

**TRANSLATOR’S STANCE IN LITERARY TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY OF LIN'S TRANSLATION OF *SIX CHAPTERS OF FLOATING LIFE***

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**ABSTRACT**

According to the theory of translatorial hexis proposed by British scholar Charlston, some details of the translated text reflect the author’s attempt to “seek cultural glory.” It provides a new method for researchers to analyze translators' translation strategies. This paper applies this theory to explain some cultural translation strategies in Lin Yutang’s translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. Through the study of examples, it is found that Lin Yutang adopts faithful and reserved translation strategies for the Chinese traditional culture that he considers glorious, and cuts down or desalinates the culture that he considers dishonorable, which reflects the “pursuit of cultural glory” in the translatorial hexis theory. This theory is applicable to the interpretation of translators who have Chinese cultural identity and are engaged in the translation of Chinese culture.

**Keywords:** translatorial hexis theory, cultural glory, Lin Yutang, *Six Chapters of Floating Life*

**1. Introduction**

In recent years, with the rapid development of China’s economy, the spread of Chinese literature and culture has gradually become a hot topic. The new translation study also needs a new perspective and research path, and the theory of social translation just fits in with the dissemination of Chinese culture. The theory of social translation emerged at the end of the 20th century. Although it started relatively late, it has injected strong vitality into the study of translation theory. The centralized social translation theory or analysis model widely used at this stage includes: Gouanvic (2002, 2005) constructed a theoretical framework based on Bourdieu's(1997)sociological thought. Buzelin (2005) proposed a comprehensive research model based on field theory and actor network theory. Heilbron (1999) proposed an analysis model,

which is used to reveal the uneven flow of international translated books among language groups with different power and status and Casanova (2010) proposed the analysis model of unequal communication of translation within the highly hierarchical international literary field. These theories are applicable to the macro international cultural exchanges or international book cross-cultural exchanges. However, none of these theories can effectively analyze the translation itself or the translation strategies adopted by the translator (Wang 2017). The “translator’s habitus” theory put forward by Simeoni (1998) believes that the basic attribute of translator’s habitus is “obedience,” regardless of individual translators or groups of translators.

British scholar Charlston (2013) proposed a new social translatology theory – “translational hexis” theory. Greek scholar Pasmazi (2014) enriched and developed this theory, providing a new analytical tool for explaining some translation strategies taken by translators independently and spontaneously. Based on this theory, this paper attempts to make a new interpretation of Lin Yutang’s translation strategy of the English version of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*.

## **2. Translatorial Hexis**

Bourdieu defined “body postures” as “patterns of postures with both individual characteristics and systems that are related to the whole skill system involving body and tools and loaded with rich social meanings and values.” “Body hexis is a permanent disposition, that is, a permanent and stable way of standing, speaking, feeling and thinking” (Bourdieu 1977: 93-94). People have expectations about which behaviors they regard as glorious or dishonourable in their culture, which are determined by culture. People’s body posture (i.e. gestures, postures and positions) exactly reflects such expectations (Bourdieu 1977:56).

On the basis of summarizing Bourdieu’s body hexis theory, Charlston put forward the translatorial hexis, that is, “an honour-seeking, bodily stance or hexis embodied in the text of the translation.” Charlston, through his case study of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* translated by the British philosopher and translator J.B. Baillie, found that the translator’s habit has a universal “submissive” characteristic, which is different from that pointed out by Simeoni (Simeoni 1998), “The translator’s attitude reflected in the details of the translated text reflects the philosopher’s attitude of challenging authority and seeking glory” (Simeoni 1998), “but it can also be used to seek honor and respectability in the eyes of certain honor-endowing social groups within the field.” (Simeoni 1998)

Charlston pointed out that “at the micro level of translation, translators’ translation decisions can be interpreted as body posture.” “At the same time, when analyzing the details of the translated text, we can refer to the translatorial hexis, which can reveal the complex process of philosophical translation.” “In addition to the source text and the target text, the translator should

also pay attention to the consistency of the target text in the way of seeking honour, pay attention to its potential role and acceptance in the target culture, and pay attention to his own honour in the field.” He also writes that Inghilleri(Inghilleri 2005:125) notes that the increased interest in Bourdieu and other sociologists in recent years reflects a general trend, That is, the focus is no longer on the translated work itself “but on translation and interpretation as social, cultural and political acts.” “But this translatorial hexis does not rule out the possibility of returning to the social ideology to consider the details of the text language (Inghilleri2005b:125).” When applying the translatorial hexis theory to translate a work, we should not only consider the translator’s translation motivation, the purpose of the publisher or sponsor, the target audience, etc., but also consider “the micro dynamic aspects of the historical sub fields and related ideological or political power fields (Charlston 2013:57-58).”

