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# 《红楼梦》两个英译本对文化差异的处理

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**摘要:** 本文通过比较“红楼梦”二个英文全译本, 讨论了文化差异对翻译实践的影响, 认为译者母语的文化背景差异导致了二个译本之间以及与原文的差异, 即翻译受到译者意识形态的无形制约. 从跨文化研究角度看, 《红楼梦》某些涵盖文化内容的翻译所出现的问题可以通过脚注或专注, 使之既凸现原文的文化内涵, 又保持行文流畅.

**关 键 词:** 文化差异; 翻译; 红楼梦  
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## 1 Introduction

The Chinese classical novel Honglouloumeng has been translated into more than twenty languages with over one hundred translation versions. Out of its six English translation versions, four are translations of selected chapters, two are complete versions. The Story of the Stone, is a complete translation in five volumes. Its first three volumes were translated by David Hawkes published in 1973, 1977 and 1980 respectively, while the fourth and fifth volumes, containing the last forty chapters, were translated by John Minford, the son-in-law of David Hawkes's, and they were published in 1982 and 1986 by Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England. A Dream of Red Mansions is another complete English version in three volumes translated by Yang Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang. They were published by Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 1978. These two versions are the most popular English versions and remain to be the only two complete translations as well. Traditionally, translation has been described as comparative linguistic

undertaking, wherefore translation has been tackled primarily from the perspective of the differences in language structures. However, this comparative linguistic approach could hardly explain the complex phenomenon of translation because inter-lingual communication stretches far beyond the mechanics of linguistic similarities and contrasts just as Nida says: "the meaning of verbal symbols on any and every level depends on the culture of language community," and "language constitutes a model of the culture." (Christine Schuffner & Helen Kelly Holms 1995: 1)

This paper argues that translation is not merely a matter of selecting felicitous equivalent words, but it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture. By citing examples with respect to cultural contexts, this paper also reveals that translation is a kind of intercultural exchange, which bridges up the "gap" or "distance" between two different kinds of cultures.

## 2 Cultural differences as manifested in the two different translations of Honglouloumeng

### 2.1 Mode of thought

Thought patterns vary as cultures differ from one another. According to the diagram from Robert B. Kaplan, "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-cultural Education", an English paragraph, which normally follows a straight line of development, is very different from an Oriental paragraph, which tends to follow a circular line of development. In this sense, putting Chinese into English is a matter of how to arrange words together in a sentence because the words and word groups of one language don't fit together in the same way as the words of another language do. That means each culture has its own special way of thinking. Apart from this, the same words and symbols on many occasions create different images in the mind of people with different culture, or rather, one's mode of thought could hardly separate from his culture.

(1) "你妹妹远路才来,身子又弱,也才劝住了,快别再提了。" [第三回 P30]

'So don't reopen that subject.'

[Trans. The Yangs Vol. I P39]

'So let's have no more of this.'

[Trans. Hawkes Vol. I, P92]

It is interesting to find that the structure of Professor Yang's translation is similar to the structure of the original Chinese, which is subject-matter prominent, while Professor Hawkes' translation is consistent with the English way of arranging word order. The addition of words "Let's" indicates, unlike Chinese, English is a subject prominent language. By domesticating the form of language, Hawkes has made the rendering more readable and comprehensible to the English readers and meanwhile retains the original stylistic color.

(2) "Take renditions of '东风' from Bao Yu's '怡红快绿' for another example: '对立东风里,主人应解怜。' [第十八回 P211]

'Facing each other in the soft east wind.'

[Trans. The Yangs Vol. I, P261]

'Their mistress, standing in the soft summer breeze.'

[Trans. Hawkes Vol. I, P370]

"东风" is a word with Chinese cultural flavor. It is literally translated into "east wind" by Professor Yang, and freely rendered into "summer breeze" by Professor Hawkes. This indicates each of them looked at the text in quite a different way, and therefore applied different methods to the translation practice; Professor Yang's is

semantic translation focusing primarily upon the semantic content of the source text and Professor Hawkes' communicative translation focusing essentially upon the comprehension and response of receptors. Owing to the difference of geographical position some of the words carry different conceptual meaning; in Chinese classic Qu's and Ci's, "东风" refers to "spring breeze". Take the lines from "The Romance of Western Bower" (西厢记) written by Wang Shifu ((元)王实甫) for example, "可正是人值残春蒲郡东,门掩重关萧寺中;花流水流红,闲愁万种,无语笑东风。"

(1996: 2) In this discourse, we are here in late spring, so it gives hint for people to recognize that the Chinese "east wind" actually refers to the "spring wind". But what for the "east wind" in the mind of English people? Dickens wrote in one of his novels: "How many winter days have I seen him, standing blue-nosed in the snow and east wind!" (钱哥川 1981: 31) This shows "east wind" in English is associated with winter, and is often modified by such words as keen, biting and piercing. Considering the cultural factor and readership, Professor Hawkes put "东风" into English "summer breeze" to bridge up the culture difference, for literal translation without annotation would be misleading.

