



Application of Transknowletology to the Reevaluation of Pragmatics Translation

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Abstract. The notion of Transknowletology, coined by a Chinese scholar named Yang Feng, Professor of Shanghai Jiaotong University, witnessed its own debut in 2021. It combines the theories of Knowledge with Translatology, offering a creative perspective for translation studies. Pragmatics Translation has experienced over 30 years of development in China and it is currently stuck in its falling period. This paper aims to reevaluate the development of Pragmatics Translation from the perspective of Transknowletology, attempting to offer suggestions to break through the development bottleneck.

Keywords: Transknowletology, Pragmatics Translation, Knowledge, culture.

1 Introduction

Translation, as a complicated human activity, runs through the history of human society, referred to as “the key to scientific development”. ([3] Fischbach, 1992: 194) It is both the media of linguistic communication and the bridge of cultural exchange. ([10] Xiao, Li & Kang, 2023: 43) The definition of translation has long been debated in the academic world. Many of the discussions around the topic merely stay on the linguistic and cultural dimensions. Professor Yang Feng from Shanghai Jiaotong University first compared translation to a road, on which my scholars come and go without calling “the name of Knowledge”. He also pointed out that language and culture are only “the use and dimension of translation”. ([12] Yang, 2021a: 26) Therefore, he made efforts to define translation from the dimension of Knowledge. He explained the relationship between Knowledge and culture, admitting the intercommunity of the two concepts. Moreover, he emphasized that Knowledge puts human practical experience first, rendering itself high objectivity, and that culture focuses more on the spiritual aspect. ([13] Yang, 2021b: 35) Based on his research, another Chinese scholar Meng Xiangchun, Professor of Suzhou University, puts forward the concept of “Knowledge-culture Entanglement”, enhancing Yang’s discourse about Knowledge and culture. ([8] Meng, 2022: 62) Besides, Meng completed the logic of naming for this emerging field and constructed a referential system of critical concepts. Meanwhile, Li Ruilin (2022), Qin Jianghua (2022), Pang Xiucheng (2022) other scholars offered instructive suggestions

on the topic and enhanced the theoretical framework of Transknowletology. ([1] Chen, 2022: 46)

Transknowletology has made a creative effort to change the position of culture from the internal elements of traditional translation theory to external relationships. It advocates that the ultimate significance of translation is to realized “the transcendental evolution of Knowledge from localization to universality”. ([14] Yang, 2022: 2) The ontological significance of Transknowletology is self-evident in its definition of Knowledge attributes for translation, which can offer an original research perspective to study translation studies. In this paper, Pragmatics Translation is to be reevaluated through the lens of Transknowletology.

2 Pragmatics Translation

The birth of Pragmatics Translation can be dated back to the “Pragmatics Transition” in philosophical and linguistic studies. ([17] Zeng, 2007:2) Hatim and Mason proposed a series of theories about the connection between Pragmatics and translation, including the Principle of Cooperation, Intercultural Communication and so on in 1990. ([4] Hatim and Mason, 1990: 2) Their advocacy gave rise to discussions on the possibility of theoretical combination of the two fields in the international academic world. ([2] Fang and Li, 2023: 91)

In China, He Ziran and Duan Kaicheng (1988) first put the fields together, providing translators with a new perspective. Since then, Pragmatics Translation has gone through nearly 35 years of development domestically. Over the course of development, Pragmatics Translation has witnessed three periods: initial period, development period and falling period. ([15] Yao and Tang, 2023: 351).

Currently, domestic Pragmatics Translation is stuck in an impasse in which “progress is stable while the bottleneck is hard to break through”. ([6] Li, 2023: 8) Early in 2008, Li Zhanxi critically analyzed the problems in Pragmatics Translation, involving creativity, imitation, empirical study and so on. ([7] Li, 2008: 24) Based on the problems Li proposed and the research outcomes in the past decade, the problems existing are analyzed below.

2.1 Lack of Theoretical Creativity

Domestic studies on Pragmatics Translation mostly hover on Adaption Theory and Relevance Theory with rare theoretical innovation and introduction. ([11] Xu and Liu, 2021: 93) In term of research methods, domestic pragmatic scholars tend to copy or imitate the old framework offered by the western academic world. Besides, Pragmatics Translation lacks further interdisciplinary research and new perspectives. Moreover, it still stays on the linguistic and cultural dimensions with a long-standing absence of ontological review on translation.

2.2 Lack of Valuable Empirical Study

What Li proposed remaining unsolved in today's research is "the massive theoretical deduction instead of hands-on study on corpus". ([7] Li, 2008: 24) Domestic scholars in the field of Pragmatics Translation spend too much time extending the existing theories. Besides, the dimensions of culture and context, two core concepts in Pragmatics Translation, have been excessively discussed to an extent where it is extremely hard for scholars to carry their research onto a new level.

