

Translation and Bibliotherapy as Healing: A Comparative Approach to Reparation

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Abstract:

Translation and bibliotherapy, though they are cost-effective and versatile, can be deemed as a supplementary treatment to support the good mental health. This paper examines translation and bibliotherapy as healing with a comparison of uses in terms of their approach and effect to reparation for ensuring a good mental health. Their differences lie in that translation is vertical and output-based, whereas bibliotherapy is horizontal and input-based with the similarity of the use of mental and cognitive activities, such as translation and reading. The choice of the genres in literature also exerts differences on the effect of translation and bibliotherapy as a means of healing and reparation. Through qualitative research and a case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin, it is found that translation and bibliotherapy can be considered as a cost-effective and efficient supplement for supporting the good mental health.

Key words: Translation, Bibliotherapy, Healing, Reparation

1. Introduction

The translation functions are so various that translation can be considered as a means of treatment in the recovery stage of a mental patient, just like music, painting, and writing. Translation is a complicated process of encoding and decoding activities, in which involves the linguistic transfer between two or more languages. Therefore, translation is also a mental process that involves the working of a neuro-linguistic part of the brain and can activate the brain cells for encoding and decoding the linguistic messages in the translational process.

Bibliotherapy is “ a therapeutic approach employing books and other forms of literature, typically alongside more traditional therapy modalities, to support a patient's mental health”.^[1] Bibliotherapy is also considered as a means of mental therapy for the mental patients even in the mental hospital while there is other kind of therapies, such as music, painting, etc, which is deemed as complementary therapy for them.

The use of translation and bibliotherapy as a therapy has been tried in mental hospitals across the world. Their utilization has been considered as a means to support a patient's mental health apart from medication and other therapies. Modern technologies and therapies have been introduced to the treatment of mental patients, but the traditional therapies, such as music, painting, translation, or bibliotherapy, remain active in the treatment and recovery of the mental patients. In the mental hospital, the psychiatrist has different therapies for treating the mental patients, including medication, and other complementally used therapies, such as music, painting, or translation and bibliotherapy, etc.

2. Research Methods

The research methods of qualitative research and case study are utilized in this paper to broaden and deepen the probe into translation and bibliotherapy as healing and reparation in a comparative manner. As a comparative literary approach to translation and bibliotherapy, a combination of qualitative research and case study will facilitate the research in a compelling way.

3. Translation and Bibliotherapy

The use of translation and bibliotherapy for mental patients has a prerequisite condition that the recipients of these therapies must be able to read one or more languages, so that they can use translation and reading as a therapy. The translation and bibliotherapy also require that the recipients of these therapies must have the ability to read and write, so that the therapies can be undertaken as a supplementary treatment to the mental patients.

3.1. Translation and Bibliotherapy as a Supplementary Treatment to Mental Patients

When a mental patient has taken relevant medication, and the mental condition of the patient has been stabilized, he/she can also take up a supplementary therapy to refresh their mental capacity and neuropsychological recovery by translation and bibliotherapy if the patient likes reading and translation. Translation and bibliotherapy are cost-effective and versatile, hence they can be considered as a supplement to support the good mental health.

It is reported that “storytelling, creative writing, and reading have long been recognized for their therapeutic potential. The use of literature as a healing method dates back to ancient Greece, when Grecian libraries were seen as sacred places with curative powers. In the early nineteenth century, physicians like Benjamin Rush and Minson Galt II began to use bibliotherapy as an intervention technique in rehabilitation and the treatment of mental health issues. During World Wars I and II, bibliotherapy was used to help returning soldiers deal with both physical and emotional concerns”. Therefore, translation and bibliotherapy (or the reading of literatures) can be an effective way for the mental patients to experience their therapeutic effect.

3.2. Translation and Bibliotherapy as Healing and Reparation

It is observed by GC. Spivak, the Indian American translator and theorist, that “translation was the most intimate act of reading”. Therefore, the notion of reading for translation or translation for reading as well as translation for healing and reparation is interconnected and interacted. In translation, the intimate act of linguistic transfer can trigger a more profoundly mental and psychological change that can be resulted in healing and reparation. As said by GC Spivak, the Indian American translator and theorist,

that “translation in the narrow sense is thus a reparation. I translate from my mother tongue. This...as one language among many – give rise to a certain obligation for reparation”. Hence translation can be deemed as healing and reparation.

Bibliotherapy, “ the use of reading as a therapeutic tool, is an age-old practice with marginal risk and potential real benefits”. Mental patients can take bibliotherapy as a supplementary or complementary therapeutic tool apart from medication and other means of treatment and therapies. Bibliotherapy is also cost-effective in that it is available through the establishment of a well facilitated library with resourceful book collections. Mental patients can make better use of bibliotherapy in the library with the instruction from the psychiatrist with a list of books and other therapeutic means of treatment.

