Research Article

An Analysis of Communicative Translation and Semantic Translation by Peter Newmark

Hongping Chen¹ and Xu Qian*²
¹Professor in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, NO 689 Road, North District, Baoding, Hebei, China.
²Graduate Students in School of Foreign Language, North China Electric Power University, NO 689 Road, North District, Baoding, Hebei, China.

Abstract: Translation is one of the longest in the history of cultural exchanges, Peter Newmark's communicative translation and semantic translation for different types of text translation offers an ideal translation method, has caused great sensation at the time. This article emphatically analyze form four aspects including theoretical basis, similarities and differences, advantages and disadvantages and application of communicative translation and semantic translation. I hope to provide some reference for translation practice.

Keywords: Peter Newmark; semantic translation; communicative translation.

Chapter one: The Theoretical Basis of Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation

1. Background

Newmark's semantic translation and communicative translation are proposed in the context of the long-standing debate between literal translation and free translation. In his opinion, since the first century AD, both sides of literal translation and free translation have neglected to consider the purpose of translation, the characteristics of readers and the type of text, and they have been too idealistic. Newmark acknowledges that the contradiction between being faithful to
the original text or translated text is an eternal theme in translation theory and practice, but he thinks this contradiction can be reconciled.

Newmark’s semantic and communicative translation theory is based on the three language functions, expression function, informational function and appellative function, discussed by German psychologists and functional linguists Karl Buhler and Jacobson. He also adopts Vygotsky's view of the essence of thought to distinguish the two translations.

1.2 Definition

Semantic translation pays more attention to the form of the original text and the original author's original intention, rather than the context and expression of the target language, let alone turning the target text into something in the cultural context of the target language. As semantic translation takes the word and sentence of the original text as sacred, it sometimes results in inconsistent, ambiguous and even wrong translations. Semantic translation is usually applicable to literature, scientific and technical literature and other text genres that are as important as the original language and content.

The purpose of communicative translation is "to make the effect of translation on the target language readers the same as that of the original text on the source language readers". Communicative translation pay attention to convey information according to the language, culture and pragmatic mode of the target language, rather than reproduce the text of the original faithfully. Translators have greater freedom to interpret the original text, adjust the style, eliminate ambiguity, and even correct the original author's mistakes with communicative translation. In order to achieve a certain communicative purpose, the translation will inevitably break the limitation of the original text.

Chapter two: A Comparison Between Semantic Translation and Communicative Translation

2.1 Common Point

We need to be clear that semantic translation and communicative translation are by no means exclusive and can be used interchangeably. Semantic translation and communicative translation also have something in common and cannot be absolutely distinguished from each other. The interdependence of the two is shown in the following aspects:

First, cognitive translation is the common theoretical basis of semantic translation and communicative translation. These two theories are both the perfection of cognitive translation, so they are both based on the ideological content of the original text and must be subject to the linguistic norms of the proposed language.

The application of semantic translation and communicative translation is not absolute, but can be used interchangeably. If the original information with universality, the content without cultural information is as important as the the means of expression, and the level of knowledge and interest of the target readers is similar to that of the original readers, the semantic translation and communicative translation can be adopted simultaneously. For example, the translation of important religious, philosophical, artistic and scientific documents, semantic translation or communicative translation will produce similar effects to each other.

2.2 Different Points

Semantic translation emphasizes the reproduce the original style and thought by words, sentence structure and expression techniques, and the translations are often complex, cumbersome and overly detailed; Communicative translation Theory mainly explores translation methods from the perspective of target readers. It is emphasized that the effect produced by target language readers in reading the translated text is as consistent as possible with that produced by source language readers in reading the original text. The translation is usually smooth, clear, direct, and easy to understand, conforming to the specific register category. We will analyze it from the following specific aspects.

Culture: Semantic translation stays within the culture of the source language; Communicative translation converts foreign elements into the target culture. For example, the translation of “西游记” is “Journey to the west” in semantic translation, while is “Pilgrimage to the west” in communicative translation.

Time and Source: There is no fixed time or specific space for semantic translation, and translation needs to be updated with time; Communicative translation is transient and rooted in one’s own context at that time. For example, the sentence “he was the last person to help,” was translated into “他是我会要求帮助的最后一人” in semantic translation, while “我是不会求他的” in communicative translation.

Relationship with the original language text: Semantic translation is always "inferior" to the original text, meaning "distortion"; Communicative translation may be "superior" to the original text, and it can add appeal and clarity. For example, the slogan of Beijing’s bid for the Olympic Games, was translated into “New Beijing, new olympic” in semantic translation, while “New Beijing, great olympic” in communicative translation.

Original language form: Semantic translation deviates from the rules of the original language, it must turn in the target language text and be "faithful" to the
author of the original language text; Communicative translation attaches importance to the linguistic form of the source language, but denies the rule of “faithful” to the target language.

**Target language form:** Semantic translation is more complex, cumbersome, detailed, and concentrated, and tends to be over translated; Communicative translation is more fluent, concise, clear, direct and routine, and tends to be under translate.

**Unit of translation:** Semantic translation is more of a word; Communicative translation is more of a sentence.

**Translation method:** Semantic translation belongs to art; Communicative translation is a skill.

**Evaluation criteria:** Semantic translation is based on the accuracy of reproducing the importance of the original text; Communicative translation is based on the accuracy of information delivered in the target language.

**Text types:** Semantic translation includes philosophical, religious, political statements, scientific and technological works, literary works, autobiography, personal letters, and literary works expressing personal feelings; Communicative translation includes non-literary works, news reports, official letters, textbooks, reports, political propaganda materials, and commonly used communicative expressions.

