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湖北工业大学外语科研成果培育项目“翻译中的民族身份问题研究”

阶段性成果



# QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

刘学思◎著

## 翻译中的 身份问题研究

以文化研究中“身份”这一概念为核心，从文化身份、民族身份、性别身份、译者身份等各个角度对身份问题进行探讨，重在探讨身份与翻译的关系



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# Questions of Identity in Translation Studies

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· 北 京 ·

## 内 容 提 要

随着翻译研究的“文化转向”和文化研究的“翻译转向”兴起,文化与翻译有着千丝万缕的联系。本书以文化研究中“身份”这一概念为核心,从文化身份、民族身份、性别身份、译者身份等各个角度对身份问题进行探讨,重在探讨身份与翻译的关系。具体来说,身份影响着翻译的方方面面,从译本的选择到翻译策略的运用,从对异质文化的态度到目的语言文化的接受程度等;反过来,翻译既解构了身份又建构了新的身份,这不仅有助于在传播中华优秀传统文化的过程中,树立积极正面的民族身份,更有助于推进“中国文化走出去”战略,实现文化兴国。

本书适用于笔译或口译从业人员、高校英语相关专业师生、翻译爱好者等,既适合用作普通读者的阅读材料,也适合用作英语等相关专业学生的教材。

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## 前 言

无论是在中国还是西方国家，作为最主要的跨文化交流手段之一，翻译活动可以追溯到数千年前。远至中国汉代的佛教翻译以及西方世界对《圣经》的翻译，近至“诺奖推手”葛浩文对莫言作品的翻译，无不印证了翻译在古今中外无可撼动的重要地位。

20 世纪下半叶，翻译研究进入了一个新的时期，尤其是 60 年代的“语用学转向”和 70 年代的“文化转向”，使翻译研究跳出文字层面，从语言文字提升到了文化、历史、哲学、政治等层面，着力于对语言层面背后的一些因素进行研究。在此之前，世界各国对翻译的研究基本上集中在两种语言转换的文字层面，例如直译、意译之争，翻译的标准，翻译的技巧，译者的风格等等。“文化转向”则突破了文字、突破了文学的范畴，从更广阔的视角来看待翻译。翻译作为一项社会文化活动，其实已深深植根于其发生的社会、政治、经济、文化背景之中。那么，在翻译活动中的社会、文化、政治等因素毫无疑问成为翻译研究的热点。除了 20 世纪 70 年代翻译研究的“文化转向”引起翻译学界的一股思潮，另一个转向也极大地丰富了翻译研究的内涵，即文化研究的“翻译转向”。随着学科的不断交叉融合，文化研究也开始开疆扩土，与社会学、人类学、历史、心理学等学科交织起来。随着翻译在全世界文化交流的地位日益显现，文化学家纷纷将目光投向了翻译，把翻译置于社会历史文化的大环境中，研究翻译与社会文化直接的互动关系，并发表了诸多论文著作。无论是翻译的文化转向，还是文化的翻译转向，都极大地丰富了翻译研究、文化研究的内容，拓宽了研究范围。

正因为上述两大转向在国际学术界的盛行，文化研究中一个重要的概念“身份”也随之进入到翻译研究的视野。简单地说，身份就是回答“我是谁？”这个问题。然而，随着经济全球化，人口流动性加剧，国家、民族间往来日益频繁，身份问题越来越难以界定。而作为文化交流的主体活动，翻译在传播异

质文化、建构及塑造文化身份方面起到了极为重要的作用。尤其是在 21 世纪初,我国确立了“中国文化走出去”战略的文化建设方针之后,如何确定民族身份、提高我国的国家形象显得尤为重要。在经济全球化这一势不可挡的浪潮冲击下,文化作为一种“软实力”已成为国家综合国力的象征,也成为各国核心竞争的方向。文化强国除了本身的文化自信,更重要的是将我国传统的优秀文化推向世界。翻译成为扩大对外文化交流,实施‘中国文化走出去’战略的有力帮手。翻译在全球化背景下绝不仅仅是两种语言的转换,翻译可以是强势文化以语言为工具进行文化殖民的手段,翻译也可以是弱势文化抵制文化霸权、进行解殖民化的工具。翻译的政治性以及“身份”问题能让我们及时应对变幻莫测的国际形势,有利于建设社会主义文化强国,增强国家文化软实力。

