

Analysis of Translation strategies of Culture Compensation in the English Version of the Analects of Confucius by Ku Hungming

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Abstract. In the context of implementing “Chinese Culture Exporting” strategy, it is difficult for Chinese translators of national classics to completely break down cultural barriers. For example, some high cultural context concepts such as “Li” (礼) cannot match the Western context, and classic translations are difficult to spread more widely. Ku's translation of ancient books is quite in line with the taste of the Western public, and is still widely spread. The translation strategies chosen to highlight the Chinese national culture have certain research value in the translation of Chinese classics and are of great help to the dissemination of Chinese culture. From the perspective of culture compensation, this paper classifies and analyzes the cross-cultural analogies in the Analects of Confucius translated by Ku, so as to extract the translator's implicit translation strategies and good translator's literacy, hoping to provide a solution to the problem of “culture barriers” in the translation of Chinese classical books.

Keywords: Translation of ancient books; Culture Compensation; Ku Hungming's English translation of the Analects of Confucius.

1. Introduction

As a Confucian classic, the English translation of the Analects of Confucius was monopolized by missionaries in the West at the beginning, until the appearance of Ku Hungming's translation broke this unified situation. Ku Hungming is the first Chinese scholar to translate Confucian classics in the West. His English version of the Analects of Confucius was highly praised by the Western society, which was nominated for the literature Nobel Prize in 1913. The books were snapped up in the Western countries, setting off a “Ku Hungming mania”. However, in China, the English version of the Analects of Confucius by this cultural celebrity has generated academic controversy due to its strong translator style and interpretation, therefore it does not occupy a mainstream position in the translation history of Chinese classical books and the study of the Analects of Confucius. There have always been different opinions on the evaluation of Ku's work. Up to now, some scholars are still striving for a justifiable historical position for Ku Hungming's translation activities. Though controversial, it is undeniable that, knowledgeable foreign-educated Ku Hungming, with superb multilingual skills and high western literature attainments, is expert at understanding western countries, Britain, Germany etc. and thinking in the way the general public thinks in the West. Moreover, its reputation in Western literature proves that its translation has high value in cultural communication and research. Based on the English translation, the original text of the Analects of Confucius, and Ku's comments in Chinese, this paper summarizes and analyzes the cross-cultural analogies of the Analects of Confucius.

2. Analysis

2.1 Acculturation: Generalization with Upper-positional Categorical Words

In the process of translation of Chinese classics, the complex relationships between characters in the Analects of Confucius and other books, as well as the names with Chinese surnames and phonetic rules, are difficult to understand for western readers who are not familiar with the Chinese context, resulting in reading burnout and a sense of alienation. This classic Chinese book records many of his

disciples' and his daily conversations, involving not only the two sides of the conversation, but also the evaluation of numerous historical figures and events.

ST:<论语.先进第十一>子贡问:“师与商也孰贤?”子曰:“师也过,商也不及。”曰:“然则师愈与?”子曰:“过犹不及。”

For example, in the Analects of Confucius, Zi Gong asked Confucius which of the two men was cleverer. In this paragraph, “Zi Gong” asks Confucius to answer, and the topic involves two people, “Shi” and “Shang”, corresponding to two students, “子张”and “子夏”respectively, involving a total of four characters. The name of the original text appears as follows:

Table1. Names and their English translation

孔子:	Confucius
子贡:	a disciple of Confucius
师与商	two other disciples; which of the two; the one...the other
师:	the first one
商:	the last one

TT: A disciple of Confucius, referring to two other disciples, enquired which of the two was the better man. Confucius answered, “One goes beyond the mark: the other does not come up to it.” “Then,” replied the disciple, “the first man is a better than the last.” “No,” answered Confucius, “to go beyond the mark is just as bad as not to come up to it.”

In the process of processing the original text, Ku not only uses relatively clear “Upper-position words”, which transform the relationship between characters into a clear student-and-teacher relationship, but also uses the pronoun cohesion means of the English language, which makes the semantic integration in line with the characteristics of the English language, so that western readers do not have to jump between Chinese names and think about the relationship between characters. It is very common for Ku to use the term “Disciple relationship” as a substitute for complex character identity in his translation version, especially if discourses contain more than one name, and most of them will choose to omit the names as “his disciples”. But there are also some exceptions. For example, as one of Confucius’s favorite disciples, “Yen Hui” has appeared in many scenes and dialogues. It is often translated literally as “Yen Hui” or “His favorite Yen Hui”.

2.2 Cultural Common Core: Use Basic Category Words to Reflect Faithfulness

Ku Hungming’s English translation of the Analects of Confucius describes political and historical scenes that refer to the political system of Confucius and the names of the different ranks of officials. Therefore, when translating different cultural backgrounds and systems, Ku tries to replace with basic categorical words, so as to strive to be faithful to the original text and let readers understand the main idea in the familiar cultural context.

