A Case Study on Yang Hsien-yi's Translation of *A Dream of Red Mansion* From the Perspective of Vinay and Darbelnet's Model

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Abstract: As China launched the "going out" strategy of culture, a batch of Chinese classics have been retranslating. Being one of the representatives of Chinese classics, *A Dream of Red Mansion* has reached cult status in literary studies. This study presents a case analysis on Yang Hsien-yi's translation of *A Dream of Red Mansion* from the perspective of Vinay and Darbelnet's model, finding out the application of this theory in Chinese classics translation and offering new inspiration for future translation practice and studies.

Keywords: Vinay and Darbelnet's model; *A Dream of Red Mansion*; Chinese classics; Translation studies

1. Introduction to Research Background

The rising of China in all aspects has enabled China itself to step into the center of the world. The rest of the world is in want of exploring China deeply; China should tell its own stories in attractive ways to show its beauty to others. As English still dominates the world, translation is an indispensable process in the cultural strategy. However, people from English culture may not be interested in foreign cultures; what we need to do is to select and translate works containing core values of Chinese culture (Ban, 2018).[4]

This study is based on *A Dream of Red Mansion* from the perspective of Vinay and Darbelnet's model. *A Dream of Red Mansion*, one of the Four Great Classical Novels in China, was translated by Yang Hsien-yi and his wife, which is regarded as one of the famous translated versions. Vinay and Darbelnet's model of translation shifts has exerted considerable influence on translation theorists and was useful in bringing to light a wide range of different translation techniques (Munday,2016).[2] Using Vinay and Darbelnet's model to examine *A Dream of Red Mansion* can a unique understanding of the latter and encourage more contributions to the translation of Chinese classics.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 Vinay and Darbelnet's model

Since the 1950s, a variety of linguistic approaches to the analysis of translation have proposed detailed lists or taxonomies in an effort to categorize what happens in translation (ibid:87). French scholars J.P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet compared and analyzed French text and English text from three dimensions—the lexicon, syntactic structures, and the message, *in Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*. They put forward two strategies and seven procedures in the process of translation. Table 1 displays the taxonomy of the two strategies and seven procedures. At first, the different methods or procedures seem to be countless, but they can be condensed to just seven, each one corresponding to a higher degree of complexity (Viney & Darbelnet, 1995).

Translation Strategies	Translation Procedures
Direct translation	*Borrowing, calque and literal translation*
Oblique translation	*Transposition, modulation, equivalence or idiomatic translation and adaptation*

Table 1. Vinay and Darbelnet's Model (1958)

2.1.1 Direct Translation

According to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995)[3], translators can choose direct translation if the two languages are parallel in structure or concepts. The direct translation covers three procedures: borrowing, calque and literal translation.

2.1.1.1 Borrowing

To overcome a lacuna, usually a metalinguistic one (e.g. a new technical process, an unknown concept), borrowing is the simplest of all translation methods (ibid: 31). For example, some borrowings from Chinese: Kungfu, Confucius, Taoism and dim sum, etc.

2.1.1.2 Calque

A calque is a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements (ibid:32). It contains 'lexical calque' (ibid:32) and 'structural calque'(ibid:32). After the Watergate scandal was exposed, there were lots of Chinese calques to describe bad phenomena, such as "艳照门"and "兽兽门". These too, like borrowings,

may have undergone a semantic change, turning them into false friends (ibid:33).

2.1.1.3 Literal Translation

As for literal translation, this is a word-for-word translation, which Vinay and Darbelnet describe as being most common between languages of the same family and culture (Munday,2016).[2]

2.1.2 Oblique translation

After trying the first three procedures, translators still cannot work out an acceptable translation; they must turn to oblique translation.

2.1.2.1 Transposition

The method called transposition involves replacing one-word class with another without changing the meaning of the message (Vinay & Darbelnet,1995).[3] Doing translation between Chinese and English involves uncountable changes in part of speech, such as from verb to adverb, or from adjective to verb, etc.