一直以来,笔者对翻译的政治性和文化身份的研究都抱有较浓厚的兴趣。早在 2012 年,笔者就成功申请到了湖北省教育厅人文社会科学研究项目“后殖民视域下译者的身份探究”,开始对译者的身份进行研究,本书也是此项目的后续研究成果之一。带着此项目,笔者有幸于 2014 年应享誉世界的当代翻译理论家、国际顶尖学术期刊《译者》的创刊主编、英国曼彻斯特大学翻译与跨文化研究中心主任——莫娜·贝克(Mona Baker)教授之邀,前往英国曼彻斯特大学翻译与跨文化研究中心进行访学。期间聆听了英国著名翻译理论家西奥·赫曼斯(Theo Hermans)多次讲座,既了解了翻译中的规范问题,也对施莱尔马赫将阐释学运用到翻译研究中有了新的认识。正是在英国访学期间受到贝克教授、赫曼斯教授等名家的启发,收集到丰富的相关资料,让笔者了解到身份研究早就引起了西方翻译学者的注意,更激发了其无限的研究热情,使笔者对身份问题展开了更进一步的研究,并顺利完成了此项目。去年,笔者也成功申请到湖北工业大学外语科研成果培养项目“翻译中的民族身份问题研究”,本项目进一步深化了前期的研究内容,开始对民族身份这一特殊文化身份展开深入探讨。

本书从文化身份、民族身份、性别身份、译者身份等各个角度对身份问题进行探讨,既有宏观视角,又有微观视角;既有理论意义,又具实际意义。宏观上,在全球化背景下,将民族身份与翻译联系起来,探讨其相互之间的关系。具体来说,民族身份与翻译相辅相成。一方面,民族身份影响着翻译的方方面面,包括文本的选择、翻译策略的使用等等。另一方面,作为跨文化、跨语言

的桥梁，翻译的过程也就是建构民族身份的过程。翻译的政治性决定了它所建构的民族身份不是中立的。在传播异质文化的过程中，翻译既传递了本民族的文化价值，又折射出对外来文化的态度和立场。无论是传递本民族文化，还是外来文化，民族身份都会在翻译活动中显现并得以建构。微观上，性别身份，无论是生理性别还是社会性别，都对翻译产生巨大的影响。理论意义上，本书梳理了古今中外数千年来翻译理论、思想，流派等，既适合翻译研究者用作阅读材料，也适合翻译研究方向研究生用作教材使用。除此以外，本书的创新之处在于将文化研究中的“身份”概念引入到翻译研究领域，使翻译研究与文化研究相融合，同时也顺应了国际学术界中两个转向：翻译研究的“文化转向”和文化研究的“翻译转向”。实际意义方面，本研究有助于我们通过翻译这一跨文化活动建构独立的、正面的、积极的文化身份，有助于贯彻实施“中国文化走出去”战略，实现文化兴国。

本书为湖北省教育厅人文社会科学研究青年项目“翻译与性别——论性别身份流动性”和湖北工业大学外语科研成果培育项目“翻译中的民族身份问题研究”（项目编号为 2017SW0309）阶段性成果。

最后，由于篇幅有限，作者才疏学浅，对身份与翻译的探讨还不够完善，本书中仍然存在一些不成熟的观点值得商榷。不足之处，敬请专家和读者批评指正。

编者

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research Background

Since the second half of the 20th century, translation studies have entered a new era. Especially since the prevalence of linguistic school in the 1960s and the “cultural turn” in the 1990s, translation studies have also been promoted from the linguistic level to the cultural, historical, philosophical and political levels. The changes also signal a shift from a more linguistic approach to translation to one that laid greater emphasis on extra-textual factors. As the representative of cultural turn, Susan Bassnett said: “Translation does not occur in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer” (Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999: 2). It highlights the importance of a translation process that involves more than language, and encompasses recognition of cultural differences. These cultural, and sociological elements involved in the transfer of texts become the primary focus in translation studies. Therefore, as a social and cultural activity deeply rooted in the social, political, economic and cultural environment, translation is a culturally regulated act that is deeply embedded in all aspects of cultural life. The cultural turn gives rise to a number of approaches to the translation studies.