2.2.1 Basic Category Word Substitution of Political Terms

TT:<论语.微子第十八>齐人归女乐,季桓子受之.三日不朝,孔子行.

The characters in this sentence are complicated, describing the process of events in Confucius’s official career. The characters appearing are “齐人”, “女乐”, “季桓子”, and “孔子”. These characters and events are listed in the order of occurrence, without any semantic cohesion. Once the translator does not clarify the relationship between characters, the English translation will become confused, ambiguous and difficult to understand. First of all, “季桓子”, also known as “季孙斯”, was a governmental official in the State of Lu during the Spring and Autumn Period. He was a viscount in the State of Lu. “子爵”is usually translated as “Duke” with the person name. But Ku handled it differently.

ST: The Prime Minister who held the power of government in Confucius’s native state, after Confucius had risen to be Minister of State (Minister of Justice), having on one occasion received a

troupe of actresses from another State was so occupied with them that there was no meeting of ministers at the Palace for three days. Confucius thereupon resigned, and left his own country.

“首相”is translated as “prime minister” in Western politics. He was the head of the cabinet of a monarchical state. In Chinese ancient governmental system,” 首相” means “谓宰相中居首位者.” Ji Huanzi was the head of the Ji family who had been in power three times in the State of Lu, so he was the prime minister. It can be seen that Ku’s translation and treatment have achieved the transformation of cultural elements very well. If the word “Duke” is used, Western readers cannot understand the meaning of China’s bureaucratic political system. They are both entitled to the title and participate in the governance of the country, and hold positions in the government.

2.2.2 Using Historical Allusions to Replace the Same Category Words

When introducing Confucianism to Westerners, Ku Hungming took the identity and cultural context of western readers into consideration, and made many interesting analogies with western philosophy, religion and ethics: Emperors Yao and Shun(尧舜)were compared with Abraham and Isaac, “尊王攘夷” were compared with Western chivalry, and Confucian rites and music(儒家礼乐) were compared with the Old Testament of the Bible. At the same time, these wonderful cultural analogies also let western readers know Ku Hungming, who has the spirit of scholars and official in mind, so as to deeply understand the essence of the Analects of Confucius from these aspects. When using the classics, as background information supplement, the translator usually occupies a large length of the article. In contrast, the method adopted by Ku is just to add parentheses after the replacement of characters or things, without filling in the redundant description, concise and eye-catching, and only use the concepts familiar to Westerners and use several household names to make the translation fresh and efficient.

For example, in The Analects of Confucius, Baxiao, (<论语.八佾>), Confucius described to students the inheritance relationship between Xia and Qi state, as well as the inheritance relationship between the state of Sung, the descendant state of Yin, and the Yin Dynasty itself, in order to explain the argument that the existing ancient books and scholars are insufficient to repay the high level of history and civilization.

TT: 子曰:“夏礼,吾能言之,杞不足征也;殷礼吾能言之,宋不足征也.文献不足故也,足则吾能征之矣.”

ST: Confucius remarked to a disciple, “I can tell you of the state of the arts and civilization during the Hsia dynasty [say the Greek civilization]; but the modern State of Ts’i [say modern Greece] cannot furnish sufficient evidence to prove what I say. I can tell you of the state of the arts and civilization during the Yin dynasty [say Roman civilization]; but the modern state of Sung [say Italy] cannot furnish sufficient evidence to prove what I say. The reason is because the literary monuments extant are too meagre, —otherwise I could prove to you what I say.”

Table 2. Categorical word substitution at the same level

Hsia dynasty	The Greek civilization
The modern State of Ts’i	Modern Greece
Yin dynasty	Roman civilization
The modern state of Sung	Modern Italy

Western readers’ worship and yearning for the ancient Greek civilization can be found in various western art works and literature, while now Greece is the shadow of a lost civilization, and it is impossible to restore the whole picture even if it is a splendid civilization. The same is true of Roman civilization and present-day Italy. Although it cannot completely present the grand and complete picture of Chinese history, Western readers can understand the depth of Confucius’ thought through Ku’s translation, and understand the sage’s psychological activities of regretting the loss of splendid civilization during the change of dynasties, which will greatly arouse the resonance and admiration of Western readers.

Here are a few more examples. In the Analects of Confucius, Taibo the Eighth(<论语.泰伯第八>), Ku translated Lord of Chou as Moses or Solon in Chinese history; Xian Wen the Fourteenth(<论语.宪问第十四>) the translation “晋文公谲而不正” and “齐桓公正而不谲” for One (the Frederic the Great of the time) was crafty and without honor. The other (Wilhelm I of Germany) was a man of honor and without any craftiness in his character.”

Table 3. An analogy between historical figures of the two countries

晋文公	the Frederic the Great of the time	crafty and without honor
齐桓公	Wilhelm I of Germany	a man of honor and without any craftiness in his character.

