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Translation Strategies and Translator's Subjectivity:

A Case Study of the Two English Versions of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*

翻译策略与译者主体性

——基于《浮生六记》两个英译本个案分析

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Abstract

With the rapid development of China, Chinese culture has much deeper impact on the Western ideology. Translation is one method of exchanging ideas among people of different countries. Therefore, translation plays an important role in transmitting culture through translating various works of domestic authors.

A good translation is based on many factors, including the adoption of proper translating strategies. There are two translating strategies, domestication and foreignization, which are proposed by Venuti. Different methods are applied to the translating process according to different strategies, which means that the translating strategies directly affect the output of translation. For example, free and literal translation would create different effects to the target readers, making target readers more easily accept the target text or much closer to the source text.

The debate on the appropriate translating strategy goes back many years. Some scholars hold that domesticating strategy is a good way to make target readers more understandable, while others believe that foreignizing strategy retains the color of the original text. However, translation is still influenced by the translator's subjectivity. It is the translator who decides which strategy.

As a social being, translators' subject elements, covering personality, temperament, psychology, scope of knowledge, language ability, and even cultural attitude and moral elements, all have direct and significant impacts on translation activities. The author of this thesis summarizes the translator's subjectivity from the philosophical point of view. The translator's subjectivity can be divided into three parts, activity, passivity and self-center, which are concretely manifested in the purpose of translation, the cultural context of the target language, and the cultural identity of the translator.

Influenced by the three aspects, the translator adopts different translating strategies. This thesis analyzes the relationship between the translator's subjectivity and translating strategies, based on the comparative analysis of the two English

versions of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*. *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* is an autobiographical novel with a wide range of subjects written by Shen Fu in 1808, who writes about his marriage life and the appreciation of life in simple and vivid description, speaking of the art of living, leisure and interests, scenery with mountains and rivers, and literary criticism. This novel reflects the attitude of life of traditional Chinese intellectuals, who are content with simple happiness, opposed to feudal ethics, advocating individuation, and in pursuit of leisure time, simple and natural life style.

As the different translator's subjectivities of the two translators, their translating strategies differ on the level of language, culture and literary style. The identical translating strategy concerning grammar results from the passivity of the translator's subjectivity, and the opposite translating strategies are due to different activity and self-center of the translators.

Through the comparison, the author tries to find a suitable strategy for such works with distinctive national color nowadays. The author, by writing this thesis, hopes to bring a deeper and vivid understanding of the translating activity, in order that people will disseminate more and more Chinese culture to the world.

Key Words; translating strategy; translator's subjectivity; English translation of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*

摘要

随着中国的快速发展，中国文化对西方的意识形态的影响也越来越深刻。翻译就是各国人民之间交流思想的手段之一。因此，通过翻译国内的诸多译作，翻译在文化传播中起着非常重要的作用。

一篇好的翻译是由许多因素决定的，例如翻译策略的选择。韦努蒂归纳了两种翻译策略：同化与异化。由于采取不同的翻译策略，不同的翻译方法就会运用到翻译过程中，这些都会直接影响到译文。例如直译与意译方法的运用，就会导致译文有不同的走向，使读者更易接受译文或者更靠近原文。

对于同化与异化孰劣孰优的争论由来已久，一些学者认为同化使读者更易理解，另一些学者则认为异化更能保持原文特色。然而，因为是译者决定采取何种翻译策略，翻译同样会受到译者主体性的影响。

作为社会人，译者的许多主观因素，包括个性、心理状况、知识面、语言能力、甚至文化态度和道德因素，都会对翻译活动产生影响。本文作者从哲学角度总结了译者主体性，它包括三个方面：主动性、受动性和为我性。这些因素具体都在翻译目的、译入语的文化环境和译者的文化身份中表现出来。

由于这三方面主体性的影响，译者会采取不同的翻译策略。本文从《浮生六记》的两个英译本来对比分析译者主体性与翻译策略的关系。《浮生六记》是清朝沈复所著的自传性质的小说，描写了他的婚姻生活及对人生的感悟，涉及生活艺术、山水景色、文艺评论等，反映了中国传统文人的追求闲适、反对封建礼教、提倡自由的生活态度。由于不同的译者主体性，林语堂和布莱克的《浮生六记》译本从语言、文化和风格层面上都有所差异。相同的翻译策略是由译者主体性的受动性决定的，而不同的翻译策略则是由译者的主动性与为我性决定的。

通过比较，本文作者意图寻求最适合这样具有典型中国特色的作品的翻译策略。通过本文，作者想为翻译过程带来更深刻更生动的理解，让更多的人能够更好地传播中国文化。

关键词：翻译策略；译者主体性；《浮生六记》英译

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Introduction

0.1 The Objective of this Study

As closer economic and political ties between China and the other nations, Chinese language is mingled with more English words and expressions, and foreign culture is gradually infiltrating into Chinese culture. With more borrowed words and English abbreviations, Chinese people have been accustomed to English words in domestic newspapers, in contrast with rare Chinese characters in English newspapers. This phenomenon not only reflects the Chinese need for communication and for understanding the Western world, but also the urgency for transmitting Chinese culture to the world.

