

Travel and Intralingual Translation: Travel and Translation as Each Other's Allegory

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Translation, once classified into intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation by Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), has always been studied from the perspective of translation proper, i.e., interlingual translation, and the other two aspects—intralingual and interlingual translation have been slightly ignored by scholars. This paper, employing the theories on travel writing and translation presented by Michael Cronin (2000), discusses the relations among travel, language, and translation in terms of microscopic aspects, macroscopic aspects, and power relations in order to shed new light on the research of translation and travel writing. Specifically, the issue of language and translation in intralingual traveling has always been neglected, and the so-called “transparency” may cover up many problems. A reinterpretation of travel writing concerning how cultural identities, cultural differences, and power relations operate in language and translation has been given in the analysis of the paper and the author concludes that unfair and unequal relations do exist in cross-cultural communications; similarly, unequal power relations do exist in intralingual exchange and translation; the writing of travel accounts has often been manipulated by the traveler and influenced by the external discourse, just as translation has by the translator and the historical discourse.

Keywords: travel, translation, power relations

Introduction

Travel accounts, a popular literary form, may tell us more than just scenic spots and interesting tourist stories. A traveler's identity may be clarified when he/she is faced with someone who is from a different background; otherwise, it is possible that he/she does not fully understand him/herself. Travel accounts implicate the traveler's status and perspective, showing self and other, the clash between history and reality, and constitute the documents of departure and return. “Travel writing, involving the change of time and space, is likely to produce comparison and contrast between identities of self and other” (ZHOU, 2000, pp. 115-20). Similarly, “the narrative voices of postcolonial travel writing are rarely naïve” (Brothers, 2001, p. 440). Therefore, if we proceed to interpret travel writing from a postcolonial viewpoint, what we will discover might not be only sightseeing, political reality, and economic development. Rather, the indispensable means of travel, namely, language and translation, should also be investigated. The transparency of language and translation during traveling is always

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an illusion, whether we are traveling in a foreign-language environment or a place where people speak the same language as we do.

Generally speaking, translation is necessary when traveling is interlingual (to a place where people speak a language different from the traveler's). But do we need translation when we travel intralingually (to a place where people speak the same language as the traveler does)? How do we account for the translation phenomena in intralingual traveling? Cronin, an Irish translation theorist, has given some illuminating comments on intralingual traveling in his book *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (2000). In the following part, we will discuss several of his points.

Travel and Translation on a Micro-level

In 1959, Jakobson classified translation into three categories: intralingual translation, interlingual translation, and intersemiotic translation. This classification has been accepted by many other scholars. Jakobson's (1959/1966, p. 233) definition of intralingual translation is "Intralingual translation or rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language". Intralingual traveling mentioned above refers to traveling in an environment where people speak the same language as the traveler does. However, in intralingual traveling, thanks to the difference of customs and cultures, a traveler often encounters intralingual translation.

Cronin (2000) examined the travel accounts of several English-speaking travelers who have toured in English-speaking countries. These travelers are Rosita Boland, Paul Theroux, Bill Bryson, Jonathan Raban, and a few others. Boland was born in Ireland and visited Ireland many years later. Theroux and Bryson were born in the United States, but lived in Britain for many years. Raban was born in Britain but lived in the United States for a long time. Their writing represents the difference in language and culture of various English-speaking countries. The issues of language and translation in intralingual traveling appear more subtle and complicated than those in interlingual traveling.

The first language problem in intralingual traveling is accents. Travelers, for the purpose of sightseeing and enjoying themselves, may like going to a place where people speak different languages. Different languages mean a foreign place, where a traveler can relax and forget daily routines. The same-language environment may be disappointing in some aspects. But a place with different accents may compensate for this disappointment. Different accents may symbolize an alien land and give travelers an impression of foreignness. When Raban traveled in the United States, he was sensitive to accents of the natives, and in turn, they also tried to correct his British accent. Theroux carefully wrote about the local accents when he traveled in England and Northern Ireland. These accounts indicate that travelers are fully aware of the difference of accents, and may add to the authenticity of travel writing.

During Raban's travel, his accent sometimes constructs his identity, for natives always associate accents with classes or races. His accent made him feel out of place in New York, but in southern US states, the accent made him feel at home. When he was touring on Mississippi, some Americans showed contempt to his British accent. And on a levee, a woman mistook him for a Jew due to his accent.

The difference in accents represents the distinction in language, for people with different accents have to translate when they communicate with each other. How different the accents are determines the translatability.

The more distinct the accents, the lower the translatability, and the stronger the opacity of language. An accent hard to understand may pose a lot of problems for a traveler. In Glasgow, Bryson found natives hostile to him, because he could not understand the local accent. And Theroux discovered people in England dislike those with the Ulster accent, which may be attributed to historical and political reasons.

Another problem in intralingual traveling is vocabulary. The same English boasts various vocabularies. When Charles Graves revisited Ireland, he found there *donkey-cars* were called *ass-carts*, *hill* called *butt*, and *beach* called *strand*. These words call for translation. Bryson encountered some words in Britain he had never heard: streaky bacon, high tea, and so on. A real headache for Theroux is that British people often use euphemisms, say, they may refer to a long way as "a canny little step".

