



Book Review: A Selected Introduction to Chinese and Western Translation Theories

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Abstract: As China further opens up and integrates into the world, the demand for translation professionals has increased significantly. Despite the development of translation disciplines, the existing teaching materials have not yet met the needs of undergraduate education in terms of quantity and quality, especially for graduate students and doctoral students. To make up for it, the book *A Selected Introduction to Chinese and Western Translation Theories* emerged at the right moment. This article briefly reviews this translation theory textbook edited by Professor He Xueyun from Hengyang Normal University and published by The Commercial Press in 2021, with the ISBN 9787100201100, using research methods such as literature review, comparative analysis, and case study analysis. The book is divided into three main parts: an introduction to Chinese translation theories, an introduction to Western translation theories, and the main schools of translation theory. It is characterized by its comprehensive content, concise introductions, clear layout, highlighted key points, and ease of self-study, making it an excellent introductory book for learners of translation theory.

Keywords: *A Selected Introduction to Chinese and Western Translation Theories*; Review; Translation Theory

Introduction

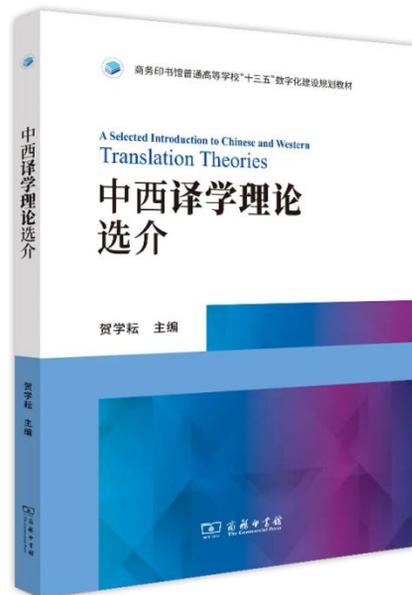
Translation, as one of the ways for human communication across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, boasts a long history, yet it has not been long since translation was formally recognized as an independent discipline. It was not until James S. Holmes published the paper *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* in 1972 that translation was formally established as an independent discipline.

China, a nation with a profound history in translation, has witnessed the increasingly pivotal role of translation in various sectors, including politics, economics, diplomacy, culture, education, science, and technology, amidst the deepening reform and opening-up policies and the intensifying international exchanges. Consequently, the country's demand for high-quality interpreters and translators has soared. In light of this, a series of undergraduate translation textbooks have been published in China, among which *A Selected Introduction to Chinese and Western Translation Theories* stands out.

It was edited by Professor He Xueyun from Hunan Normal University and was published in 2021 by the Commercial Press, a national-level publisher. It is one of the planned textbooks for the "13th Five-Year" digital construction of ordinary colleges and universities published by the press.

During the reading process, the author found that this book has many merits, which have been of great help to her theoretical study of translation. The Author hope to recommend it to more readers by writing this book review, looking forward to assisting more students who are interested in translation theories. Meanwhile, the author also discovered some flaws in the book and looks forward to further discussing them with the editor.

This article will provide a brief content review of the book *A Selected Introduction to Chinese and Western Translation Theories*, summarize its characteristics, and also point out some minor flaws in the book.



Picture 1: Cover of the book

Literature Review

With the deepening of reform and opening up and the continuous advancement of globalization, international exchanges in China have become increasingly frequent, and the demand for translation talents has grown accordingly. In 2004, after Shanghai International Studies University obtained the doctoral degree authorization point for the first-level discipline of



"Foreign Languages and Literature," it independently set up master's and doctoral authorization points for "Translation Studies" and began recruiting students in 2005. In 2006, the undergraduate translation major (with the major code 050255S) was approved by the Ministry of Education as a catalog-outside major for pilot enrollment in three universities (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Fudan University, and Hebei Normal University)^[1]. By April 2023, there were 309 universities in China that established the undergraduate translation major^[2].

To meet the needs of the socialist market economy for high-level specialized talents with practical application, the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council passed the "Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) Professional Degree Program Setting Plan" in 2007, deciding to set up the Master of Translation and Interpreting professional degree. Since 2008, the MTI education has gone through 15 years of development, and the number of pilot units for the MTI professional degree education has increased from the initial 15 to 316 (as of April 2023)^[3]. At this point, Translation Studies in China has gradually obtained a relatively independent academic status and has formed a complete scientific education and talent training system from undergraduate to post-doctoral research.

