Proposing a Theoretical Framework of Patron’s Ideology in Translation

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Abstract

Patron’s ideology in translation has not gained sufficient attention in academia. The study of patron’s ideology integrates theories of patronage and ideology in translation, and is actually an intersection of the two. This paper attempts to propose a simplified theoretical framework of patron’s ideology in translation. It first explores the concept of patronage, and moves on to a short discussion of patron’s ideology, and then tries to propose two theoretical models: the first one is “Manipulation Model of Ideology upon Translation”, and the second one is “Manipulation Model of Patron’s Ideology upon Translation”. The second model is based on the first and has developed from the first. This is a theoretical development from general to specific. The two models shed some light on the study of patron’s ideology in translation studies.

Key words: patron; patronage; patron’s ideology; translation

INTRODUCTION

André Lefevere studied patronage alongside with ideology and poetics in translation studies, and labelled them as three factors that give rise to rewriting. To Lefevere, they are of equal importance. Following him, quite a few scholars have done research on it, still confining to the three components of patronage (an ideological, an economical and a status components) and not going beyond. It is not difficult to find that there are overlappings in Lefevere’s rewriting theory: ideology is a concept in parallel with patronage, and also a subcategory of patronage. Actually there is an interwoven relationship between patronage and ideology. This paper tries to explore this relationship and formulate a simplified theoretical framework of patron’s ideology in translation.
1.1 The Concept of Patronage

Patronage theory is part of the systems theories which originate from Russian Formalism. André Lefevere views translated literature as a sub-system of the system of literature, which is again a sub-system of another broader system. The system of translated literature consists of a double control factor: one is professionals within the literary system, the other is patronage outside of the literary system (Lefevere, 1992b: 14). The professionals include critics, reviewers, teachers, and translators; patrons include persons, groups of persons, and the media (Lefevere, 1992b: 15). Patronage is more interested in the ideology of literature than in its poetics (ibid).

Patronage consists of three inter-related components: an ideological component, an economic component, and a status component (Lefevere, 1992b: 16), in a hierarchical order. The ideological component constrains the choice and development of both form and subject matter. The economic component concerns the payment of translators and determines which may appear in the form of pension, salary or royalties. The status component implies the translators’ social status and may occur in different forms: appointment of some office, membership of a particular support group, shift to a certain life style, etc. Figure 1 shows a clear picture of what has been said in this paragraph.

It has to be pointed out that there is an interrelatedness and interdependence among the three components. The ideological component plays a decisive role in translators’ payment and social status. It concerns the patron’s attitude towards and understanding of translation and translators. Ideology determines one’s actions. If the patron attaches great importance to translation and pays high respect to translators, he/she will provide them with a decent income and a high status in society; a satisfactory payment to the translator may lead to his/her conforming to the patron’s ideology and improve his/her self-consciousness and arouse in him/her a sense of achievements; a
translator with a high social status can feel the respect and recognition from society, is happy to conform to the patron’s ideology, and may produce more economic benefits for the patron and himself/herself in the end. These relationships are somewhat complex and not as visible as other one-to-one relationships in society.

In translation, specifically, the ideological component determines the selection of ST: which texts are to be translated, and in part or in whole? The economic component ensures that translators can make a living by doing translations. A satisfactory salary arouses in employees a sense of self-pride and directly leads to the employees’ ideological loyalty to the employer as they can feel the respect paid to their work and themselves. The status component indicates the position translators take in the social ladder, and this social status directly leads to the translators’ self-consciousness. Sense of superiority/inferiority, sense of achievements, etc., of translators may all come from the status component (Lefevere, 1992b: 17).

Lefevere also distinguished differentiated patronage and undifferentiated patronage. The former means that the economic component is independent of the ideological component and the status component, and latter means that the three components are provided by the same patron and interdependent. In translation practices, the latter outnumbers the former. Undifferentiated patronage is in a stricter sense of the term “patronage”. Acceptance of patronage implies acceptance of the parameters or specifications set by the patron (Lefevere, 1992b: 18), with exceptions in which patronage is imposed forcibly on translators by a powerful person or institution, such as a ruler (king or emperor), or a powerful person in a totalitarian regime.

