

Original Paper

The Ideorealm of Translation from the Perspective of Translation

Horizon Theory: A Case Study of *a Happy Excursion*

Mengyao Zhao¹ & Yusheng Du^{2*}

¹ College of Liberal Arts, Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, Nanjing, China

² College of Liberal Arts, Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, Nanjing, China

* Yusheng Du, Corresponding author

1. *Teaching Reform Project of Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology in 2023: "Research on the Path and Innovative Method of Ideological and Political Construction of Translation Major Curriculum" (No.: 2023XZDJG08)*

2. *The 2023 Graduate Course Ideological and Political Research Project of Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology: Research on the Path of Integrating the Teaching Goal of "Curriculum Ideological and Political" into Teaching Design of the Master of Translation (MTI).*

Received: January 29, 2024

Accepted: March 19, 2024

Online Published: April 01, 2024

doi:10.22158/eltls.v6n2p91

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/eltls.v6n2p91>

Abstract

Professor Chen Daliang proposed the Chinese Translation Theory with "Translation Horizon" as its core, explaining the three states of literary translations: sense, flavor and ideorealm, constructing a theoretical system for the theory of translation horizon, which has Chinese characteristics and represents an innovative development of traditional Chinese translation theories. As the first chapter of Zhuangzi, *A Happy Excursion* can be regarded as representative of Zhuangzi both in terms of thought and artistry; it contains rich wisdom of classical Chinese philosophy. This paper takes Translation Horizon Theory as the theoretical framework through studying Lin Yutang's English version of *A Happy Excursion* so as to explore strategies conducive to promoting Chinese culture by means of literature translation, and to building Chinese characteristic translation studies system, aiming at providing reference for translation of traditional Chinese works.

Keywords

Translation horizon theory, Ideorealm, A Happy Excursion, Construction of Chinese translation studies system

1. Introduction

To build a translation theory with Chinese characteristics is not only a call from the translation academic field, but also a contribution to the prosperity of world translation theories. Rooted in traditional Chinese culture, Chinese translation theories possess unique values and serve as important resources for the construction of contemporary translation theories with Chinese characteristics. However, as Wang (2002) pointed out, “Traditional Chinese translation theories cannot naturally integrate into modern translation theories. Instead, they require some artificial transformation.” Under the current imbalance of the dominant discourse of Western translation theories, the reconstruction of Chinese native translation discourse can help address the speechlessness of traditional Chinese translation theories. Professor Chen Daliang of Soochow University’s monograph *Three States of Literary Translation: Sense, Flavor and Ideorealm* returns to the origin of traditional Chinese translation theories and establishes a theoretical system of “Three Translations” of the realm of literary translation theories. It provides new sights for the innovation and development of literary translation studies and is of high academic value and practical significance.

2. Theory of Translation Horizon

Chinese traditional translation theory originates from Chinese traditional philosophy and aesthetics of literature and art. Therefore, the concept of “realm” is consistently applied from “realm of life” and “realm of art” to “realm of translation”. “Realm” is a core term in Chinese philosophy, aesthetics and poetics, which is universally applicable in translation studies as well. The so-called “realm” of translation refers to an aesthetic category that measures the artistic accomplishment level of the translator and evaluates the quality and taste of the translated works. It has subjectivity, hierarchy and transcendence. (Chen, 2017) The essence of translating the realm is the pursuit of spiritual elevation, rather than the increase of objective knowledge. “Sense”, “Flavor”, “Ideorealm” proposed in *Three States of Literary Translation* correspond respectively to the three levels of meaning, connotation, and artistic conception in literary works. This forms a trinity system for the realm of literary translation and achieves a sublimation in traditional Chinese translation theory.

2.1 Sense of Translation

Sense of translation is the foundation of literary translation, which is a kind of conceptual meaning that is common in different languages. Therefore, any language can translate the meaning. In the process of translation, the translator should respect the original meaning of the work, grasp the intention of the text and faithfully express the connotation of the original work.

2.2 Taste of Translation

In the translation of literary works, taste of translation is a crucial link, which aims to reproduce the original rhyme, rhythm, emotion, rhetoric and style. In the process of translation, the translator should put himself into the original text and try to reach the true feelings expressed by the text. To enhance the aesthetic appreciation of the translation, it is necessary to carefully consider the use of words and have

a correct understanding of the linguistic features of the original in terms of vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric, which helps to be close to the textual characteristics of the original.

