

STRATEGIES AND THOUGHTS OF NICKY HARMAN IN DIALECT TRANSLATION — A CASE STUDY OF BROKEN WINGS**Wu Tiyi¹ and Hua Jing²**

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ABSTRACT

Based on the analysis of some typical examples with Shaanxi dialect's characteristics in the Broken Wings, which are divided into three categories: dialect verbs with obvious local characteristics, nouns with Chinese cultural elements and Chinese proverbs, this paper probes into Nicky Harman's translation strategies and translation thoughts on dialects and local cultures. The results show that Nicky Harman adheres to the strategy of literal translation, focusing on accurate understanding and good expression, and at the same time, makes up for cultural incomprehension and differences by supplementing explanatory elements, which uncover the reader-oriented translation thought on the basis of being faithful to the original text. Nicky Harman plays an important role in the cross-cultural communication of contemporary literature in China.

Keywords: Nicky Harman; Broken Wings; Dialect Translation..

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2019, Nicky Harman, a famous British sinologist and translator, translated Jia Pingwa's local literature novel 《极花》 (*Ji Hua*) into English and published it with the title *Broken Wings*. As one of the representative works of local literature, *Ji Hua* has a strong Chinese local cultural color.

Zhou Lingshun believes that dialect is the carrier of local literature, and the study of dialect translation is of great significance to the external spread of Chinese culture.^[1] Therefore, the translation of dialect and local culture is well worth studying in the translation of local literature. This paper makes a case study and discussion on the translation of dialect verbs, dialect nouns and proverbs in the *Broken Wings*, and probes into Nicky Harman's translation strategies and translation thoughts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW**2.1 About Nicky Harman and the Cross-cultural Communication of Chinese Literature**

The dissemination of Chinese literature, as an important force in the construction of China's cultural soft power, has gained popularity. Paper Republic, as a translation website to introduce Chinese literature to readers in the English-speaking world, is an important platform to promote cultural exchanges between China and the world.^[2] Nicky Harman, as one of the important founders of the Paper Republic website, has 21 years of Chinese-English translation

^[1] Zhou Lingshun. A Study on the Translation of Local Language and Its Criticism[J]. Foreign Language Research. 2016,33(04) 0

^[2] <https://paper-republic.org/nickyharman/>.

experience, which has made great contributions to the entry of China literature into the English world. Nicky Harman translates a wide variety of texts, ranging from novels, children's literature, poetry to prose.

Nicky Harman, a great translator with such rich translations and remarkable achievements, is a blank in systematic research at home and abroad, and only some theoretical analyses or demonstrations from a certain perspective can be found.^[3] Therefore, in today's cross-cultural communication environment, it is indispensable for literary works to "go global", and it is inevitable to study Nicky Harman and her translation strategies and translation thoughts.

Li Jiayue discusses Nicky Harman's literary translation view, material selection tendency, translation strategies, and negotiation and compromise in the process of translation, and explains that Nicky Harman promoted the overseas spread of China literature with "multiple identities".^[4] Tang Xue sorts Nicky Harman's translations of Chinese literature and the track of translation activities, and finds that Nicky Harman's contribution to the foreign translation of Chinese literature not only lies in the richness of translated works, but also plays an important role in talent training and China's literature promotion.^[5] However, Nicky Harman herself seldom publishes her translation theories. In 2009, she published an article entitled "Foreign Culture, Foreign Style", discussing the factors that make literature in different language backgrounds stick to their respective literary traditions and literary styles in the context of literary language.^[6]

It can be seen that most domestic papers systematically study Nicky Harman's translation practice and contribution, mostly systematic and general. However, this paper mainly takes her dialect translation practice in *Broken wings* as the starting point, with a small but precise focus, and presents the translator's role in China's cultural communication from the perspective of cross-cultural construction of the translation.

