A Critical Analysis of the Translator Behavior in Ken Liu's English Version of *Folding Beijing*

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Abstract

BeiJing Zhedie is a medium-sized novel written by science fiction writer Hao Jingfang. It is a profound critical realism work, and has won the 74th Hugo Award for best short and medium stories. The English version of *Folding Beijing* is translated by Ken Liu. Based on the theory of Translator Behavior Criticism, this paper attempts to analyze *Folding Beijing* from the aspects of internal translation and external translation. In terms of the intra-translation, the "Truth-seeking-Utility-attaining" evaluative model of continuum based on translator behavior will be used to analyzed four aspects of representative examples of vocabulary, sentence pattern, rhetoric and style in the translation, as well as the translation methods used by the translator. As to the extra-translation, this paper will analyze through translator's utility-attaining translation behavior. The results show that the translator Ken Liu's translation behavior is reasonable and his "social-being" attribute is prominent.

Keywords: Ken Liu; Folding Beijing; Translator behavior criticism

1. Introduction

Folding Beijing is a sci-fi realistic novella by Hao Jingfang, a science fiction writer, which contains self-consciousness of social criticism (Li Wei, Li Jia, 2019), where the city of Beijing is divided into three foldable spaces. Based on the 48-hour experience of Lao Dao, the fiction reflects people's deep anxiety about class division in modern society. After *Folding Beijing* was published in 2014, Ken Liu, a translator, science fiction writer and the translator of *The Three Body Problem*, translated it into English. The English version has been published in major American e-magazines and published by TorBooks Press in 2016. After that, the fiction won the 74th Hugo prize for best short stories. Ken Liu 's ingenious translation strategy has made *Folding Beijing* enter the science literature field of the world (He Shuangzi, 2016).

With "English translation of *Folding Beijing*" as the key term, more than 72 articles have been found on CNKI, covering different perspectives such as translation theory and strategy, grammar and sentence structure, translator's subjectivity, pragmatics and semantic communication. However, no scholars have studied the English version of the fiction from the perspective of translator's behavior criticism. Therefore, this paper intends to analyze the "in translation" and "out of translation", the translator and the text of the English version of *Folding Beijing*, so as to make up for the lack of current research in this perspective.

2. The Rationality of Translator's Behavior Criticism

"Translator's behavior criticism" is a translation criticism theory focusing on the translator's behavior,

which holds that the translator is the executor of translation activities, and has two basic attributes: the "lingual" for code switching and the "social" to take different translation responses according to the changes of social environment (Zhou Lingshun, 2014:64). There are two perspectives of criticism in this theory, "in translation" and "out of translation". The translator's behavior can also be divided into in translation behavior, which is the convention of the literal meaning of the source text, and external behavior, adjusting the source text through the translation due to his own attributes (Zhou Lingshun, 2014:18).   The "Truth-Seeking & Pragmatic" continuum evaluation is a dynamic model in theory. "Truth-seeking" and "pragmatic" are two extremes. Translators tend to pursue "truth-seeking" when they perform the lingual, while they tend to be pragmatic when their sociality is highlighted (Zhou Lingshun, 2015). In fact, "truth-seeking" and "pragmatic" are dialectically unified. On the macro level, "truth-seeking" is also for pragmatism, "and it is based on achieving pragmatic goals and effects". In this way, "truth-seeking" has evolved into "pragmatic truth-seeking" (Zhou Lingshun, 2014b: 79). The translators' external behavior is closely related to the degree of their "socialization", because their subjective translation behavior (not divorced from the nature of translation) is the result of taking full account of "reader / society" without the literal meaning of the source text (Zhou Lingshun, 2019). "Truth-seeking", "pragmatism" and "reasonableness" are three concepts closely related to the evaluation model (Zhou Lingshun, 2014a: 248). "Truth seeking" is about the original text, while "pragmatic" is about the reader / society; the former focuses on the degree of truth-seeking, while the latter pays attention to the degree of pragmatism. The evaluation of translator's behavior and translation will eventually come down to the evaluation of the reasonableness of translator's behavior. Translation is an act of cultural communication. One of the most important aims of translation is to publicize local culture to the target foreign readers. Therefore, the translators' behavior stipulated in the translator's behavior criticism is: truth-seeking is the foundation, seeking truth with consideration of pragmatism; be pragmatic in practice, pragmatism giving consideration to seeking truth (Zhou Lingshun, 2014a: 104).