2.3 Ideorealm of Translation

Ideorealm of translation is not only the ultimate goal but also the highest realm of literary translation. It emphasizes the reconstruction of the original text, highlighting the correspondence between the translation and its overall meaning, as well as the reader's holistic cognitive experience. The language of artistic conception possesses aesthetic features such as metaphorical, symbolic, suggestive, and intertextual elements. While there are limitations to achieving this ideorealm of translation, it is not impossible. Translators can surpass what seems untranslatable through poetic language and strive to preserve the implied meanings inherent in the original text. At the same time, readers need to have rich emotional experiences and empathize with others by delving into words within translations, thus experiencing profound implications conveyed by artistic conception. (Liu & Ren, 2022)

3. Analysis: The English translation of *A Happy Excursion*

3.1 Three Realms in A Happy Excursion

A Happy Excursion is the representative work of Zhuangzi, an important figure in the Taoist school. Zhuangzi's writings are imaginative and fantastical, with cleverly crafted concepts. He skillfully employs fables and metaphors, showcasing a bold and unrestrained writing style that embodies romanticism. The literary style of *A Happy Excursion* best reflects Zhuangzi's artistic approach.

The article explains to us the three realms of human life, revealing what pursuits individuals should have and what the ultimate ideal state of existence is. “弃燕雀之小志，慕鸿鹄之高翔” which means “abandon the small ambition of swallow, and follow the high flying of swan”, this is the first realm of life. “举世而誉之而不加劝，举世而非之而不加沮，定乎内外之分，辩乎荣辱之境” which means “If the whole world flattered him, he would not be affected thereby, nor if the whole world blamed him would he be dissuaded from what he was doing. For Yung can distinguish between essence and superficialities, and understand what is true honor and shame.” This is the second realm of life. “至人无己，神人无功，圣人无名” which means “The perfect man ignores self; the divine man ignores achievement; the true Sage ignores reputation.”, this is the third realm of life, but also the highest realm of life described by Zhuangzi.

3.2 The Translator's Translation Thought

The translator's personal cultivation and moral accomplishment greatly affect the quality of his translation. Lin Yutang has more than 30 years of overseas living experience. He treats Eastern and Western cultures equally and balances them perfectly in his translation. Besides, Lin Yutang also played a great role in promoting the development of Chinese translation theories. From the perspective of translation theory, Lin Yutang advocates “beauty” as the basis. (Lu, 2005) According to him, faithfulness, smoothness and beauty are the three criteria that a good translation needs to meet. It is the first time that aesthetic concepts are introduced into the system of Chinese translation theories. It is not

difficult to see from this that Lin Yutang's translation thought was greatly influenced by Taoism's aesthetic thought. In terms of faithfulness, smoothness and beauty, Lin Yutang believes that they are related to the translator's responsibility to the original author, the translator's responsibility to Chinese readers and the translator's responsibility to art respectively. Knowing that the West has many misunderstandings about the East, Lin Yutang fully considers the acceptability of the target audience when translating, which is also the main reason for Lin's success in promoting cross-cultural communication between China and the West.

3.3 Case Analysis

ST1: 逍遥游

TT1: A *Happy Excursion* (Lin, 1942)

The title can often reveal the theme of a text, and the English translation of the title is not only a word level translation, but also a deeper understanding and interpretation of the text and the thoughts of Zhuangzi. The translator translated “游” as “Excursion”, which cleverly embodies “游” as a spatial feature, elevating the realm of travel as a verb and endowing it with a long distance implication. This way of translation breaks through the literal interpretation of the title. Meanwhile, the word “happy” adds subjective emotional color. On the basis of retaining the original meaning, it carries out innovative interpretation and creation, and improves the translation ideorealm. Translating the title of this article is not only a test of the translator's basic knowledge, but also a challenge to their understanding of Taoist philosophy and their ability to convey the essence of Chinese culture. Furthermore, it should be noted that when interpreting ancient texts, it is essential to strive for revealing the profound and mysterious aspects of these classics, which poses an important task for contemporary scholars.

