When Narratology Meets Literary Translation Teaching: An Interdisciplinary Case Study on the Translations of *Hongloumeng* in a Chinese EFL Classroom

Xinyao YU

School of Foreign Languages, Guangzhou Huashang College, China

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Corresponding Author: ***Xinyao YU,*** *School of Foreign Languages, Guangzhou Huashang College,*

Abstract: *Much has been made of recent efforts to a shift from the teacher-centered instruction to the students-centered pedagogy in undergraduate second language education, which has spurred a series of pedagogical advances such as project-based learning and interdisciplinary collaboration. However, little seems to happen in a Chinese EFL classroom to connect the cultivation of students' self-efficacy and learning agility with an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge acquisition. In attempt to propose a practical methodology for incorporating a narratological praxis and literary translation in a second language learning environment, this paper explores narrative inquiry within the percepts of Social Constructivism and serves to resolve thorny learning-related issues through hands-on experience. Grounded in the project-based case of analyzing the translations of Hongloumeng in translation course of Guangzhou Huashang college, the paper acts as a lens through which students' translation competence could be developed. With the implementation of narratology in literary translation teaching, it could also function as an effective tool for distilling deep meaning of the original text and sharpening problem awareness during the translation process. To some degree, it is conducive to fostering a productive dialogue between narratology and literary translation in tertiary education.*

Keywords: *Narratology; Literary Translation Teaching; interdisciplinary; Social Constructivism; Hongloumeng*

1. INTRODUCTION

As the information age has gradually given way to the comprehensive era in education (Cai, 2011), there is an increasing demand for learners to sustainably synthesize a great deal of available information and utilize interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to tackle complicated contextual issues (Nadelson and Seifert, 2017), which is viewed to be a vital cross-curricular competence of the contemporary society in the 21st century (Herde et al., 2016). Nevertheless, as formal curricula may be acknowledged as the explicit framing and a key token of ways in which cultural, ideological, economic and social relations are reproduced, most of them have traditionally been premised on the strict division of knowledge into discrete and disjointed subject areas. For instance, when scholars and teachers identify "literary translation course" at the undergraduate level, it is often described and examined in terms of distinctive norms governing the source and the target languages, texts, literatures and cultures. In China's EFL classroom at tertiary level, literary translation teaching is still being guided and dominated by relatively out-of-date guidelines and methodology, namely, vocabulary-centeredness, grammar-centeredness, and score-orientation, which could explain the ongoing failure to motivate students' self-efficacy, stimulate their creativity and integrative

competence (Blackley and Howell, 2015). In this case, characterized by fragmented courses and isolated subjects whose foci are relatively narrow (Kim and Park, 2012; Park, 2012), the traditional educational mode is far from adequately verifying the intended effectiveness in tertiary education, with almost no thorough consideration of other subjects and disciplines (Wang et al., 2018).

Frequently discouraged by the prevalent and rigid grammar-translation practices, which are largely promoted and evoked in word-to-word or sentence-to-sentence textual exercises, this paper sheds light upon the strategic significance of disciplinary integration and underlines that literary translation teaching entails an interdisciplinary approach oriented towards narratology and discourse analysis. Formerly, narratology, literature, translation and pedagogy were generally approached as isolated subjects. With regard to the interplay between narratology and literary translation, most scholars and critics have merely skimmed the surface of narratological issues relevant for translation studies, let alone the pedagogical uses of narratology in tertiary education (Bernaerts, Bleeker, & Wilde, 2014). Nevertheless, in practice, the college curriculum, such as "literary translation course", could contribute to the making of "patchwork" from diverse subjects and disciplines stitched together to achieve greater accomplishments in language acquisition and competence development (Thuneberg et al., 2017).

2. AN INTER DSCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK OF LITERARY TRANSLATION TEACHING

Reflecting on prior teaching experiences, the scholars and the teachers have come to realize that it is ripe time to rethink the discrepancies between prescribed and actual use of textbooks in EFL classrooms and remove the incongruity between the perceptions of learners' needs and teachers' pedagogical goals (McGrath, 2013; Zacharias, 2005). When analyzing a translated literary text in a traditional educational mode, the EFL learners are simply passive listeners or inefficient note-takers, which exposes the absence of learners' subjectivity and critical thinking. In addition, the common practices aimed at vocabulary and grammar acquisition are only tangentially touched upon in the textual level, let alone the holistic reading and the discourse analysis of translated texts. Thus, a scrupulous narratological analysis may harness various aspects of language use that were disjointed in previous studies and in-class experiences, which enables learners to become aware of narrator, narrative perspective, narration and other elements that they would not have noticed before.