2.3 Lack of Closer Intra-theoretical Connection

With deeper understanding of Pragmatics and Translatology, the theoretical connection in-between is showing a discrete tendency owing to a lack of "generalists" in both Pragmatics and Translatology. Many domestic researchers mechanically regurgitate opinions from western scholars, only to find out that the introduced theories can achieve a happy chime with translating cases, causing the theories dangling high practical cases.

3 Transknowletology

Transknowletology has successfully defined translation in a new way — a cultural and social practice of manufacturing, reconstructing and redistributing cross-linguistic Knowledge. ([13] Yang, 2021b: 35) It suggests that linguistic transition is only the superficial feature while connection of Knowledge is the intrinsic characteristic of translation. ([5] Li, 2023: 16) Revolving around the concept of Knowledge, Transknowletology offers an instructive theoretical framework.

3.1 Knowledge Globalization

According to its definition of translation, Transknowletology equates translation to Knowledge Interaction, which refers to the interaction between the localization and universality of Knowledge. On the one hand, Knowledge Globalization symbolizes the theoretical return to the ontological discussions about the essence in the definition of translation. On the other hand, it promotes the traditional research level onto a world-wide Knowledge transmission.

3.2 Identity-difference Spectrum of Knowledge

Identity-difference Spectrum of Knowledge consists of three parts — Area of Knowledge Identity, Area of Knowledge Discrepancy and Area of Knowledge Conflict. It perfectly puts practical translation cases into three "buckets". Under the guidance, hands-on suggestions can be concluded for translators.

3.3 Knowledge-culture Entanglement

Over the course of Knowledge Globalization, there is no such thing as Pure Knowledge. The transmission of Knowledge is bound to entangle with culture. Therefore, Knowledge is considered as culture itself when we study Knowledge Globalization. Meanwhile, we shall also make it clear that Knowledge and culture have respective preferences on the description of translation.

3.4 Knowledge Translation Paradox

Intercultural translation involving Knowledge transmission will benefit bilateral Knowledge Ecology, enlarging the range of Knowledge reservoir. However, in the context of globalization, Knowledge translation will also lead to convergence of Knowledge between countries and regions, thereby reducing the richness of Knowledge Ecology. The paradox seems remarkably prescient in the way it appears to have predicted the outcomes of Knowledge transmission.

4 Theoretical Application

The theoretical application of Transknowletology to Pragmatics Translation is feasible for the following reasons: 1) The two areas share an identical research field in culture; 2) The two areas are both interdisciplinary research fields based on translation; 3) The problems existing the Pragmatics Translation give rise to the needs for new theoretical introduction; 4) Transknowletology, as a newly discussed area, can bring insights to the theoretical creativity of Pragmatics Translation. By such theoretical application, problems in Pragmatics Translation may find solutions. Besides, prospects in the area can be anticipated.

4.1 New Definition and New Perspective

In Pragmatics Translation, the concept of translation is defined as a process in which the information expressed is transmitted to make it understood in certain context. It places it focus on the contextual elements that may affect the conveyance of true meaning. Besides, it also classifies culture into contextual elements. Therefore, Pragmatics Translation revolves around the effect of context in translation.

Transknowletology has offered a creative perspective for translation studies. First, it defines translation as a process of Knowledge transmission, which means that the purpose of translation is to realize Knowledge Globalization. It has puts translation onto a level of world significance. Second, it removes culture from the inner elements to external elements and advocates that Knowledge is an intrinsic property of translation. Its ontological return to the core part of translation has demonstrated new possibilities to theoretical innovation. Moreover, many translation research outcomes entitled "Based on Adaption Theory/Relevance Theory....." share the same theoretical starting point of cultural differences, neglecting "the inherent and core Knowledge

level of the original texts". ([16] Yue and Chen, 2022: 65) Given that situation, Transknowletology can offer methodological guidance for translation studies.

4.2 New Standard and New Classification

In Pragmatics Translation, contexts has been elaborated and categorized differently. In general, contexts are categorized into two groups — linguistic context and non-linguistic context. ([9] Ran, 2006: 12) However, as the needs for translation diversify, the classification that is still in use today no longer meets the analytical standards in translation.

Based on Identity-difference Spectrum of Knowledge, translation is analyzed from three separate perspectives — Area of Knowledge Identity, Area of Knowledge Discrepancy and Area of Knowledge Conflict. More specifically, from the perspectives, contexts in Pragmatics Translation can be categorized for detailed case study. For example, in a text that contains two persons, the translator shall analyze the knowledge backgrounds of the two people separately and come to basic judgments whether the two persons share a similar knowledge area. This may offer instructive suggestions to further process the contextual information in the original text.

