance.

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