However, patron’s ideology has not drawn sufficient attention in China’s academic circle. Searching cnki.net, the biggest database of academic papers in China, the author of the present thesis has not found any article with “patron’s ideology” included in the title. Most scholars employ Lefevere’s three-component patronage to analyze translation cases in China. It is indeed true that patron’s ideology can be drawn out from the three components and studied separately, though it bears relation with the other two components, namely, the economic component and the status component, because it the patron’s ideology that has a direct revelation in the target text: the other two components are not so conspicuously revealed in the target text. It is necessary to call the attention of the academia in China to patron’s ideology.

1.2 The Concept of Ideology

Ideology used to be an area of politics, but now it has fallen to the domain of translation studies. It is generally held that ideology is indispensable to translation. Some scholars even make such absolute statements as that all translational acts are ideological and the relationship between translation and ideology is an ideological one (Schäffner, 2003, p. 23). Lydia H. Liu (1995) stated, “Translation is no longer a neutral event untouched by the contending interests of political and ideological struggles. Instead, it becomes the very site of such struggles.”

There are almost as many definitions of ideology as there are theorists of it. Nobody
has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology (Eagleton, 1991/2007:1). Eagleton lists some of the oft-quoted definitions of ideology as: the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life; a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class; (false) ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power; systematically distorted communication; forms of thought motivated by social interests; identity thinking; socially necessary illusion; the conjuncture of discourse and power; action-oriented sets of beliefs; the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure; etc. (Eagleton, 1991/2007: xxi) There are binary oppositions in the above definitions such as “ideas” and “false ideas”, and it can be either static or dynamic as it may be a process, a body, a form, a conjuncture, or a medium. A process is inevitably dynamic, and a body/form/conjecture/medium is usually static. Ideology usually carries pejorative meanings. It is a set of values, meanings and beliefs which is to be viewed critically or negatively (Eagleton, 1991/2007: 28). Few people reckon their own ideas ideological and most people label others’ ideas “ideology”. For example, Napoleon coined the term ideologue to refer to the ideas of his opponents. As can be seen from these definitions, ideology can be both commendatory and pejorative.

André A. Lefevere, a theorist of rewriting, defined ideology as “the conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time, and through which readers and translators approach texts” (Bassnett & Lefevere, 2001). He claimed, “On every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or a poetological nature, the latter tend to win out” (Lefevere, 1992b: 39). Translators are constrained by a series of ideological factors: by the dominant or ruling ideology, by the initiator and/or patron’s ideology, by their own ideology, by the intended readership’s ideology, etc. Translators’ ideological identity and stance are more or less constrained by all of these factors. Translators also show certain ideological stances in their translation activities.

In terms of subject, it can be divided into dominant ideology and individual ideology, and ruling ideology and oppositional ideology or rebel ideology. In Marxist philosophy, the term “dominant ideology” denotes the attitudes and beliefs, values and morals shared by the majority of the people in a given society; as a mechanism of social control, the dominant ideology frames how the majority of the population think about the nature of and their places in society; of being in and of a social class (Bullock & Trombley, 1999). As for translators, they are eager to conform to the dominant ideology so as to facilitate the reception of their translations by the ruling class. Dominant ideology shapes and reshapes translators’ individual ideology and serves as a guiding principle for the translators especially when the latter enters into conflict with the former. Individual ideology, also called translators’ ideology, refers to ideology of individual translators and/or translator groups. It may either conform to or deviate from the dominant ideology. Ideally, the former tries to match the latter as was the case in the treaty translation. In translating politically colored and ideologically loaded sensitive texts, if translators’ ideology departs from dominant
ideology, they may fall into the infamy of traitors and may even risk their lives. Rather, if the two meet each other, the results are usually satisfactory.

