Chinese Translation of Japanese Quotation Sentences From the Perspective of Contextual Adaptation

DING Pinyue

University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China

Based on the contextual adaptation perspective of Verschueren's Adaptation Theory, this paper explores the Chinese translation strategies of Japanese quotation sentences in the Yang translation of *The Courage of One* from the perspectives of communicative context and linguistic context. The study finds that the Chinese translation of Japanese quotation sentences involves various strategies, including retaining direct quotations, converting direct quotations into statements, transforming direct quotations into attributive + noun forms, and alternating between direct and indirect quotations. This research provides a new perspective for the Chinese translation of Japanese quotation sentences and offers theoretical support for translation practices in cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: contextual adaptation, communicative context, direct quotation

Introduction

Due to significant differences in linguistic structures and cultural backgrounds between Japanese and Chinese, the Chinese translation of Japanese quotation sentences has long posed considerable challenges for translators. *The Courage of One* (original Japanese title: "孤独を楽しむ人、ダメになる人"), written by Japanese author Mayumi Arikawa and published by PHP Institute in Japan, was officially released on March 18, 2023. The Chinese translation was undertaken by Professor Yang Benming, a "Morning Light Scholar" from Shanghai. The book reveals the inherent biases in Japanese society towards loneliness, deeply analyzes the current state and causes of loneliness, and offers a new life philosophy—"enjoying loneliness"—for those struggling with interpersonal relationships.

To enhance the book's accessibility and readability, the author extensively uses sentences marked with "「」"

(known as "quotation marks" or "kagikakko" in Japanese). In Japanese, the quotation marks "「」" serve multiple

functions. According to the *Dictionary of Punctuation, Symbols, and Signs*, they can be used not only to mark quoted statements but also to indicate keywords, terms with specific meanings, and for emphasis. Scholars in Japanese linguistics have conducted in-depth research on the scope of quotations. For instance, the Japanese Language Education Association (1982) studied the differences between citation and quotation, and Li Cuicui (2017) analyzed the criteria for distinguishing between direct and indirect quotation sentences.

According to Lü Xiaodong's (2003) comparative study of the application scope of Japanese and Chinese

DING Pinyue, Master in candidate, College of Foreign Languages, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China.

quotations, there are two main differences between the two languages: First, in terms of the classification of quotation sentences, Chinese research focuses solely on the "quotation mark" category, while Japanese research extends to the syntactic level, including the analysis of the logical relationship between quoted content and predicate verbs. Second, in terms of the connotation of quotation sentences, Chinese quotations refer exclusively to oral or written discourse, whereas Japanese quotations also include perceptual content such as thoughts, judgments, and feelings, which are absent in Chinese quotations.

Given this, it is of great significance to study the translation strategies for quotation sentences that express mental states in Japanese-Chinese translation. This can be explored from various perspectives, including the translation of direct quotations, indirect quotations, quotations with quotation verbs, and quotations without quotation verbs. This paper aims to use Verschueren's Adaptation Theory to explore the strategic choices in the Chinese translation of Japanese quotation sentences, providing new insights for translation practice.

Verschueren's Linguistic Adaptation Theory

The theory of Linguistic Adaptation, proposed by Belgian linguist Jef Verschueren, is a pragmatic theory concerning the adaptation and selection of language. The theory posits that language use is a continuous process of selection, both conscious and unconscious, influenced by internal and external linguistic factors (Verschueren, 1999). Since the process of language selection is similar to the choices translators must make during translation, Adaptation Theory is often applied in translation studies, offering a new pragmatic perspective.

Verschueren elaborates on language selection and adaptation from four analytical dimensions: contextual adaptation, structural adaptation, the dynamics of adaptation, and the salience of adaptation. Contextual adaptation, a crucial branch of Adaptation Theory, includes both communicative context and linguistic context (Verschueren, 1999). Communicative context refers to the specific environment and background in which language occurs, encompassing the physical world, social world, and mental world. Linguistic context refers to the co-text, including contextual cohesion, intertextuality, and sequencing, which provide the necessary conditions and constraints for language selection and use. Verschueren's Adaptation Theory emphasizes the importance of context in language selection, arguing that language users must adapt to the context to achieve effective communication.