Since the 1970s, a meaningful and thought-provoking phenomenon has appeared in the translation studies and cultural studies, namely the cultural turn in translation studies and the translation turn in the cultural studies. With the wave of globalization, the cultural studies combine with disciplines in many humanities such as sociology, anthropology, psychology and history, and became a discipline without clear boundaries. Its comprehensiveness and openness break the traditional boundaries of disciplines and take a translational approach to cultural studies. As the rising significance of translation in global communication, the translational approach to cultural studies gains more attention to scholars. The emergence of the

translation turn and the cultural turn in translation studies broadens the scope of both studies and enriches each other. Translation studies share common ground with cultural studies as Susan Bassnett said “cultural studies in its new internationalist phase turned to sociology, to ethnography and to history. And likewise, translation studies turned to ethnography and history and sociology to deepen the methods of analysing what happens to texts in the process of what we might call ‘intercultural transfer’, or translation. The moment for the meeting of cultural studies and translation studies came at exactly the right time for both” (Bassnett, 1998:132-133).

Because of the interdisciplinary nature, the concept of “identity” originally in cultural studies has become one of the key issues in many fields such as sociology, linguistics, translation studies and other humanities and social sciences, arousing intense interests of many scholars. There was an unprecedented movement of people moving between countries with the acceleration of globalization, and accordingly the question of identity like “who am I?” arises. Lawrence Venuti also emphasizes the function of translation in the construction of cultural identity. “By far the most consequential of these effects—and hence the greatest potential source of scandal—is the formation of cultural identities. Translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures” (Venuti, 1998: 67). Identity refers to the self-image observed by itself and the images recognized by the other, which involves the question of power relationship. Therefore, identity is also called identity politics, which becomes an important concept in the post-colonial context. With the advent of cultural turn, the political role of translation in certain contexts has become the interest of scholars. Tejaswini Niranjana and other postcolonial scholars have pointed out that translation tends to take place within an unequal power relationship, where often one culture is in a dominant position. She argues that “translation reinforced hegemonic versions of the colonized, helping them to acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representation or objects without history” (Niranjana 1992: 176). From a postcolonial perspective, translation is employed metaphorically as a device for understanding the multiple identity issues that come out of a condition of migrancy. From within translation studies, the idea of the cultural turn has been to include

research into translation and global power relations.

Therefore, the concept of identity plays an important role in translation studies. The relationship between the identity and translation is worth further research as it remains largely unexplored.

## 1.2 Research Methods

As for the research methods, this book mainly uses methods of qualitative analysis, including: literature research, case study research, comparative analysis and inductive method.

### (1) Literature research

Careful reading and study of translation literatures at home and abroad is the first step for any research so as to grasp the mainstream development of translation studies, find and analyze the limitations of existing research and seek the breakthrough point for research. Since the concept of identity involves cultural studies and translation studies, the literature research involves both studies. It attempts to show the effect of cultural identity on our production and perception of translation.

### (2) Case study

This study also selects concrete examples of translation to conduct the research from the perspective of language and culture so as to demonstrate their respective translation strategies and the role identity plays behind translation. This book focuses on four types of identities involved in translation: the cultural identity, the national identity, the gender identity and the translator's identity. In order to elaborate clearly the relationship of each type of identity and translation, case study research is used to show the concrete influence identity exerts on translation as well as the role translation plays in identity construction.

### (3) Comparative analysis

In the case study research, one single version of translation is not convincing enough to prove the translation strategy the author adopts on purpose and demonstrate the uniqueness of the selected translation. Comparative analysis is

necessary to be used to discover the differences and characteristics of the different versions of translation. For example, as far as the national identity is concerned, this book compares the poem translations by translators of different countries to show the relationship of national identity and translation.