Linguistic difference may lead to identity crisis. Raban told us the experiences of two British women in the United States. Everett Asquith, in order to conquer the barriers in language and culture, tried every means to learn American English, for example, called biscuits as cookies. Another woman, Jeannie, did not want to be assimilated into American culture, and tried to remain English. However, as time went on, some American words permeated into her vocabulary inadvertently, which frustrated her.

Different vocabularies of the same language may define speakers' identities. In intralingual traveling, people with different identities have to face difficulties of translation, such as distinct vocabularies, rhetorical devices, word plays, and euphemism. These difficulties in intralingual traveling: linguistic misunderstanding, cultural difference, in-equivalencies, etc., are similar to those encountered in interlingual translation, and are also hard to resolve. But these are often ignored and thus lead to unexpected consequences.

Cronin (2000, p. 16) presented a concept of fractal traveling. If someone wants to know the length of the British coastline, what we can tell him is only a probable number. In fact, if we try to count all the little capes, inlets, and even pebbles, and to go into smaller scales indefinitely, we would find an infinite number. The coastline will be infinitely long! If we travel on an island three miles wide and walk according to fractal lines, our tracks will be infinitely long and different! This means there may be infinite differences in a finite space. As Theroux (1984) said, "every mile of England was different" (p. 29). Similarly, a traveler may run across various people and things in the same place, which means there may be infinite possibilities within a finite scope. In a bar on Mississippi, Raban heard different voices, each representing a distinct class or a distinct background. Individual languages belong to sublanguages within a language. This concept of fractal traveling is close to that of translation. As we know, the same original may have different translations in different times, and done by different translators. Even in the same era, different translators may produce different translations for the same original. Furthermore, the same translation done by the same translator may undergo constant revisions, hence different versions. This testifies to the infinite possibilities within a finite scope.

Cronin presented two concepts—horizontal travel and vertical travel. Horizontal travel refers to moving from one place to another. Vertical travel means staying in a place for some time in order to understand the local geography, customs, history, past, present, and future. Therefore, time is a crucial component, whether for horizontal travel or vertical travel, and the longer the time, the deeper the understanding. This seems very close to translation. Horizontal travel means to translate one after another work or various works of the same language. Vertical travel may consist of translating works of the same category, the same author, or different versions of the same work. As time goes on, translation, similar to vertical travel, has no end and no perfection. In reality, it is

very time-consuming and energy-consuming to learn a foreign language or to translate a literary work. The complexity of travel, language, and translation calls for our reconsideration.

Travel and Translation on a Macro-level

The displacement of language refers to the function of language of recalling associations of presenting things or actions in one's mind when they are not on the spot. Before a traveler visits a place, he/she usually gets to know something about it through language. Some tourist destinations, with landscape beauties or cultural values, usually construct their cultural values through language, oral, or written.

A travel writer travels to foreign places and writes some travel accounts. The accounts make up displacement in a sense, a displacement of travel, allowing readers to visit alien places without having to take pains to travel. Travel writing may enrich the cultural content of the traveler's native land, and may contribute to the charm of the visited spots. Paul Theroux's travel accounts were loved by readers from many countries, and Bill Bryson's book *Notes From a Small Island* (1995) was on top of the bestseller lists for months in Britain (the visited spot) (Cronin, 2000, p. 22).

Then how can travel accounts be related to translation? Travel accounts are translations of travel cultures. The cultures of tourist attractions and unique experiences of travelers are originals. Travel accounts are not necessarily real descriptions of objective scenes. Sometimes they are records of travelers' emotions and opinions. Therefore, in relation to originals, travel accounts are travelers' (as translators) creative products, hence translations of travel cultures manipulated by "translators". Tourist destinations are constantly visited, and travel accounts are rewritten by travelers again and again. This phenomenon is analogous to constant retranslations of literary classics.

Intralingual travel, or travel in the traveler's own linguistic environment, often gives people an illusion that language is transparent and translation is unnecessary. However, in addition to accents, vocabularies, fractal traveling, sub-languages, etc., which belong to the micro-level aspects, various customs may render travelers dependent on translation. Gibbons (1930, p. 66) had imagined Ireland to be second-rate suburb of England, but after traveling, he realized Ireland was indeed a foreign land, especially for its different religion. Bryson was shocked by natives in Skipton in Britain. He wanted a train ticket worth £18.50 and a receipt. But he was told the ticket was free of charge, and the receipt cost £18.50. During Theroux's travel in Britain, he found that British people always satirized those features that other peoples had but English did not. American people are proud of being ahead of others, but English consider it rude. The cultural differences mentioned above are usually covered up by sharing the same language, and give rise to misunderstandings. Such logics of action are often covert and lead to special difficulties in intralingual translation. This reveals the translatability of travel accounts from travel cultures. If travel writing can only touch on superficial phenomena of visited cultures, we may say it does not translate travel cultures well.

Travel starts from a starting point and translation starts from an original. What travel brings back is accounts, and what translation brings back is translated texts. Departure means return, and the final destination of travel is home; similarly, the destination of translation is translated texts, usually in the mother tongue. Travel writing may be the combination of native culture and foreign cultures, and translation is the integration of mother tongue and foreign idioms.

