Study on Internet-Based Translation Criticism from the Participatory Perspective: Taking the Translation Forum of Douban.com as an Example

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ABSTRACT

The development of Internet technology opens up a new space for translation criticism. Researches on internet-based translation criticism have focused on the mode, current situation, characteristics and other aspects of internet-based translation criticism, paying little attention to the subjects' participation of internet-based translation criticism. This paper, from the perspective of participation, by collecting data on the posts of Douban.com's translation forum, explores the features of post themes, critics, and the replies, then seeks the reasons behind. It finds that in the translation forum, participants are of great variety, ranging from professional translators to general users, and social platforms exert great impacts on participation of internet-based translation forums, including the wider extent of participation with less productive interaction. In order to promote the high-quality internet-based translation criticism, it is suggested that normative internet translation criticism forums should be established to inspire more scholars to join the online translation criticism community.

Keywords: internet-based translation criticism; participatory theory; the translation forum; Douban.com

1. INTRODUCTION

An article written by Lin Zhiyuan(2010:49) made an introduction to the Internet-based translation criticism. Internet-based translation criticism, as a new form of translation criticism, is the result of modern high technology. Its material basis is computer and its propagation depends on electronic techniques.

In recent years, internet-based translation criticism is mainly studied from aspects of the mode, current situation, features, etc.. However, there are few articles on the subjects' participation of internet-based translation criticism.

This paper, taking the translation forum of Douban.com as an example, from the participatory perspective, analyzes the Internet-based translation criticism. Theoretically, this research will broaden the vision of current translation criticism researches. In practice, this thesis offers some suggestions to the construction of normative Internet translation forums.

2. PARTICIPATION AND INTERACTION IN THE WEB-BASED FORUM

2.1. Participatory Culture in the Era of Digitalization

In 1992, professor Henry Jenkins, an American communication scientist, first proposed the concept of "participatory culture" in his famous book Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture, which is used to describe the phenomenon that the strengthening interaction between transmitters and receivers as well as within audiences, "In the past, news information dissemination was achieved through "media producers-media consumers". This dissemination mode is one-way without feedback. However, it has been changed since the rise of participatory culture. In today's information dissemination, the audience not only acts as the active receiver of news information, but also the disseminator.[1] " Jenkins elaborated participatory culture in his Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st

Century, "participatory culture refers to a brand-new media culture style of openness, interaction and cooperation created by online audiences through actively disseminating news information, strengthening interactive communication, and creating media texts via various platforms provided by Web2.0 on the basis of establishing their identities[2]".

Exploring the connotation of participatory culture, it can be found that it emphasizes the initiative of individual participation driven by the development of new digital communication technology, and the participation behavior involves life learning, creative expression, virtual community and other content. Participatory culture connects individuals' media consumption with a wider digital communication network. With the help of emerging social media and its social functions, individuals can easily participate in the production of media culture. The roles of consumers, producers and disseminators in the cultural industry can change and overlap at any time. The inherent one-way communication mode becomes a two-way interactive communication mode. The traditional passive media culture turns to a participatory culture centering on sharing and creation.

2.2. Characteristics of Participation and Interaction in the Web-based Forum

First, the Web-based forum gives full play to the openness of the Internet, which refers to its openness to users, so that free expression of opinions is no longer the patent of the powerful and intellectual elites. The general public, including disadvantaged groups and marginalized groups, truly have a certain right to speak. The openness of the Web-based forum allows netizens to freely participate in the forum to discuss issues of common concern, and to listen to and understand other people's speeches without interference from others. Therefore, voices from all social classes can be heard in the Web-based forum. Second, strong interactivity is another feature of the Web-based forum. The communication mode of the Web-based forum is group communication centered on a certain theme. Like-minded people can meet online at anytime without worrying about the cost, and because it avoids the embarrassment that often occurs in human-to-human communication, online users can speak freely and participate actively. Besides, in the Web-based forum, people's identities are semi-public. The web-based forum is a virtual community. To join in this community, first, users should apply for a user name. For veteran netizens, their IDs are stable. Some forums even have their opinion leaders, who can often spread some news, or can express their own unique views on news events. Although some opinion leaders may be famous in a large circle, what people know is the ID, not the real identity.

3. TRANSLATION CRITICISM IN THE WEB-BASED FORUM

Today, the rapid development of Internet technology has brought the profound change for all walks of life. Many virtual platforms, with the traits of virtuality and immediacy, have become a new field of translation criticism. More and more ordinary people, in the network environment, can participate in translation criticism activities.