#### (4) Inductive method

In this study, we summarize the relevant issues revealed in the study by inductive method, such as the factors restricting the translation activity, the characteristics of cultural identity, and the shaping role of translation in the cultural identity, etc. With the combination of case study research and generalization, this book achieves valid and useful conclusions.

#### (5) Comprehensive analysis

Firstly, this study combines the empirical description with theoretical analysis. Adopting the research paradigm of the cultural school in translation studies, descriptive translation research method, post-colonial translation theory as well as feminist theory, this book analyzes and expounds the social, historical and cultural functions of translation. Secondly, the study on identity integrates both the macro perspective and micro perspective. In the macro view, national identity is demonstrated through translation, which also plays an important role in the creation and construction of national identity. In the context of globalization, only by defining our own national identity and using translation strategies properly can we ensure the effectiveness and feasibility of the “Chinese culture going abroad” strategy. In the micro view, personal’s gender identity is highlighted in translation. Through the comprehensive analysis, we explore the irreplaceable role played by translation activities (including translators as the main body of translation) and translation works in the social, historical and cultural background.

## 1.3 Research Significance

This research has important theoretical and practical significance.

Theoretically, it opens up a new area for translation studies and enriches translation studies as an independent discipline with the introduction of the concept

“cultural identity” in the cultural studies. Translation activities can be traced back to two thousand years ago. However, translation studies emerged as an independent discipline only in the second half of the 20th century with the publication of James S. Holmes’ paper “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” (1972). For a long time, translation studies cannot get rid of the position of subsidiary discipline. The philological school and linguistic school applied linguistics to translation and just took translation as a language transfer from the source language to the target language. The introduction of cultural identity to translation jumped out of the language level and began to consider the shaping forces of cultural identity, which has greatly broadened the scope of translation studies. Behind translation is actually the identification and construction of cultural identity, and conversely, translation helps to forge the cultural identity.

Practically speaking, this research helps us to construct independent and positive cultural identity through translation. Economic globalization has prompted people to think from a deeper cultural perspective. Some scholars maintain that globalization mainly refers to economic globalization, which means the integration of the economies of various countries finally forms the global economy as a whole. However, some scholars believe that globalization not only refers to the economic globalization, but also includes the globalization of political, cultural and social life. Personally, I’m in favor of the second opinion because the economic globalization has already affected all aspects of social life. Obviously, globalization is no longer simply a matter of economic, political or sociological issues. With the increasing cultural exchange, issues in cross-cultural communication are becoming increasingly prominent. Gender, ethnicity and political issues shift people’s attention to cultural identity. Since translation carries the mission of cultural exchange, it will certainly help us to seek cultural identity and shape new cultural identities. In this sense, this research can help people recognize the essence of cultural globalization, to be specific, to get rid of the narrow ethnic centrism and protect themselves from the neo-colonialism in the new situation. Focusing on the close relationship between translation and the cultural identity, we can draw a conclusion that translation is one of the main shaping forces of the unique culture and the process of translation is central to the formation of cultural identities.

Translation can be the tool of resisting the exercise of cultural hegemony, as well as the tool of asserting an independent explanation of history and identity.

## 1.4 The Framework of the Book

This book touches on how identity exerts invisible but powerful influence on translation as well as how translation helps to construct identity in the intercultural communication. It also examines translation practices and theories in China as well as the West to show how translation as a powerful tool enhances differences, constructs identities and promotes intercultural dialogues.

Given the fact that the ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies has brought about an enhanced awareness of the cultural issues about translation, this book tends to clarify the dialectical relationship between cultural identity and translation, which can be demonstrated as: cultural identity is forged through translation and conversely translation constructs and destructs the cultural identity. Cultural identity is a broad topic and, of course, there are many elements that may influence the construction of cultural identity such as language, gender, family roles, information technology, class, race and ethnicity, etc. Given the multiplicity of cultural identity, it is impossible to cover all the aspects and elements of cultural identity. This book attempts to explore cultural identities from two perspectives, national identity from a macro view and gender identity from a micro view. Apart from the social identity mentioned above, this book also focuses on the personal identity, namely, the translator’s identity.