**Freedom of the translator:** Semantic translation is limited to the original text; Communicative translation allows for modification and improvement. For example, “Wet paint!” was translated into “湿油漆” in semantic translation, while was translated into “油漆未干，请勿触摸！” in communicative translation.

**Chapter three: Advantages and disadvantages of semantic translation and communicative translation**

Semantic translation and communicative translation have their own advantages and disadvantages. In the process of application, attention should be paid to coordination, otherwise the quality of translation will be affected.

First, semantic translation tends to be based on the original text and the source language, striving to show the flavor of the original text to the greatest extent. Under the guidance of this method, translated works are more faithful to the original text. At the same time, the translator should pay attention to the fact that no translation can be equivalent to the original text, and the translation can only be infinitely close to the original text. Moreover, if the aesthetic effect of the original text is overemphasized while the information transmission of the original text is neglected in the process of the approach, the translation without information function will lose its value.

Secondly, communicative translation is more inclined to translation and language culture. Under the guidance of this translation method, the works mainly pay attention to the readers' reflection, that is, they pursue the consistency between the readers' reflection of both original work and translated work. In this way, the translation of information becomes the focus. At this time, if the translator only pays attention to the transmission of information, and completely ignores the style and rhetorical of the original text, then the translator will become the second author of the original text. The style of the original text will be completely lost, and the translation will also lose its meaning.

**Chapter 4: The application of semantic translation and communicative translation**

4.1 Analysis on the Text-types

We can apply the translation theory by analyzing the text-types. Newmark points out that both semantic translation and communicative translation should depend on the type of original text. In a style that is primarily expressive, such as literary works, personal letters, autobiography and prose, the author's unique linguistic form and content should be regarded as equally important. Therefore, the translator should mainly adopt semantic translation. The text that is primarily informational in nature, such as non-literary works, textbooks, academic papers, articles in newspapers and magazines, etc., whose core is the real world outside language. Therefore, translators should adopt the communicative translation. The core of a text with calling-based function is to "call the reader to action, to think and to feel", such as notice, instruction, advertisement and so on. Therefore, translators should adopt communicative translation.

But any translation must involve how to deal with the relationship between content and effect harmoniously, especially poetry translation. In the face of elegant literature, it is very important to combine content and effect. These two kinds of translation methods seem to be helpless in translating literary works with strong aesthetic art, such as poetry. The reason why literary translation is special is that the language it uses is not only for the purpose of communicating information, but also requires the translator to use an artistic language with an aesthetic function. Newmark pointed out that semantic translation is suitable for pure literary texts such as poetry and prose novels, and communicative translation is suitable for non-literary practical texts. Although he has repeatedly stated that the two methods may be used interchangeably in the same text, this kind of division has strong provisions. In a way, it restricts the translator's artistic creativity and appreciation in the process of translation.
4.2 Analysis on the Expression

We can apply the translation theory by making good use of the expression. In Chinese aspect, we must grasp the rich vocabulary and each kind of sentence pattern, and can use Chinese to write the beautiful, lively, succinct article. In foreign aspect, we should master fixed expressions in foreign language. For example, “an advertisement in The Globe” was translated “A copy in hand, the word in mind”. The rhetorical devices of sentence refinement, rhyme and Chinese antithesis make the sentences read with rhythm and aftertaste.

4.2 Analysis on the Culture

We can apply the translation theory by analyzing the culture. Translation should not only cross the language barrier, but also cross the cultural gap. In the final analysis, the translation of language is the translation of culture. The translation should return from the linguistic level to the level of cultural construction. In the process of translation, the specificity of national culture brings a lot of trouble to translation, but we should not change the original text in order to deliberately satisfy the psychological and aesthetic habits of the target language readers. We should take into account in cultural factors, so that the meaning of articles can be translated more accurately. In fact, many foreign words have been absorbed into our language, such as "Clone", "mosaic" and more. English has also absorbed a large number of Chinese words, such as "paper tiger", "lose face", "spring rolls" and more. When the readers see many of these exotic target languages, they will subtly internalize them into national languages. In a word, cultural exchange is a rich vocabulary and each kind of sentence pattern, and can use Chinese to write the beautiful, lively, succinct article. In fact, many foreign words have been absorbed into our language, such as "Clone", "mosaic" and more. English has also absorbed a large number of Chinese words, such as "paper tiger", "lose face", "spring rolls" and more. When the readers see many of these exotic target languages, they will subtly internalize them into national languages. In a word, cultural exchange is a long-term process, both neither can "wholesale westernization" in the translation, nor "completely naturalized". Only by taking an objective and fair view of cultural differences, can the cultural diversity of countries in the world be promoted. We must hold the principle of "seek common points while reserving difference" and "Plural Complementarism" to constantly enrich the target language expression.

In the same work, some parts must adopt semantic translation, and some parts must adopt communicative translation, which complement each other. Considering semantic translation and communicative translation as a whole, it is impossible to use a certain method in isolation in translation, nor can it be said that semantic translation and communicative translation are better. The two are often used interchangeably in translation, but with different emphasis, and sometimes the two approaches are combined.

**CONCLUSION**

Newmark's translation theory provide a new viewpoint for us to consider problems. As for the text classification, the translation method according to different text, and improvement and perfection of his translation theory. First of all, he continues to develop the important role of context in communication. Secondly, he also puts forward a different perspective from Nida, which is different from the reader-oriented perspective and emphasizes the importance of source language text and source language culture. It breaks the translation orientation with the core of discourse language. In addition, the combination of practice and theories in Newmark's works is an invaluable asset for translation learners. In a conclusion, Newmark has a strong enlightening and guiding significance for contemporary translation theory and translation practice.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**