Communicative context and linguistic context interact, jointly influencing language selection. In specific communicative processes, context is influenced by both internal and external linguistic factors. Different contexts lead to different language choices, which in turn affect the generated context. Therefore, translations must adapt to the specific communicative and linguistic contexts to remain faithful to the original content.

Translation Strategies for Japanese Quotations in Chinese

Adaptation in Communicative Context

Li Cuicui (2017) categorized Japanese quotation sentences into three types based on quotation verbs and content: speech-related quotation verb sentences, thought-related quotation verb sentences, and writing-related quotation verb sentences. Since Chinese quotations only include speech and writing, translating thought-related Japanese quotation sentences into Chinese poses a significant challenge. From the perspective of communicative context, speakers and listeners continuously adapt their language choices based on changes in the physical, social, and mental contexts. Therefore, translators must adapt to these contexts, selecting

translations that align with the current social background, the original text's social pragmatic function, and the author's mental state.

Adaptation to the physical world. The physical world includes temporal reference and spatial reference, both of which anchor language choices to the physical world. Temporal reference is a relative concept, varying across languages and depending on different events and dialogues, leading to uncertainty. Spatial reference is also relative, depending on the speaker's or the given reference space, and different spatial perspectives can influence language choices, potentially causing communication issues (Verschueren, 1999).

Additionally, the physical context involves non-verbal factors, such as gestures, body posture, and facial expressions, which also affect language choices.

Example 1: 「私のことなんか、どうでもいいのね」「こんなことなら、仕事を辞めるんじゃなかった」と（妻が）キレて、何時間も泣きながら猛攻撃することに。夫は夫で「仕事で苦労している自分のことをわかってくれない」という孤独があって逆ギレ。

Translation: 被惹恼的妻子哭诉着"你根本就不在意我，早知道我就不辞职了！"，指着丈夫骂好几个小时，丈夫也因妻子的不理解而感到孤独，回嘴道"你根本不知道我有多辛苦"。

Example 1 depicts a couple arguing over a minor issue. The wife, a homemaker, feels neglected by her husband, while the husband, who works outside, feels misunderstood by his wife. The first and second quoted sentences are speech-related quotation verb sentences, expressing the wife's complaints. The third quotation marks a key term, indicating the husband's reason for feeling lonely. Verbs like "キレ" (losing temper), "猛攻撃" (fierce attack), and "逆ギレ" (retorting) describe the couple's argumentative state. The wife first complains, and the husband retorts. The translator combines the first two direct quotations into a dialogue format, adding an exclamation mark to intensify the emotion, and converts the reason for the husband's loneliness into a direct quotation, adapting to the physical context and enhancing the scene's tension.

Adaptation to the social world. The social world involves the identities of the speaker and interpreter, as well as the influence of social structures and constraints on language choices, such as social status, power relations, and social norms (Verschueren, 1999). For example, the degree of social intimacy affects language choices. Japanese honorifics are a typical example, divided into respectful language, humble language, and polite language, depending on the addressee's social status. For instance, when apologizing, people tend to use more formal expressions like "申し訳ございません" or "誠に申し訳ございません" in formal settings or with strangers, while using more casual expressions like "すみません" or "ごめんなさい" with close family or friends. In translation, the translator must adapt to the social context of both the source and target languages, preserving the author's intent while conforming to the target readers' social context.

Example 2: 他人事のように自分を笑ってしまうと、一歩引いた目で見られて、「悩んだり、ジタバタしたりするほどの問題ではないか……」と思えてきます。

Translation: 当用第三方的角度来看待自己时，你就会发现何谓"当局者迷，旁观者清"，就能意识到这种问题根本不需要烦恼。

Since Chinese quotation sentences do not include thought-related content, the translation of this quotation sentence must be adjusted according to the context. The author uses a "direct quotation" to depict the sudden realization of viewing oneself objectively, enhancing the connection with the reader and aligning with the Japanese mindset that values "thoughts" as much as "speech" (Lü, 2003). However, in Chinese, "quotation marks

are only used to mark quotations with 'concrete evidence'" (Lü, 2003, p. 34), and thought-related content does not align with Chinese social context.