Ku was well aware of the German image of Frederick the Great as a “treacherous hero” known for his organizational and combat skills, as well as William I's benevolent act of paying reparations to the Democratic people when he attacked socialism and the working class under the guidance of Bismarck's revisionism. In the familiar context, Western readers, especially Germans, will understand the characteristics of the two Chinese characters effortlessly. At the same time, they will be amazed by the translator's profound Western historical insights and profound knowledge of history, which will generate a friendly and familiar reading feeling and draw the distance between the reader and the translator in an instant.

2.3 Cultural Default: replace with inferior category words and special cultural forms

Some elements of Chinese culture are unique and cannot be reproduced in other cultures. It is difficult to translate such concepts, terms or concrete things, which is the main obstacle for translators to overcome in the process of translating classic Chinese books. The following three kinds of culture default phenomena in the English translation of the Analects of Confucius are used to study the Ku translation methods and techniques: the Confucian reference to “classic verses of the Book of Songs”, “Confucian abstract etiquette”, and “concrete Chinese ancient object nouns”.

In the Analects of Confucius, Zi Han No. 9 (<论语.子罕第九>), there are some comments by Confucius on some poems circulated in the pre-Qin period.

ST: “唐棣之华,偏其反而.岂不尔思,室是远而.”子曰:“未之思也,夫何远之有?”

TT:

“How they are waving, waving,

The blossoming myrtles gay;

Do I not think of you, love?

Your home is far away.”

Confucius, repeating those lines, remarked, “That is because men do not think. Why is it far away?”

You can see the literary style of Ku Hungming. He translated these lines with the melody of Shakespeare's sonnets. Of course, if translators aspire to achieve this, they should have extremely high requirements on their language skills. Apparently, Ku is not only familiar with Shakespeare's poems, but also understand the rhymes and genre rules, which are highly matched with ancient Chinese poems in terms of cultural expression and incisive and vivid artistic expression.

ST: 子曰:“禘自既灌而往者,吾不欲观之矣.”

TT: Confucius remarked, “At the service of the great Ti sacrifice [the ‘Mass’ in ancient China], I always make it a point to leave as soon as the pouring of the libation on the ground is over.”

In this translation, “禘”, a grand national sacrificial ceremony (which is the most solemn worship ceremony in ancient China, only the son of heaven can be held) is marked after the mass in Western religions. After reading the translation, Western readers can feel that the sage also has a similar side with ordinary people and thus develop empathy and affinity for this cultural giant. Targeted readers

will be amused by the fact that the sage are also annoyed with many rituals of the sacrificial ceremony and he unexpectedly hurry away after the necessary viewing.

In the *Analects of Confucius*, Xiangdang Tenth(<论语.乡党第十>), Confucius described the dress etiquettes of people at that time and the dress code that must be paid attention to during weddings and funerals in spring, summer, autumn and winter. There were a lot of “Chinese ancient object nouns”, such as “帷裳”, “悬冠” and “羔裘”.

ST: 去丧,无所不佩.非帷裳,必杀之.羔裘玄冠不以吊.

TT: When not in mourning, he may have any ornaments or appendages on the girdle of his dress. His under-garment, except when it is worn as an apron (like the Free Masonsnow) on State occasions, he should always have cut pointed on the upper part.

After the mourning period, ancient people could take off their mourning clothes and wear some decorations. In addition to sometimes serving as an apron (as is the case with stonemasons today), the undergarment should be trimmed in excess on formal occasions. Liu Baonan, an ancient scholar, explains the term like this: it is the dress of the ceremony with the size of a curtain. (In Chinese: 刘宝楠正义: “郑注云,帷裳,谓朝祭之服,其制,正幅如帷也.”) Here, “帷裳” is translated as an apron (like the Free Masonsnow). According to the author, it is a Masonic apron in the context of western culture. It originally originated from a strong religious costume, similar to a certain religious ceremony recorded in Egyptian murals in Figure1. In Ku's translation, the concept of religious similarity is often used for culture compensation, so that readers can grasp the maximum understanding in cognition and enjoy the collision of different cultures.



Figure 1. Peking Opera curtains on the left, aprons of ancient Egyptian murals on the right

3. Conclusion

This paper summarizes the cross-cultural translation strategies adopted by Ku in translating the *Analects of Confucius* into English version of *The Analects of Confucius* from three aspects: cultural adaptation, cultural co-core and cultural default. From the angle of acculturation, the use of “upper category words” in Ku translation can simplify the complex relationship between characters and cultural concepts, and reduce the cultural burden for western readers to understand. From the perspective of cultural common core, for things that can exist in the social system and public cognition, basic category words can be the substitution, especially well-known cultural allusions can be used, which will make the translation more compelling and enhance the familiarity and interaction with Western readers. From the perspective of cultural default, it is difficult to replace the high context phenomenon with Chinese characteristics in Chinese classical books. It is necessary to give play to the translator’s creativity and start with the specific background culture of the target language in order to find a solution.

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