

Implicature: A Valid and Effective Indicator in TQA of Liu

Mazi's Lines in Lao She's *Cha Guan*^{*}

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This paper deals with the problem of TQA (translation quality assessment) by taking into consideration two English translations of the lines of Liu Mazi, a character in *Cha Guan* (*Teahouse*) (1956). The issue of TQA has been discussed before by some scholars, but there are still many problems. One of them is that most of such research is too complex and general. This thesis thus attempts to narrow to some specific object, namely, the translation of the lines of Liu Mazi, and through applying one means of assessment—implicature, so as to explore some concrete operable measures in TQA. Then a study is made with the corporuses of the TT (Target Text). The conclusion is that implicature is a valid and effective indicator in TQA of the lines of Liu Mazi.

Keywords: TQA (translation quality assessment), implicature, drama translation, *Cha Guan*, Liu Mazi

Introduction

This paper tackles TQA (translation quality assessment), an area which has been dealt with by some scholars, such as Jamal Al-Qinai (2000), Juliane House (2001), and María Pinto (2001). But their research is not without problems. One is that scholars in this area (e.g., House) are so ambitious that they intend to come up with some criteria for all genres of literary texts. The present authors do not pretend that implicature alone is perfect and sufficient to assess the translation of Liu Mazi's lines, but means that implicature is an important factor in TQA of Liu Mazi's lines and therefore should not be neglected.

Method

The two English translations of Liu are examined and compared in a corpus study designed to see how implicatures are conveyed in the TT (Target Text). The non-translation in the TT of the implicatures in the ST (Source Text) may be compensated by other means or in other places of the play. The present authors, however, have not found any such convincing compensation in the two translations of *Cha Guan* (Gibbon, 2006; YING, 1999).

As for the method used in the analysis of the conversations between Liu Mazi and other characters in the two translations, the present authors apply two principles—local interpretation and analogy, which are elaborated in

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detail by Brown and Yule (1983, pp. 58-67). The first principle requires the interpreter of the conversation to assume that a change is minimal, if there is one, and the second principle requires the analyzer to compare the present situation in which things are happening with what used to be in the past. Thus, the two principles will eliminate far-fetched explanation. Here, “change” means a change of the context in which speakers are carrying out their conversation. Context is emphasized by the two authors of the book from where the two principles above have been cited. In this paper also, context is given enough stress when the lines of Liu Mazi are interpreted.

A Critique of House’s Model

According to House (1998, pp. 197-199), there are mainly three groups of approaches to TQA, i.e., the anecdotal and subjective approaches, the response-oriented and psycholinguistic approaches, and the text-based approaches. In 2001, she also put forward three groups of approaches with similar terms: mentalist views, response-based approaches, and text- and discourse-based approaches (pp. 244-247).

Problems in House’s Model

For House, linguistic approaches which take the relationship between the text and context into account are most likely to produce fruits for TQA. House takes the relationship between text and context into consideration because this relationship is parallel to that between language and the real world, which determines the meaning of the text in translation (2001, p. 247). And she follows the line that considers translation as a re-contextualization which means the reconstruction of context in the process of translation (House, 2001, p. 247) and proposes a functional-pragmatic model of translation evaluation (2001, p. 247). House’s model is functional-pragmatic, because she applies to her model the concept of function equivalence (2001, p. 247) and “context of situation” (2001, p. 248), which is the main research area of pragmatics.

House’s model requires that the function of the TT be equivalent to that of the ST, where the equivalence of the function is achieved in two aspects. The first aspect is composed in the Hallidayan sense of an ideational and interpersonal functional component, while the second involves equivalent pragmatic means. The operation of the model begins with an analysis of the ST according to a set of situational dimensions to produce a textual profile containing some linguistic particularities, a profile characterizing the function of the ST and taken as the norm to measure the quality of the TT. At last, a degree of equivalence between the ST and TT is obtained (House, 1998, p. 199). The vital problem of this model may lie in the scientificity of the process in attaining the “textual profile”, that is, whether there is a scientific approach to establish “a set of situational dimensions”. It is far more difficult to establish a scientific system than to apply a single indicator with regard to TQA. If this indicator is not taken proper account of in translation, it could be judged that the quality of the TT is not satisfactory.

