



## Micro Novels: New Teaching Materials for MTI's Literary Translation Course

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**Abstract:** The mainstream literary style of Chinese literature and even the world literature is the novel. The main literary style involved in MTI literary translation course is the novel. Among them, the micro novel is short in form, broad in content and close to the times, which conforms to the teaching goal of MTI literary translation course and students' "vision of expectation". This paper discusses the nature of micro novels and their adaptability to MTI courses which intends to prove the necessity and feasibility of using as new teaching materials in MTI literary translation course, so as to provide reference for guiding the current teaching of MTI literature course.

**Keywords:** micro novel; MTI literary translation course teaching materials; necessity; feasibility

### 1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, with the acceleration of the pace of life, micro novels have developed rapidly in China. At present, more than 1000 newspapers and magazines across the country provide publishing spaces for it, some of which specialize in publishing micro fiction works and commentary articles, with a monthly circulation of about 600000 copies. Scholars have long conducted statistics that in 2001, the monthly circulation of over 400 pure literary journals in China was more than 1.2 million copies, with micro fiction journals accounting for over 600000 copies. The circulation of micro fiction journals accounts for half of the monthly circulation of literary journals. The number of micro novels created and the coverage of readers exceed any current literary work. According to incomplete statistics from researchers, since the new era, there have been around 2000 collections of various micro fiction works published in China alone, and the number has been increasing year by year. The myth of a craze for micro novels has emerged in the Chinese literary world. Therefore, some scholars point out that since the new era, the main Chinese contemporary novel families that can truly participate in the dialogue of world literature are novellas and micro novels. Especially micro novels, with their large number of creations, wide readership, and high popularity, have formed a unique landscape in the context of the increasingly declining pure literary world today. On the other hand, MTI Literary Translation (Literary Translation), 64 credit hours, 4 credits, for full-time/part-time graduate students with a Master's degree in translation. It includes the translation study, appreciation and practical operation training of novels, prose, poetry, drama and other genres. Through the translation and appreciation of different literary works, students can master the skills of literary translation, clarify the similarities and differences between literary translation and non-literary translation, and deepen their understanding of literary translation. At present, the teaching materials selected for this course are almost confined to classical books and modern literary works. While maintaining the classics, such contents also show drawbacks such as outdated theme, single form and style, and language out of touch with the contemporary era. However, literary works lacking a sense of the times are difficult to attract the interest of contemporary young students, and teaching materials have become an urgent problem to be solved in the course of literature.

### 2. Literature Review

The language of the characters in the mini-novels is concise and concise, and the implied meaning is profound<sup>[1]</sup>. Micro novels, also known as mini-novels, refer to a borderline emerging literary genre between marginal novels and prose with a word length of about 1,500. It is one of the four families of fiction, along with short stories, novellas and novels. The micro novel has grown into a separate genre today. As one of the "four families" of novels, mini-novel has entered the field of view of Pu Songling Literature Prize and Lu Xun Literature Prize, and has become a pure literary style with the widest range of contemporary audiences. Micro novels have always been the mock test questions and real test materials for high school entrance examination, college entrance examination, Chinese and English exams, listening, reading comprehension, translation and composition of CET-4 and CET-6 English exams. Micro novels are also adapted materials for film and television short plays, comedies and skits.

The original Chinese micro novels and the translation of foreign micro novels into Chinese are of great significance in the history of Chinese contemporary literature. The appearance of a kind of literary style is interdependent with the national living condition, the level of productive forces and the relations of production at that time<sup>[2]</sup>. Each style of writing can only break ground after it has obtained the appropriate cultural soil. First of all, the translation of foreign micro novels into Chinese not only has the common value of conveying text literature, but also has the historical significance of translation literature from the perspective of medio-translatology. The translation of foreign micro novels introduces and promotes the establishment of a new, energetic and short literary style, which brings "Outside the Box" to the original Chinese micro novels in terms of novelty of form and diversity of content. The translation of foreign micro novels sets up



samples that can be imitated and used for reference, directly spawns the emergence of original mini-novels, and rewrites the trend of national literature history.

On this basis, at the crisis moment of literature decline, there are at least two specific problems with the main textbooks used. Firstly, some textbooks often use outdated examples when explaining theoretical viewpoints. Secondly, some textbooks use theoretical knowledge from psychology and aesthetics to explain and study writing. In some places, there are only theoretical viewpoints without practical examples to confirm such content. The academic nature is too strong and lacks the feasibility of guiding writing practice methods; In some places, although the viewpoint is new, the examples are old<sup>[3]</sup>. Original micro novels stood out and turned the tide, directly promoted the contemporary mainstream literature of China to return to the literary character, and reshaped the mainstream poetics at that time, and made great contributions to the promotion of literature, culture and civilization. In view of this, it is necessary to introduce micro novels into the literature translation classroom and serve as teaching materials.

