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The English Translation Style of
Mo Yan's Novels:

A Corpus-based Investigation

莫言小说
英译风格研究：
基于语料库的考察

宋庆伟 著

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序 言

庆伟在本书付梓之前,请为代序。作为他的博士生导师,看到他毕业不久即出版专著,甚感欣慰,特此为序。

《莫言小说英译风格研究——基于语料库的考察》凝结了宋庆伟博士这些年,特别是其在厦门大学求学期间的研究成果和心血结晶。目前为止,在我招收、指导的博士生当中,庆伟是唯一一个在三年期间顺利完成学业的,并且在外语类核心期刊发表了系列论文;更为可喜的是,他以该研究为框架,申请获得了2014年国家社科基金一般项目。这体现了他认真刻苦、敢于挑战、善于探索和勇于创新的学术品质和潜力。本人认为,该书具有以下特色:

1. 鲜明的时代特征。该书在中国文化“走出去”、莫言荣膺诺贝尔文学奖以及国内外翻译转向关注中国作品外译的宏大背景下,基于语料库语言学的工具和方法,从词汇、搭配和句法等多个层面对莫言小说的葛浩文译本风格进行分析,并借鉴译介学、功能主义目的论和多元系统理论等视阈的研究成果,诠释其独特文体特征的形成动因。该书基于语料库方法对莫言小说的葛浩文译本风格进行深入的个案研究,从多个维度审视莫言小说在海外的译介过程和接受效果,可以为中国文化研究提供理论参考和全新的思考角度;还可以科学地探究译者独特的语言风格,为其他译者风格研究提供启示和借鉴;此外,更为重要的是可以为中国文化的成功外传提供方法论和经验上的指导,进而为中国文学和文化继续寻找“走出去”的最佳方案积累经验。

2. 研究方法的有机融合。环顾现有研究,基于语料库方法对译本风格进行的实证研究在国内还比较薄弱,且存在研究方法相对单一以及解释力不足等问题。该书实现了定量分析和定性观察方法的相互呼应、互补解释,使译本风格研究既不失科学严谨,又兼顾了艺术性,确保了研究结论更加全面且更具解释力。

3. 研究创新的充分体现。该书实现了译者风格研究在理论、方法与实践上的创新。理论上,将语料库研究方法和描写翻译学有机结合起来,初步提出了兼顾原文和译本风格的研究模式,使研究更加系统化、科学化和均衡化。方法上,



将平行语料库和对比语料库方法结合起来,从不同维度对译文进行全方位考察,从而更加系统地对译本特征进行透彻分析。实践中,对葛浩文译本风格的系统研究有利于指导中国文学“走出去”的国家战略,这和十八大报告中提出的不断增强中华文化影响力、建设社会主义文化强国的历史使命不谋而合。因此,研究成果亦可作为相关政策执行过程中的参考。

概而言之,该书基于作者自建语料库和翻译学的相关理论,对译者风格和中国文学外译等领域研究具有较高的借鉴和指导价值。希望庆伟借力该书现有研究框架,不断挖掘和探索,以期取得更为丰硕的创新成果。

我不想说得太多,以免有为弟子吹嘘之嫌。读者诸君,开卷阅后,自会明白本人所言不虚。我由衷地祝贺宋庆伟博士初获成功,希望他“百尺竿头,更进一步”;同时也希望能在不久的将来有幸读到本书作者的下一部力作。

吴建平

于厦门大学西村书斋

2014年9月20日

Preface

This book conducts a corpus-based study of Howard Goldblatt's translation style of Mo Yan's novels on the lexical, collocational and syntactic levels by drawing on the theoretical achievements in such fields as media-translatology, the Skopos theory and the polysystem theory, etc. In 1993, Mona Baker introduced the corpus-based approach to translation style studies, which paved the way for a consistent, comprehensive and brand-new research perspective and paradigm. From then on, corpus-based studies of translator and translation style attract intense interest among translators and linguists and gradually become the focus of research in this field.

Inspired by her endeavor, translators at home begin to set foot in the research of translation style recently. However, there are sparsely-touched and unsystematic empirical studies on the style of Howard Goldblatt's translation, which leads to the dilemma that the conclusions don't offer very explanatory power. Thereby, under the spectacular backdrop of the "going out" project of Chinese literature and culture, it is of particular value to conduct some in-depth and multi-dimensional corpus-based exploration of the translation style of Howard Goldblatt. The general objectives of the present study are to provide implications for the style study of other translators, and offer methodological and practical instructions for the successful dissemination of Chinese literature and culture to the West so as to overcome the difficulty for the "going-out" project of Chinese literature and culture.

