



Exploration of Translation Strategies for Introduction to *Qi Min Yao Shu* from the Perspective of Hermeneutics

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Abstract

George Steiner, one of the representatives of hermeneutics, proposed that translation should go through four steps, namely "trust", "aggression", "absorption" and "compensation". In the "aggression" step, the translator needs to exert subjectivity, decompose the original text, and extract the parts he needs from the potential meaning of the text. *Qi Min Yao Shu*, as a text that is both scientific and literary, the translator's subjectivity in the "aggression" part plays a crucial role in its translation. At the same time, as a work to guide agricultural production, *Qi Min Yao Shu* needs to be explained reasonably and clearly by the author, and its guiding significance should be retained in the translated text. Under these conditions, hermeneutics is a very suitable theory of translation. In general, little attention has been paid to agricultural translation, but agriculture is the foundation of a country. In the context of "agricultural power", the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China promotes the translation of agricultural classics, which also holds far-reaching significance for the times.

Keywords

George Steiner, hermeneutics, *Qi Min Yao Shu*, agricultural translation, translation strategy

1. Introduction

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China for the first time included "agricultural power". Translating ancient agricultural books into English and injecting the power of the times can help China strengthen international agricultural exchanges and establish and consolidate its position as an agricultural power internationally. Since the Opium War (1840), 200 types of Chinese classics and literature have come out due to the work of over 100 Western publishing houses. Oxford and Cambridge presses have respectively published 40 and 20 types of Chinese classics. Over 400 years, Britain has published over 300 types of Chinese classics and 30 relevant PhD dissertations (Feng Qi, Zhang Huan, & Sun Hui, 2022). *Qi Min Yao Shu* is the earliest existing complete agricultural book in China, and its importance is self-evident. Introduction to *Qi Min Yao Shu* was written by Professor Shi Shenghan. In the 1950s, Shi Shenghan embarked on collating and annotating *Qi Min Yao Shu*, and translated it into the modern Chinese language. On that basis, Shi authored A Preliminary Survey of the Book *Qi Min Yao Shu*, making a scientific analysis and assessment of the ancient agricultural technologies involved in *Qi Min Yao Shu* (Baoguo Zhang, 2022).

Professor Shi has been dedicated to translating *Qi Min Yao Shu* for a long time but passed away before it was completed. Therefore, there is still no complete translation of *Qi Min Yao Shu* to this day. This paper aims to explore

the translation strategies of existing translations, with the aim of providing inspiration for future translations and completing the complete translation of this classic agricultural classic as soon as possible.

2. Using Hermeneutic Theory to Analyze the Rationality of "Introduction to *Qi Min Yao Shu*"

Although people have different definitions of hermeneutics, they generally revolve around understanding and interpretation, which are of course specific to the text. Therefore, in this study, hermeneutics is defined as the science of understanding and interpreting texts. Since its birth, hermeneutics has been connected to understanding and translation, providing more possibilities for human understanding and interpretation of other disciplines, expanding the boundaries of human understanding, which naturally includes understanding and understanding of "translation". This quality is suitable for studying the interpretation of English translations of Chinese scientific and technological classics. As a classical Chinese text, the translation process of 'Qi Min Yao Shu' requires both intralingual and interlingual translation, and understanding the original text is crucial. George Steiner, one of the representatives of translation hermeneutics, proposed that translation should go through four steps, namely "trust", "aggression", "absorption", and "compensation". According to Steiner, aggression means the translator invades the original so as to extract the meaning. During the process, the translator's task is to decode the source text and convey the intended meaning to the target text (Jin JH, 2005).

Aggression refers to the translator experiencing the original text like a reader and resonating with the author. In the process of translation, the translator needs to break the shell of the language and penetrate into the interior of the original text, extracting the core meaning. In the process of interlingual translation, the translator's understanding and interpretation of the original text is a necessary attack, and the spirit of the original text is the goal he seizes. It can be considered as an attempt to restore the balance that has been broken in the previous translation process (Wang Lili, 2022). Therefore, the step of "aggression" is always biased and an inevitable attack on the original author's intention and perspective. The translator must break free from limitations such as cultural background, history, and language, and make every effort to present the content of the original text. Therefore, in order to engage in 'aggression', translators need to exert their subjectivity, understand the original text, and express the meaning of the original text in the translated language based on their own understanding.