Greek scholar Pasmazi (2014) found M. Angelidou, as a native Greek translator, had a Greek cultural orientation. Angelidou adopted the translation strategy of "being able to accept and consider it as cultural glory", including euphemism, purification, hypercorrection, deletion, and dilution. Pasmazi believes that M Angelidou’s translation strategy reflects the translatorial hexis of “seeking the glory of his own culture” (Pasmazi 2014:80-81). This shows that translators will “seek the glory of their own culture” when translating and creating, which is also applicable to the external communication of our Chinese culture.

### **3. Translator’s Cultural Identity and “Translatorial Hexis”**

Translators with different cultural identities often adopt translation strategies that match their cultural identities. Since the 1990s, the concept of “cultural identity” was introduced in China, and there has been no clear definition of "cultural identity" in the academic community. Zhang Yuhe, a Canadian sociologist of Chinese descent, believes that cultural identity is an individual, a collective, and a nation's self-image in comparison with others, other groups, and other nations (Zhang & Qian, 2002:72). Charles Taylor believed that the problem of identity was related to meaning and value, and the identification of an individual's identity would lead to the individual making value judgments and thus affect the individual's behavior orientation (1989:28). Specifically, cultural identity is different from the simple division based on nationality, region and other criteria, but more inclined to identify and belong to the national culture. Identity is actually a category or a group of categories with certain attributes; If this category refers to a certain kind of person (such as a translator), when they are engaged in activities related to their specific identity, they will consciously or unconsciously agree with the regulations of this activity on their identity, and their behaviors will have some commonness. This kind of regularity in behavior under certain conditions has great theoretical significance for translation studies. (Wang, 2014:72)

In fact, the personal identity of a translator is often very complex, and there may even be multiple identities. British scholar Adrian Holliday (2010) found that although countries and nations are very important, they often act as an external force. However, in a multi-ethnic country, the cultural stratification of personal life trajectories (including religion, family history, community, occupation, politics and language) that often gather in multiple countries often conflicts with the external force of countries and nations. China has many famous translators, who have strong Chinese cultural characteristics, including local translators Lin Yutang, Yang Xianyi, Xiao Qian, Li Zhihua, etc., and overseas translators Wang Jizhen, Xia Zhiqing, Yu Guofan, etc. When they translated Chinese literary masterpieces to the West, these translators seek the attitude of “glory of Chinese culture.”

#### **4. Examples of Lin Yutang’s Translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life***

Lin Yutang, a translator who is well-versed in both China and the West, has written extensively. Lin Yutang has published many English translation works, such as *Moment in Peking*, *The Vermilion Gate*, *A Leaf in the Storm*, *My Country and My People*, *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, among which the *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* is the most famous.

Nie Yonghua, based on the three translation criteria proposed by Lin Yutang, analyzes the translation strategies adopted in Lin's translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, and points out that he is not as conservative and narrow as the “quintessence of Chinese culture school,” without changing as the “Europeanization school.” (Nie, 2008:77-78) Meng’s research on Lin’s translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* and translation of ancient essays into English shows that Lin Yutang “takes faithfulness as the primary principle” and “pays attention to conveying the local (cultural) spirit and interest” (Meng, 2016:37). Wang Baorong, after conducting a statistical investigation, analysis and research on the strategy of Lin’s translation of the place names in *Six Chapters of the Floating Life*, concluded that “Lin Yutang generally tends to adopt a cultural retention translation strategy, trying to retain and accurately convey the Chinese cultural information contained in the place names in *Six Chapters of the Floating Life*, and sometimes he also adopts a cultural replacement translation strategy. His translation strategies and methods are flexible, mature, and ingenious.” (Wang, 2016:40-43)

After text analysis of some classical extracts from Lin’s translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, the author comes to the conclusion that Lin Yutang tends to use literal translation, transliteration, additional translation, or annotation in the selection of translation strategies, so as to retain the traditional Chinese culture that he regards as “the glory of Chinese culture” and that it is necessary to introduce to western readers. These are common in the translation of appellations, place names, and culture-loaded words. At the same time, Lin Yutang tends to cut down, dilute or obscure the traditional culture that he thinks is not glorious, shameful, and

unsuitable for introducing to western readers.