ST2: 是鸟也，海运则将徙於南冥；南冥者，天池也。

TT2: When on a voyage, this bird prepares to start for the Southern Ocean, the Celestial Lake. (Lin, 1942)

The original interpretation in the text is: This bird migrates to the southern sea when the wind blows the sea. The southern sea is a naturally formed pool. Here, the translator did not choose to transliterate “Tianchi”, which would be more obscure and difficult for the target language readers to understand. Lin Yutang translated “天池” as “the Celestial Lake” here, meaning the lake in the heaven. Although it did not further reveal the meaning of “naturally formed”, it is in line with the typical imagery in myths in Chinese culture. The reader can imagine the mythical bird migrating to the South China Sea, which is a cloud-shrouded and ethereal place, as if the heavenly beings lived in seclusion. This scene is not only a natural phenomenon, but also a cultural symbol, representing the pursuit of ancient scholars' emotions and ideas that are detached from the mundane world. This translation adds infinite imagination to the readers and adds strong aesthetic appreciation in the translation ideorealm. In the process of translation, Lin Yutang, with his own aesthetic literacy, strives to explore and construct an aesthetic realm that can evoke the imagination of target readers while remaining faithful to the original text. At the same time, in translating classic literary works to other cultures, he preserves the unique

aspects of Chinese culture and strengthens cultural confidence.

ST3: 野马也，尘埃也，生物之以息相吹也。天之苍苍，其正色邪？

TT3: Translation There mounting aloft, the bird saw the moving white mists of spring, the dust-clouds, and the living things blowing their breaths among them. (Lin, 1942)

In the original text “The bird” refers to the Peng (鹏) that soars in the Southern Sea mentioned earlier in the text, describing the ethereal scene seen by Peng flying high in the sky. The wild horses mentioned here are not actual running horses; instead, a metaphorical technique is used to compare floating clouds and flowing mist in the sky to galloping wild horses. In this translation, Lin renders “野马” (wild horses) as “the moving white mists of spring”. Firstly, at the level of sense, the translator accurately understands and faithfully reproduces the semantic content of the original text. Secondly, at a level of flavor, on the basis of ensuring accurate conveyance of its original meaning, “游气” is not directly translated as “the moving fog”, emphasizing both rhetorical devices employed in Chinese literature and adding a touch of literary translation flair to enhance aesthetic appeal. Lastly, at a level of ideorealm, the translator transcends the literal meaning and flavor in the translation process, emphasizing the overall correspondence between the target text and the original, as well as the reader’s holistic cognitive experience. The phrase “white mists of spring” depicts the ethereal and fantastical scenes. By incorporating vivid descriptions of colors, using “mist” instead of a literal translation like “fog” or “cloud”, it highlights the scene of hazy mist drifting with the wind in the sky, allowing readers to imagine more vividly and adding to their interest in reading. In the process of literary translation, the translator adds an aesthetic touch, elevating the translation ideorealm.

ST4: 且夫水之积也不厚，则其负大舟也无力；覆杯水於坳堂之上，则芥为之舟，置杯焉则胶，水浅而舟大也。

TT4: A great cup of water If there is not sufficient depth, water will not float large ships. Upset a cupful into a hole in the yard, and a mustard-seed will be your boat. Try to float the cup, and it will be grounded, due to the disproportion between water and vessel. (Lin, 1942)

The original interpretation in the text is: if the water is not deep, then it will not have the strength to load a large boat. Pouring some water in the low-lying place in front of the hall, a leaf of grass can be regarded as a boat, and if you put a cup on it, it will be stuck, which is the reason why the water is shallow while the boat is comparatively big. At first reading, the original text has many images and the sentences are more obscure. Blindly translating the original text will destroy the aesthetic feeling of the original text, and at the same time cannot explain the metaphorical meaning of the original text clearly, so the translator has made appropriate rewriting and supplement in the English translation process. “水之积也不厚，则其负大舟也无力” and the later “风之积也不厚，则其负大翼也无力” form a correspondence. “水之积”, which means “the accumulation of water”, can be understood as the gathered water; “风之积”, which means “the accumulation of wind” describes the strong wind, expressing the same connotation. It is necessary to use the abstract concept to understand the meaning of the original word “积”. When dealing with this difficulty, the translator did not choose the words

such as “accumulation”, but reorganized the structure of the original text, transformed “accumulation” into “deep”, and translated as “sufficient depth”. Meanwhile, the translator reverse the order of water and wind, and use them as the subjects for the phrases “负大舟” and “负大翼”, making the translation more smooth. The metaphor and symbol in the original text can be expressed, which reflects the transcendence of the translation ideorealm. On the basis of accurately conveying the meaning of the translation, it adds implicit poetic flavor.