House’s model has other problems and draws criticism from some scholars. Gutt (2000, p. 50) questioned the translator’s ability to judge whether his/her translation is functionally equivalent and raises the problem that some devices used by the translator may be socially unacceptable, that is, not accepted by the readers. Munday (2001) thought that besides errors, other translation strategies, such as explicitation or compensation, may also give rise to mismatches between the ST and TT (p. 101); he also talks about the jargon problem of House’s model (2001, p. 106). Too many jargons may cause confusion, although it seems scientific for House to create new concepts in her model (Munday, 2001, pp. 105-106). SI (2005, pp. 82-84) pointed out improper design of parameters and operation procedures in House’s model.

A too large scope often makes a model too complicated. When it comes to TQA, the task of covering all the relevant variables is nearly impossible. The authors of this paper are unable to list all the relevant variables, which is nearly an impossible task for the assessors of translation quality. Even though a list of all the variables is made, some of them are almost inoperable in TQA, e.g., response among the readers. That is partly the reason why the authors of this thesis choose only implicature as the variable to be considered. Other variables which may be of interest to TQA scholars may consist of language aspects, skopos, etc.. House's model of TQA also has the "too complicated" problem, where she tries to assess the translation quality of all literary genres with the means of her functional-pragmatic model. Her model covers the concepts of function and context of situation which could be further divided into field, mode, and tenor. Therefore, the model incurred much criticism which has been listed above. However, such problems could be avoided and the research would be much more operable if the focus is put upon one indicator.

It would be easy to judge whether an indicator is effective in TQA if the research object is narrowed down to a role or a factor in a specific literary work. This needs a qualitative and/or quantitative research. If valid, the proper dealing of it would be accepted by the readers. Moreover, it would become unnecessary to come up with excessive jargons when only one indicator is used in TQA, thus the problem of jargons spared. With simplification of the model of TQA, problems of parameter design and operation procedures would be reduced.

The authors decide on *Cha Guan* by Lao She (1999, 2006), modern China's most renowned drama artist, for the following considerations. First, it has an important position in modern Chinese literature, which makes the research significant. TANG (2007, p. 20) considered it as a complex and living work of art beyond the borders of social criticism. Second, various people appear in it, making the conversations and their analysis meaningful and revealing. The most important reason is that conversational implicature is an effective device used by playwrights to portray their characters in a play (YANG & JIN, 2006, p. 148) and the implication in conversations in *Cha Guan* plays an important role in creating characters (LAI, 2003, p. 35).

What LAI (2003) has done is a qualitative research, not aimed solely at Liu Mazi, whereas he is chosen for analysis owing to one reason, among others, namely, he tends to speak with a number of implicatures with his interlocutors. Two English versions, one by YING Ruo-cheng and the other by John Howard, are used in the analysis for comparison, so that the results will be more convincing than when only one translation is chosen.

Introduction of Implicature into TQA of Liu Mazi's Lines

It is true that there is not only one device to apply when making an analysis of a literature work. In fact, there already exist studies concerning literature works applying one or several of pragmatic methods, such as CP (Cooperative Principle), presupposition, and turn-taking. As to why only one item—implicature—is chosen by the present authors as an indicator for drama translation assessment, this problem can be explained from two aspects: the number of indicator chosen and the pragmatic means finally decided upon.

First, only one device is chosen as a means of quality assessment in this paper, because the number of the device chosen in this paper is limited by the scope of the research; moreover, it would be nearly impossible to make a clear and detailed analysis if too many indicators are chosen in one paper.

Second, in the assessment of the quality of drama translation, implicature is chosen, since this pragmatic device may be often used as a means of character creation, one of great importance in play writing. It seems

strange if a person uses implicatures too frequently in daily conversations. However, it is quite possible for a playwright to use implicature as a means to depict characters in dramatic conversations which are from and surpass daily talks. This can also be seen in the research in this paper upon Liu Mazi, a pimp, whose cruel and treacherous character is revealed through his using of implicatures to hint at his vile intention.