2.2 About Dialect Translation

For dialect translation, at present, most foreign countries are based on bilingual literature narrative corpus, summarizing the descriptive research of dialect translation strategy norms; In China, however, it is mainly the critical-interpretive approach.^[7]

For example, based on 49 Shaoxing dialects used in Luxun's novel *Fei Zao*, Huang Qin and Liu Xiaoli compares and analyzes the similarities and differences of translation strategies in four English versions with the help of 11 categories of cultural-specific translation strategies summarized by Exela.^[8] Yu Jing discusses six common methods of dialect translation in English and American literature, and summarizes the "gap" strategy of dialect translation, that is, creating two different voices in the translation, highlighting the differences between the two groups.^[9] Li Yingyu and others take the translation of "瓷 (ci) " in a northwest dialect novel as an example, and use the framework of relevance translation theory to explore the translation

[3] Hua Meng. A Bridge for the Translation and Introduction of Contemporary China Literature: An Interview with Nicky Harman, Jeff Crosby and Jeff Crosby [J]. A Multidimensional Study of Orientalism.2018(01)

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strategies of culture-loaded words.^[10] It can be seen that most papers have tested a certain established translation theory by analyzing and explaining translation cases, and finally come to a known but prescriptive conclusion:

1) The research perspective is relatively single. Most of them study the translation methods and strategies of dialects from the perspective of translatology. However, due to the interdisciplinary nature of dialect itself, the research direction of dialect translation can be extended to sociology, linguistics, cultural theory and other dimensions.

2) Comparative research methods are the main methods. Only a few studies use corpus research methods and data quantification methods.

Therefore, this study combines dialect translation with cross-cultural communication, pays attention to culture itself and its foreign translation phenomenon, and combines dialect translation with translator's research to explore the translator's presentation and expression effect of dialects in translation, and the translator's role in cross-cultural communication of China literature. The research method is a combination of corpus and case analysis.

3. METHODOLOGY

《极花》(*Ji Hua*) is based on a true story around Jia Pingwa. It tells the story of a young girl, Butterfly, who was abducted to a remote rural area, resisted and fled, and finally chose to return to the rural area because of the cynicism of people and missing her children. As a native writer in Shaanxi, Jia Pingwa has a keen sense of the dialect of his hometown and a skillful ability to use it. There are many words and sentences with regional colors and traditional cultural factors in the original text of *Ji Hua*, which is a major cultural difficulty in translating the novel into English.

In this paper, the local language in *Ji Hua* is taken as the research object. Nicky Harman once classified the local language of Jia Pingwa's novels into the following categories in the discussion on the English translation and reproduction of the local language in Chapter 15 of *Happy Dream*: 1) Dialect words with strong adhesion; 2) Dialect verbs with dominant features; 3) Dialect nouns with dominant features; 4) Proverbs with local characteristics. This classification is based on the translator's grasp of the overall local language of the novel and combined with specific translation practice, which is highly systematic and representative for the summary of the local language of Jia Pingwa's novels. According to this classification, this table can be made:

Table 1 Four kinds of local languages and their functions, and their resources in *Ji Hua*

Category	Function	Resources in <i>Ji Hua</i>
Dialect words with strong adhesion	It has no special meaning alone, and it is mainly used in combination with specific contexts to express emotional changes and other meanings.	“么(me)” 127 times “哩(li)” 100 times “咋(za)” 78 times “呀(ya)”, “的(de)”, etc
Dialect verbs with	Words with obvious regional characteristics that express actions, behaviors and state changes.	“戳(duo)” 9 times “箍(gu)” 6 times