### **3. The Necessity of Micro Novels as Teaching Materials for MTI's Literary translation course:**

#### **3.1 Fiction is a mainstream literary style involved in the contemporary MTI Literary Translation course.**

Consistent with the literary style of literature, MTI's literary translation course focuses on genres such as fiction, prose, poetry, and drama. Among them, novels occupy the most important position, because according to the development law of literature, literary genres appear in different times in the history of world literature, and their order is mostly carried out along the line of poetry -- prose -- drama -- novel. For example, in the history of Chinese literature, the development of genres follows the sequence of *the Book of Songs*, the prose of various schools, the poetry of the Tang Dynasty and the Ci of the Song Dynasty, the Yuan Dynasty and the novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties. It can be seen that the novel appears last, but it is the genre with the highest maturity; The novel is also the most comprehensive genre, which can contain the conciseness of poetry, the lyricism of prose, and the conflict of drama. It is also the genre that is most close to the times. In contemporary society, novels are the literary genre that readers enjoy most, and MTI students are no exception. Taking fiction as the main research object of literary translation course is consistent with the contemporary mainstream literature style, thus highlighting the focus of literary translation course and ensuring the seamless connection between in-class teaching and extra-class practice.

#### **3.2 The novel conforms to the current situation of contemporary world literature with the novel as the mainstream literary style.**

From the perspective of the world, we can find that the most important literary style of contemporary literature is the novel. In terms of the genre of the Nobel Prize winners in literature from 1949 to 2016, during the 67 years, 47 winners were awarded for fiction, which is an overwhelming share. In terms of popularity, other literary styles are also hard to beat.

#### **3.3 Micro-novels are in line with the current situation and trend of the shortening of the length of world literature.**

World literature is becoming shorter in length. For example, in 2013, Canadian female writer Alice Munro won the Nobel Prize in Literature, and her award speech was "the master of the contemporary short story", which represents the trend of world literature in length, and readers have the same trend. From O. Henry in the United States to Shinichi Hoshi in Japan, their micro novels lead the world, including the emergence and development direction of China's micro novels. In recent years, English micro novels with as many as several thousand words and as little as three sentences, each with one or two words, have become quite common.

#### **3.4 The *status quo* that micro novels conform to the mainstream literary styles of Chinese literature**

Its broadest literary audience and vitality rank first in Chinese pure literature, and it ranks among the "Lu Xun Literature Prize" together with novels, novellas and short stories. Chinese micro fiction has been developing and expanding gradually since the 1980s, with special magazines such as *Selected Edition of Micro Fiction* and *Selected Edition of Little Fiction*, entering the history of contemporary literature, publishing more than 100 sets of anthologies, dictionaries, biographies, monographs by Zhang Chun, national projects by Long Ganghua, and setting up special awards such as "Sparrow Award". It has become Zhanjiang Normal University and other college courses, test materials for the senior high school entrance examination, college entrance examination, English CET-4, CET-6, TEM-4 and TEM-8 exams, essay materials, and film materials. As well as a large number of amateur writers, occupations covering all walks of life, geographical coverage all over the world.

### **4 Feasibility of the Micro Novel as a Literary Translation Course for MTI**

#### **4.1 The design of mini-novels is consistent with the teaching objectives of the course.**

The training objectives of a Master's degree in Translation are to cultivate high-level, applied, and professional translators and interpreters who are well-rounded in morality, intelligence, and physical fitness, capable of adapting to the needs of global integration and improving national international competitiveness, adapting to the needs of national economic, cultural, and social construction, possessing proficient translation skills and a broad knowledge base, and capable of meeting the requirements of different professional fields. Cultivation characteristics: In the educational process, emphasis is placed on cultivating a practical spirits, cultivating high-level professional skills, high professional ethics, and selfless professional dedication, with the ability to independently undertake practical work and management work in the professional field.