CP

CP was first discussed by Henry Paul Grice in his William James Lectures at Harvard University in 1967 with the topic “Logic and Conversation”, whose handouts were later printed and circulated in 1975 (LIU, 2003, pp. 7-8). In 1989, these handouts were compiled into a book *Studies in the Way of Words*. In Part I of this book (1989, pp. 26-27), Grice advances four categories/supermaxims of CP, namely, Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, and their respective maxims.

Implicature

These categories and maxims include:

Category of Quantity:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Category of Quality:

Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Category of Relation:

Be relevant.

Category of Manner:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly. (Grice, 1989, pp. 26-27)

When any one of the maxims is violated, according to Grice’s theory, there will be conversational implicature in the utterance. This theory is about conversations, thus quite helpful in analyzing drama, abundant with dialogues.

However, implicature in this paper mainly refers to conversational implicatures rather than conventional implicatures. But confusion and misunderstanding will arise if no distinction is made between these two types of implicatures.

Before the distinction between conventional and conversational implicatures is made, it may be helpful to look at the meaning of implicature first, which is “an implication or suggestion deduced from the form of an utterance” (Crystal, 1992, p. 183). However, the term “implicature” is distinguished from “implication” a logical relationship between two propositions (Mey, 2001, p. 45). Actually, implication and implicature have the same root “implicat” meaning “to imply” and thus implication could be well used to define implicature. Grice (as cited in Chew, 2007) said, “We interpret what we hear if it conforms to these maxims. When a maxim is flouted, it becomes an implicature”.

Conversational Implicature

Grice distinguishes between what is said, the conversational implicature, and what is conventionally implicated, the conventional implicature (Malmkjær, 1991, p. 355). The latter is “simply attached by convention to particular expressions” (Crystal, 1992, p. 183), while the former, using the CPs which govern the efficiency of conversations (Crystal, 1992, p. 183), is a subclass of non-conventional implicature (Malmkjær, 1991, p. 355). Conversational implicature differs from conventional implicature as the latter is very obviously distinct from what is being said (Malmkjær, 1991, p. 355).

Conversational implicature is defined as “the use of conversational maxims to imply meaning during conversation” (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1985, p. 65), which shows the relationship between Grice’s maxims and conversational implicature. Mey (2001) defined a conversational implicature as “something which is implied in conversation, that is, something which is left implicit in actual language use” (p. 45). Conversational implicature is applied by speakers when they “wish(s) to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning” (Chew, 2007).

A better understanding of the occasions where conversational implicatures appear can be obtained from the following statement:

Where an implicature rests not only on the conventional meaning of the uttered expression but also on the supposition that the speaker is following or is intentionally breaking certain **maxims of conversation** [original emphasis] then that implicature is called a “conversational implicature”. (Bussmann, 1996, p. 221)

Actually, there is a close relationship between conversational implicature and CP, where CP guarantees the production of conversational implicature. This relationship is pointed out:

Conversational implicature is *essentially connected* [original italics] with certain *general features of discourse* [original italics], and these general features of discourse arise from the fact that if our talk exchanges are to be rational, they must consist of utterances which are in some way connected to each other. What guarantees this connection is called the **cooperative principle** [original emphasis]: make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Malmkjær, 1991, p. 355)

Levinson (1983, p. 126) also made a distinction between standard implicatures, derived from the assumption of speakers observing Grice’s maxims, and other implicatures, originated from the common knowledge among the speakers that one of them is flouting or exploiting a maxim. Levinson’s division is similar to that of Bussmann’s (1996) and HUANG’s (2007) which will not change the results of the research in this thesis.

Grice himself divides his conversational implicature into two kinds: generalized and particularized, depending on whether a specific context or special scenario is needed when implicature is drawn from what a speaker says (Levinson, 1983, p. 126). In the analysis of this paper, such a division will not be made. Levinson (1983) also referred to other implicatures: conventional implicature (p. 127), scalar implicature (p. 133), and clausal implicature (p. 136), which facilitates the complexity of this issue.