^[10] LI Yingyu GUO Jirong YAUN Liling. Translation of Culture-Loaded Dialect Words: With the Rendition of "ci" in Turbulence as an Exemplar [J]. Chinese Translators Journal. 2008,(03)

dominant features		“戇(qiang)”3 times “爹(zha)”3times, etc
Dialect nouns with dominant features	It mainly focuses on food culture terms with local characteristics, China culture words, network words and so on.	“搅团(jiao tuan)”“饴络(he le)”“神(shen)”“阎王(yan wang)”“灵堂(ling tang)”“星野(xing ye)”“光棍(guang gun), etc
Proverbs with local characteristics	As an oral, vivid and stereotyped sentence, it reflects local characteristics and people's thoughts and feelings.	“生有时，死有地”“鲜花插在牛粪上”“人怕老来穷”，etc

This study mainly discusses Nicky Harman's translation strategies and translatability of Chinese language and local culture from the perspective of the latter three categories, namely dialect verbs, dialect nouns and proverbs.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Dialect Verbs

In Jia Pingwa's local literature creation, all kinds of verbs in dialects are frequently used and have obvious regional characteristics. For this kind of local language vocabulary, Nicky Harman mainly uses the strategy of literal translation, which fails to reproduce the distinctive regional features of the original text, and some verbs are not understood accurately and not convey the original meaning faithfully. But generally speaking, Nicky Harman eliminates the reading obstacles and ensures the readability of the target language.

(1) 村里人便指戳起他爹。

The villagers pointed the finger at his old dad.

(2) 使着阴招挑拨，贪婪，嫉妒，戳是非，耍滑头。

There's trouble-stirring, greed, jealousy, quarrelling and scamming.

In Shaanxi dialect, “戳(dó)” is used as a verb, which has the meaning of discussing behind the scenes and secretly conspiring. Common usages include “指戳(zhi do)”, “戳咕(do gu)” and so on. In example 1, the original text means pointing behind and gossiping secretly; However, the translator translates it into point the finger at, which is more used as public accusation, which leads to the deviation of meaning, errors in understanding and expression, and this kind of error will also bring readers a wrong related understanding, which will further confuse readers' understanding of characters and regional colors. Although the “指(zhi)” in the word “指戳(zhi do)” corresponds to the “finger” in English phrases, to some extent, it shows the connection and similarity between different cultures, but there are differences between the two words, and the translation of the word into “point the finger at” also loses the “vulgar” feeling and local flavor of the original text.

In Example 2, the translator uses the conversion strategy, translating several groups of verbs into nouns. First of all, the understanding of the two words “戳是非(do shi fei), 耍滑

头(shua hua tou)" is not very accurate. "戳是非(do shi fei)" means to gossip and stir up enmity, while "耍滑头(shua hua tou)" can be interpreted as playing tricks to make yourself less responsible, which does not match the meaning of the translation. Secondly, the two words in the original text are used in spoken language, which are informal and have obvious derogatory colors, while quarrel and scam are two common words in English, and quarrel has no obvious derogatory colors. Therefore, these may be better translated into "tell tales and play fox".

(3) 大家的屁股都不瓷实了，稀松巴软的。

They were all skinny and slack.

(4) 你发瓷啥哩？

Have you turned so stone?

"瓷(ci)" in Shaanxi dialect is mainly used as adjective and verb. Its synonyms are "stupefied", "in a daze", "dull" and "solid", etc. This word may seem derogatory, but it implies love or implies that someone is practical, honest, inarticulate and will not deliberately show off. In Example 3, "不瓷实(bu ci shi)" is used as a neutral word to describe the donkey, which shows that the donkey is thin and has no fat, which just corresponds to the two words "skinny and slack" in English, and the translator also flexibly uses the rhetorical devices of alliteration. In Example 4, "发瓷(fa ci)" means to be stupefied, and the translator translates it as "turn stone", in which stone, as an adjective, can be understood as dull. For these two examples, the original text and the translation reflect the similarity between English and Chinese in grammar, semantics and pragmatics, and the understanding and expression are accurate.

4.2 Dialect Nouns

Dialect nouns with obvious characteristics in *Ji Hua* mainly focus on regional food culture terms and China element culture words. It is almost impossible to find equivalent expressions of these nouns in English. Therefore, Nicky Harman adopts free translation and addition, which not only takes care of the understanding of the target language readers, but also tries her best to preserve the characteristics and "different texture" of the source language.