## 2.2 Values

Values are overt expressions of what is considered good or evil, beautiful or ugly, and right or wrong. They are standards by which we judge the actions and positions of ourselves and others. (Gail B. Ellenbaum & Charles O. Ellenbaum 1992: 37) Individuals in each culture may not accept the same set of values, and they may express their values differently. As each language reflects and creates cultural attitudes, each has a unique way of expressing values.

(3) "贾母王夫人等因素喜李纨贤惠,且年轻守节,令人敬服,今见他寡婶来了,便不肯叫他外头去住。那婶母虽十分不肯,无奈贾母执意不从,只得带着李纹李绮在稻香村住下了。"

[第四十九回 P607]

'Because the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang appreciated Li Wan's good qualities and her admirable conduct since her husband's untimely death, they would not hear of her widowed aunt staying anywhere but in their house. So although most reluctant to impose on them, on the old

lady's insistence Li Wan's aunt had to move into Paddy — Sweet Cottage with her two daughters.'

[Trans· TheYangs Vol· II, P128]

'Grandmother Jia and Lady Wang esteemed Li Wan as a good and virtuous young woman who, having lost her husband at an early age, bore widowhood with fortitude and restraint. Now that this widowed aunt had arrived, they refused to hear of her taking lodgings outside, and though the good lady made many polite efforts to decline, insisted that she and her two daughters, Li Wen and Li Qi, should move into Sweet — rice Village and stay there with Li Wan at the family's expense.'

[Trans· Hawkes Vol· II· P473]

Differences between the two translations of "...只得带着李纨李绮在稻香村住下了." lie in the aspect of way of thinking. Following the original text, Prof. Yang's literal translation reveals the politeness and indirectness of Chinese discourse habit and a kind of Chinese national psychology that is avoiding talking about money, which dates from ancient time. Prof. Hawkes's communicative translation, or rather adding cultural words "stay there with Li Wan at the family's expense." indicates westerners' value orientation. That is money is a powerful thing. They talk about and admire it more openly. For instance, Americans regard money "as a measure of success, and the final guarantee of personal choice." (Jane Walmsley 2002: 7) Even between full brothers they will make out bills clearly. This kind of providing background information explains the reason why Grandmother Jia insisted Li Wan's aunt's staying at Li Wan's place, and why Li Wan's widowed aunt was reluctant to stay there. In a word, translation is invisibly restricted or influenced by ideology.

### 2.3 Tradition, customs and life style

#### (4) Dining

"两边靠门一小桌: 李纨和凤姐, 虚设座位, 两人皆不敢坐, 只在贾母王夫人两桌上伺候."

[第三十八回 P461—462]

"... and the small one near the door on the west for Li Wan and His — feng. The seats at this were unoccupied, however, as they were waiting on the tables of the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang."

[Trans· The Yangs Vol· I, P461]

"A little table was laid for Xi — feng and Li — Wan

on the west side, of the doorway, but this was only for form's sake, since both of them remained on their feet in order to wait on the other two tables.

[Trans· Hawke Vol· II, P243]

Though both of the translation versions are faithful, Prof. Hawkes's translation sounds more interesting and expressive. In his translation the cultural words "虚设座位" was turned into "this was only for form's sake", and leaves us an impression that Hawkes's mastery of Chinese is indeed remarkable. It is true in the Hongloulou when Jia family gave a dinner party, the guests usually sit around a square table. The respectable one sat at the head of the table with two people sitting on each side. And at the other end of the table no seat is set there for the sake of serving the food according to the Customs of A Dream of Red Mansions (《红楼梦风俗谭》).

#### (5) Ritual of initiation

"既要学做诗, 你就拜我为师."

[第四十八回 P597]

"If you want to write poetry you must acknowledge me as your tutor." [Trans· The Yangs Vol· II· P115]

"You can make your kowtow and become my pupil if you like."