Lin Yutang's translation retention strategy is reflected in the translation of culture loaded words. He adopts transliteration, annotation and additional translation

#### **4.1 Transliteration**

##### ***Example1:***

***Original text:*** 妾见市中卖馄饨者,其担锅灶无不备,盍雇之而往(Shen, 2009)?

***Lin's Translation:*** I have seen *wonton* sellers in the streets who carry along a stove and a pan and every thing we need. We could just ask one of these fellows to go along with us.

##### ***Example2:***

***Original text:*** 生而颖慧,学语时,口授琵琶行,即能成诵(Shen, 2009)。

***Lin's Translation:*** Even in her childhood, she was a very clever girl, for while she was learning to speak, she was taught Po Chüyi's poem, The *P'i P'a* Player, and could at once repeat it.

##### ***Example3:***

##### ***Original***

***text:*** 于是易髻为辮,添扫蛾眉,加余冠,微露两鬓尚可掩饰,服余衣长一寸又半,于腰间折而缝之,外加马褂(Shen, 2009)。

***Lin's Translation:*** I suggested. Accordingly she changed her coiffure into a queue, painted her eyebrows, and put on my cap. Although her hair showed slightly round the temples, it passed off tolerably well. As my gown was found to be an inch and a half too long, she tucked it round the waist and put on a *makua* on top.

#### **4.2 Annotation**

##### ***Example4:***

***Original text:*** 清明日,先生春祭扫墓,挈余同游(Shen, 2009)。

***Lin's Translation:*** On the ch'ing ming festival,<sup>①</sup> my tutor was going to visit his ancestral grave and brought me along.

#### **4.3 Additional Translation**

**Example5:**

**Original text:** 迁仓米巷，余颜其卧楼曰宾香阁，盖以芸名而取如宾意也(Shen, 2009)。

**Lin's Translation:** After we moved to Ts angmi Alley, I called our bedroom the “Tower of My Guest’s Fragrance,” with a reference to Yün’s name,<sup>①</sup>and to the story of Liang Hung and Meng Kuang who, as husband and wife, were always courteous to each other “like guests.”

The culture retention strategy adopted by Lin Yutang is reflected in the transliteration of some culture-loaded words. As shown in Example 1, Example 2 and Example 3, *wonton* is a traditional Chinese food, *pipa* is a traditional Chinese musical instrument, and mandarin jacket is a traditional Chinese dress. There is no doubt that the above three are part of the epitome of Chinese traditional culture. Lin Yutang also adopts transliteration to maximize the retention of Chinese elements. Lin Yutang believed that these three were “the glory of our own culture” and translated *wonton*, *pipa* and *makua* to western readers in the most direct and Chinese characteristic way.

In addition, Lin Yutang’s retention translation strategy is also reflected in the method of annotation. As shown in Example 4, ch’ing ming festival is a traditional Chinese festival, which also represents China's long history. But there is no similar festival in western culture, so Lin Yutang thinks it is necessary to introduce it to western readers in detail. Therefore, he adopted the strategy of annotation when translating. The footnote is: A festival which falls on any unfixed date somewhere round the middle part of the spring months. On this day people are accustomed to pay their visits to their ancestral tombs in the country.

Lin Yutang also adopted the method of additional translation, which also reflects his reserved translation strategy. As shown in Example 5, “宾香阁” has two meanings: one is the name of Shen Fu's wife, Xiang Yun, and the other is that couples respect each other as guests. Lin Yutang translated it as two “宾” in the sentence “Tower of My Guest’s France,” meaning that both of them are from the traditional Chinese allusion “respect each other as guests.” Lin Yutang translated and explained the allusion to western readers by adding translation.