(5) 黑亮爹做了三桌菜，当然是凉调土豆丝，热炒土豆片，豆腐炖土豆块，土豆糍粑，土豆粉条，虽然也有红条子肉呀焖鸡汤呀，烧肠子呀，里边也还是有土豆。

Bright's dad had done all the cooking and there were three tables of guests. Of course, there were potato dishes: cold shredded potato, hot stir-fried potato slices, beancurd stewed with cubed potatoes, potato cakes, potato flour noodles, and although there were red-cooked pork slices, and a chicken stew and stewed stripe, they all had potatoes in them too.

The whole paragraph of Example 5 is about the typical northern food. In such a remote rural area with material shortage and backward economy, the food is scarce, but the villagers can make different kinds of dishes with limited ingredients. Although the translator cannot translate the characteristics of food in the original form through free translation, the translator's description of ingredients and simple explanation of cooking techniques effectively stimulate the association of the target language readers, while retaining the local food characteristics.

With the Chinese food culture gradually going to the world, many typical dishes have been known by the English-speaking world, and the translation of China food culture will be easier.

(6) 院子里千万不能栽木桩，有木桩就预示了这户人家将不会再有女人。

You mustn't stick bare posts into the ground, because it meant that there would never be any more women in that family – men without wives were known as “bare branches”.

The translation of Example 6 not only translates the original meaning sentence by sentence, but also adds a dash at the end of the sentence to explain the specific meaning of "there will be no more women" in Chinese culture, that is, single men are called "bare branches (光棍)". In addition, the translator has also made supplementary explanations to the “内经 (Nei Jing) ” mentioned in the third chapter, which shows that it is a medical classic of the Yellow Emperor. For English readers who don't know China's traditional folk culture and customs, words such as "光棍 (guang gun) " and "内经 (Nei Jing) " are very strange cultural symbols. For those who don't understand between cultures, adding explanations to resolve the cultural information in the source text can express the meaning behind culture more completely.

4.3 Dialect Proverbs

As a verbal and vivid sentence, dialect proverbs are the word-of-mouth of the people, reflecting the regional characteristics and people's thoughts and feelings. There are many dialect proverbs with local characteristics in *Ji Hua*, which gather rural wisdom and are humorous and interesting. On the one hand, it fully shows the local characteristics, on the other hand, it also depicts rich characters in detail. For the translation of dialect proverbs, the translator adopts the strategy of "combining literal and liberal translation".

(7) 乌鸡乌在骨头上。

A black bantam's black right through to its bones.

(8) 一时之功在于力，一世之功在于德。

A one-off achievement is down to strength. A lifetime's achievement comes from virtue.

(9) 方嘴吃四方。

A square mouth will travel!

(10) 吃饭不知饥饱，睡觉不知颠倒。

He didn't know his ass from his elbow.

In example 7 and example 8, the translator conveys the original information through literal translation, and the target readers can easily perceive the meaning of these idioms and realize the value connotation to be highlighted in the context. The language form of the translation is also modeled after the original, and the way of antithesis is chosen to achieve formal equivalence. The translation is equivalent in vocabulary, semantics, syntax and style, accurately and effectively conveys the cultural connotation of the source language, the local characteristics, China culture and China wisdom.

In Example 9, "方嘴吃四方" is a folk proverb, which means that people can speak eloquently, be able to balance their resources in interpersonal relationships, be comfortable in

their work and life, and get development. The literal translation of this sentence by the translator filters out its deep meaning, and it is difficult for the target language readers to understand its cultural connotation.

In Example 10, the translator chooses an English proverb to translate the original proverb, which expressed the same vivid meaning as the original, while effectively retaining the vulgar feeling of the original. Generally speaking, the translator has tried her best to reproduce the cultural charm in local literature in the translation of dialects proverbs.

