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The Application of Eugene Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory in Jin Yong's Novel' English Version: A Hero Born: Legends of the Condor Heroes

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Abstract: *Jin Yong's masterpiece of martial arts-The Legend of the Condor Heroes - conveys the essence of Chinese martial arts spirit to readers with its ups and downs and rich cultural background. In February 2018, its first volume was finally published in English - A Hero Born: Legends of the Condor Heroes, and the book sells well at home and abroad. Based on Eugene Nida's functional equivalence theory, this paper discusses the application of functional equivalence theory in this translation and its translation effect from three aspects: semantics, style and culture.*

Key words: Nida's functional equivalence theory; literary translation; martial arts fiction; Jin Yong.

1.The Introduction

Martial arts novels are an important part of Chinese traditional literature, and the "martial arts" and "chivalrous spirit" in the novels are the treasures of Chinese folk art. Jin Yong's martial arts novels are full of twists and turns in plot, characters and rich in culture, which give a full play of the heroism and chivalry.

In 2017, Christopher MacLehose, one of the most influential figures in British publishing industry, officially announced the 12-volume series of *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* will be published in succession in English. With his full support, the first volume - *A Hero Born: Legends of the Condor Heroes*, which was translated in 2012 by Anna Holmwood, a Swedish scholar of Chinese at the university of Oxford,

was finally released in February 2018. The translation became a bestseller and opened the world of martial arts to British readers.

On October 30, 2018, the death of Jin Yong, a great master of martial arts novels, triggered a lot of memories and recollections among the public, and again lighted people's enthusiasm for the study of Jin Yong's novels. From the perspective of Eugene Nida's functional equivalence theory, this paper makes a comparative analysis of the original work of *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* and its English translation of its first volume (the first nine chapters of the original work) - *A Hero Born: Legends of the Condor Heroes*. In light of pointed examples, this paper discusses what kind of translation strategies can be adopted in literature translation, especially in the translation of Chinese kung fu novel from the semantic, stylistic and cultural three aspects and by virtue of functional equivalence translation theory, in order to help more Chinese outstanding literary works convert English version. Besides, the article is written to pay my respects to the great Chinese master Jin Yong.

2. Eugene Nida's functional equivalence theory

Eugene a. Nida was a famous American linguist, translator and translation theorist in the 1980s, who wrote a number of books, including *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964) and *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969).

In order to find out a standard and reduce the differences between conversion between source language and target language, Nida proposed in *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969) that translation has "two basic tendencies" or "equivalence type" (Nida, 1964a:159), namely formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on the form and content of the original text, while dynamic equivalence pays more attention to the relationship between the information and the recipient.

The core concept of Nida's theory is "dynamic equivalence", later "kinetic energy equivalence", whose foundation is called "equivalence principle". It refers to that the relationship between the target language reader and the translated information should be basically consistent with the relationship between the source language reader and the original information. He pointed out that "translation is to reproduce the information of the source language from semantic to stylistic in the most appropriate, natural and equivalent language" (Guo Jianzhong, 2000, P65). "Dynamic equivalence" includes four aspects: 1. lexical equivalence; 2. syntactic equivalence; 3. discourse equivalence; 4. stylistic equivalence. In these four aspects, Nida believes that "Meaning is the most important, second by form" (Guo Jianzhong, 2000, P67). Form is likely to hide the cultural meaning of the source language and hinder cultural

communication. The purpose of literary novel translation is to effectively convey the original ideas and writing styles to readers. According to Nida's theory, the translator should take the reader's response as the criterion in the novel translation, and take the four aspects of dynamic equivalence as the translation principles, so as to accurately reproduce the cultural connotation of the source language in the target language.

3. Embodiment of Nida's functional equivalence theory in the English version of *A Hero Born: Legends of the Condor Heroes*

3.1 Functional equivalence at the semantic level

Nida's functional equivalence emphasizes the expressive meaning of translation, followed by the form. Therefore, in the process of Chinese-English translation, the translator should avoid too long and complicated expressions while conveying the precise meaning.