Since the 1980s, China has made significant progress in the establishment of translation theory courses and the compilation of translation theory textbooks^[4]. However, with the steady development of the translation discipline, the existing translation textbooks in both quantity and quality cannot meet the needs of professional construction, and are often only suitable for the training of master's and doctoral students, and difficult to meet the teaching needs of the undergraduate translation major. With the aim of compiling a suitable translation theory textbook for senior English majors in the translation direction and students of the undergraduate translation major, this textbook came into being^[1].

Content Overview:

This book is divided into three parts: the first part introduces selected Chinese translation theories, the second part presents an overview of selected Western translation theories, and the third part delves into the major schools of translation theories. Each part comprises numerous chapters, which are further divided into several sections.

The first part is an introduction to selected Chinese translation theories. This part is organized around the five major milestones of translation activities in China, spanning five chapters: from the Eastern Han Dynasty to the Northern Song Dynasty, the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, the Opium War to the May Fourth Movement, the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the period following the establishment of the People's Republic of China. It selects influential translation theorists from each of these five periods, providing a brief introduction and analyses of their lives and major translation ideas, as well as compiling some original text of their important translation theories. Additionally, 4-6 thought-provoking questions are included at the end of each chapter to facilitate readers' self-study and assess their comprehension.

The second part is an introduction to selected theories of translation in the West. Organized chronologically, it comprises three chapters: Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary. Each chapter selects significant representatives from the period, adhering to the format of the first part by initially presenting the translation theorists and their major translation theories, followed by a compilation of some original text of their pivotal translation thoughts.

The third part delves into the major schools of translation theory, serving as a supplement and further exploration of the previous two parts. Adhering to the principle of integrating "macro and micro perspectives" with "historical and synchronic analyses," it categorizes translation studies into schools of literary-artistic, linguistic, research-oriented, and postmodernist theories, with an emphasis on influential translation theorists and their translation ideas within these schools^[5]. While the classification of translation schools primarily pertains to Western translation theories, the editors of this book contend that Chinese scholars' contributions to translation theory should also be recognized within global translation theory, particularly in the domain of literary aesthetic translation. Therefore, the fourth section of the first chapter specifically incorporates the Chinese literary aesthetic translation school, providing a detailed overview. The editing style of this part undergoes a slight adjustment, with each section first introducing the theoretical background and key representatives, followed by an exposition of the major translation theories espoused by different representatives within the same school.

Characteristics of the Book :

This book stands out for its distinctive features, not merely in its comprehensive content, clear logic, and well-highlighted key points, but also in its lucid annotations, detailed explanations, and ease of self-study, making it a remarkable and well worth possessing.

(1) Diachronic and Synchronic, with Clear Logic

The book boasts a meticulously structured logical framework that enables learners to swiftly grasp its narrative logic and independently summarize translation theories of various individuals across various periods. The first two parts initially categorize Chinese and Western translation theories into historical periods based on a chronological order, followed by a horizontal introduction to translation studies, showcasing the commonalities of translation theories within each period, thereby embodying the diachronic characteristic. Despite sharing the same historical juncture, different translation scholars inevitably hold divergent perspectives. Consequently, the book delves into the translation theories of various representative scholars within the same period, fostering a vertical comparison that exemplifies the synchronic characteristic. On these two main trunks, there branch out five and three sub-topics respectively, forming a lush and intricately interconnected system, thus constituting a dynamic and interactive network of translation theories.

(2) Concise Introductions for Self-Study

Each chapter of this book begins with an introduction that outlines the historical development of translation theories in both China and the West and broadly introduces the content of each section. This provides learners with a macro-level overview of the chapter content, enabling them to have a general understanding before engaging in autonomous learning, thus facilitating self-study. Additionally, introductions are also provided before each section, assisting learners from a more micro-level perspective to further comprehend the background of a particular period, translators, and their core translation theories. This facilitates review after completing the entire section

(3) Detailed textual research and clear annotations

Another distinguishing feature of this book is its clarity in specifying which translation theory was proposed by which scholars in a particular book, and how it corresponds to a specific section in the compilation of translation theories. The compilation section is meticulously annotated with references, greatly facilitating learners' navigation. Additionally, cultural terms like "Yuezhi," "Prajna," and "Sindhu," as well as terms that require additional contextual knowledge, such as "The Creation Society(CT)," "The Renaissance Society," and "Crescent Society," are explained and supplemented with background information through footnotes, thereby broadening learners' knowledge base.