MTI Literature course aims to help students master the skills of literary translation through the study, appreciation and practical operation training of literary works, clarify the similarities and differences between literary translation and non-literary translation, and deepen their understanding of literary translation. The ideological and political value of the

literary translation course is related to the question of “why translate”<sup>[4]</sup>. With the increasing status of cultural soft power in national competition, the quality requirements and forms of cultural communication are also increasing. The novel is the mainstream literary genre of literature, especially the contemporary literature, and the micro novel is the mainstream type of the contemporary mainstream literary genre. Taking the most representative texts as the teaching materials of the MTI literature course is designed in line with the teaching objectives of the course. In the selection of textbooks, representative bilingual reading books can be used. Students can read the original text before translation and the translated text as a reference. For example, in recent years, China International Broadcasting Press has published bestsellers, China’s first collection of translated micro-novels (Chinese-English translation), and the brand book “Yiqufang” series, consisting of eight volumes. For Chinese-English translation, students can choose the English version of China’s first self-selected collection of micro novels, Ling Dingnian’s Translated Collection of Micro Novels by Ling Dingnian, a leader in Chinese micro novels, recently published by the United States Science and Technology Group.

4.2 Micro novels are in line with the practical orientation of MTI literature course.

The professional Master’s degree in Translation cultivates professional oral and written translation talents with the characteristics of “high-level, applied and professional”. Therefore, new requirements have been put forward for the teachers. In the past 30 years, many universities in China have set the direction of “Translation Studies” (or translation theory and practice) under the secondary discipline of foreign language and literature, and trained a large number of research-oriented Master of Arts (Doctor) in translation. The outstanding feature of the “Translation Studies” direction under the second-level discipline of foreign language and literature is research-oriented, so the teachers of the course are also research-oriented. However, the newly established Master’s degree in translation requires teachers to have strong practical skills in interpretation and translation, avoid paper-based teaching, and cultivate professional practical talents in translation. Literary translation literacy training is a basic requirement for college English translation students and a necessary requirement for teachers to improve their translation skills<sup>[5]</sup>. The traditional MA of foreign language, or “Master of Arts”, lays emphasis on the academic and theoretical research of translation, ignoring the professionalism and application of translation. Its training goal and training mode mainly focus on training specialized talents in language and literature research and teaching, rather than professional translators engaged in translation practice.

With the deepening of China’s economic development and reform and opening up, the continuous enhancement of its comprehensive national strength, and the increasing international exchanges in politics, economy, science and technology, culture and other aspects, the demand for high-level translation professionals has put forward urgent higher requirements in terms of both quantity and quality. In order to make innovations in teaching models and methods, it is necessary to enhance the cultivation of translation ability on the basis of inheriting the tradition, and form a translation teaching thought that integrates basic strategies, basic techniques and basic techniques<sup>[6]</sup>. Therefore, it is particularly necessary to train high-level translation talents according to the characteristics, concepts and modes of professional degree emphasizing practicality, application and specialization. The emphasis on practice refers to the cultivation of practical ability of translation and the analysis of translation cases. Translation practice runs through the whole teaching process, requiring students to have at least 150,000 words of translation practice. The emphasis on practicality in MTI literature course is manifested as a non-linear process of practice-theory-practice. In order to cultivate students’ practical ability, teachers’ explanation of translation skills and students’ internalization of theories need to be realized through a lot of practice, and it is not necessary to spend a lot of class hours explaining and digitizing relevant literary theories and translation theory knowledge. Micro novels are short in length and independent in text. They also contain the theme, plot and other elements that literary works should have. They meet the text requirements of literary translation, but they are shorter in time than novels, novellas and short stories, which is convenient for class arrangement. On the other hand, the repetition of knowledge points and the repeated strengthening of translation skills in a series of class hours are conducive to students’ understanding, with strong practicability and stronger correlation between teaching objectives and teaching effects.

4.3 The length of the micro novel is matched with the total class hours of the semester and the weekly class hours.

Micro novels, as the name suggests, are characterized by small length and refer to novels with a word count of about 1,500 words. The MTI Literature program has a total of 64 credit hours, and four credit hours of instruction per week, assuming 16 weeks of instruction per semester. The first step is for students to translate a micro novel by themselves for one credit hour. In the second step, the teacher will use one credit hour to complete the appreciation and analysis of the background, plot and character analysis of a mini-novel. In the third step, teachers and students use two class hours to compare the translations of the students’ own translations, and the teacher will analyze the translation and translation strategies and skills throughout the process. The superposition of the three steps is a step-by-step and complete practical operation training unit. Such a link, such a rhythm arrangement, to ensure that there are appreciation, analysis; There are student-centered periods, teacher-centered periods, and finally teacher-student interaction periods. Both comprehensive and orderly, the most important, this relatively independent and complete unit in content and class hours, only the length of the micro novel will match, the use of short, novella and novel, will be due to the length of too long, content segmentation, class delay, and directly affect the teaching effect. The teaching process adopts the discussion type and simulation type teaching. Project translation is adopted in teaching, that is, teaching units undertake translation tasks of various styles, students translate after class, teachers make comments in class, and strengthen the training of translation skills.