3.1.1 Natural equivalence of lexical meaning -- ingenious conversion to reproduce the source language information

Four-character phrases or idioms often appear in Chinese because they are more concise and artistic. *A Hero Born: Legends of the Condor Heroes* translated the first nine chapters of the original book. The title of each chapter in the original book is presented in a four-character form. The author presents the Chinese and English titles of these nine chapters in the form of tables, with a hope to give readers a more intuitive impression (see table 1) :

Table 1

第一回 风雪惊变	Chapter One Suddenly a Snow Storm	第二回 江南七怪	Chapter Two The Seven Freaks of the South	第三回 大漠风沙	Chapter Three Swirling Sands
第四回 黑风双煞	Chapter Four A Dark Wind Blows	第五回 弯刀射雕	Chapter Five Draw the Bow, Shoot the Condor	第六回 崖顶疑阵	Chapter Six Combat at the Cliff
第七回 比武招亲	Chapter Seven For the Maiden	第八回 各显神通	Chapter Eight Every Man a Mythical Skill	第九回 铁枪破犁	Chapter Nine Spear Splits Plough

As can be seen from table 1, the translator does neither stingy words when translating four-character titles, nor translate them word by word, but uses a variety of translation skills to translate them into smooth and understandable phrases.

Taking the first chapter “Suddenly the Snow Storm” as an example, the translator omits the verb. In chapter 5, the translator adopts the strategy of literal translation and translated it into “Draw the Bow, Shoot the Condor” in the form of orderly imperative sentence, which renders the title more picturesque. Translator translates the title of the chapter 7 into “For the Maiden” with free translation for the sake of expressing the main idea of the chapter to the most western readers who are short of sufficient background information. Domestication translation is a useful approach to help readers picture a competition of marrying a girl in a simple and clear way, which is also conducive to make a suspense so as to arouse the reader's curiosity and interest in reading.

3.1.2 Syntactic equivalence -adjusting word order and supplementing source language context

According to Nida's “functional equivalence theory”, translation can be different from the original in terms of form, but the content should be functional equivalence to the maximum extent. In the book *The Art of Translation*, Xu Yuanchong also pointed out that “translation is to understand the content of the original text through the form of the original text, and then reproduce the content of the original text in the form of the translation. Such reproduction is not a mechanical word-for-word translation, but a recreation of beauty in meaning of the original text”.

Meanwhile, there are great differences between English and Chinese. Chinese focuses on parataxis and expressions of euphemism and implicitness. More often than not, Chinese is simple in grammatical structure and short in sentence structure. Active voice and verbs are commonly used. On the other hand, English pays attention to hypotaxis with direct and clear expressions with complex grammatical structures and long sentence patterns. Passive voice, nouns and adjectives are common in English. Therefore, in the process of translation, the translator should maximize his creativity, combining characteristics of the two languages with appropriate adjustments.

E.g.1: 只见红楼画阁，绣户朱门，雕车竞驻，骏马争驰。高柜巨铺，尽陈齐货异物；茶坊酒肆，但见华眼珠履。真是花光满路，箫鼓喧空；金翠曜日，罗绮飘香。只把他这从未见过世面的少年看的眼花缭乱。

Home to more than a million inhabitants, the streets were lined with decorative red-brick buildings with painted doors, and crowded with ornate carriages. Merchants stacked their storefronts with a multitude of goods, the likes of which Guo Jing had never seen before, as the fragrance of tea leaves wafted into the street. Music hang in

the air, colours, sounds and smells overwhelmed him. Guo Jing did not know which way to look.

Example 1 describes the situation that Guo Jing, who grew up in the desert, saw the capital of the Jin kingdom the first time. In the original text, the sumptuous four-character Chinese is superimposed to exaggerate atmosphere of a noisy and prosperous the Kingdom. But if this expression is literally translated, it will be particularly messy and illogical. The translator needs to choose a suitable angle from many scenes and connect all the images into a line. Many post-positive attributive and prepositional phrases are employed in the translation, which makes the translation have a sense of hierarchy with prominent emphasis and clear priorities. And the words used are appropriate and understandable, and conforms to the natural and plain writing style of original article.

3.2 Functional equivalence at the stylistic level

In *Translation Theory and Practice*, Nida pointed out that “Style, second only to content, is very important”. Translation should not only consider lexical syntax, but also focus on style. A good translation should remain the style of the original. *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* is concise in language, accurately expressing the ideological subject of the work. In translation, it’s imperative to adjust the corresponding expression according to the cultural background of each character, so as to represent characteristics and cultural identity of each character.

E.g.2:

陈玄风高声叫道“贼婆娘，怎么了？”梅超风扶住大树，残声叫道“我一双招子让他们毁了。贼汉子，这七个狗贼只要逃了一个，我跟你拼命。”陈玄风叫道：“贼婆娘，你放心，一个也跑不了。你.....痛不痛？站着别动。”

“My dear harpy, are you alright?” Hurricane Chen called over. “They blinded me!” Cyclone Mei growled back from she was slumped against a tree. “Bastard husband of mine, if you let even one of these scoundrels go, I will kill you myself”. “Don’t worry, old crone,” Chen called back, “they won’t get away from me alive. Are you in pain? Don’t move.”