According to Kleinian psychology, “reparation is never complete; rather, it is an active process of striving toward completeness, whether of the head or heart or entire being”. Reparation is an important process in which the heart and the mind, or even the soul, are inwards to healing as oneness and completeness. Therefore, the paths to reparation are varied in terms of the means and ways, but their goal is identical in that reparation is the complete healing.

3.3. The Literature Genres: Effect as a Means of Healing and Reparation

There are different literature genres, whose therapeutic effect varies in terms of the use of a single or a combination of different literary genres for reading materials. The following section illustrates the use and therapeutic effect of different literary genres according to the nature of the said genres.

Lyric poetry has the elements of being lyrical, emotion-packed, speaking the mind, etc. Therefore, lyric poetry can be utilized as a literary genre to work out the healing and reparation for mental patients. The chosen lyric poetry can be sourced from such poets as Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Heinrich Heine, Tagore, Li Po, etc. The lyric poetry can be recited, read aloud, role played for reciting, copied and/or reproduced in calligraphy, just to mention a few ways for appreciation and understanding.

Romantic Poetry has the elements of being romantic, love-themed, passionate in love, etc. Romantic poetry can be utilized to heal and repair the wound caused by love or love relationship by means of recitation, reading aloud, or role playing for recitation, etc. The recommended poetry is

written by such poets as Robert Browning, John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, etc. Likewise with lyric poetry, romantic poetry can be appreciated and shared by mental patients.

Classic novels provide mental patients with a yearning for knowing the past experience that could date back from decades ago to centuries ago. Therefore, classic novels can bring the reading experience as profoundly felt as being immersed in history and historic events. The past and the present can be linked together by reading the classic novels for appreciation and understanding.

Bestselling novels or bestsellers, which are published today or in the past years, can be deemed as a mirror to the present situation. The reading pleasure and therapeutic effect can be felt by reading them and bestsellers of different genres, such as self-help books.

Moreover, reading books on philosophy, psychology, or history can also be an effective tool to be used as the bibliotherapy for mental patients or anyone who are interested in human thoughts and understanding the inner self of humans. It is an ideal case that a good selection of book lists inclusive of fiction and non-fiction will be provided for bibliotherapy and translation as a means to achieve healing and reparation.

The different literature genres have different therapeutic effect as healing and reparation varies, but what should be avoided a book which is erotic or obscene, or politically frenzied, or too religious. The selection of literature genres and the book lists can be consulted by the psychiatrist with literary professionals or by consulting with relevant books or reviews.

4. Translation and Bibliotherapy: Differences

Translation is vertical and output-based in that the linguistic transfer or the encoding and decoding process of translation is a process by the head and the mind, and then to be written or typed out by the hands, which can be deemed as vertical. Translation is also a neuro-mental-physical activity that requires the head and the mind, as well as the physical labor of the hands. The result of translation is the linguistic transfer into another language or the output-based writing rendered from the source text into the target text, therefore translation is output-based.

Translation can be done by amateurs or professionals alike, in which the ultimate target text is different though the source text is identical. The-

refore, there is a saying that 100 translators can produce translations with 100 figures of Hamlet as the Hamlet in the source text. Though translation is not creative writing, translation is considered as both science and art as argued by theorists for centuries. To sum up, translation can be used as a tool for maintaining good mental health.

Bibliotherapy is horizontal and input-based in that reading is like a horizontal activity immersing in books while it is input-based through reading. Bibliotherapy is an old practice that has been used to be taken as a supplementary, therapeutic tool for treating psychological and mental illness. When one is fully concentrated in reading books with positive content, one will immerse in the positive sense, feeling, and mindset. Therefore, the choice of books with positive mental attitude, such as the inspirational classic entitled *The Positive Mental Attitude* by Dr Norman Vincent Peale, can help to facilitate and maintain the good mental health.

4.1. Translation and Bibliotherapy: Similarities

Similarities between translation and bibliotherapy are the use of mental and cognitive activities, such as translation and reading as healing (or bibliotherapy). Both translation and bibliotherapy have a prerequisite requirement that one should be able to read, which means that one should at least receive relevant education, not to mention the higher education, as capable of reading. If one could read and understand the source text, one would be able to write out the translation in the target text. That is the basic translational process.

Translation and bibliotherapy will also require that one undertakes the use of creative, physical activities of the mind, hands, and eyes. This also means that the mind, hands and eyes of a person must be dexterous as to be able to read and translate effectively.