Translator's behavior criticism involves internal and external behavior, text and translators, making the evaluation more "comprehensive, objective and scientific" (Wang Hong, Shen Jie, 2019). So far, no research is more profound than Professor Zhou Lingshun's discussion on translator's behavior with the translator's behavior criticism he established (FU Jingmin, 2019). The focus of the translator's behavior criticism should not only be on the linguistic level, but also on the translator's will and socialization (Zhou Lingshun, 2017). Therefore, to analyze the English translation of *Folding Beijing* and Ken Liu 's behavior based on the translator's behavior criticism, we should see his dual attributes as both a lingual person and a social person, and make an objective and comprehensive evaluation with the model of "truth-seeking & pragmatic" continuum evaluation.

3.The Internal Behavior of Translator Ken Liu

The translator's internal behavior includes "truth-seeking" and "pragmatism". In addition to transmitting the linguistic meaning of the source text as a "lingual person", the translator is also a "social person", which will motivate him to turn to the translation strategies friendly to "reader / society" without changing the meaning of the original text.

3.1   Translator's "truth-seeking" or "pragmatic truth-seeking" behavior

Hao Jingfang, the author of *Folding Beijing*(2019), believes that both science productions and sci-fi literature works should have two levels of contents: one is the stunning setting beyond real life; the other is the core that can get to people's hearts. Therefore, the story of *Folding Beijing* is set in three spaces, which is amazing; moreover, it is a vivid story about garbage man Lao Dao as its core. In translation, Ken Liu , as a "linguist", tries his best to reproduce the original appearance, story, sci-fi background and characters of the

novel, with the consideration of vocabulary, the choice of sentence patterns, and the embodiment of rhetoric and style.

(1) Vocabulary

In order to show the Chinese customs and traditions to foreign readers more intuitively, Ken Liu adopted literal translation of some names of people and dishes, which is a translation method for "seeking truth".

①Source text:

"……你看看，就比你大四岁。"他顿了一下，又说，"我叫葛大平，你叫我老葛吧。(......Ni Kankan, Jiu Bi Ni Da Si Sui." Ta Dun Le Yi Xia, You Shuo, "Wo Jiao Ge Da Ping, Ni Jiao Wo Lao Ge Ba.)" (Hao Jingfang,2016:26)

Translation:

…See, just older by four years. … My name is Ge Daping. Why don't you just call me Lao Ge?" (Ken Liu, 2016:248)

②Source text:

少年每人面前摆着一盘炒面或炒粉，几个人分吃两个菜(Shao Nian Mei Ren Mian Qian Ba Zhe Yi Pan Chao Mian Huo Chao Fen, Ji Ge Ren Fen Chi Liang Ge Cai.)(Hao Jingfang，2016:2)。

Translation:

Each kid had a plate of chow mein or chow fun, and they shared two dishes family style. (Ken Liu，2016：222)

In example ①, Ken Liu transliterates the name 老葛 into Lao Ge. In the traditional English translation of Chinese names, many translators choose to convey the meaning of names. For example, in his English translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Hawkes translated "Xiren[1]" into "Aroma" and "Pinger[2]" into "patience" (Hawkes, 1997). However, Liu did not adopt such a translation method, as he wrote in the first annotation in the Introduction of *Invisible Planets*: "All Chinese names in this anthology are given with surname first, in accordance with Chinese customs" (Ken Liu, 2016). Liu is well aware of the fact that when Chinese people of the same status address each other, they will add the word "Lao[3]" before their surnames to express their casualness and closeness (Chen Liufang, 2006). Therefore, he transliterated "Lao Ge" directly, keeping the custom of Chinese name and also preserving Ge Daping's cordiality to Lao Dao. The "chow mein[4]" and "chow fun[5]" in example ② are both Chinese unique foods. Instead of translating them with their ingredients or production methods, Liu transliterates the names of the food, which can show the readers the authentic Chinese food name and promote the Chinese food culture.

(2) Sentence structure

The arrangement of sentence pattern and order in literary works plays an irreplaceable role in the expression of emotions. So those of the translation texts are also extremely important.

①Source text:

生意是生意，他不想欠人情(Sheng Yi Shi Sheng Yi, Ta Bu Xiang Qian Ren Qing.)。(Hao Jingfang，2016：12)

Translation:

Business was business, and he didn't want to owe anyone any favors. (Ken Liu，2016：233)

②Source text:

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[1] Xiren, "袭人" in Chinese, means the light aroma of flowers.

