On the Dilemma of English Translation and Communication of Jia Pingwa's Novels in the Background of Culture Going Out

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Abstract: With a strong creation power and highly-individualized language use, Jia Pingwa is one of the most important writers in contemporary Chinese literary circles. This paper analyzes the problems of the shortage of regional dialect translation talents, the translation of Shaanxi Shangzhou dialect and the awareness of international communication in the context of cultural development. By a careful analysis of the reasons, it aims to promote Shaanxi culture and even Chinese culture to go out.

Under the strategic background of Chinese culture going out, translating Chinese culture and literary works into foreign languages are only the basis for culture going out. In a sense, culture going out is a dynamic and complex cultural project. An effective culture going out requires the joint efforts and collaboration of multiple factors. As far as the overseas spread of the famous writer Jia Pingwa is concerned, it includes at least the author's literary communication consciousness, the translation of sinologists and translators, the development of foreign publishing channels, the cooperation between Chinese and foreign editors, and the cultivation of reader groups. Jia Pingwa’s novels are not systematically translated into English and disseminated, so the depth and breadth of his research are obviously insufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the dilemma of the English translation and dissemination of his novels, and to better explore the path for it.

1. Lack of Regional Dialect Translation Talents

First of all, there is a shortage of translators in the regional dialects of Shangzhou, Shaanxi. From the translation of Jia Pingwa's novel "Fu Zao", the translator Ge Haowen said in the translation of "Turbulence" that China does not lack good works, but not enough translations, and there are too few qualified translators [1]. Obviously, there are obstacles in publishing channels in the translation and publication of Jia Pingwa's novels, but the most fundamental difficulty is the lack of qualified translators [2]. To spread Jia Pingwa's novels overseas or to implement the "going out" strategy, the most urgent task is to build a team of translators who are familiar with Shaanxi Shangzhou dialect and focus on translating Jia Pingwa's novels.

Secondly, there are fewer overseas translators and sinologists who pay attention to Jia Pingwa's novels. From the practice of the English translation of the novel "Abandoned Capital", Ge Haowen said, "The editor of the University of Hawaii Press gave me a translation of Jia Pingwa's "Abandoned Capital", to see if it is possible to modify it, which was translated by a Chinese doctoral student studying in the United States. He went to Xi'an to find Jia Pingwa, asked him that if he could translate "Abandoned Capital." Jia Pingwa agreed. Unfortunately, the English level of this international student is really bad, so was his translation of the book."[1] Mo Yan is the first person in Chinese contemporary writers whose works have been translated abroad in an astonishing number. The translators of his works include Ge Haowen and Chen Anna and so on. Mo Yan’s Nobel Prize in Literature is attributed to Mo Yan’s creative talent, but also to a powerful and competent qualified translation team. Compared with the translation of Mo Yan's novels that have won the Nobel Prize in Literature, Jia Pingwa's novel "Abandoned Capital" is still on the road, and the shortage of translating talents is the most fundamental.
Judging from the dilemma of "Abandoned Capital", one of Jia Pingwa's representative works, the book was banned for 16 years, which might be one of the reasons why translators did not choose it. Also Shaanxi Shangzhou folk dialect made reading it more difficult, so the translator was not optimistic about the reader market. In addition, the writer himself lacked the awareness of the construction and cultivation of translation talents, and most of his works were translated and accepted passively. These factors, which are not conducive to translation and communication, are closely related to Jia Pingwa's introverted personality and his learning environment. Writers need to cultivate their own “going out” literary communication consciousness, constantly promote their own works, and actively contact overseas sinologists and noted domestic translators to open the door to the international market for their novels. Inspired by Mo Yan’s Nobel Prize in Literature, Jia Pingwa once devoted himself to “going out” of his novels, but also “failed to find a suitable translator”[3].

2. The Difficulty of Translating Shangzhou Dialect into English

In the context of intercultural communication, regional dialects refer to the most popular-used languages in a particular geographic region. As far as Jia Pingwa's novels are concerned, Shangzhou dialect in southeastern Shaanxi and some Shaanxi dialects are everywhere in his novels, and have formed a unique language style in the creation of Jia Pingwa's novels.

In Jia Pingwa's novels, the local dialect of Shangzhou, Shaanxi Province has a strong local flavor, and at the same time, it also sets a certain barrier to cross-cultural communication for the English translation of his novels. Ge Haowen "had wanted to translate Jia Pingwa's novel "Qin Qiang", but because of the dialect, he felt difficult to translate and eventually gave up."[4] Indeed, from the obstacles encountered by the American sinologist Ge Haowen who wanted to translate Jia Pingwa's novel "Qin Qiang", we can feel the strong Shangzhou dialect in the novel "Qin Qiang" create difficulties for non-Shaanxi Shangzhou people to fully understand the whole novel. Xu Jun believes: "Translation is limited, especially the communication of language features"[5]. Obviously, the language of Jia Pingwa's novels creates obstacles to the translator's reading and understanding, which makes it difficult for the English translation and publication of his novels. Similarly, we also believe in the commonality of human culture in cross-cultural communication. In response to the various Chinese language problems in translation practice, translators should not give up easily, not treat the difficulty of translation negatively, but should seek corresponding translation strategies. Just like the English translation of Jia Pingwa's novel "Turbulence", after a painstaking translation, it has produced a good communication effect in the English world.