The choice of the genres in literature also exerts differences on the effect of translation and bibliotherapy as a means of healing and reparation. As above-mentioned, the materials or books of positivity should be used for translation and bibliotherapy for maintaining a good mental health. That does not mean that we should not read or translate books that reveal the dark side of life or society, but we should take a very positive attitude towards reading those books of negativism.

5. A Case Study: Mr. Xiaoyu Jin, a Chinese freelance translator with bipolar disorder

In January 2022, a freelance translator named Xiaoyu Jin with bipolar disorder went viral in the Chinese mainland as a “prodigy translator” after the death of his mother, and his father wrote about and published his son’s story as an autodidactic, freelance translator suffering from a serious mental illness. Mr. Jin, a patient of bipolar disorder, taught himself English, Japanese, and German and translated and published 22 Chinese translated books from these languages amounting to five millions Chinese characters. Mr. Jin is still under medication and suffering from the mental illness, but he is grateful that “translation is done as the consolation and a career for me”, which was simply put in his own words in a State television interview (China Central Television, the CCTV).

From the news reports and the CCTV interview about Mr. Xiaoyu Jin, it is found that reading (the conscious or unconscious use of bibliotherapy by him and his family) and translation by Mr. Jin has assisted him so much in overcoming the sufferance of a serious mental illness-bipolar disorder-that he considered translation and bibliotherapy as consolation (in his own word) with the connotation of healing and reparation. From the case of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin, it is observed that translation and bibliotherapy can be deemed as a means of healing and reparation or consolation, even for a past and present patient of bipolar disorder like Mr. Xiaoyu Jin.

The case of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin illustrates that translation and bibliotherapy can be helpful to and facilitate the process of healing and reparation, even for a sufferer of bipolar disorder like Mr. Jin. It is only in the process that takes time and procedures as well as techniques that healing and reparation can be achieved by practicing translation and bibliotherapy as Mr. Xiaoyu Jin has done so consciously or unconsciously.

6. Findings and Discussions

Through above-mentioned qualitative illustration and case study regarding translation and bibliotherapy, it is found that translation and bibliotherapy can be considered as a cost-effective and efficient supplement for supporting the good mental health and the therapeutic effect of healing and reparation for a case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin has been exemplified in a comparative manner. The supporting illustrative, qualitative research and the case study also indicates that there is a lack of clinical evidence or quanti-

tative data from the mental institutions, which this paper will pave a way for further research and clinical study. This can be considered as the limitation for this research and will provide a new perspective for the future research projects with both of the qualitative and quantitative research data to further illustrate the therapeutic healing and reparation by the use of translation and bibliotherapy in real-life, mental institution settings.

The current research tries to elaborate the comparative approach to understand translation and bibliotherapy as healing and reparation while the case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin is exemplified for this understanding that it is worthy of doing the initial, present study. Differences and similarities regarding translation and bibliotherapy are also presented with illustration of different literature genres, which have various, therapeutic effect as a means of healing and reparation. More clinical and quantitative research needs to be undertaken in that regard in order to have a complete illustration.

Given the qualitative nature of this research, it is elaborated to approach translation and bibliotherapy as the therapeutic healing and reparation while it is found that the case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin has fully exemplified this research idea. For the future research, if there will be added with the collaboration and clinical support from psychiatrists, psychologists, translators, mental patients, and translation researchers, this research idea will bloom into a big research project with a series of papers or even can be resulted in an academic monograph.

There is no lack of evidence in the literary world that renowned writers with mental illness overcame their deadlock disease to achieve the literary prominence and monumental works ever written or produced, such as Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, etc. Literary translation and/or writing requires the intensive capacity for mental and neuro-physiological work for literary production. This area will open up a new route for interdisciplinary research on translation, literature, psychology, and psychiatrics.

7. Conclusion

This paper examines translation and bibliotherapy as healing and reparation in a comparative approach and manner so that it is found through qualitative research and a case study that translation and bibliotherapy have the therapeutic effect for healing and reparation. Though the healing and reparation resulted from translation and bibliotherapy varies, it is also found that different genres of literature regarding fiction and non-fiction have

different therapeutic effect for healing and reparation as observed from the case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin. The research in this paper also has its limitation in that it lacks the quantitative and clinical data to support its further argument, but it has opened up a new route in the way that more research, both in qualitative or quantitative, or both, will be able to pave the way for a new, interdisciplinary research idea in that regard. The author hopes that the presentation and argument in this paper will give him and other researchers a new research route to do further studies in the area that more contribution will be given to the interdisciplinary field of translation studies, psychology, and psychiatrics.

The research in this paper still needs to be elaborate further with quantitative and clinical data in order to make a more fully fledged conclusion regarding the therapeutic effect of translation and bibliotherapy to maintain the good mental health. The good mental health as well as a healthy body is the dream goal of every human on this earth and worthy of doing further research in that regard.

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