5. DISCUSSION

Translation thoughts determine translation methods, which affect translation style and quality. Translators' understanding of translation activities has always influenced their macro translation strategies.^[11]

From the above examples, we can see that Nicky Harman mainly upholds the translation strategy of literal translation, focusing on accurate understanding and skillful expression, and at the same time, for a few of translation, Nicky Harman uses liberal translation, making up for cultural incomprehension and differences by supplementing explanatory elements. It is exactly the same as her translation thought of "taking the original texts as the foundation and taking the readers as the guide".

First of all, Nicky Harman believes that "all translation needs to be balanced" and "the translator has the same responsibility to the original author and the target readers".^[12] Nicky Harman sometimes makes some changes for the readability and acceptability of the translation. Just like example 5,6 and 10, she skillfully reproduces the content and form of the original through some clever translation techniques, achieving the effect that the author wants to produce. Nicky Harman proposed that literary translation is a recreation loyal to the author and the original text, and that her recreation is not a random fabrication, but a recreation based on the original content to convey the original style and the author's intention.

In addition, while admitting that "translation must meet readers' expectations", Nicky Harman said, "I will not change the author's intention just because I consider the preferences of audiences in Britain and America"^[13]. The ultimate goal of the translator is to be faithful to the original text and be responsible to the target readers. Translators must be faithful to the original content and the ideas the author intends to convey, and must not arbitrarily merge chapters, change styles and story plots, etc.

Due to her translation thought of "taking the original texts as the foundation and taking the readers as the guide", Nicky Harman likes to have in-depth communication with friends, original authors, readers and editors. First of all, due to the lack of knowledge of China's cultural background, translation will inevitably encounter problems. Usually, Nicky Harman will check online, ask China friends or contact the author. Nicky Harman studied the original text very carefully. In order to accurately translate the original text and convey the author's ideas and the profound meaning in her works, she often discussed with the author and said, "I really like that all my writers are still alive! I almost always hope to ask them a few questions."^[14] Secondly, she likes to communicate deeply with readers and editors. In her view, editors

^[11] LI Jiayue LIU Chang. Bridging Cultural Gap through Literary Translation: A Study of Nicky Harman's Translation Thoughts and Behaviors [J]. East Journal of Translation. 2021, (03)

^[12] SCHWARTZ M.HARMAN N.A Conversation between Literary Translators Marian Schwartz and Nicky Harman [EB/OL]. (2017-09-12)[2020-08-16]. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/bookriot.com/e-conversation-between-literary-translators-marian-schwartz-and-nicky-harman/amp/>.

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^[14] Hua Meng. A Bridge for the Translation and Introduction of Contemporary China Literature: An Interview with Nicky

have keen intuition, and their opinions are targeted and constructive, and they can be better resolved through consultation when there are occasional disagreements.

To sum up, it can be seen that faithfulness is the first criterion guiding Nicky Harman's translation thoughts, and she also tries her best to find a balance between being loyal to the original text and being responsible to the target readers. This translation thought is also reflected in her translation strategy of giving priority to literal translation and appropriate liberal translation to bridge the cultural differences between the East and the West.

6. CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, it can be seen that under the translation thought of "taking the original texts as the foundation and taking the readers as the guide", Nicky Harman's translation strategy of focusing on literal translation and with appropriate liberal translation to supplement cultural information, has successfully bridged some cultural differences between the East and the West, displays the culture and connotation of China's local literature, and improves the readability of this novel in the English-speaking world.

Nowadays, cultural misreading and misunderstanding still exist, and the "going out" of Chinese literature still needs the joint efforts of several aspects. Translators like Nicky Harman have made great contributions to the cross-cultural communication of contemporary literature in China, which should be paid more attention by the academic circles. With the gradual deepening of cultural exchanges, cultural translation will have more means to operate and transform.

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