To preserve the author's intent, the translator must concretize the thought content, adopting a translation that is more convincing to the target readers. Therefore, the translator uses the Chinese idiom "当局者迷，旁观者清" (the onlooker sees more than the player) to summarize the scene, making it more convincing and clear to the reader, and converts the direct quotation into a statement, adapting to the target language's social context.

Adaptation to the mental world. The mental world involves the cognitive and emotional factors of the speaker and interpreter. Language choices vary based on the speaker's mental state, and different expressions can lead to different interpretations by the interpreter. The interpreter may speculate on various aspects of the speaker's mental state, such as personality, emotional state, cognitive ability, motivation, and intent (Verschueren, 1999). How individuals understand and process information also affects language choices. For example, when individuals are highly stressed or anxious, they may choose simpler or more direct language, while in a relaxed or happy state, they may opt for more complex or expressive language.

Example 3: 飲み会に誘われると、自分がしんどくても「せっかく誘ってくれたから」、仕事を頼まれると「困っているみたいだから」と断れない。

Translation: 逃避孤独的人在面对不想参加的聚会时，会顾虑"难得别人邀请我"，然后硬着头皮去；面对别人硬塞的工作，他们会心软，觉得"他看上去很困扰"，然后接受委托。

In Example 3, the author lists types of people who cannot refuse others. The two direct quotations reflect the speaker's mental state: "せっかく誘ってくれたから" (They went out of their way to invite me) shows the speaker's reluctance but consideration, while "困っているみたいだから" (They seem to be in trouble) reflects the speaker's empathy and self-sacrifice. Both express the speaker's unwillingness. To adapt to the original mental world, the translator retains the direct quotations and adds translations like "feel sorry" and "consideration", aligning with the mental worlds of both the original author and the target readers.

Adaptation in Linguistic Context

Linguistic context refers to the environment of language within the co-text. Contextual cohesion includes markers that indicate relationships within a discourse or text, such as conjunctions, anaphora, deixis, juxtaposition, exemplification, repetition, ellipsis, and substitution. Intertextuality refers to the multidimensional relationships between expressions in a text and other texts during comprehension and interpretation. Sequencing refers to the linear order of linguistic components in a text, such as chronological order or the sequence of events (Verschueren, 1999).

Example 4: ワクワクしながら街角を歩いて「この看板、面白い！」、自然のなかで「あ、めずらしい花」と細かいことにも目が留まるのは、一人旅だからこそ。

Translation: 一个人出门的好处就在于能够留意到生活中的很多细节，你可以迈着欢快的步伐，在街角处拍下有趣的招牌，或是在大自然的环绕中拍下珍稀的花朵。

In Example 4, the two direct quotations describe the author's actions during a solo trip. Notably, "この看板、面白い！" (This sign is interesting!) and "あ、めずらしい花" (Oh, a rare flower) merely express the author's reactions to what they see. However, based on the preceding context—"the author enjoys taking photos during solo trips"—it is clear that the author is photographing the scenery. Considering the linguistic context, the translator converts the two direct quotations into the attributive + noun forms "interesting signs" and "rare

flowers", simplifying the emotional tone of the original text. This translation aligns more closely with the reading habits of the target audience.

Conclusion

Using Verschueren's linguistic Adaptation Theory, this paper explores the strategic choices in the Chinese translation of Japanese quotation sentences in the Yang translation of *The Courage of One*. Significant differences in linguistic structures, stylistic features, and social cultures between Japanese and Chinese make the translation of quotation sentences a major challenge in translation work. Adaptation Theory offers a new perspective for addressing this challenge, with contextual adaptation expanding the ideas for translating quotation sentences and playing a key role in language selection and reconstruction.

The study identifies four main strategies for translating Japanese quotation sentences into Chinese: retaining direct quotations, converting direct quotations into statements, transforming direct quotations into attributive + noun forms, and alternating between direct and indirect quotations. However, this study is limited to the Yang translation of *The Courage of One*. Future research could expand to more text types to further validate and enrich these translation strategies, exploring the potential of Adaptation Theory in the translation of quotation sentences and advancing Japanese translation studies to build a solid bridge for cross-cultural communication.

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