The first chapter is an introduction, which gives a general introduction to the research background, research methods, research significance and the framework of the book. The research originates from my personal interest in the important concept in cultural studies — identity. Since the translation turn in cultural studies and cultural turn in translation studies, identity has become a hot issue in cultural studies as well as translation studies.

The second chapter is about theoretical basis. A brief overview about translation studies in China and the West is made at first. It is necessary to grasp a

clear thread of thoughts on translation practices and theories. It's interesting to find that there are some similarities of translation practices and theories between China and the West at the very beginning. Both of their translation activities, traced back to two thousand years ago, have something to do with religion. The translator in the West translates the Bible and Chinese translate Buddhist scripts. Owing to the similarity of the source text in translation, they choose the same translation strategies: word-for-word translation. Since then, based on the translation practices, translation theories both in China and the West began the debate about free translation and literal translation. However, translation studies between China and the West develop differently in the modern times. In China, there are a lot of scholars and translators with various principles about translation, such as Yan Fu's three-word principle of "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance", Fu Lei's "spiritual resemblance", Qian Zhongshu's "sublimation", and Xu Yuanchong's theory of "three beauties", etc. However, there is no theoretical book with a complete system. On the contrary, a lot of schools have sprung up with distinctive translation theories and viewpoints in the West. Nowadays, the cultural turn in translation studies has swept all over the world including China and the West. Translation is no longer a language transfer from the source text to the target text. The cultural elements behind translation are more noticeable and worthy of study. It broadens the object of translation studies beyond the immediate frame of the text and opens up a new area for the current translation studies. Along with the cultural turn, there appears the power turn and postcolonial approach to translation. Michael Cronin says, "if previously ideology had been the principal way of structuring political communication, identity has now taken over" (Cronin, 2006: 1). Undoubtedly, identity is an important concept in translation in the postcolonial context. The last part of this chapter also analyses the meaning and classification of identity.

The third chapter focuses on cultural identity and translation. The first question to be clarified is what cultural identity is. After the discussion about the definition and formation of cultural identity, this book distinguishes two easily-confused concepts: identity and identification. Five components of cultural identity proposed by Zhang Yuhe (2002) are also given a detailed explanation.



They are values, language, family system, lifestyle and spiritual world, mutually impermeable and interdependent. As for the characteristics of cultural identity, Chinese scholar Liu Yan summarizes six characteristics in the postmodern context: relativity, negativity, situationality, fluidity, fragmentation and multiplicity. Some of them overlap with each other, and still they are interdependent and closely related to each other. In this book, three representative characteristics are selected, namely, relativity, multiplicity and fluidity. In the last part, Howard Goldblatt's translation is taken as the case study to probe into the influence of cultural identity on translation.

Chapter four analyzes the relationship between translation and identity from a macro view — national identity. The reason why we choose national identity rather than ethnic identity is that this book mainly focuses on the translation of two different linguistic systems, English and Chinese. Because ethnic identity has the connotation of a group's identity in a particular ethnic group, we choose national identity with the emphasis on identity or image in the sense of a nation or state. With the contradiction between globalization and localization, it accelerates the aspirations of people's self-awareness and cultural identity, and the problem of national identity emerges. Who am I? Who are we? What kind of national image is presented to the world? These are the questions we are eager to answer. In such an international situation, China proposes "Chinese culture going abroad" strategy, which is also the cultural construction policy in the early 21st century. How can we disseminate the national core values to the world? How can we make Chinese culture go abroad successfully and effectively? As an important tool of cross-cultural communication, translation undoubtedly shoulders the responsibility of promoting "Chinese culture going abroad" strategy. In translation, only by defining our own national identity and using translation strategies properly can we ensure the effectiveness and feasibility of the strategy. In a word, the national identity influences translation, and in turn, translation helps to shape the national identity and image conversely. In the last part of this chapter, we take a comparative study of Ezra Pound's and Xu Yuanchong's translation of Chinese classical poetry as the case study to analyze the relationship between translation and national identity.