[2] Pinger, "平儿" in Chinese, indicates that the person is approachable, patient, tough and tolerant.

[3] Lao, "老" in Chinese, is added before the surname to show closeness.

[4] Chow mein, "炒面" in Chinese, is a kind of stir-fired noodles with vegetables.

[5] Chow fun, "炒粉" in Chinese, is a kind of fired rice noodles.

只要抵死不说钱的下落，最后总能过去(Zhi Yao Di Si Bu Shuo Qian De Xia Luo, Zui Hou Zong Neng Guo Qu.)。(Hao Jingfang，2016：6)

Translation:

As long as you refused to divulge the source of the money no matter how much you suffered, you could survive it. (Ken Liu，2016：226)

"生意是生意(Sheng Yi Shi Sheng Yi)" is an indirect repetition in Chinese. The translator adopts the corresponding repetition in English ("business was business") to strengthen the emotion it conveys (Cheng Xiaoyan, 2017). The second example retains the sentence structure of the adverbial clause led by "只要（Zhi Yao）" ("as long as"), and is translated into "as long as you refer to...", with "you could survive it" as the main body. These sentence patterns do not only retain the original expression, but also enable foreign readers to read.

(3) Rhetorical devices

In the novel, rhetorical devices are effective ways for the authors to express the feelings and shape the characters. For the translators, accurate and appropriate translation of rhetorical devices can reduce the distance between the translation text and the original.

①Source text:

步行街一端的小摊子开始收拾，人群像用棍子搅动的池塘里的鱼，倏一下散去(Bu Xing Jie Yi Duan De Xiao Tan Zi Kai Shi Shou Shi, Ren Qun Xiang Yong Gun Zi Jiao Dong De Chi Tang Li De Yu, Shu Yi Xia San Qu.)。(Hao Jingfang，2016：3)

Translation:

The peddler at the other end of the road began to pack up their wares, and like fish in a pond disturbed by a stick, the crowd dispersed. (Ken Liu，2016：223)

②Source text:

…蓬乱的头发和乱敞的睡衣在门里门外穿梭(...Peng Luan De Tou Fa He Luan Chang De Shui Yi Zai Men Li Men Wai Chuan Suo)。(Hao Jingfang，2016：39)

Translation:

All around him were disheveled hair and half-dressed bodies. (Ken Liu，2016：261)

Example ① describes the state of people in the third space rushing home before the space conversion. The author compares the crowd to a group of disturbed fish, and the translator follows the metaphor and adopts the truth-seeking translation to keep close to the original text, maintaining the vivid scene; In example ②, the original text uses metonymy, in which "disheveled hair" and "half-dressed bodies" refer to the residents in the apartment. The author uses metonymy to set off the chaos every day. Ken Liu also uses the synecdoches mentioned above to perfectly reproduce the charm of the original text.

(4) Style

"Style is the soul of artistic expression and one of the indirect ways to realize the value of a work" (Leng Huiling, 2008). The style of *Folding Beijing* varies, and its artistic value is reflected by the detailed description of the scene.

①Source text:

"靠，菜里有沙子。"另外一个叫小丁的胖少年突然捂住嘴说，…"坑人啊。得找老板退钱！Kao, Cai Li You Sha Zi. " Ling Wai Yi Ge Jiao Xiao Ding De Pang Shao Nian Tu Ran Wu Zhu Zui Shuo, ..."Keng Ren A. Dei Zhao Lao Ban Tui Qian!)" (Hao Jingfang，2016：2)

(" Fuck! I just bit into some sand," a heavyset kid named Ding said while covering his mouth with one hand, ... "We need to get our money back from the vendor!" (Ken Liu，2016：222)

② Source text:

命运直抵胸膛。…可是那轮廓太远，太冷静，太遥不可及(Ming Yun Zhi Di Xiong Tang. ...Ke Shi Na

Lun Kuo Tai Yuan, Tai Leng Jing, Tai Yao Bu Ke Ji.)。(Hao Jingfang，2016：37)

Translation:

Fate now pressed into his chest. …But the outline was too distant, too cold, too out of reach. (Ken Liu，2016：259)

"Kao" is a vulgar mood word used by Chinese young people to express surprise, anger and other emotions. The translator translated it into "fuck", maintaining the rough language style of the young people in the third space, which also help foreign readers understand the recklessness of the young people in the fiction. At the critical moment, the author uses a parallelism ("Tai Yuan, Tai Leng Jing, Tai Yao Bu Ke Ji") to set off such a tense and desperate atmosphere, which is a desolate and desperate style. The translator translates this sentence as "too distance, too cold, too out of reach", which retains the beauty of parallelism and enables foreign readers to feel Lao Dao's anxiety and helplessness in his own place. Style is the soul of the author, and it is the goal of every translator to convey it to the target readers.