3.1. Overview of Internet-based Translation Criticism

Translation criticism pays attention to specific translation phenomena in translation practice. It has the purpose and function of indirectly serving translation practice (Zhao Wei, Bo Zhenjie(2008:75). There are many papers and monographs on translation criticism in the translation field, especially literary translation criticism, but there are few articles on translation criticism in the network environment. According to the information of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), several papers directly use names related to internet-based translation criticism (Huang Xiaoyan (2013), Wang Yiduo(2014), Ren Ling(2015), Wang Fangfang(2016), Pang Jing (2018), Zhu Anbo, Liu Chang(2021). Besides, articles related to internet-based translation criticism include Liu Yunhong (2008), Yang Xiaorong (2010), Lan Hongjun (2012), etc. These articles all agree that there is a dearth of research on internet-based translation criticism.

At present, in addition to advising that more attention should be paid to the study of Internet-based translation criticism, Xu Jun and Gao Fang (2006) discussed the characteristics, significance and existing problems of online criticism of literary translation, and put forward three types of Internet-based literature translation criticism. Liu Yunhong (2008) talked about the timely, rapid and enthusiastic response of Internet-based translation criticism in the absence of irrational traditional translation criticism and translation practice. In recent years, the emergence of internet-based translation criticism has attracted the attention of translation circles and is regarded as an expansion of translation criticism space. Lin Zhiyuan(2010) believes that the Internet has provided a brand-new modern platform for translation criticism, especially literary translation criticism. Lan Hongjun (2012) spends a large amount of space proposing that the Internet should be effectively utilized to carry out translation criticism, and guide translation to develop in a healthy and positive direction, which will become an important field of translation criticism and its research. In addition, in Xiao Weiqing's (2010) monograph, there is a subsection on internet-based translation criticism and non-Internet

translation criticism, but due to the limited space, it cannot give a detailed discussion.

The initial research was mainly just an introduction to internet-based translation criticism. Recent studies have begun to explore the construction of Internet-based translation criticism mechanisms and patterns of Internet-based translation criticism from the perspective of Communication. However, these are still a small part of internet-based translation criticism. A comprehensive, in-depth and systematic discussion is required.

3.2. Differences Between Internet-based Translation Criticism and Traditional Translation Criticism

Peter Newmark(1988:184), the famous translation theorist and linguist, said in his book A Textbook of Translation, "Translation criticism is an essential link between the translation theory and its practice", and gave specialized discussion of translation criticism.

Traditional translation criticism spreads through print media, such as newspapers, books, magazines and other forms of publication. Compared with the translation criticism via paper media, internet-based translation criticism has its own features.

3.2.1. Language Style

For language style, traditional translation criticism is very formal and terminological. Due to the anonymity of network, the language of Internet-based translation criticism is more random and colloquial.

3.2.2. Translation Methods

Translation criticism via paper media tends to use translation theories to analyze translated texts. However, the criteria of internet-based translation criticism are very plain. Ordinary people can also make comments just by personal feelings.

3.2.3. Translated Texts

Traditional translation criticism concentrates on the translations of famous works, while internet-based translation criticism mainly focuses on the translations of best-selling novels. The openness of the Internet improves the status of readers.

3.2.4. Participants

Participants of traditional translation criticism are experts and scholars who have very professional translation knowledge. On the contrary, the subjects of internet-based translation criticism are mostly ordinary readers without any specialized knowledge. Therefore, the rising of internet-based translation criticism offers more space for us to recognize the function and status of readers.

3.2.5. Propagation Mode

Critics of traditional translation criticism mainly depend on paper media, such as some journals and magazines to express their opinions. However, internet-based translation criticism spreads on some communicative platforms such as BBS, Weibo, etc.. Besides, the spread speed of internet-based translation criticism is faster than that of translation criticism via paper media.

4. AN ANALYSIS OF USERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE TRANSLATION FORUM OF DOUBAN.COM

4.1. Sample Selection

Through a search in the Douban.com translation forum, it is found that there are only four Douban groups about translation criticism. They are "Translation Criticism", "Academic Translation Criticism", "Fantasy Literature Translation Criticism" and "Economist Translation Criticism". Therefore, this thesis, taking these as samples, gives an analysis from the aspects of post themes, critics, and the number of replies.

4.2. Sample Statistics

Table 1. Data Statistics of "Translation Criticism" Group in The Translation Forum of Douban.com

Groups Aspects	Translation Criticism(1871 members, founded on November 28th, 2007)			
Themes	quality of translated texts (2 in total)	recruitment of translator s(34 in total)	recommendation and evaluation of new translation platforms(5 in total)	sharing of English learning resources(6 in total)
Critics	professional translators; grassroots translators; other general users	grassroots translators	general users	general users
The number of replies	32 (totally)	25(totally)	10(totally)	3(totally)

Note: Data collection from 2007 to 2021

Table 2. Data Statistics of "Academic Translation Criticism" Group in The Translation Forum of Douban.com