The empirical research starts from Chapter Three, in which the construction procedures and applications of CEPCOMN are illustrated in details, including corpus design, data collection, data sampling, segmentation and annotation, etc. Following that, a multi-dimensional and multi-level empirical exploration of the English translated texts of Mo Yan is carried out in order to ensure the analysis to be in a more systematic, comprehensive and reliable manner by combining parallel corpus-



based and comparable corpus-based approaches (Chapter Four to Chapter Six). On the lexical level, five parameters, including lexical variability, average word length, lexical density, part of speech distribution and wordlist and keywords are mainly explored. The findings reveal that English translated texts of CEPACOMN seem to display a mixture of some translation universals, such as explicitation, implication and simplification, etc., which occasionally questions and throws doubt upon the hypotheses of translation universals on the lexical level. This indicates that translation universals are relative and partial notions to a certain extent (Chapter Four). Investigations on the collocational level manifest that the English translated texts of CEPACOMN are of the following two distinctive features: 1) The co-existence of the hypotheses of simplification, normalization and de-normalization; 2) Simplification and normalization as the main features while de-normalization as the secondary (Chapter Five). Besides, detailed analyses of the following dimensions on the syntactic level are conducted, including average sentence length, average paragraph length, sentence parallelism in Chinese-English translation, possessive pronouns, the frequency and semantic prosody of passive constructions. It is found that the average sentence length and average paragraph length of the English translated novels of CEPACOMN are longer than those of the original English novels; in Chinese-English translation, correspondence is the primary transformation type, while sentence is the main translation unit; the translated novels of CEPACOMN show more syntactic hypotactic features than English and Chinese original novels; the frequency of passive constructions in the English translated novels is significantly higher than that of the Chinese original novels but lower than that of the English original novels. A major proportion of the passive constructions in the English translated novels of CEPACOMN carry neutral connotations as far as semantic prosody is concerned (Chapter Six). In Chapter Seven, translation features, translation strategies, together with the merits, demerits and controversies of the translation of CEPACOMN are summarized and discussed by means of qualitative approach. It is expected that qualitative and quantitative approaches can be combined in the study so that the two approaches can be complementary and explanatory to each other. Hence, the translation style study of Howard Goldblatt can be more scientific, rigorous and artistic; consequently, a persuasive and comprehensive conclusion can be arrived at.

Chapter Eight sums up the findings, contributions and deficiencies inherent of the research and offers some suggestions for future research in the field. As has been

observed in the preceding chapters, there is a tendency of co-existence of some seemingly contradictory translation universals in the translation of Howard Goldblatt. This exhibits the hybrid nature of translated languages and it confirms the reason why translated languages are also labeled as the “third codes”. Meanwhile, it is found that some demerits unavoidably exist in the translation of Howard Goldblatt. However, his distinctive translation style and superb skills provide invaluable implications for Chinese literature and culture translation overseas. The present study contributes in one way or another to translation studies theoretically, methodologically and practically. Theoretically, with the combination of corpus-based approach and descriptive translation studies, a tentative research model of integrating the styles of Chinese original novels and their counterpart English translation is proposed, and due importance of the osmotic effect of Chinese source language on English target language is attached to, which to some degree leads to the systematicity and scientificity of the study. Methodologically, the present study explores the translated language style by adopting the model in which bilingual parallel corpus-based approach and monolingual comparable corpus-based approach are combined. Besides, inter-disciplinary research methods also render the analysis more systematic, comprehensive and multi-dimensional. Practically, the comprehensive research on the style of the translations by Howard Goldblatt serves to distinguish and define what kinds of literary works are popular in the West, and explores how and why his translation is accepted and hailed as a masterpiece overseas, which is of significant value in providing guidance for the “going-out” project of Chinese literature and culture. As a result, the findings of the study can serve as references for the formation of policies concerned in China. Despite of the contributions and innovations mentioned above, the present study still suffers from some limitations and deficiencies in corpus size, corpus annotation and in-depth analysis and explanation of the data, etc. Some tentative suggestions are also put forth in the hope that the present study may work as a trigger for further explorations in the corpus-based translation studies and the interactive relationship research between source and target languages.

Composition of CEPCOMN

Chinese-English Parallel Corpus of Mo Yan's Novels

莫言:《红高粱》,花城出版社 2011 年版。

莫言:《天堂蒜薹之歌》,上海文艺出版社 2012 年版。

莫言:《酒国》,上海文艺出版社 2012 年版。

莫言:《师傅越来越幽默》,上海文艺出版社 2012 年版。

莫言:《丰乳肥臀》,上海文艺出版社 2012 年版。

莫言:《生死疲劳》,上海文艺出版社 2012 年版。

Mo, Y. 1993. *Red Sorghum*. Trans. Goldblatt, H. New York: Viking Penguin.