The above five examples all reflect the unique and long-standing Chinese traditional culture. These are not only lacking in western culture, but also full of Chinese traditional characteristics. Lin Yutang adopted the reserved translation strategy, transliteration, and annotation, and translated what he thought was "the glory of Chinese culture" to western readers.

Lin Yutang's translation retention strategy is also reflected in the translation of folk culture. He adopts literal translation and literal translation withnotes

#### 4.4 Literal Translation

##### *Example1:*

**Original text:** 芸曰: “世传月下老人专司人间婚姻事, 今生夫妇已承牵合, 来世姻缘亦须仰藉神力, 盍绘一像祀之?(Shen, 2009)”

**Lin’s Translation:** “It is said that the Old Man under the Moon is in charge of matrimony,” said Yün. “He was good enough to make us husband and wife in this life, and we shall still depend on his favor in the affair of marriage in the next incarnation. Why don’t we make a painting of him and worship him in our home?”

##### *Example2:*

###### **Original**

**text:** 合卺后, 并肩夜膳, 余暗于案下握其腕, 暖尖滑膩, 胸中不觉怦怦作跳(Shen, 2009).

**Lin’s Translation:** After the drinking of the customary twin cups between bride and groom, we sat down together at dinner and I secretly held her hand under the table, which was warm and small, and my heart was palpitating.

#### 4.5 Literal Translation with Notes

##### *Example3:*

**Original text:** 是年七夕, 芸设香烛瓜果, 同拜天孙于我取轩中(Shen, 2009)。

**Lin’s Translation:** On the seventh night of the seventh moon of that year, Yün prepared incense, candles and some melons and other fruits, so that we might together worship the Grandson of Heaven<sup>①</sup> in the Hall called “After My Heart.”

##### *Example4:*

###### **Original**

**text:** 芸曰: “此何难。俟妾鬓斑之后, 虽不能远游五岳, 而近地之虎阜灵岩, 南至西湖, 北至平山, 尽可偕游。(Shen, 2009)”

**Lin’s Translation:** “Oh! this is not so very difficult,” said Yün. “Wait till I have got my grey hairs. Even if I cannot accompany you to the Five Sacred Mountains<sup>①</sup> then, we can travel to the nearer places, like Huch’iu and Ling yen, as far south as the West Lake and as far north as P’ing shan[in Yangchow].”

Lin Yutang's reserved translation strategy is embodied in the literal translation of traditional Chinese folk customs. As shown in Example 1 and Example 2, “月下老人” and “合卺” are unique traditional folk customs in China, and they are both related to marriage and love between men and women. Lin Yutang adopted the strategy of literal translation, he translated “月下老人” and “合卺”, presenting the meaning of Chinese traditional folk vocabulary to western readers concisely, so that they can better understand Chinese culture.

In addition, Lin Yutang's retention translation strategy is also reflected in the handling of literal translation notes. As mentioned in Examples 3 and 4, “七夕” is the Chinese Valentine's Day. However, Lin Yutang did not directly replace “七夕” with Valentine's Day when translating. On the contrary, he translated “七夕” literally and added footnotes: ① The seventh day of the seventh moon is the only day in the year when the pair of heaven lovers, the Cowherd (“Grandson of Heaven”) and the Spinster, are allowed to meet each other across the Milk Way Huashan, the West Sacred Mountains (in Shensi), (3)Hengshan, the North Sacred Mountains (in Shansi), (4)Hengshan, the South Sacred Mountains (in Hunan)and (5) Sungshan the Central Sacred Mountains (in Honan).-Tr. Lin Yutang introduced the "Five Mountains" in more detail and marked their locations. One of the above two represents the romantic feelings of ancient Chinese people, and the other reflects the magnificent mountains and rivers and beautiful scenery of China. For these two words, Lin Yutang naturally felt that they could reflect the "glory of Chinese culture", so he kept them in translation.

On the other hand, Lin Yutang tends to delete, downplay or not express the traditional Chinese culture that he believes is not honorable or inappropriate to introduce to western readers, which is highlighted in his handling of women's foot binding mentioned directly or indirectly four times in the original text. This is reflected in his treatment of foot binding mentioned four times in the full text.