1.3 Defining Patron’s Ideology

Ideology is often enforced by the patrons, the people or institutions who commission or publish translations (Lefevere, 1992b: 14). Patron’s ideology can be defined as ideas or beliefs of an patron, either a person or institution, of a particular social group or class, on various issues or aspects of translation, with an view to manipulate the whole process and the final product of translation, to help maintain the interests and social status of the individual or the social group or class. Patron’s ideology sees to it that his/her ideology has infiltrated into the whole process of translation and the three components have played their due role in every link of the translational chain respectively. It ensures that the translation has met all the requirements he/she set up or the specifications reached upon between him/her and the translators before the actual translating.

Generally speaking, patron’s ideology has to decide whether the three components have been successfully fulfilled. It has to decide the choice and development of both form and subject matter, the payment of translators and the form of payment, and ensure the translators’ social status. Specifically, it determines the selection of translators and source texts, how much and how often translators are paid (i.e., they are paid by hour, fortnight, month or year), and what status the translators enjoy in society and in which layer they lie in the social pyramid. What’s more, patron’s ideology concerns whether the translators are rightly motivated for the completion of a high-quality translation product.

Patron’s ideology may involve in a series of procedures in translation: translator selection, source text selection, translation quality control, translation strategies, etc. It exerts influences on the criteria of translator selection, motivations in source text selection, means of translation quality control, and translator’s translation strategies. Patron’s ideological manipulation may include both direct manipulation and indirect manipulation. A Patron can exert direct ideological manipulation on translator selection, source text selection, and translation quality control, and indirect ideological manipulation on his translators’ translation strategies. Figure 2 shows a general picture:
1.4 Manipulation Model of Ideology upon Translation

Ideology in translation falls into two categories: macro-ideology and micro-ideology. Macro-ideology covers political ideology and poetics, and micro-ideology refers to the ideology of a series of players in the chain of translational action, such as the patron, the translator, and the reader.

Ideology is first at all a political doctrine (Vincent, 1992). Political ideology is a certain ethical set of ideals, principles, doctrines, myths, or symbols of a social movement, institution, class, or large group that explains how society should work, and offers some political and cultural blueprint for a certain social order. A political ideology largely concerns itself with how to allocate power and to what ends it should be used (Olanrewaju, 2015). Political ideology stipulates the direction of poetics and affects the birth of poetics mode and construct of discourse power in different fields (Yang, 2010). Political ideology takes a very important position in Chinese intellectuals’ minds, and political pursuit, i.e., to gain a high position in the government, is their lofty ideal. China’s translation activities are inevitably infected with such strong political needs, which determines China’s translation view in history. On the one hand, political ideology makes it possible that translation caters to the political needs of the ruling class; on the other hand, translation affects the development and change of political ideology. Political ideology constructs the repertoire of translated literature via its manipulation of selection of ST, general strategies of translation, reception of translations, etc.

Poetics covers two components: the inventory component and the functional
component. The former includes literary devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters and situations, and symbols; the latter concerns the role of literature in the social system (Lefevere, 1992b: 26). The former affects the way in which a literary theme is treated (Lefèvre, 1992b: 34); the latter influences the selection of themes that must be relevant to the social system if the work of literature is to be accepted (Lefevere, 1992b: 26). The selection of certain themes means the exclusion of others, and the way the selected themes is treated reveals the dominant poetics. Poetics is not absolute or static, but relative and dynamic. Poetics is in a constant change in accordance with the social context. However, in a certain period of time, there are stages of “steady state” in which all elements are in equilibrium with each other (Lefevere, 1992b: 38). Like ideology, there is also a constant struggle between dominant poetics and rival (oppositional) poetics, which is decided by translators as translations are a perfect gauge for poetics (Lefevere, 1992b: 38).