3. Writers' Weak Awareness of International Communication

From Li Xing's evaluation who carried out a long-term follow-up study of Jia Ping and Jia Pingwa's own confusion that he could not find a suitable translator, we can see that before Mo Yan won the award, Jia Pingwa was mostly willing to be in the domestic situation and rarely participated intercultural communication actively, not promoted his cultural awareness of international communication, and lacked consciousness of international communication due to his own language restrictions.

Li Xing said: "Mo Yan is a writer with a global vision and a sense of promotion, and attaches great importance to intercultural communication. He has come to Shaanxi for more than ten times. Every time he comes here to find friends in the literary world. In contrast, Shaanxi writers only know that they need to be hard-working and rarely go out on their own initiative. They just don’t want to leave the bowl of sticky noodles of their hometown. Once someone called Jia Pingwa to go to Hong Kong, he rejected. Chen Zhongshi is also like this. This has great restraint on Shaanxi writers going out which they Shaanxi writers must improve!"[6] Jia Pingwa said frankly: "I don't know who wants my works. If i go out and find someone, i can't find him or her. Always there are people who come to me and tell me what to do, or i know nothing. I don’t know how to start. I have been in Shaanxi, and don’t know how to go out, and the world outside."[3]
From the perspective of intercultural communication, international communication is an important area of intercultural communication, and it focuses on the communication between countries. International communication is difficult because of the different countries involved. It is extremely difficult to maintain a positive international communication because of the variety of cultures involved and the huge differences\[7\]. Similarly, the translation and dissemination of Jia Pingwa's novels seems to be only the overseas publishing and dissemination of contemporary Chinese literary works. In fact, it belongs to international communication, influenced by the differences in cultural types between countries, and is influenced by cultures on the other side of the ocean. In the past 100 years, Chinese literature has learned and borrowed from cultures of the Western world. Only in the past 40 years, the Western world has learned about Chinese contemporary culture or literature sporadically. This historical reality warns us that writers should have world consciousness, such as starting from literary works, paying attention to the international communication consciousness in creation, only in this way can it lead to the Chinese culture going out.

4. Breaking the Traditional Publishing Communication Model

Foreign literary works in the Chinese book market are popular, and Chinese literary works translated in the overseas market are totally different. The "Panda Series", once the main translation of Chinese literature, is not popular in foreign markets. For example, "The Selection of Seven Contemporary Chinese Women Writers" is very popular in the Anglo-American market. It was reprinted twice in the 1980s, and the total printing volume reached 30,000. Sabina Knight, a professor at Smith University in the United States, pointed out in his article "Chinese Novels in the Eyes of Americans: On Fictions translated from Chinese": In 2004, China purchased 3,932 books published in the United States, but the United States only purchased 16 Chinese books. In 2009, the United States published 348 books, but only 8 Chinese novels accounted for only 4% of the total number of foreign literature publications in the United States. Obviously, the overseas dissemination of Chinese writers' works must have faced two problems ten years ago: on the one hand, Western readers had their own preferences in reading interest according to different historical eras and had their own literary hobbies. This was relatively stable. On the other hand, the Western book publishing market was not like the Chinese publishing industry which was in a period of vigorous development, while the publishing industry in western developed countries slowed down relatively, and the construction of China's overseas publishing communication platform is at the exploration stage. Therefore, it was inevitable for Chinese books not to be warmly welcomed overseas.

Conclusion

In view of the above-mentioned problems, we must not only exert strength in translation practice, but also work hard on the effectiveness of Chinese culture to go out. We must not stay at the translator's translation practice level. For a long time, this biased understanding has led us focus only on the issue of specific translations, that is, to focus only on the conversion of words, and to care less about other issues. In fact, to accomplish the effectiveness of culture going out, it is one-sided to only pay attention to the problem of translation practice. Translation is a top priority, but it does not mean that if Chinese literature are translated into a foreign language, Chinese culture can go out. We should pay more attention to the purpose and task of translation which is the exchange, dialogue and understanding between the two sides. We should also pay attention to the channels of communication and the subjects of acceptance. As far as the mode of communication is concerned, the traditional publishing communication model is relatively old, so we should not ignore who is the translator, when and where the translated versions are published, and who is the foreign editor. Therefore, reshaping a new model of publishing communication is the key to the problem.
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