**Example1:**

Original text: 王怒余以目, 掷花于地, 以莲钩拨入池中(Shen, 2009)。

**Lin's Translation:** Wang looked at me in anger, threw the flowers to the ground and kicked them into the pond.

**Example2:**

**Original text:** 芸曰:“脚下将奈何?”余曰:“坊间有蝴蝶履, 大小由之, 购亦极易, 且早晚可代撒鞋之用, 不亦善乎?(Shen, 2009)”



**Lin's Translation:** What am I going to do about my feet? she asked. I told her there was a kind of shoes called "butterfly shoes", which could fit any size of feet and were very easy to obtain at the shops, and suggested buying a pair for her, which she could also use as slippers later on at home (Shen, 2009).

**Example3:**

**Original text:** 芸见势恶, 即脱帽翘足示之曰:“我亦女子耳”(Shen, 2009)

**Lin's Translation:** and seeing that the situation was desperate, Yün took off her cap and showed her feet, saying "Look here, I am a woman, too!"

**Example4:**

**Original text:** 余择一雏年者, 身材状貌有类余妇芸娘, 而足极尖细, 名喜儿。

**Lin's Translation:** I chose a very young one, called Hsierh, who had a pair of very small feet and whose figure and expression resembled Yün's, while Hsiufeng called a girl by the name of Ts'uiku, and the rest of the company asked for their old acquaintances.

Compared with adopting a retention strategy to deal with excellent traditional culture, Lin Yutang adopts the methods of deletion, dilution and fuzziness to deal with foot binding. As shown in the four examples above, all of them are related to feet. The background of the source text is the Qing Dynasty, when women's foot binding was popular. Most Chinese people know that foot binding is a bad habit, not to mention Lin Yutang. Therefore, foot binding appeared four times in the full text, and Lin Yutang chose to delete, dilute and obscure the method, so as not to show foot binding to western readers. This is what he thinks is the disgrace of Chinese culture.

## 5. Conclusion

The above-mentioned translation cases of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* can be effectively explained by the translatorial hexis theory. Venuti pointed out that since the 1930s, fluency has been the only criterion used by British and American critics to evaluate English translations, namely, the mainstream translation norm (Venuti 1995:2-5). Through case analysis, Lin Yutang did not fully adopt this mainstream norm. On the contrary, he intentionally violated it and tended to adopt cultural reservation translation strategies, which was mainly determined by his cultural identity. Lin Yutang, a native translator in China, is naturally influenced by Chinese traditional culture. He holds the translation purpose of "explaining Chinese culture to western readers(Tyler, 1936:274)," so he tends to retain the Chinese culture that he thinks is glorious in his translation while discarding the Chinese culture that he thinks is not glorious. Chinese traditional food,

musical instruments, and costumes undoubtedly reflect the depth and long history of Chinese culture. Lin Yutang did not choose literal translation or substitution, but transliteration, trying to present Chinese traditional culture to western readers. The broad and profound traditional Chinese culture is exactly what Lin Yutang introduced to western readers. The process of translation is also the process of seeking “national cultural glory.” Lin Yutang expressed his translation purpose in the preface of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*:

She is not the most beautiful, for the author, her husband, does not make that claim, and yet who can deny that she is the loveliest? ...expect that in Yun I seem to feel the quails of a cultivated and gentle wife combined to a greater degree of perfection than falls within our common experience. ...I am translating her story just because it is a story that should be told to the world; on the one hand, to propagate her name, and on the other, because in this simple story of two guileless creatures in their search for beauty, living a life of poverty and privations, decidedly outwitted by life and their cleverer fellowmen, yet determined to snatch every moment of happiness and always fearful of the jealousy of the gods, I seem to see the essence of a Chinese way of life as really lived by two artistic persons who did not accomplish anything particularly noteworthy in the world.

What Lin Yutang wants to “let the world know” is not only “the quiet and lovely life of a Chinese couple,” but also the essence of Chinese traditional culture, as well as the “virtue” of Chinese women, the “philosophy of the Chinese people,” “the spirit of loving beauty and truth,” “the nature of knowing enough, being happy and comfortable.” Lin Yutang has lived overseas for many years and knows that Western culture is unfamiliar and even lacks this traditional Chinese “philosophy of life” and “way of life.” Therefore, he adopted a reserved translation strategy to translate Chinese cultural proper nouns, which reflects his pursuit of “national cultural glory” from beginning to end.

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