3. Analysis of Translation Strategies for "Introduction to *Qi Min Yao Shu*"

As can be seen from the previous text, from the perspective of hermeneutics, translators need to exert their subjectivity to "invade" the original text. According to the characteristics of scientific and technological classical Chinese literature, translators need to fully exert their subjectivity. Firstly, as in classical Chinese, the original text has the characteristics of a long history and concise language introduction. The translator needs to perform a secondary translation, first translating it into modern Chinese and then into English. One unavoidable difficulty is that there are many unclear meanings in the original text, or many expressions that do not fully display all the author's meanings. This requires the translator to choose various translation strategies, such as additional translation or free translation. These two translation methods are the most common. The difference lies in that adding translation is to supplement and complete the omitted meanings in classical Chinese, while free translation is for the translator to integrate the meanings in the text, reorganize the language, and translate them using flexible expressions. Another way to deal with unclear information is to clarify it. The expression in classical Chinese is relatively vague, and sometimes the meaning is not fully and accurately expressed. Translators need to clarify ambiguous and ambiguous expressions when translating. This requires translators to have sufficient agricultural background knowledge and a strong perception of classical Chinese.

3.1 Unclear Information and Additional Translation

Due to the extremely concise language form of classical Chinese, many grammatical elements are omitted compared to modern Chinese. It is necessary for translators to rely on their own understanding and knowledge to restore the meaning of omission in classical Chinese in English translations.

Example 1

The original text: jin bing zhou wu da suan, chao ge qu zhong, yi sui zhi hou, hai cheng bai zi suan yi, qi ban cu xi, zheng yu tiao zhong zi tong.

The translated text: Common garlic cannot be maintained in Ping-chow, seeding bulbs have to be brought from Ch'ao-ko. But after one year's cultivation, the bulb becomes bulbil again, scales being about the size of that in the

inflorescence.

Analysis: The literal meaning of "jin bing zhou wu da suan" in classical Chinese is "there is no garlic in Bingzhou today", but combined with agricultural knowledge, this statement is unfounded. Therefore, the author added "common" and "maintain" in the translation, so that the meaning of the translation became "ordinary garlic cannot be preserved in Bingzhou nowadays", which is the true meaning that the original text intended to express. The author translated 'seed bulbs have to be brought from Ch'ao ko' and added 'have to', meaning 'the seeds have to be brought from the Ch'ao-ko, which is more in line with the original meaning in terms of details. The translation of "after one year old" has added the logical word "but" with a turning point, highlighting that the time for cultivating garlic is relatively short, only one year. Reflects the author's restoration of the original meaning.

Example 2

The original text: wu, liu yue zhong han shi, qu shui er dou , yi yan yi dou tou shui zhong, ling xiao jin; you yi yan tou zhi, shui xian ji, ze yan bu fu xiao rong.

The translated text: In the dry hot summer-months (5th and 6th), take 2 tou (4.4 litre) of water, and drop in 1 tou crude salt. Let it dissolve and add some more. Finally, the brine will be so concentrated that no more salt will dissolve.

Analysis: The original text mentioned a series of operation methods for adding salt to water. In the last sentence, the translation added "Finally" to make the description of the entire process more logical. The meaning in the original text is causality, because "water is very salty. Therefore, salt can no longer dissolve". In the translation, the translator added another meaning, which is "the density of saline water is too high to dissolve salt anymore. This translation adds modern scientific knowledge, increases the scientificity of translation, and is more suitable for modern readers.

3.2 Unclear Information and Free Translation

Scientific and technological ancient books also have strong literary attributes, so many expressions cannot be translated according to their literal meaning, but rather need to reflect the implicit meaning. Translators should not focus exclusively on the narrow perspective of linguistics, but should also pay attention to history, philosophy, poetry, and culture as well as understand translation as a cultural process rather than a linguistic process (Beiyang Liu & Jiguang Xie, 2022). This requires translators to have a deep understanding of traditional Chinese culture and to correctly connect it with the agricultural background of *Qi Min Yao Shu* in order to correctly understand the original text and translate it into appropriate and easy-to-understand English expressions.

Example 1

The original text: Shun tian shi, liang di li, ze yong li shao er cheng gong duo.

The translated text: Follow the appropriateness of the season, consider well the nature and conditions of the soil, then and only then least labour will bring the best success.