4.4 The form of micro novels is consistent with students’ “vision of expectation”

The reason why micro-novel, a newly born genre, has moved from the edge to the center since the 1980s, standing on an equal level with other novels, and then occupying half of the pure literature or even more, has the broadest readership,

apart from other internal and external factors, a very important factor is its form and the aesthetics of the times. Especially the “vision of expectation” of young students coincides with each other. The fast pace of social development has given birth to the fragmented reading habits of fast food, such as: blog lost to Weibo, QQ lost to wechat. Readers of micro novels are more likely to prefer novels of other lengths. In their small form, they have won the hearts of young readers in both print and electronic media for their conciseness and comprehensiveness, their ability to see the big from the small, their ability to win the big from the small, and their ability to win more from the small. Not only that, the forms and styles of micro novels are also diverse and inclusive, which can have the prose style of *Love you deep*, the irony style of *The Birth of a Masterpiece*, the grandiosity style of *Love Grass*, the narrative style of *Wish*, the argumentation style of *Women Also need a Wife*, the fantasy style of *Judgment Day*, the questioning style of *Mom and Dad, Why*. The fairy tale style of the *Sleeping Ugly*, the epistolary style of *The Job Search*, and so on. The introduction of such literary texts into MTI literature classes is a great way to increase students’ interest. This kind of literature will undoubtedly stimulate students’ enthusiasm for the learning content and bring good teaching effects.

4.5 The content of the micro novel is consistent with the students’ “vision of expectation”

If the form of the micro novel can initially arouse students’ interest, then the content of the miniature novel can further detonate students’ enthusiasm. Micro novels, simple but not simple, the exploration of human nature can be said to be all-round, the connotation is different, and the theme is mostly contemporary. Taking YiQufang series books as an example, they have been published in five categories: healing volume, inspirational volume, humorous volume, sincere volume and philosophical volume. Under the care of Stanislavski’s system, young students will feel empathy for such “mirrors” of contemporary human existence, under the care of Brecht’s system, they will generate the beauty of distance, and under the care of Mei Lanfang’s system, they will move forward and forward with ease and be in touch with each other. The first edition of the first series of three printed books sold out in less than a year, and they sold out again after being printed. They continue to sell well on Amazon, Dangdang and Jingdong. E-books are among the best on Qidian Chinese website, Baidu Reading, NetEase Reading and other websites. The second series of paper books just came out, and immediately jumped to the top of Jingdong’s popular items, becoming the new favorite of Dangdang and Amazon. It should be emphasized that such achievements are the result of competition with Chinese and English books of other genres and themes. It can not only be said that the strength of the style of micro-fiction is also the strength of the subject matter of micro-fiction. Judging from the content, vocabulary and syntax of the online reviews of these websites, the readers should be mainly young people.

## Results

In summary, as a refined and profound literary form, micro novels have demonstrated their unique advantages and profound significance when used as teaching materials for MTI (Master of Translation and Interpreting) literary translation courses. It not only closely conforms to the diversified and fast-paced mainstream situation of contemporary world literature and Chinese literature, but also indicates the increasing demand for short, concise, and richly meaningful works in the future trend of literary development. Micro novels, with their short length, compact plot, and profound meaning, are highly in line with the teaching objectives of MTI Literature Translation Course, which aims to cultivate students’ ability to accurately convey the essence of the original work within a limited space, while emphasizing the equal importance of literary quality and translation skills.

In addition, the diversity and sense of the times of micro novels, whether in form (such as narrative structure, language style, etc.) or content (covering multiple dimensions such as social phenomena, human exploration, emotional expression, etc.), form a good correspondence with the “expectation horizon” of master’s students in translation - that is, the desire for novel, profound, and challenging translation materials. This mutual agreement not only stimulates students’ interest and creativity in learning, but also helps them deepen their understanding of literary translation in practice and enhance their cross-cultural communication skills.

Therefore, introducing micro novels as a new teaching material for the master’s literature course is not only an innovation and expansion of the traditional teaching mode, but also a positive response to the concept of keeping pace with the times and cultivating international translation talents in the field of translation education. This measure not only has certain practical significance and can directly improve the quality of teaching and students’ learning outcomes, but also has broad promotional value due to its foresight and practicality, which is expected to inject new vitality and inspiration into the development of MTI education and even the entire translation industry.

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