Mo, Y. 1995. *The Garlic Ballads*. Trans. Goldblatt, H. New York: Arcade Publishing.

Mo, Y. 2000. *The Republic of Wine*. Trans. Goldblatt, H. New York: Arcade Publishing.

Mo, Y. 2001. *Shifu, You'll Do Anything for a Laugh*. Trans. Goldblatt, H. New York: Arcade Publishing.

Mo, Y. 2004. *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. Trans. Goldblatt, H. New York: Arcade Publishing.

Mo, Y. 2008. *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. Trans. Goldblatt, H. New York: Arcade Publishing.

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Chapter One Introduction

Howard Goldblatt, the renowned Chinese literary sinologist, can be counted as the most productive and successful translator who introduces contemporary Chinese literature to the English-speaking world so far. The majority of his translations are Mo Yan's works (Mo Yan, winner of Nobel Prize for Literature in 2012), which contributes tremendously to his reputation at home and abroad. His translations are rigorous, elegant and faithful to the original and market-oriented. He made significant contributions to the dissemination of Chinese literature overseas, which also enormously promotes the popularity and acceptability of Chinese literature and culture in the West. Consequently, Professor Xia Zhiqing, a master sinologist labels him as the leading translator of Chinese contemporary literature and John Updike (2005: 84-87) compares him to the "midwife" of Chinese contemporary and modern literature. Therefore, in the magnificent and extensive backdrop of Chinese literary and cultural effort to "go out" of their native linguistic and cultural borders, it is of particular significance and value to conduct some in-depth research into Howard Goldblatt's English translation style of Mo Yan's novels. Based on corpus-based translation studies approach, the research expounds inter-disciplinarily the notion of the original texts style and translation style, the objectivity and rationality of the existence of the translation style and their corresponding restraining and influencing factors and their epistemological and methodological rationale so as to explore the unique translation style of Howard Goldblatt and scientifically explain the motivations of his specific style by drawing on the theoretical achievements of culture, translation and statistics, namely, the media-translatology, the Skopos theory and the polysystem theory. However, there has been a serious imbalance of "westwardness" between Chinese modern and contemporary cultural, especially literary communication with the West since the last century; that is to say, Chinese literature is in the



marginalized position in the so-called mono-directional cultural exchange process. Meanwhile, Chinese literary translation mainly centers on classical literature; hence, it is the case that a few studies on Chinese novels just focus on the classical ones (Lü, 2011: 1). It is clearly revealed that Chinese modern and contemporary literature is marginal in Chinese literature as far as the importance is concerned, and Chinese novel translation and dissemination are not as popular as poetry and other literary forms and it is least welcomed. Thereby, it is rational to seek for the breakthrough from Chinese modern and contemporary literature research so as to change the current situation by triggering Chinese novel translation studies. Viewed from the history of domestic and foreign literature translation and translation studies, Chinese-English translation lags far behind the level and scale of English-Chinese translation. This renders the translation of Chinese-English novels become the focus of this present study. In addition, China has recently set foot in the feedback study of overseas Sinology, which refers to the study of overseas Chinese cultural research. Specifically speaking, the study aims at investigating the status, process, history, law and characteristics of dissemination of China's culture throughout the world, exploring its breadth and depth of influence and its different dissemination layers in a certain heterogeneous cultural background, and analyzing the different research methodologies adopted by the sinologists of different cultural backgrounds and academic roads taken in the process from the perspective of Chinese culture (Cheng, 1998: 116).

The book aims at providing references and brand-new dimension for the study of Chinese culture, and also offering guidance on the methodology and experience for successfully disseminating Chinese culture overseas from the perspectives of the translation process and reception effect of Mo Yan's novels. Still, there are sparsely-touched and unsystematic empirical studies on the translation style of Howard Goldblatt, which leads to the dilemma that the conclusions obtained so far don't offer very explanatory power. Fortunately, with the development of corpus-based translation studies in recent years, fundamental changes have taken place in translation research paradigm and made corpus-based empirical studies and analyses possible. It follows that the translators at home and abroad begin to focus on the studies of translation style from the perspective of corpus-based approaches. Yet one point that cannot be ignored is that we still need to widen and deepen the research and improve its scientificity and systematicity. This study intends to improve on the