

A Study on the Translation of Muxin's Short Stories in the English World under the Perspective of Diaspora: A Case Study of Toming Jun Liu's English Translation of *The Empty Room*

Shanxiu He, Ke Ni*

School of Foreign Languages, East China JiaoTong University, Nanchang, 330013, China

*Corresponding author: 2537210181@qq.com

Abstract. With the Chinese government advocating the going global of Chinese literature, the number of translation, introduction and dissemination of Chinese literature in the English world is increasing. This paper takes Toming Jun Liu's English translation of *The Empty Room* as an example, analyzes the translation strategies adopted by the translator in the translation of *The Empty Room*, and explores a successful translation model to help the overseas dissemination of Chinese literature.

Keywords: Diasporic Perspective; Cultural Translation; Four-dimension Translation Philosophy.

1. Introduction

With the deepening of globalization, countries have cultural communication. In the process of their respective historical development, different countries have formed the different languages, which hinders the cultural exchanges between countries. Translation plays an indelible role in the process of communication. As a cross-cultural communication movement, translation sets up a bridge of communication between countries. The translation of Chinese literature is an important part of the "going global" policy of Chinese culture. However, the overseas communication effect of the works translated by local translators initiated by the Chinese government is not very ideal (Ma Huijuan, 2013:64). There are two reasons behind this: (1) Due to the gap between Chinese and foreign cultures, foreign readers are unfamiliar with Chinese culture and solidify the original image of China; (2) There is a shortage of translators who have a good master of both Chinese and English. There are few researches on Mu Xin's novels at present and no system has been formed. The result of CNKI retrieval about the translation of Mu Xin's novels from the perspective of Diaspora is only 4. This paper will take Toming Jun Liu's translation *The Empty Room* as an example to analyze the translation strategies adopted by the translator from the perspective of diaspora, and explore a successful way of translation.

2. Diaspora and Diasporic Translators

Diaspora, which comes from the Ancient Greek word -- diaspeirein, means that seeds or pollen "spread out" to allow plants to thrive. Toming Jun Liu's concept of diaspora refers to a cultural (including literary) concept in the globalized, post-colonial era, which holds that cultures multiply across borders by means of travel (i.e., diaspora) (Toming, 2004:52).

Diaspora, originally a cultural phenomenon, collides with translatology and forms a new research field. Diaspora can help Chinese literature to go global, and diasporic translators play a crucial role in this process. Overseas Chinese have other countries' living experience, belongs to diasporic translators, while at the same time those who have the two identity of the overseas Chinese and the translator also belong to diasporic translators. They emigrate to other countries with their native cultures. Although they have been away from home for many years, they are concerned about the cultural transmission of their homeland, eager to spread Chinese culture overseas, and also undertake the obligation of spreading excellent culture. Therefore, overseas Chinese translators can be called diasporic translators. Toming Jun Liu is currently a professor in the Department of English at California State University, Los Angeles. His main research topics include diapora, cosmopolitanism, nationalism and modern American literature. As one of the representatives of diasporic translators,

he is familiar with Chinese and Western cultures. Toming Jun Liu is not only a faithful reader of Mu Xin, but also has been a good friend of him for more than 20 years. Therefore, *The Empty Room* was translated on the basis of the communication between the translator and the author. When Toming Jun Liu encountered any doubts, he could ask Mr. Mu Xin in time, so he had a thorough understanding of Mu Xin's works and could faithfully translate them in both style and language (Zhang Qian, 2015:105).

Quite a few translators have interpreted diaspora as "Lisan", but "Lisan" is a passive process that reflects the loneliness and desolation of being in another country, while "Feisan" is an active process that reflects the joy of living in another country (Toming, 2004:52). Like "Feisan" is a proactive action, the Chinese culture as much as in the past no longer wait for the opportunity to go out, but will actively spread Chinese culture to overseas, and have cross-cultural communication with other countries. In the process, the translator with excellent bilingual skills will play a vital role, so overseas Chinese should take the responsibility of the translator.

3. Four-dimension Translation Philosophy of Diasporic Translators

Toming Jun Liu not only put forward the concept of diaspora, but also summarized the process of diaspora into four dimensions four characters of "yi" (异, 易, 移, 艺), which is called four-dimension philosophy.. Tong Ming saw the difference, transform the difference and complete the journey in the process of translation, which can be summarized as "异, 易, 移", and added the fourth word "艺"(Toming, 2013:119).

Given the different cultural background and language characteristics, the translator can give full play to the subjectivity in translation, to adopt the appropriate translation methods and strategies, such as literal translation, free translation and added translation, etc. Translators can make reasonable adjustments to the original text as much as possible to fit the original text and do not lose the original flavor. "易" and "移" are methods, which are similar to domestication and foreignization respectively. But the translator Toming did not use "易" and "移" respectively, but combined them to complement each other to reached the height of "艺" (Zhang Qian, 2015:107).

These four characters complement each other in translation. "异" is the premise, which means that due to different cultural background, there is a certain degree of difference between two languages, and the difference between languages should be properly translated. "易" means that in order to make readers better understand the original text and arouse the readers' interest in the target language, the original text is adjusted to a certain extent by means of addition and subtraction to conform to the expression habits of the target language.

Example 1: 我回信时, 应和她的风调, 不古不今, 一味游戏. 好在没有"爱"的顾虑. 我信任"一见钟情", 一见而不钟, 天天见也不会钟. 丁琰来时, 问起芳芳, 把信给他看, 一致评价她的好书法(*Fong Fong No. 4*, Mu Xin, 2006:29).