3.2 The translation strategies adopted

(1) Liberal Translation

①Source text:

"这钱……太多了。"他给自己一个台阶下，"我不能拿这么多(Zhe Qian……Tai Duo Le." Ta Gei Zi Ji Yi Ge Tai Jie Xia, "Wo Bu Neng Na Zhe Me Duo)。" (Hao Jingfang，2016：23)

Translation:

"This is…too much." He wanted to make himself feel better. "I can't accept so much." (Ken Liu，2016：244)

②Source text:

阿贝抢白了阑阑几句，阑阑倒哭了(A Bei Qiang Bai Le Lan Lan Ji Ju, Lan Lan Dao Ku Le.)。(Hao Jingfang，2016：39)

Translation:

Ah Bei turned and shouted at Lan Lan; Lan Lan began to cry. (Ken Liu，2016：262)

"台阶（Tai Jie）" and "抢白（Qiang Bai）" in the examples are both slang and colloquial expressions commonly used in Chinese society. "下台阶（Xia Tai Jie）" refers to looking for an excuse to get out of embarrassment. Liu translates it as "make himself better", which expresses the most appropriate meaning with the simplest words and expressions. "抢白（Qiang Bai）" refers to criticizing someone face to face, and the translator uses the verbs "turned and shot" to show the scene to the readers.

(2) Direct-Indirect Speech Change

Source text:

老刀问他这笔钱是不是攒了很久，看他是学生，如果拮据，少要一点也可以。秦天说没事，他现在在实习，给金融咨询公司打工，一个月十万块差不多(Lao Dao Wen Ta Zhe Bi Qian Shi Bu Shi Zan Le Hen Jiu, Kan Ta Shi Xue Sheng, Ru Guo Jie Ju, Shao Yao Yi Dian Ye Ke Yi. Qin Tian Shuo Mei Shi, Ta Xian Zai Zai Shi Xi, Gei Jin Rong Zi Xun Gong Si Da Gong, Yi Ge Yue Shi Wan Kuai Cha Bu Duo.)。

Translation:

"Have you been saving up for this for a while?" Lao Dao asked. "You 're a student, so money is probably tight. I can accept less if necessary. ""Don't worry about it. I'm on a paid internship with a financial adversary firm. They pay me around a hundred thousand each month...

The above example is the dialogue between Lao Dao and Qin Tian. In the translation, the translator changes the indirect speech of the original text into direct speech, which produces a "sound effect" (Xu Songjian, 2018), which can highlight the language characteristics and personality of the characters. Without changing the meaning of the original text, the language style of the characters is highlighted, and the readers can portray the

characters more directly.

3.3 An analysis of Ken Liu's internal translation effect

Internal translation effect refers to a series of efforts made by the translator to keep close to the original text (Zhou Lingshun, 2014). But "seeking truth" and "pragmatism" actually complement and penetrate each other. In the above examples, the translator transliterated the names of people and dishes, which not only restored the original text, but also spread the Chinese food culture. However, foreign readers may feel confused in the absence of annotation, so the rationality of vocabulary translation is low. But in terms of sentence pattern, rhetorical devices and style, Liu considered the readers' reading habits and the transmission of the literary effect on the basis of truth-seeking translation strategy. In fact, the translator's translation strategy is the concrete manifestation of his "pragmatism" and his reasonable adjustment to the original text according to the social needs. Therefore, Ken Liu 's internal behavior can be reflected in the following table:

Three Criterion	Truth-seeking	Pragmatism	Rationality
Vocabulary	+	—	—
Sentence Pattern	+	+	+
Rhetorical Devices	+	+	+
Style	+	+	+
Liberal Translation	—	+	+
Direct-Indirect Speech Change	—	+	+

Schematic Diagram of Ken Liu 's Internal Behavior in Translation

It is not advisable to separate "truth-seeking" from "pragmatism", and the idea of continuum is just for discussing and studying without separating the two (Zhao Guoyue, 2018). The translators' "truth-seeking" and "pragmatism" can be reflected in their translation, and Ken Liu 's translation fully embodies his attributes as both a "lingual man" and "social person". His "truth-seeking pragmatic" behavior and the use of translation strategies reflect his translation characteristics close to the "reader / translation" end.