Groups Aspects	Academic Translation Criticism(629 members, founded on May 18th, 2009)		
Themes	quality of translated texts(6 in total)	recruitment of translators(11 in total)	criticism of controversial translators(5 in total)
Critics	general users	grassroots translators	general users
The number of replies	3 (totally)	6(totally)	7(totally)

Note: Data collection from 2009 to 2021

Table 3. Data Statistics of "Fantasy Literature Translation Criticism" Group in The Translation Forum of Douban.com

Groups Aspects	Fantasy Literature Translation Criticism(33members, founded on June 23rd, 2007)	
Themes	quality of translated texts (1 in total)	analysis of the status quo of all classes in China's translation industry (1 in total)
Critics	general users	grassroots translators
The number of replies	4 (totally)	2(totally)

Note: Data collection from 2007 to 2021

Table 4. Data Statistics of "Economist Translation Criticism" Group in The Translation Forum of Douban.com

Groups Aspects	Economist Translation Criticism(894members, founded on February 2nd,2020)	
Themes	practice of punching in Economist(1 in total)	sharing of Economist resources(21 in total)
Critics	translation enthusiasts	general users
The number of replies	19(totally)	21(totally)

Note: Data collection from 2020 to 2021

4.3. Sample Analysis

Statistics show that posts themed quality of translated texts gain responses from professional translators, grassroots translators and general users. The texts discussed by these people are almost all excerpts from a literary translation. They often use words such as "unsatisfied", "a real surprise", etc. , to criticize these excerpts, and some even give their own translation version at the bottom of the post so as to invite further criticism. Posts themed criticism of controversial translators are much talked by general users. They tend to use modal particles to briefly express their opinions. Besides, there are also some posts about sharing of English-related resources, recommendation and evaluation of new translation platforms, and analysis of the status quo of all classes in China's translation industry. These posts gain replies mostly from general

users or translation enthusiasts who want to expand their scope of knowledge.

It is also worth noting that posts of translators' recruitment are totally the most published and gain the highest responses compared with any other posts, and their critics are virtually all grassroots translators. It is because that, in today's competitive era, the ever-increasing employment pressure has forced grassroots translators to pay more attention to obtaining economic capital through translation behavior. Therefore, posts directly related to capital competition, such as job-seeking experience and resource sharing, are more attractive [3].

From the analysis, it can be seen that the participants of internet-based translation criticism vary from

professional translators, grassroots translators, translation enthusiasts to general users. The diversity of participants shows that anyone can express their opinions about translation in the era of "We" media. In addition, these opinions individuals publish online can get replies in no time. In the network environment, two-way interactive communication mode replaces the inherent one-way communication mode of the traditional media, making internet-based translation criticism becomes more open and interactive.

However, due to the emergence of WeChat Moments, people spend a lot of fragmented time reading WeChat Moments, Weibo, etc., so the time that they use to write high -quality translation and criticism articles have been replaced by a lot of shallow reading and thinking. For instance, weblog was all the rage a decade ago. At present, there are quite a few blogs on the Internet, including translation criticism blogs, which have been stopped or less updated. Translation forums are similarly affected. In recent years, the number of pure translation criticism articles posted on most forums has also decreased. The translation forum of Douban.com is a good example. The statistics above show that it has stopped updating.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNET TRANSLATION FORUMS

Social platforms fully drive the initiative of individual participation. However, there are also some other problems. To begin with, they have restrictions on the length of the text. For example, Sina Weibo once limited the number of words in a microblog to 140 characters, while the number of words in WeChat Moments could not exceed 700 characters [4]. It can be seen that the two pursue the quantity of information output and the speed of information dissemination. However, the more depth in-reasoning requires a certain amount of text support, so the short-length translation criticism on these applications is not thorough. In addition, WeChat Moments is weak in anonymity. Due to acquaintances, there are more "likes" and less criticism, which is not conducive to the collision of ideas and the formation of insightful translation criticisms. Internet translation forums, with the advantages of unlimited words and high anonymity, play a vital role in the further development of internet-based translation criticism. However, more participants make the quality of posts vary, and some themes are even not related to translation. Therefore, it is necessary to establish normative Internet translation criticism forums.

It is suggested that different translation criticism columns should be set up for different perspectives involved in translation criticism. For example, opening a column for translators to comment on the translated works, translation styles and translation theories of a Chinese or foreign translator. What's more, creating interactive columns for readers, translators and publishers are indispensable, because participation and interaction is key factors for the development of Internet translation criticism forums.

6. CONCLUSION

Although the development of Internet is already overwhelming, there are still few relevant researches on internet-based translation criticism. As a new translation criticism form, Internet provides a good interactive platform for ordinary people. Meanwhile, Internet-based translation also exposes some problems. Therefore, it is necessary to make use of relevant theories to guide internet-based translation criticism and construct specialized interactive platforms for online translation activities.

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