Each and every implicature in a certain and specific context in Liu Mazi’s lines will be analyzed, which in one way or another demonstrates his character. Thus, the implicature discussed in the thesis refers to what Grice calls “conversational implicature” with no further distinction.

Results

The breach of any of the four maxims of CP could be easily kept in the TT. It is difficult to translate a lie into truth, or to make what is related to the conversation in the ST not relevant in the TT; usually, the translator would not omit or add information in translation, neither would he/she change the manner the expressions are written in the ST. Thus, if one maxim is broken in the ST, this breach would be easily retained in the TT. There may be cases in which the four maxims of CP are not dealt with properly. In this condition, they will be indicated Table 1.

Table 1

The Handling of Implicatures in Liu Mazi's Eight Conversations

Conversation No.	Gibbon	YING	Implicature No.
1	1	2	3
2	3	4	7
3	0	1	1
4	1	3	4
5	0	2	2
6	0	1	1
7	4	0	4
8	0	1	1
Total	9	14	23

Table 1, the comparison of translations by Gibbon and YING, shows that the percentages of the better translations of implicature turns by Gibbon and YING are 39.1% (9/23) and 60.9% (14/23) respectively. YING's has a 21.8% higher than Gibbon's with regard to the better translations of implicatures. There seems to be no regularity in the 39.1% and 60.9% expressions Gibbon and YING have translated better respectively. However, the big gap between the two figures has illustrated that YING has done better than Gibbon concerning the translation of implicatures.

There may be several reasons why YING has translated implicatures better than Gibbon. One reason may be that YING himself is an actor, so he knows how to deal with implicatures properly. Another reason may be that Ying understands the ST better than Gibbon, thus able to convey properly the implicatures in Liu Mazi's lines. Still another reason may be that Gibbon translates *Cha Guan* (in 1980) later than YING (in 1979) and may have been affected by his deliberation to be different from the TT of YING.

Conclusions

This paper is an attempt to solve one of the problems in House's model of TQA—its complexity with too large a scope both in terms of literary genres covered in this model and of the means applied to TQA. A too large scope makes it nearly impossible to discuss each genre in detail, let alone a character in a specific literary work. Another scope problem in House's model exists in the tools applied to TQA. She uses too many indicators in her model and thus makes it complicated and inoperable. So, the objective of this thesis is to solve the problems in the models of TQA with those of House's as the focus.

A comparison concerning the translation of implicatures is made between the two English translations of *Cha Guan*, respectively by Gibbon and YING, a corpus study where all the translations of the expressions that affect the conveyance of implicatures are picked out and a quantitative analysis is made upon the samples obtained from the corpus. This leads to a tentative conclusion that generally speaking YING has dealt with the implicatures in the lines of Liu Mazi in a better way than Gibbon as far as the translation of implicatures is concerned. This proves that by implicature the quality of the two English translations of *Cha Guan* can be judged through comparison.

With the above work done, the operability and feasibility of implicature in TQA of Liu Mazi's lines are finally justified. Therefore, it could be said that implicature is a valid and effective factor in the assessment of the translation of Liu Mazi's lines.

The research in this thesis has proved to some extent that specification of a study object and narrowing down of research means can greatly increase the operability and bring unexpected results. This methodology of TQA may be of some enlightenment for translation studies, especially in the field of TQA.

The scope of this paper has limited the range of the research hereupon. However, the proving of implicature as an effective indicator in TQA of Liu Mazi's lines may lead to further research whether there are other effective indicators for TQA for other literary characters and whether it is possible to find out all the indicators for TQA of a character. The above questions answered, a bottom up research, compared with the somewhat top down approach in House's research, could be made to find out whether a systematic model could be constructed for TQA of this character. A bottom up approach may be more conducive than a top down method to producing convincing results in TQA.

The problem of a TQA model lies in too large a research scope, also in over-narrowness of a study object. The scope of this thesis determines the impossibility to find out whether implicature is also an effective indicator in TQA of other characters, other dramas, or other literary works. In other words, the contribution of this paper may also be its disadvantages, which depends on the research objective and also on the reasonability of the research design. In a way, TQA is an open question and further researches need to be carried out to discuss the above issues.

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