4. The External Behavior of Translator Ken Liu

Professor Zhou Lingshun clearly distinguishes the research horizons in and out of translation: "intratranslational research needs to examine the translator's internal behavior and the internal effect of the translation; the perspective of extratranslational research needs to examine the translator's external behavior and the external effect of the translation" (Zhou Lingshun, 2014). Only by taking into account both internal and external research perspectives can translation criticism be objective and comprehensive as far as possible. Ken Liu 's translation behavior can be analyzed from two aspects: personal factors and reader factors.

4.1 Personal factors

Born in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, Ken Liu   moved to the United States with his family at the age of 11. Living and growing up in China for 10 years, his social and family environment made him have a certain understanding of Chinese traditional culture and social sophistication. With a good understanding of both Chinese and Western cultures, he made pragmatic adjustments to the original text through the translation according to the needs of readers and society. For example:

Source text:

血液复苏的小腿开始刺痒疼痛，如百爪挠心(Xue Ye Fu Su De Xiao Tui Kai Shi Ci Yang Teng Tong, Ru Bai Zhua Nao Xin, …)，…(Hao Jingfang，2016：38)

Translation:

As circulation returned to his numb leg, his calf itched and ached as though he was being bitten by thousands of ants. (Ken Liu，2016：260)

"百爪挠心（Bai Zhua Nao Xin)" ("A hundred claws scratch the heart") is a Chinese idiom used to describe people's uneasiness. Liu knows that foreign readers may be unfamiliar with the image of "claw", so he uses "ant" instead of "claw" in the translation, thus producing the same effect in the reader's mind.

4.2 Reader factors

Due to the differences in cultural background, reading habits and language characteristics, foreign readers may find it difficult to understand the meaning of some words in Chinese works, or misunderstand them. In order to minimize such misunderstandings, Liu pay much attention to the needs of readers, and strive to achieve pragmatic translation.

Source text:

他第一次轻轻吻她，她躲开，他又吻，最后她退无可退，就把眼睛闭上了，像任人宰割的囚犯，引他一阵怜惜(Ta Di Yi Ci Qing Qing Wen Ta, Ta Duo Kai, Ta You Wen, Zui Hou Ta Tui Wu Ke Tui, Jiu Ba Yan Jing Bi Shang Le, Xiang Ren Ren Zai Ge De Qiu Fan, Yin Ta Yi Zhen Lian Xi.)。(Hao Jingfang，2016：14)

Translation:

The first time he tried to kiss her, she had moved her lips away shyly. He had persisted until she gave in, closing her eyes and returning the kiss. (Ken Liu，2016：235)

This sentence compares shy girls to "prisoners who are slaughtered", because Chinese women are usually reserved. In order to make foreign readers feel the love between Yi Yan and Qin Tian, the translator translates the girl's wavering state into "returning the kiss", so as to show the two people's feelings both ideologically and verbally.

5. Conclusion

In the theoretical framework of translator's behavior criticism, this paper analyzes Ken Liu 's English version of Folding Beijing from the perspective of both internal and external translation, with the help of the model of "truth-seeking & pragmatic" continuum evaluation. It is found that Ken Liu 's translation behavior is highly reasonable. In the "truth-seeking & pragmatic" continuum evaluation, Ken Liu 's translation behavior tends to be "pragmatic" and his "social" attribute is prominent. His translation behavior is in line with the translator's code of conduct, "seeking truth as the foundation and pragmatism as the supplement".

While seeking truth, translators should consider pragmatism, and at the same time, they should also pay attention to truth-seeking when being pragmatic, and pragmatic truth-seeking is better than truth-seeking (Zhou Lingshun, 2014). The goal of translation is to strike a balance between the two, which are dialectical, not opposite. The translation can achieve "pragmatic" and "truth-seeking" at the same time(Zhou Lingshun, Zhao Guoyue, 2015). It is extreme and not objective to separate the two, and it is wise to integrate them in an all-round way and flexibly transform them in translation.

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