Example 3 is an extract about an dialogue when “iron corpse” - Mei Chaofeng who was hurt by “Jiangnan Seven Strange” with poison darts and got blind, asked her husband “Copper Corpse” - Chen Xuanfeng for help. In the original text, the two couples called each other in a rather vulgar way, and Mei Chaofeng was also very tough to her husband. Given Mei Chaofeng and Chen Xuanfeng are two very cruel and snaky figures, such form of addresses and attitude is not surprising.

But although “harpy” and “bastard” are by no means good appellations, it is not difficult to see the deep love between the two people. Chen Xuanfeng cares Mei

chaofeng and repeatedly asks how serious her injury was. And after Chen Xuanfeng dies, Mei Chaofeng lives only for vengeance for her husband. In translation, it's necessary not only to restore the "name-calling" style of the two, but also show their deep affection. The translator also realizes this point and therefore she adds "My dear" and "husband of mine" to the address to emphasize the intimacy of the two. In addition, "harpy" and "old crone" were used to replace the same title in original text, which enriches the word diversity and makes the article more readable and interesting. Besides, here "crone" means "crony" with a connotation of close friend. According to the identities and characteristics of the two people, the translator also tries to make the readers understand a weird emotion between the two people that "beating is intimacy, cursing is love". The translator reshapes the characters' images in details, enriches the characters' emotions, and reproduces the colloquial style of the original text at the same time.

3.3 Functional equivalence at the cultural level

Nida proposed that language is a part of culture, and the role of language in culture and the influence of culture on vocabulary and idioms are ubiquitous (Nida, 2001). Translation can be said to be a comparison of two cultures and a cross-cultural communication in a certain cultural context. Therefore, it's advisable to put translation into a larger cultural context than language. For example, among sundry potent martial arts skills of different schools, *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* also displays a magic kung fu relative to acupuncture points. The following are the names of acupuncture points mentioned in original text with their English translations (see table 2) :

Table 2

璇玑穴	the Jade Pivot pressure point just below the collarbone
廉泉穴	the Ridge Spring on her throat
太阳穴	the Great Sun pressure point on the temples
百合穴	the Hundred Convergences on the crown
曲池穴	the Arching Pool vital point on the inside of Mei's elbow
神阙穴	the Spirit Gate on her abdomen
鸠昆穴	the Tend the Aged Pressure point on the wrist
中枢穴	the Central Pivot in the middle of her back

To hit at certain acupoints is a unique skill of Chinese martial arts. However, it is difficult to find a word for these points in English. And so is it for foreign language readers to distinguish the transliterated words in different acupoints. In light of table 2, translator carries out free translation to clarify the name connotation of each acupoint. In addition, the translator further explains the general orientation of each acupoint

body in the form of prepositional phrases, so as to convey the cultural information of the original text to the target readers and realize the “functional equivalence” of the content. This translation strategy not only transcend cultural barriers, but also spreads the corresponding Chinese medical science knowledge and expands the readers' cultural vision.

4. Recommendations

Although the objective existence of cultural differences determines that readers' reactions are unlikely to be the same (Guo, 2000), the difficulties in the translation of cultural words are also the limitations of functional equivalence in literary translation, but it does not mean that functional equivalence theory is no longer applicable in the translation of cultural words. Translators should not be too obsessed with the existing “equivalence”, but break the limitations and consider the whole text of the translation, so as to achieve the “equivalence’ in different ways.

In order to achieve the translation criterion of “faithfulness and smoothness”, translators need to apply the theory of “functional equivalence” to translation practice. On the other hand, we should enlarge the translator’s creativity, avoid the translation cavity, pursue the smooth translation, and achieve the highest level of functional equivalence.

5. Conclusion

The author realized the importance of translation theory in reading the original and English version - *A Hero Born: Legends of the Condor Heroes*. Eugene Nida’s theory of “functional equivalence” has practical implications for the analysis of literary translation both in theory and in practice.

Throughout the whole translation, the translator Anna Holmwood adopts transliteration, amplification, omission, rewriting, annotation and other translation strategies in the translation, which skillfully realizes the functional equivalence in the translation and reproduces the style and martial arts spirit of the original text. It reduces the reading barrier for English readers to the greatest extent, increases their reading interest and fun, and opens the door to the martial arts world for them.

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