

<<翻译模因论>>

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<<翻译模因论>>

内容概要

“模因”承载着本质性的文化特征，并传播文化。

《翻译模因论——翻译理论中的思想传播》把“模因”作为翻译理论中的基本概念单位，结合波普尔关于知识进化的图式，对翻译规范和策略进行描述性研究，把不同历史时期的重要翻译理论和翻译思想贯穿起来，建立了系统的翻译理论框架。

《翻译模因论——翻译理论中的思想传播》由安德鲁·切斯特曼编著。

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翻译研究领域声名卓著的学者，原芬兰赫尔辛基大学现代语言学系教授，著有《对比功能分析》(Contrastive Functional Analysis)、《论确定性——特别是关于英语和芬兰语》(On Definiteness: A Study with Special Reference to English and Finnish)等专著，发表过几十篇富有创见的论文。

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Interestingly, this law seems to run counter to the law of interference: whereas interference points to the dominance of the source language, the law of growing standardization points to the dominance of the target language system at the expense of specifically source-text features. The two laws exert opposite pulls, and the translator can be swayed either way. The standardization law suggests that translators (at a certain level of competence, perhaps) tend to overreact to the risk of interference. Some manifestations of the standardization law are purely statistical, and readily suggest hypotheses that can be empirically tested. To take a simple example: the occurrence of many textual features approximately follows a statistically normal distribution, a bell curve. If we plot the variation of sentence length in a text, for instance, we typically end up with a distribution showing a higher frequency of average-length sentences and a lower frequency of very short or very long ones. Such curves will of course vary somewhat depending on text-type. If the normal target-language distribution of this feature is then compared with its distribution in translated texts of the same type, we might hypothesize that various differences would emerge. Instead of a symmetrical bell curve the translations might show a skewed curve, showing an over-use of short or long sentences. But a more likely hypothesis is that we would find instances of "curve-hitching", showing over-use of the central, average range, and under-use of the two extremes. The translator would thus be "playing safe", making more use of the prototypical part of the range of distribution. Although the average value of the variable might be the same in the translated text and in target-language parallel texts, the translated text would manifest a smaller standard deviation. The result would be a kind of "rhetorical flattening" similar to that observed by Toury. (We shall return to related matters of translation assessment in chapter 5.)

At a lower level of generality, any teacher of translation will be familiar with the typical tendencies of translator trainees at different levels, both regarding their translation products and their translation process. One aspect of the process that has received attention recently is trainees' use of dictionaries and reference works, as compared to the practice of experienced professionals (see e.g. Jaaskelainen 1989): professionals use a wider range of reference works, and rely less on bilingual dictionaries, for instance. All such observations and research pertain to descriptive translation laws.

3.6.2 Normative laws

Within these general translation laws I would like to posit the existence of a subset of laws I will call normative translation laws. They are also descriptive, in accordance with the sense in which I am using "normative" throughout this book; however, they are not descriptive of the behaviour of all translators but only of some. They are only descriptive of the behaviour of competent professionals, of the same subset of all translators that is the source of professional norms. Normative laws, as thus understood, describe the behaviour of translators who conform to translation norms, and who actually set the professional norms. (Strictly speaking, of course, we are dealing with a continuum here, not an absolute distinction between "conforming" and "not conforming".)

A simple hypothetical example will illustrate the difference between general translation laws and normative laws. Assume that, in a given culture at a given time, there exists a communicative norm to the effect that, in a given text-type, source-language culture-bound terms are expanded or explained in translation, rather than preserved to add local colour or the like. We might discover a general translation law which revealed that, say, 70% of all translators (in this culture etc.) do indeed tend to explain such terms, but 30% do not. The 70% that do are thus following the norm. It may well be that the remaining 30%, by not conforming to this norm, expose themselves to criticism, if the opinion of their readers is that they should be conforming to it. But as we have seen, general translation laws are not sensitive to evaluative judgements, for they merely describe what is done, by good and less good translators alike.

Alongside this general law, however, we might also discover that, of all the competent professional translators studied, as many as 99% followed the norm; indeed, this would be evidence for our taking it to be a norm in the first place. If supported by subsequent research, this would suggest the existence of a normative law: that is, a law describing the typical behaviour of competent professional translators, as opposed to all translators in the culture.

Again, we are not really looking at a binary distinction here, between competent professionals and "other translators": I have set up such an opposition for expository reasons

only. What we expect to find is a correlation between "acknowledged translational competence" , measured perhaps partly in years of experience , and the use of certain translation strategies such as , in this example , "explain culture-bound terms". It is partly by extrapolation from such an observed trend that we postulate the existence of the norm in question: good translators behave in such and such a way , which implies that they seem to follow guidelines of such and such a kind , i.e. norms. One definition of "good translators" , then , would be those who tend to follow normative laws , i.e. those who translate "like competent professionals". If we then ask by what criteria these professionals are to be defined , the answer is: not on intrinsic grounds but on extrinsic ones. That is , translators belong to the subset of "competent professionals" if they are acknowledged to do so by other members of their culture (or perhaps , more specifically , by members who are themselves acknowledged by yet other members as having the ability to make this evaluation). In other words , translator competence (on this view) is defined socially , not linguistically , in the same way as we have earlier defined what counts as a translation in the first place. Power relationships in society are thus also involved , inevitably.

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这套“国外翻译研究丛书”的出版首先可以解决国内翻译教学原版参考书多年匮乏的困难，真可以说是我国翻译教学与理论研究的及时雨。

这套丛书的价值还在于能大大促进我国翻译学科建设的发展。

安德鲁·切斯特曼编写的这本《翻译模因论：翻译理论中的思想传播》是该系列中的一册，适合从事相关研究工作的人员参考阅读。

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