4. Inspiration: Construction of Chinese Translation Studies System

After decades of efforts since the reform and opening-up, China has made significant progress in comprehensive national strength and international influence. However, there still exists a problem of lack of discourse power. This requires us to strengthen academic exchanges, enabling the world to have a better understanding of China and enhancing its influence internationally. Due to Western countries’ long-term dominance in the global academic discourse system, it is necessary for us to construct an academic discourse system that aligns with the international one, showcasing China’s positions, perspectives, methods, and achievements more effectively. This will enable the world to gain a better understanding of our nation.

At present, under the background of the strategy of cultural power, China’s academic discourse power is in an important stage of development. Academic discourse power evaluation helps to promote Chinese academia to respond to the challenges in the new era, promote the internationalization and localization of academic discourse power with Chinese characteristics, and clarify the overall direction and specific measures of the future development of China’s academic discourse power (Yu & Qiu, 2023). The construction of China’s academic discourse evaluation system mainly studies how to build a scientific, reasonable and effective academic discourse power evaluation system, so as to better convey the academic information of China’s academic subjects, and comprehensively, comprehensively and accurately evaluate China’s academic discourse power. Therefore, actively building an academic discourse system with Chinese characteristics is of great significance to the promotion of China’s academic discourse power in the world.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of translation horizon theory, this thesis analyzes the English translation of *A Happy Excursion*, and finds that there are many subtle points that can reflect the “translation sense”, “translation flavor” and “translation ideorealm” of literary translation. At the same time, this translation system also plays a role in spreading Chinese culture on the literary, aesthetic and philosophical levels. At the same time, the author believes that the translator’s own personality and moral quality are closely related to the promotion and transcendence of translation ideorealm, so the translator also needs to constantly improve themselves, and strive to promote the extensive and profound traditional Chinese culture. In the strategic background of a cultural power, the author is deeply inspired by the translation

horizon theory, which returns to the origin of the traditional Chinese translation theory. Scholars in the field of translation studies need to constantly explore and actively promote the construction of the Chinese translation system, so as to master their own academic discourse power, and better spread Chinese civilization in the competitive environment of international cultural turbulence, so that the world can better understand the profound Chinese culture.

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to my mentor who has offered me constructive guidance and suggestions. He helped me a lot through all the stages of writing this thesis and always be patient with me. It is his responsible demeanor and conscientious attitude that has greatly impressed me. I will stick to a rigorous academic attitude in my future study. Furthermore, I am also deeply indebted to all the professors and teachers who taught me in the past. Thanks to their instructions and guidance, I have become more mature and rational both in work and life. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the unconditional support, encouragement and understanding of my family and friends. Without their company, I cannot keep progressing in the arduous journey.

References

- Chen, D. L. (2017). *The Realm of Literary Translation: Meaning, Taste and Ideorealm*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Lin, Y. T. (1942). *The Wisdom of China and India*. New York: Random House.
- Liu, M. J., & Ren, D. S. (2022). A Useful Attempt to Transform Traditional Chinese Translation Theories into Modern Times: A Review of the Realm of Literary Translation: Meaning, Taste and Ideorealm. *Journal of Yanshan University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*.
- Lu, Y. (2005). On American Translation: A Study of Lin Yutang's Translation. *Chinese Journal of Translation*.
- Wang H. Y., & Liu, S.C. (2002). Modern Interpretation of traditional Chinese translation classics: an Effort to establish translatology. *Chinese Journal of Translation*.
- Yu, B., & Qiu, J. P. (2023). Construction and Promotion Path of China's academic discourse Power Evaluation System under the Background of Cultural Power—A Case study of Chinese Social Sciences. *Modern Information*.