Micro-ideology includes ideology of the patron, the translator, the reader, etc. The patron is usually the person or group of person who initiate, commission, and fund translations. His/her ideology exerts a tremendous influence on various aspects of translation: selection of translators, selection of ST, translation procedures, translation modes, micro-translation strategies, polishing of TT, selection/anticipation of potential readers, interaction with readers, etc. Actually, translators are employees of the patron, so they have to abide by the specifications agreed upon between the patron and themselves. If they decline the specifications or are found have violated some of the specifications, the translational action will not proceed to next step or will simply be cancelled. The translator, though a subjective body, have limited freedom in a translation activity patronized by someone or some institution. The translator’s subjectivity is limited to a great extent. However, more or less, the translator exerts (partial) influences on some of the aspects, such as translation modes, micro-translation strategies, polishing of TT, etc. It seems that readers stand outside of the chain of translational action as they do not participate in translation activities directly. However, readers’ expectation and response exert a considerable influence on translation. Before the translation starts, the patron will work out a specification together with the translator, which takes into consideration the potential reader’s expectation, reading habits, literary preferences, etc. After the readers view the translation, they will consciously or unconsciously form their responses to and comments on the translation which will in turn affects future translations. The reader will affects translation poetics, selection of source texts, reception of target texts, etc. Reception of target texts probably concerns literary style of translations, readability, acceptability, etc. Figure 3 shows a clear picture of the relationships.
Figure 3 Manipulation Model of Ideology upon Translation
1.5 Manipulation Model of Patron’s Ideology upon Translation
Patron’s ideology exerts a considerate influence on translation. Lefevere divides patronage into three components: an ideological component, an economic component, and a status component (Lefevere, 1992b: 16). Accordingly, patron’s ideology also has the three components. The ideological component falls into direct ideological manipulation and indirect ideological manipulation. The former cover selection of translators, selection of source texts, translation procedures, polishing of TT, selection of potential readers, interaction with readers, etc. The latter include translation modes and micro-translation strategies. Translation modes means whether the translation is full translation or partial translation, whether it is adaptation, whether it is abridging, etc. Micro-translation strategies cover quite a few binary oppositions, such as literal translation vs. free translation, foreignization vs. domestication, dwarfing vs. lofting, uglification vs. beautification, etc. The economic component concerns the payment of translators in the form of pension, salary or royalties. The status component implies the translators’ social status which implies the recognition and respect of translators by the society. It may be shown in the appointment of some office (official positions), integration into a certain support group, or shift to a different lifestyle (Lefevere, 1992b: 16).
Figure 4 Detailed Manipulation Model of Patron’s Ideology upon Translation
1.6 Interaction between Patron’s Ideology and Translators’ Ideology

The present thesis draws on Lefevere’s three-component patronage, but focuses on patron’s ideology and the interaction between patron’s ideology and translators’ ideology to disclose their relationship: manipulating and manipulated, which ensures that patron’s ideology is present in the whole process of translation: selection of source texts, setting of translation strategies, review and examination of target texts, etc.

How does patron’s ideology interact with translators’ ideology will be discussed in the present study. Ideally, patron’s ideology is kept in conformity with translators’ ideology in patroned translation. However, the two ideologies are not always agreeable to each other. Conflicts do arise from time to time, and struggles between them may appear inevitably, but invisibly. The patron has his own ways in manipulating his translators’ ideology, such as back-translation, re-translation and re-examination of targets, as is the case in the present study, backed with economic and social patronage.

The patron affects the strategies of his/her translators by imposing his/her ideology on them. Ideological manipulation is a means of translation quality control. As for translation strategies, liberal translation, rather than literal translation, is most often preferred. F. Q. Horatius remarked, “Do not worry about rendering word for word, faithful translator, but render sense for sense” (Lefevere, 1992a). Patronage is something like the powers that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature (Lefevere, 1992b: 15). Accordingly, patron’s ideology is a power that affects rewriting or translating.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights patron’s ideology and its manipulation on translation. The theoretical models offer insights into patron’s ideology in translation, and enlightens institutions as patrons, such as the state, local governments, translation agencies and corporations, etc., on how to affect translation process and conduct quality control on translations. It is noteworthy that patron’s ideology in general is in constant change: patron’s ideology in the present time is different from that of past ages in its means, forms, methods, and strategies of manipulation. Even a single patron’s ideology is constantly adapted to fit the society. It is hopeful that the theoretical models proposed in the present paper is of some help in understanding the concept of patron’s ideology in a more systematic or comprehensive manner.

NOTES

1. CNKI is short for China National Knowledge Infrastructure.
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REFERENCES