Besides, Identity-difference Spectrum of Knowledge may spark insights in enhancing the readability for Pragmatics Translation. Based on the theory, Pragmatics Translation may witness the extension of the concept of context. That is to say, the knowledge backgrounds of the readers shall also be regarded as part of context. For instance, when translating works of Children's Literature, complicated information or concepts shall be explained in simple and understandable words or phrases considering children's limited knowledge reserve. Annotations could be made if necessary.

On the one hand, Identity-difference Spectrum of Knowledge offers new classification for the analysis of contexts in the original text. On the other hand, with the theoretical extension of the key concept of context, the knowledge backgrounds of the targeted readers become a vital branch of the "context tree" as well as a standard to judge whether the rendition has sufficient readability.

4.3 New Medium and New Connection

The key notion of Transknowletology, Knowledge, can be perfectly applied to the detailed and creative explanation of theoretical connection between different concepts in Pragmatics Translation. Over the course of such explanation, Knowledge acts as a new medium to consolidate the cohesiveness within the theoretical framework of Pragmatics Translation.

As is conventionally proposed by Pragmatics Translation about catchwords, New combination of words is formulated owing to the inexpressiveness of old use of language as social life advances, which gives rise to the need of introduction of new words and thoughts from other cultures. Such definition has long been used and discussed. It revolves around the superficial cause of the evolution of language use and fails to reach to the core of cultural exchange. Therefore, when we put Knowledge into consideration, it is not surprising to find out that catchwords are essentially an epitome of

“Knowledge Conflict”, which reflects the profound cause of Scissors Differential of Knowledge that exist between not only individuals but also countries and regions.

The phenomenon of catchwords is a collective linguistic behavior that cover complicated cultural elements, which perfectly matches the research lens of Pragmatics Translation. In other words, Pragmatics Translation merely deems catchwords as a critical linguistic phenomenon. However, the formulation of catchwords is commonly neglected, which may cover deeper causes of how cultural exchange is driven and generated. Apart from the domestic need for new words to fill the blank of linguistic expression, the deeper reason why catchwords come into being is the asymmetry of Knowledge, which is resulted from worldwide developmental disequilibrium. Cultural exchange actually shows the Ripple Effect of Knowledge in which Knowledge is spread from Knowledge Center to Knowledge Periphery, which is called Central-periphery Knowledge Dissemination.

From the explanation above, catchwords actually demonstrate the process of experiencing Knowledge Conflict and of attempting to keep pace with the world’s cultural development. Studies on catchwords can exert positive influence on promoting cultural and ideological progress domestically. The introduction of Knowledge into Pragmatics Translation has increasingly proved the theoretical significance of deeper research in the field.

5 Conclusions

By such theoretical application, scholars studying Pragmatics Translation may get inspiration in how to lead this area to more profound research. Pragmatics Translation will usher in a broader development prospects.

5.1 A More Complete Theoretical Framework

The application of Transknowletology has shown a strong advantage in the improvement of the theories in Pragmatics Translation. Firstly, it offers new research perspectives to study contextual information in the original text for reference. Secondly, its ontological return to the core part of translation studies is bound to give rise to more possibilities of theoretical innovation in Pragmatics Translation. Thirdly, it provides us with a feasible path of extending the concept of context to enhance to readability of Pragmatics Translation works. Last but not the least, it greatly strengthens the inner connection within the theoretical framework of Pragmatics Translation.

5.2 Feasible Methodological Guidance

Pragmatics Translation is one of the most practical areas in all types of translation studies. However, revolving around contexts, Pragmatics Translation has shown limitations in covering the increasingly complicated original texts and in catering to the diversity of readers.

Therefore, the new classification provided by Transknowletology has further elaborated the division of contexts based on knowledge backgrounds, which may give translators more hands-on methods for translation analysis. Besides, its insights in theoretical extension also demonstrates valuable reference for readability enhancement.

5.3 Closer Interdisciplinary Connection

Translation studies is endowed with a high level of interdisciplinarity. Pragmatics Translation itself is a creative area that blends Pragmatics and Translation into a new and independent field, which holds true for Transknowletology. By borrowing useful concepts from Transknowledge into Pragmatics Translation, there will be new possibilities for theoretical innovation to reverse the stagnancy in Pragmatics Translation.

The successful application will offer a model for future interdisciplinary studies, thus reinforcing the connection between Pragmatics Translation and other related areas. Such closer interdisciplinary link will generate strong incentives for exploring new possibilities of theoretical renovation.

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