Analysis: "Tian Shi" and "Di Li" refer to the natural climatic conditions and geographical environment during ancient warfare. However, in the context of agriculture, it is necessary for the author to combine agricultural knowledge and understand the true meaning behind it. Therefore, the author translated it as "the appropriate season" and "natural and soil conditions", in line with agricultural common sense.

Example 2

The original text: Dou jiao san qing liang huang, ba er dao shu long cong zhi, sheng zhe jun shu.

The translated text: When 3/5 of the pods are still green, pull out, stand the bundles upside down bound in bundles, then the green pods will gradually all ripen.

Analysis: The literal meaning of "three green and two yellow" is quite difficult to understand. Therefore, it is necessary to combine it with literary attempts to recognize that the concept of score is actually expressed in the original text, and correctly express it in translation. Three-fifths of the beans are green, so the content of ripening methods in the later text will be logical.

3.3 Unclear and specific information

The expression of classical Chinese in ancient books is sometimes very ambiguous and can be explained in many ways, but only one is the true meaning of the original text. Therefore, when faced with vague original texts, translators cannot still deal with them in translation but need to clarify the correct meaning of the translated text. In the face of many professional vocabularies, when translating, translators sometimes use words they know well to express words with other meanings. The sentences thus translated are quite different from the original meanings (Lu Yahui & Chen Minzhi, 2020). Therefore, there are high requirements for translators' literary literacy and agricultural background knowledge.

Example 1

The original text: Bu dai jiao qu huang zhi; geng dao, yi su fan jiang qing er cu zhe tao zhi, you yi bu dai jiao qu zhi, ji shou qu ran hong, wu qi ye. jiao qi, zhe weng qi zhong, yi bu gai shang, ji ming geng dao ling jun, yu xi shang tan er pu gan, sheng zuo bing.

The translated text: Wring out the yellow juice by means of a filter bag, and pound again. Wash with clear sour rice drink and again wring out the juice. (This juice is to be kept as a red dye, so don't throw it away.) Place the residuum in a porcelain container and cover it loosely with a cloth. At cockerow, take out and pound again. Spread on a mat to dry. This is better than rolling into a lump.

Analysis: The literal meaning of "Bu dai" is "bag made of cloth", but in this paragraph, the function of "cloth bag" is to filter, so its function is concretized and translated as "filter bag", so that readers can understand the meaning of the text at a glance. The term 'weng qi' is a type of container, but for foreign readers, it is unclear what type of container it is. Therefore, the translator clarified it and translated it into 'porcelain container', making the meaning of the article more precise. The meaning of "sheng zuo bing" is very vague. Therefore, translators need to rely on their own background knowledge to translate it as "rolling to a lump", which means "rolling to a lump", to clarify any ambiguity in the text.

Example 2

The original text: Fan zai yi qie shu mu, yu ji qi yin yang, bu ling zhuan yi. (yin yang yi wei, ze nan sheng. xiao xiao zai zhe, bu fan ji ye).

The translated text: In transplantation, take good care to maintain a tree in its original relationship to sun and shade. (Negligence often leads to failure of survival. With smaller trees this trouble and all anxieties may be dispensed).

Analysis: In the original text, the concept of "yin and yang" is very vague and difficult to understand. It requires a certain agricultural background to understand the meaning of the original text. The translator translated "Yin Yang" into "its original relationship to sun and shade", expressing the "relationship between light and shadow on trees" and explaining the unclear aspects of the original text. This requires translators not only to understand the literal meaning of the article, but also to be able to combine the meaning of the context, make effective inferences and judgments based on their own agricultural knowledge, and use appropriate translated language to reflect the meaning of the original text, which puts forward high requirements for translators.

4. Conclusion

The *Qi Min Yao Shu* contains a large amount of agricultural methodology, therefore, using hermeneutic theory for guidance is an inherent requirement and necessary meaning. Because the original text is an ancient classic, the role of "aggression" in the four steps of hermeneutics is particularly important. Aggression requires translators to fully exert their subjectivity and adopt a series of appropriate translation strategies. Through the analysis of existing translations, we can glimpse the translation strategies used by Professor Shi. And in the following translation practice, we will inherit and carry forward the torch of promoting China's intangible cultural heritage, in response to the call of the country to become an "agricultural powerhouse".

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