Power Relations Represented in Travel, Language, and Translation

As mentioned above, travel accounts are faithful records of travelers' perspectives and the results of conflicting identities. In travel writings, we may find implications of travelers' identities and status of visited cultures, and also power relations—in terms of political or economic relations—between the visiting and the visited. Some travelers intended to explore the exotic and held themselves as superior to locals, so they were always critical. Some facts stated in the accounts may refract the complex relations between the colonizer and the colonized, the strong culture and the weak culture, the major language and the minor language, immigrants and original natives. Close examination of travel writings may help us clarify historical and current facts embedded in various relations.

On the southern wall of Central Community College in Seattle, Raban (1986) found a slogan: "SPEAK ENGLISH OR DIE, SQUINTY EYE" (p. 318). It is an international area, where there are many immigrant minorities who speak their mother tongues. The phenomenon must have irritated some local Americans, so they posted the slogan to threaten the immigrants. In this case, to remain safe in such a neighborhood, one has to totally translate oneself into an American, in terms of whether the mother tongue or native culture. Only a totally translated American would enjoy safety and freedom there! This testifies to power relations in terms of language.

When Bryson was in Welsh, he found some locals mixed some English words with their Welsh. So he believed Welsh was not adequate to express their ideas. In his mind, English is the most powerful language, and Welsh is inevitably short of vocabulary. Theroux (1984) thought Britain and the United States belonged to the modern world, but Third-World countries were backward: "Britain and the United States were the present, while in Third-World countries I felt I had dropped into the past" (p. 29). According to Theroux's observation, Welsh people use English and Welsh at the same time, an unnecessary practice indeed! He guessed that the Welsh looked silly just because of the bilingual practice! Here the traveler's self-held superiority came to the fore.

In intralingual travel, the translation of place names and personal names also requires our attention. When Third-World names get translated into English, they have to undergo a sort of colonial translation. Translation has become a means to maintain the dominant position of English (Niranjana, 1992, p. 21). Jonathan Raban came to Alabama and his name was translated into John Rayburn. In Seattle, his name was translated again into John Rainbird. Raban also told us that two Polish emigrants, Ewa Hoffman and her sister Alina, moved to Canada and were translated into Eva and Elaine respectively. Eric Newby satirized the name of a bar called "Cloonboo" in Ireland: "What a name!" (Cronin, 2000, p. 31). Bryson and Theroux also satirized various British names in their travel accounts.

The (former) colonizer's perspective and the relation between the dominant and the dominated can become fully revealed through travel, language, and translation. For those (former) colonial nations, powerful countries and major languages, on the one hand, translation is very crucial, because as some people believe, minor languages should be translated into major languages, and weak cultures should be assimilated into strong cultures until we do not need translation any more. On the other hand, translation is an annoying matter (Cronin, 2000, p. 28). For in a sense, translation means the existence of *other*, and the fragmented *origin*. Some people are expecting that translation will disappear someday, and minor languages will disappear someday, and what is left is the major language—English (or American English). However, as pointed out by Cronin in his book *Translation and*

Globalization (2003, p. 156), major languages and minor ones are relative and always changing; the present major language may turn out to be a minor one in the future. As we know, French is currently less important than before in the world. Translation is one of the media which can change the status of languages, whether for better or worse. Therefore, minor cultures and minor languages may take translation as a weapon to decolonize themselves.

Conclusions

Cronin is original in investigating travel and intralingual translation together. On the one hand, taking some travel accounts under scrutiny, he has dissected the cultural interchange, the clash of powers, and the contrast of identities in terms of language and translation. In this way, the understanding of travel and translation has been deepened. Travel is not merely travel and always involves language and translation; translation is not merely translation, and has become a metaphor full of meanings: Translation is mutual understanding, the clash of identities, a channel of colonization, and a weapon of decolonization... On the other hand, the emphasis on intralingual translation has expanded translation theories and further demonstrated the complexity of translation. We may come to know more about the nature of travel and translation, and delve into the phenomenon of intralingual travel and translation, which has been covered up to some extent. What we may learn from Cronin's theory is that we should be more specific and more careful. The universality of travel and language is possibly questionable, and the particularities of language and cultural identities should be respected. Interlingual travel and translation are not transparent, and neither are intralingual travel and translation. Unfair and unequal relations do exist in cross-cultural communications. Similarly, unequal power relations do exist in intralingual exchange and translation. The writing of travel accounts has been manipulated by the traveler and influenced by the external discourse, just as translation has by the translator and the historical discourse. Interlingual communications and translation call for our attention, and so do intralingual communications and translation.

Moreover, the examination of intralingual travel and translation has broadened the scope of postcolonial studies. We may as well turn our eyesight away from former colonies, former colonizers, colonialism and anti-colonialism, neocolonialism and decolonization, and such binary relations, and look into the cultural differences, identity clashes, and unequal power relations within the major language English itself. Through the investigation of intralingual travel accounts, we may possibly rethink our history and reality, try to define our respective cultural identities and fight for equal cultural relations.

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