Moreover, against the backdrop of limited efficacy, the inclusion of project-based learning also plays the vital role in shaping of an interdisciplinary framework of literary translation teaching. As an arguably instructional and effective tool for quality education, project-based learning allows EFL learners to engage in their own learning process more actively (Al-Maali1 and Siddiek, 2022). By participating in project-based activities, learners are capable of constructing their own knowledge and reflect upon their learning projects, which is conducive to enhancing motivation and self-efficacy.

As literary translation teaching is apt to take great advantage from the implementation of narratological methodologies and project-based learning activities, the authentic case for pedagogical practices of disciplinary integration in the following chapter are closely relevant to didactics directed at undergraduate students in China's EFL classroom.

3. A NARRATOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY IN LITERARY TRANSLATION TEACHING

Guided by the Social Constructivism theory, the interdisciplinary approach to teaching literary translation that is offered here is chiefly based on the authentic experience and hands-on practices. To assist readers to acquire a more ostensive, tangible view on the application of narratological approach in literary translation teaching in China's EFL classroom, the author chooses a case of

Chinese-English Literary Translation Course which she has taught in Guangzhou Huashang College as an example. Guided by the implementation of the "going-out" national policy and the promotion of China's international communication with foreign countries, the curriculum has carried out via intercultural and interlingual translation, especially going-out translation. Generally speaking, after teachers' redesigning of pedagogy plans, the whole teaching procedure could be divided into three main parts successively: the pre-project investigation about recognition of unreliable narrative in *Hongloumeng*; the mid-project analysis of different translations of unreliable narration of in *Hongloumeng*; the pro-project reflection on the collaborative performances in the project.

3.1. Pre-Project Investigation: Unreliable Narrative in *Honglongmeng*

During the pre-project phase, the teacher generally conducts a research through an online questionnaire about students' existing knowledge and understanding about *Hongloumeng* in her own literary translation classroom to redesign her own pedagogy. In this way, students are encouraged to connect their learning and knowledge acquisition with the empirical world beyond the classroom. As Brooks and Brooks (1993) explicates, it is only when learners actively associate their prior knowledge with new experience and new techniques in a real-world environment that meaningful learning will occur. And then, connecting students' empirical knowledge and personal experience on reading *Hongloumeng*, the teacher enhances her students' conceptual understanding and interests in new and undiscovered aspects of the translations of *Hongloumeng*. For example, the teacher states that hailed as an encyclopedic novel and the summit of Chinese classical literature, *Hongloumeng* has been an ever-lasting spotlight for scholars on its remarkable blend of realism and romance, as well as psychological motivation and fatalism. Confronted with the harsh literary inquisition in the feudal society, Cao Xueqin, who is well-versed in narrative art, breaks the limitation of traditional narrative and manipulates amply the unreliable narrative as a protective umbrella, implicitly unrolling the immense panorama of social history by portraying the vicissitudes of life in aristocratic household.

At the same time, the teacher advocates to take the values of "implied author" into account before considering the unreliability of narrative. Labeled as "the author's second self", the "implied author" is "a highly refined and selected version" and "more perceptive than any real man", pulling the strings behind the curtain and manoeuvring what could be conveyed to readers (Booth, 1983). According to the teacher's pedagogical endeavors, students came to realize that a canonized yardstick is provided by Booth to distinguish the reliability of a narrator: whether his speech and behavior is in accordance with or in contradiction to the real facts or values of the implied author. As Rimmon-Kenan further explicates, "[a] narrator's moral values are considered questionable if they do not tally with those of the implied author of the given novel" (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002).

With the implementation of narrative art, students were gradually aware of the magic of narratology in a literary text and rekindled to reflect on the effect of narrative and narrator in translation. Before probing into the translations of unreliable narrative in *Hongloumeng*, students were eager to clarify more terms and theories. Diverging from the "norms of implied author", unreliable narrative to some extent, is acknowledged as the stumbling block in exploring and conveying the implicit values, especially in the realm of translation (Booth, 1983). Translators, not only play the role of careful reader to "double-code" both the narrator's words and the viewpoint of "implied author", are also required to keep all the hidden meaning behind unreliable narration intact in the target text by "deviating or surpassing of the narrator's narration" (Shen, 1995). As students have dug into this field of interdisciplinary studies, it is worthwhile to guide them to apply the theories to hands-on practices and analyses, and penetrate into effective translation strategies through a comparative analysis of typical illustrations taken from *A Dream of Red Mansions* and *the Story of the Stone*.