As translation aims to enhance understanding among different countries and nations, consequently promoting communication across cultures, it exactly plays the most efficient role. Newmark has two statements: “translation is the most economical method of explaining one culture’s way to another” and “translation mediates cultures” (Katan, 2008: 4). This implies the importance of translation in bringing one culture’s uniqueness to the world.

In order that the Chinese language would not be diluted and assimilated, it is necessary to increase English versions of Chinese literary works, which are actually translations of Chinese thinking patterns, customs, history, religions, beliefs and so on. Translation from language to language is in fact translation from culture to culture (Bassnett, 2004:13). As we all know, one of the Four Great Classical Novels, *The Dream of Red Mansions (Honglouloumeng)*, is a successful example, which has been translated into many languages, giving foreign people access to various aspects of Chinese history and society.

Since different translators belong to different cultures, the adoption of translation strategies differs. According to different culture contexts, some translators from the source culture tending to introduce intrinsic culture would take foreignization (alienation), and others from target culture tending to explore extrinsic

culture would take domestication (adaptation). However, there is no evidence of both cases are completely correct. Although trying to explain one culture to another, each translator is still based on certain purposes. Some sincerely aim to introduce the source culture, and some just want to satisfy the need of target audience. Argument about which translation strategy is better has been at issue for many years. Depending on different motivations, translators would take different translation strategies.

In most translation works, foreignization and domestication are alternatively employed while one's proportion is larger than the other. As translation of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*, what then is the main translation strategy, what purposes do translators have, and what kind of impact do the purposes of translators have on the utilization of translation strategies?

The research objective of this thesis is to explore from the perspective of translator's subjectivity the suitable translation strategy for *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*, based on the comparison between the two English versions of the book, one of which is translated by a famous Chinese translator, and the other of which is by Shirley M.Black, a British translator.

Through this research, the questions put forward above can be answered in a satisfactory way. With the combination of theories and specific examples, the adoption of translation strategies will be discussed through a reasonable analysis. As it is urgent to add weight to Chinese culture, to translate more books into English, this thesis hopes to be referential to those who are engaged in the field of translation, for better expressing Chinese unique culture.

0.2 The Outline of the Present Thesis

This thesis mainly consists of five parts:

Introduction aims to provide a general introduction to the present research, including the research background, purpose of study and organization of the paper.

Chapter One looks into the literature review of the present research, L.Venuti

and Schleiermacher's translation strategies, including the definition, methods and differences between literal and free translation, and investigates the subjectivity of the translator, and the relationship between translation strategies and the subjectivity of the translator.

Chapter Two provides a general study of Shen Fu's *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* and it is two English translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* and *Chapters from A Floating Life THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A CHINESE ARTIST*, with regard to the concept of translation of respective translators.

Chapter Three is the main component of this thesis, which presents a comparative study of the two English versions of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*, on the basis of the translator's subjectivity and translation strategies, and further probes into the appropriate translation strategy for different parts, including language, culture and style, influenced by translator's subjectivities.

Conclusion gives a summary of this thesis, including the major findings of the current research as well as the drawbacks and limitations of the present research. It tentatively proposes some suggestions for translation practice.

Chapter One Literature Review

1.1 Translation Strategies

There have been numerous discussions about translation strategies among scholars both in China and in the West in history. The nature of translation is to communicate, to let target audience understand the source text. A translation strategy is a method adopted by a translator to deal with linguistic and cultural difference in translation. The adoption of translation strategies directly has an impact on the quality and effect of the output.

Generally speaking, there are two basic translation strategies: domestication and foreignization, which are termed “domesticating” and “foreignizing” (Venuti, 1995: 20) by Lawrence Venuti.

1.1.1 Domestication and Foreignization

The origin of domestication and foreignization can be traced back to the German philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. In his famous lecture “On the different ways of translating” given in 1813, he emphasized on the indiscernible relationship between translation and understanding, and argued that there were only two different methods of translation, “either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him”(Venuti, 1995:19-20). According to the theory of Schleiermacher, Lawrence Venuti published his book *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995), in which he proposed the two terms “domesticating” and “foreignizing”.

Dictionary of Translation Studies defines domesticating as “a term used by Venuti to describe the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for TL readers” (Schuttleworth & Cowie, 1997:43-44). For Venuti, the domesticating method is “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values, bringing

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