Translation: In my replies, I tried to be playful and imitate her style of mixing archaic and contemporary diction. Fortunately, I didn't have to worry about "love" as I believed in love at first sight (*Fong Fong No. 4*, Toming, 2010:59).

The author did not translate the name "芳芳" as Fang Fang, because Fang Fang has a bad implication in English, so the translator translated it as Fong Fong. Chinese is a parataxis language with implicit logical relations and many loose sentences, while English is a hypotaxis language with explicit logical relations and many related words. Obviously, translators have noticed the differences between Chinese and English, and when translating into English, they skillfully connect the loose sentences of the original text with logical cohesion words.

"移" means that in order to further fit the original text, some necessary heterogeneous molecules are retained, which can minimize the misunderstanding and misreading of the original text by foreign readers, and also spread the excellent traditional Chinese culture (Chen Wenrong, Li Jin, 2018:94-99).

Example 2: 我家素不佞佛，母亲是为了祭祖要焚“疏头”，才来山上做佛事。“疏头”者现在我能解释为大型经忏“水陆道场”的书面总结，或说幽冥之国通用的高额支票、赎罪券(*The Moment When Childhood Vanished*, Mu Xin, 2010:14).

Translation: My family never failed to honor the Buddha. It was for the purpose of worshipping our ancestors and burning shu-tou that my mother had decided to make this trip. As far as I could explain then, shu-tou was the written penance sent to the dead ancestors “by water route and by land route” the entire rite involving an elaborate performance. Or, as I understood it, a kind of bank check with a high monetary value acceptable in the other world, an otherworldly currency for penance(*The Moment When Childhood Vanished*, Toming, 2010:7).

There is a “移” in this paragraph, that is, “Shutou”. Since Buddhism culture was introduced into China, it was combined with Chinese culture, forming the distinctive Chinese buddhist culture. The translation reflects the buddhist culture, and the translator translates very well to retain the flavor of the original text. The translator transliterates “Shutou” directly into Shu-tou, which retains the traditional culture with Chinese characteristics, just in line with the explanation of “Shu-tou” as follows. As for the translation of sycophant Buddha, the translator does not literally translate it as ingratiating oneself with Buddha, but as believing in Buddhism in combination with the context.

Example 3: 上横街买烟，即点一支，对面直路两旁的矮树已缀满油亮的新叶，这边的大树枝条仍是灰褐的，谅来也密布芽蕾，有待绽肥了才闹绿意(*Tomorrow, I'll Stroll No More*, Mu Xin, 2010:103).

Translation: I buy cigarettes at the cross street and light one. Perpendicular to the street where I stand is a road lined with dwarf trees already filled with shiny new leaves. The taller trees on my street still display the grayness of bare branches. I imagine these must be budding too, but because of their height the branches aren't visibly green until their buds unfurl into leaves(*Tomorrow, I'll Stroll No More*, Toming, 2010:189).

The original text of “绽肥了才闹绿意” uses anthropomorphic rhetoric, in which “闹” vividly reflects the naughty tree branches. In order to reproduce the meaning of the original text, the translator translates “密布芽蕾” into a verb “bud”, translates “闹绿意” into “be visibly green” and translates “绽肥了” into “their buds unfurl into leaves” with free translation strategies and thorough understanding.

“艺” means to maintain the artistic and literary quality of the translation, and pay more attention to the beautiful form of the language to reproduce the style of the original text. It means to not only stay in the content, but also focus on the beauty of the form, so as to achieve diaspora.

Example 4: 叶子的碎声撩动耳蜗的纤毫，风给发肤以清凉柔润，而肉体何止是这些，它大着，被忽视弃置，于是它欠伸了，健全的肉体在黑岩上作瘫痪状为时已久，它欠伸，四肢应和着改换姿态，徐徐平定下来(*The Windsor Cemetery Diary*, Mu Xin, 2006:78).

Translation: Those myriad sounds tickle the fine hairs in the ears, and the breeze feels cool and moist on the hair and skin, but this is not all the idle body feels, for it refuses to be ignored and abandoned and stretches because a healthy body stiffens if it remains on that dark rock too long, it stretches because a body requires stretching and adjusting before it can slowly restore itself(*The Windsor Cemetery Diary*, Toming, 2010:209).

It can be seen that the original text adopts anthropomorphic figures of speech through “撩动”，“柔润” and “欠伸”. Through a series of verbs “tickle”, “feel”, “refuse” and “stretch”, the translated text better reproduces the artistry of the original text and delivers the beautiful language to the readers.

4. Conclusion

Against the backdrop of globalization, spreading Chinese culture is in urgent need for excellent translators like Toming, who have a good master of both Chinese and American cultures and help Chinese literature to strike a balance between foreign culture and native culture. Through

understanding “异”, flexibly using “易” and “移”, and giving play to subjectivity to achieve the realm of “艺”. The diasporic journey of Mu Xin’s novels abroad has set a model for the international communication of Chinese literature. It is hoped that in the future, more and more overseas Chinese can undertake the mission of international communication of Chinese literature to help Chinese culture to go global.

In addition, the diasporic perspective combined with translation is a fresh perspective, but the current relevant literature and research is few, and there is no estimate of how many diasporic translators there are. In the future study, we need to further dig into the perspective, and explore the relationship between diaspora and translation to explore a successful translation model for Chinese literature.

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