(4) Appreciating classics and facilitating verification

Whether it is the compilation of translation theories from Chinese or Western translation scholars, the editor presents the original texts, allowing learners to savor the authentic works. For Chinese translation scholars, whether the original texts are in vernacular Chinese or classical Chinese, the editor displays them faithfully, facilitating learners' independent learning and summarizing the translation thoughts of the scholars. The compilation of translation theories from Western translation scholars adopts their original English texts. By reading these original English texts, learners can summarize the translation theories of various representatives themselves, compare them with the summarized content in the book, and even question some parts of the book, thereby further verifying and exploring. In this way, learners become active thinkers rather than passive recipients. By turning passive into active, they can gain a deeper understanding of translation theories from scholars. They can cultivate the ability to identify, analyze, and solve problems, and gradually grow into explorers of learning.

(5) Clear Layout with Emphasis Highlighted

In the first and second chapters, the translation theory of the translation theorists is highlighted in blue font, distinguishing them from the black text of the main body. This emphasis highlight enables readers to quickly grasp the theories of translation scholars. In addition, the background color of the compilation of translation theories is also blue, which is very clear and easy to distinguish, alleviating visual fatigue from an all-white background. In the third chapter, different colors are utilized for the theoretical backgrounds, main representatives, and key translation theories, making the layout clear and allowing readers to perceive the book as rigorous yet lively, detailed, and focused.

Overall Assessment:

The overall framework of this book is exceptionally clear, with introductory backgrounds and guides preceding each chapter and section. The first two articles follow the principle of "diachronic and synchronic" and take time sequence as the starting point to divide different periods. Within each part, a logical progression from "Introduction of translation theorists" to "Introduction of translation theory" and finally to "Selection of Translation Theories" is adopted, fostering clarity and lucidity. The third part, organized by schools of thought, also follows the principle of "diachronic and synchronic" internally, presenting a coherent narrative structured around "Theoretical Backgrounds", "Main Representatives", and "Key Translation Theories". This arrangement effectively aids learners in grasping the core essentials.

This book is systematic and comprehensive, encompassing introductions to both Chinese and Western translation theorists along with expositions of their theories. Additionally, it provides selections from the original texts of these scholars, ensuring both rationality and evidence-based content that is both scientific and representative. Furthermore, by categorizing theories according to schools of thought, the book introduces translation theories from various dimensions, achieving a balance between detail and brevity while emphasizing key points.

The reference section serves as a pivotal element of this book. By consulting the references, readers can broaden their horizons and delve deeper into specific translation theories. It is not difficult to find that before the publication of this book, the compilation of translation theory books in China mostly focused on Western translation theories, with few books combining Chinese and Western translation theories. This underscores the unique value of this book.

Nevertheless, despite its numerous highlights, the author believes that the book could be further improved in the following aspects:

(1) Appropriately incorporating charts and diagrams to enhance the interest of theoretical books

As a purely theoretical book, learners may inevitably feel intimidated when confronted with lengthy texts. By appropriately integrating charts and diagrams, this exhaustion and dullness can be alleviated, thereby enhancing the vividness of the content and arousing readers' interest in reading.

(2) Appropriately adding translation examples to demonstrate the guidance of different theories

While this book is positioned as a translation theory book, it does not hinder the inclusion of some translation examples in the text. In particular, when elucidating certain translation strategies, attaching exemplary translations by renowned translations could be considered. This can help learners understand the guiding role of theory in practice while mastering the theory.

Results and Discussion

As China continues to open up and integrate globally, there has been a marked surge in the demand for skilled translation professionals. However, despite advancements in translation disciplines, the current pool of teaching materials falls short in addressing the quantitative and qualitative requirements of undergraduate education, particularly for graduate and doctoral students. To bridge this gap, the timely publication of "A Selected Introduction to Chinese and Western Translation Theories" has proven to be a valuable addition. This book is characterized by its clear logic, concise introductions, detailed citations, clear layout, and ease of self-study. Through four sections including an overview of translation history, introductions to translation theories and their major translation theories, a compilation of translation theories, and thought-provoking questions, it fully demonstrates the integration of "knowledge, quality, and ability cultivation, as well as a combination of a systematic knowledge system and a compilation of original translation theories text." This book can fully help translation theory learners lay a solid theoretical foundation and is a rare introductory book for translation theory learners. Of course, it would be even better if appropriate charts can be incorporated to enhance the interest of theoretical books, and more translation cases, such as famous translations by renowned translators, can be added to deepen the guiding role of theories in practice.

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