2.1.2.2 Modulation

This change can be justified when, although a literal, or even transposed, translation results in a grammatically correct utterance, it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL (ibid: 36). Modulation can be divided into nine types at the level of message. Munday (2016)[2] has made a summary of the nine types (see table 2).

Types	Examples
From general to particular	*Give a little blood. →Give a pint of blood.*
From effect to cause	*You're quite a stranger. →We don't see you anymore.*
From whole to part	*He shut the door in my face→He shut the door in my nose.*
From part to another part	*He cleared his throat. →He cleared his voice.*
Reversal of terms	*You can have it. →I'll give it to you.*
Negation of opposite	*It does not seem unusual. → It is very normal.*
From active to passive	*We are not allowed to access the internet. →They don't allow us to access the internet.*
Rethinking of the intervals and limits in space and time	*No parking between signs. →Limits of parking.*
Change of symbol	*The mustard rose up to his nose. →He became very angry.*

Table 2

2.1.2.3 Equivalence

We have repeatedly stressed that one and the same situation can be rendered by two texts using completely different stylistic and structural methods (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995).[3] In such cases we are dealing with the method which produces equivalent texts (ibid:38). According to the two scholars (1995), the perfect example of equivalence is "proverb". For example, as China is a country based on traditional agriculture, "牛" is the major tool to work on the farm. That helps to explain why "牛" is usually used to describe a man of honesty and diligence. English people are from nomadic tribe, and "horse" means everything to them. From this perspective, "俯首甘为孺子牛" and "a willing horse" reach equivalence; they refer to the same situation.

2.2 Significance of Vinay and Darbelnet's Model in the Study

Although the model proposed in *Comparative Stylistic of French and English* centers solely on the French-English translation, its influence has been much wider (Munday, 2006).[2] Classic taxonomy of Vinay and Darbelnet continues to exert influence even today and was useful in bringing to light a wide range of different translation techniques(ibid:109). Using this model to analyze *A Dream of Red Mansion* can provide more inspiration to push the development of China's cultural strategies.

3 Case Study

3.1 Borrowing

Usually, two kinds of borrowing are included in the process of translation: borrowing in accordance with the word's pronunciation or meaning.

Example: SL:原来女娲氏炼石补天之时，于大荒山无稽崖炼成高经十二丈，方经二十四丈顽石三万六千五百零一块。

TL: When the goddess Nu Wa melted down rocks to repair the sky, at Baseless Cliff in the Great Waste Mountain she made thirty-six thousand five hundred and one blocks of stone, each a hundred and twenty feet high and two hundred and forty feet square.

Note: In this example, "大荒山"is translated into "the Great Waste Mountain" and "Baseless Cliff" is for "无稽崖".In fact, "大荒山" and "无稽崖"are two fictitious places given by the author of this novel. That means the lacuna is ahead of a translator to deal with. "荒" has various explanations in Chinese; "being discarded" is one of them. If something is discarded, it would become a kind of waste to some extent. As for "无稽崖","无稽"means the opinion is ill-founded and baseless. Obviously, Mr. Yang adopts borrowing in accordance with the word's meaning, endeavoring to fill the lexical gap between SL culture and TL culture.

3.2 Calque

Example: SL:忽见那厢来了一僧一道，且行且谈。

TL: …where he suddenly noticed a monk and a Taoist approaching, talking together.

Note: "道"is a philosophical concept based in China; there are no corresponding words for "道"in English culture. Therefore, borrowing is required in the process of translation. However, "道" in this context means people who behold the concept of "道", so it should be "道人"in modern Chinese. "Taoist" for "道人"uses Wade-Giles Romanization. Although Chinese Romanization is emerging as a standard for foreigners to learn Chinese, enormous English borrowings from Chinese still adopt Wade-Giles Romanization. In addition to borrowing, "Taoist" is also a calque from the perspective of its formation. "ist" is a suffix referring to a special kind of people, such as "artists, scientist and communist, etc. It's obvious that "ist" is put together with "Tao" to form a new word in TL culture. No matter in meaning or structure, "Taoist" basically is a calque from SL.