[Trans· Hawkes Vol· II, P456]

As an old custom in the past, "拜师" means making actual kowtow to one's teacher. Hawkes reveals the historical background to the target readers through his translation while Prof. Yang's version gives us a flavor of modern sense which seems not quite go hand in hand with the original.

## 3 Bridging up cultural differences in translation

### 3.1 Transliteration

In cross — cultural communication, transliteration, which implies the writing of words with characters of another alphabet that represent the same sound or sounds, is one of the most essential ways to achieve the source language country's cultural fidelity.

According to the great translator of Buddhist scripture, Xuan Zhuang (600—664), transliteration can be applied in the following cases, such as incantation, polysyllabic terms to SL country, already accepted translation and on some needed occasions of Buddhism. (陈福康 1992: 42). Apart from this theory, Peter Newmark also

pointed out: "Transcription is mandatory in all the following cases, unless there is already a generally accepted translation likely to be accessible and acceptable to the reader: (a) proper nouns—particularly names of people (except the Pope) and of geographical features; (b) addresses (c) names of private firms (d) names of national public and private institutions, unless they are transparent; (e) terms peculiar to the institutions, ecology and general culture of the SL countries, where there are no equivalents in the TL countries and (f) titles of newspapers, periodicals, books, films, articles, papers, works of art, musical compositions." (Peter Newmark 1981: 154)

In all the above cases, the translator may add a translation or gloss, or a cultural equivalent if he thinks this will assist the reader. For example, we can translate the following proper nouns in this way: Hsien (Immortal), Wang (king), Fo (Buddha) and Shen (god). Therefore "阿弥陀佛" can be translated into Amitabha if it is connected with Buddhist occasion. Other word like "道" in Taoism should be turned into "Tao", not "way".

To give national characteristics and to attract reader, some cultural words are often transferred: "咖啡", "巧克力", "坦克" and "Confucius" are the excellent examples of transliteration.

### 3.2 Expounding

Expounding or interpretation is a translating technique used to amplify a text with 'cultural specific' messages to achieve a high level of precision in specifying cultural meaning within SL text. For example:

(6) "听见说,我老娘在那一家时,就把我二姨儿许给皇娘庄头张家,指腹为婚."

[第六十四回 P836]

"I've heard Gran say that when she was carrying Aunt Er, her first husband had an agreement with a friend of his called Zhang, who was a manager on one of the Imperial Farms and whose own wife was also pregnant at the time. They agreed that if the children their wives were carrying turned out to be a boy and a girl, they should be

betrothed to each other. In that way Aunt Er was engaged to the Zhang's boy from the moment she was born.

[Trans Hawkes Vol. III, P264]

"指腹为婚" means a prenatal betrothal, an old custom known by Chinese, but as English readership are not supposed to have similar background knowledge, so it is difficult for them to understand the true meaning of it. To solve this problem, Hawkes inserted additional information into the text to explain what the custom is without interrupting the readers' flow of attention. However, the disadvantage is that it blurs the distinction between the text and the translator's contribution.

Some say it is cumbersome, but Nida said: "... almost all good translations tend to be appreciably longer than their originals." (Nida 1964: 131) In this sense expounding is one of the best methods to fill up cultural gap between SL and TL and it shows an appropriate sign of respect to foreign cultures.

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# The Bridging of Cultural Differences in English Translation Versions of Hongloulou

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**Abstract:** By comparing two different English renditions of Hongloulou, this paper considers the role of cultural difference in the practice of translation. It argues that differences in translation are often the result of the differences in the translators' cultural backgrounds, or rather, translation is invisibly interfered or restricted by translator's ideology, aesthetic standards, national psychology etc.

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### 2.4.2.3 利用皮筋作练习

- 1) 俯卧, 脚结扎橡皮筋, 另一端有同伴拉着, 做屈伸小腿动作.
- 2) 仰卧, 橡皮带的两端结扎在两脚上, 橡皮带的中间固定在头后上方处, 做左右腿下压动作.

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## Research on the Cause and Prevention Countermeasure of Rear—thigh Muscles Pull on Track Man in High College

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**Abstract:** From training and resume, the text analyss the producing reason and the way of settling of pulling in back leg muscle. in order to offer practice and theory for coach in high college.

**Key words:** track and field in college; athlete; rear-thigh muscles pull