3.3 Literal Translation

Example:SL:那绛珠仙子道："他是甘露之惠，我并无此水可还。他既下世为人，我也去下世为人，但把我一生所有的眼泪还他，也偿还得过他了。"

TL: "He gave me sweet dew," said Vermilion Pearl, "but I've no water to repay his kindness. If he's going down to the world of men, I would like to go too so that if I repay him with as many tears as I can shed in a lifetime I may be able to clear this debt."

Note: Although Chinese and English fall into different language families, the expression of two languages still sometimes share similarities due to human beings' perceptions of the world relatively being the same. It's obvious that "sweet dew" for "甘露"，"no water to repay his kindness" for "无此水可还" and "if I repay him with as many as tears as I can shed in a lifetime I may be able to clear this debt" for"但把我一生所有的眼泪还他，也偿还得过他了"can be recognized as a literal translation. Even though Chinese expressions are strange to target readers, if literal translation is applied in a good time, target readers would be caught by the "strange" expression.

3.4 Transposition: Verb to Noun

Example：SL: 待在下将此来历注明，方使阅者了然不惑。

TL: Let me explain, so that there will be no doubt left in your minds.

Note: "使…不惑"is a verb phrase, while it is translated into a noun phrase "no doubt" in the transcription. This example reflects that transposition is required in the process of translation as English prefers noun phrase.

3.5 Modulation

3.5.1 Modulation between Abstract and Concrete

Example: SL:只因尚未酬报灌溉之德，故其五内便郁结着一段缠绵不尽之意。

TL: But her heart was heavy because she had not repaid the care lavished on her.

Note: Chinese is a vague language; opaque expressions hinder people from fully understanding what the sentence or phrase is exactly about. Even for Chinese people can hardly tell what "缠绵不尽之意"means; they need to explore the connotation by combining the context and their imagination. Therefore, "缠绵不尽之意"can be identified as an abstract phrase; its transcription delivers clear-cut meaning to the readers. "heavy" for "缠绵不尽之意"perfectly explains the modulation process from abstract to concrete.

3.5.2 Negation of Opposite

Example: SL:…竟不如我半世亲睹亲闻的这几个女子…

TL: Much better are the girls I have known myself during my young days.

Note: In the example, "不如"is a negative term, yet no negative term is found in the transcription. The translator adopts negation of opposite. Because of different ways of thinking between Chinese people and English people, sometimes an attitude may be expressed from a negative way in English culture while a positive way in Chinese.

3.5.3 Reversal of Terms

Example: SL:今之人，贫者日为衣食所累。　**TL:** At present the daily concern of the poor is food and clothing.

Note: In SL, the subject is "贫者", yet in TL, the original subject is changed into "the daily concern". The difference in subject selection reveals that Chinese culture is human-oriented, which pushes Chinese people to perceive the world from the perspective of themselves; Western culture is reality-based and it views the universe from an objective point. That can explain why the translator switches the subject.

4 Conclusion

This study elaborates the application of Vinay and Darbelnet's model in the rendering of *A Dream of Red Mansion*. Since Yang's version is one of the representative transcriptions of the classical Chinese novel, the research into this version under the scope of Vinay and Darbelnet's model can offer translators an example of how to deal with Chinese classics translation. Beyond that, it also illustrates those situations in which translators can adopt the seven procedures, proving the vitality in Vinay and Darbelnet's model.

Culturally, Chinese classics contain profound and abundant background information. Thus, the translation of that kind of works can be referred to as cultural translation. It raises complex technical issues: how to deal with features like dialect and heteroglossia, literary allusions, culturally specific terms such as food or architecture or further-reaching differences in the assumed contextual knowledge that surrounds the text and gives it meaning (Baker&Saldanha,2009).[1] The disparities between Chinese culture and English one therefore evoke lots of lacunas in expressions. Luckily, thanks to the endeavors from those illustrious translators and theorists, who fill the blanks in translation with their examples or theoretical guidelines, lacunas can be overcome generally.

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