3.2. Mid-Project Analysis: Unreliable Narration of Narrator in Translations of Honglongmeng

During the mid-project phase, the teacher initially presents a brief introduction to the background information. According to her instruction, one of the most typical example of unreliable narrative is the portrayal of Baoyu from the perspective of narrator. Involved in a sharp contrast between the stated viewpoint and the implicit values of "implied author", Baoyu's image is imparted a "double significance, of seemingly a useless son in the eyes of the feudal elders" and an admirable cynic rebel against the feudal system from the perspective of "implied author". However, unlike his son, Jia Zheng has been shaped into a reputed figure of capability and virtue on the surface, whose hypocrisy and pedantry actually become an object of denunciation of "implied author". In this regard, students are fully aware that it is really a tough task for the translators to cross the boundary of two different cultures and make the implicit meaning behind unreliable narration available to readers in target language.

The following sample analysis and relevant materials are derived from Hawkes' (1973) and Yang's (1978) translated versions of *Hongloumeng*.

e.g.(1)

ST: 无故寻仇觅恨，有时似傻如狂。纵然生得好皮囊，腹内原来草莽。[...]寄言纨绔与膏粱，莫效此儿形状！

TT: Yang: Absurdly he counts **care and melancholy**. And raves like any madman in his folly; For though endowed with the handsome looks is he, His heart is lawless and refractory. [...]Young fops and lordlings all, be warned by me; Don't imitate this youth's **perversity**!

Hawkes: Oft-times he **sought out what make him sad**; Sometimes an idiot seemed and sometimes mad. Though outwardly a handsome sausage-skin, He proved to have but **sorry meat** within. [...] Let gilded youths who every dainty sample Not imitate this **rascal's dire example**!

Involved in an utterance like a senior's reproach to his junior, students are given a picture of Baoyu when he comes on the stage for the first time, in which the implied author sings high praise for him in the seemingly sarcastic tone. Some students argue that faithfully retaining the manner and tone from the source text, Yang adopts "counts care" and "melancholy" to implicitly depict Baoyu as a man of sincerity and sentiment, unpolluted by the decadent and cold social system. Besides, the teacher points out that "perversity" was also wielded to unveil his unconstrained "true nature", which other "young fops and lordlings" cannot grasp in this novel. Nevertheless, it is inclined for students to form into a misunderstanding of Baoyu when they encounter with a quantity of derogatory utterances like "sorry meat within", "rascal" and "dire example" in Hawkes' version.   He neglects unfolding the precious traits of Baoyu and kneads and shapes him to a good-for-nothing playboy in disorder, who usually asks for trouble and makes no sense. Comparatively speaking, the teacher would invite some students to make a summary about their discussion results. Someone just addresses that Yang's translation is more worthy appreciating because he uncovers the hidden meaning between the lines and effectively provides some clues and enough room for readers in target language to interpret and grasp the concealed characteristics of Baoyu, which is appreciated by "implied author".

E.g.(2)

S.T.虽说贾政训子有方，治家有法⋯⋯。

TT: Yang: Although Chia Cheng **was known for** his fine method of schooling his sons and disciplining his household⋯⋯.

Hawkes: **It was not that** Jia Zheng was a slack disciplinarian, incapable of keeping his house in order······.

Based on students' free discussion, they have found that as the name of Jia Zheng ("Jia Zheng Jing" equals to hypocrisy) implicates, the "implied author" is critical of this character as well as his style of doing things. As the upholder of feudal ethics and patriarchal system, Jia imposes ideological restraints upon Baoyu and often beats him just for groundless one-side story, letting alone the chaotic state in his administration of the whole family. Ironically, such a person is praised as "disciplinarian" from the perspective of narrator, which can be regarded as another convincing example of unreliable narration. During the translation, Yang adds appropriately "was known for" to transfer the narrator's point of view to others' point of view and strengthens the subjective mood of narration. In this way, the evaluation about Jia Zheng is more like the transmission of others' argument and the affirmation of narrator in the statement is weakened, which allows the readers more room to interpret this unreliable narrative. Instead, Hawkes adopts the sentence pattern "It was that ···" to intensify the indubitable tone of narrator and to deepen the impression of readers about Jia Zheng's able leadership and efficient method in education, to some extent, making the readers easily to blur the unreliable narration with the true meaning of "implied author".

3.3. Mid-Project Analysis: Unreliable Narration Of Character In Translations Of *Honglongmeng*

After the first project, the teacher inspires all the students to elaborate other elements in translations of *Hongloumeng*. Compared to unreliable narration rendered by narrator, unreliable narrative from the perspective of character has not been given due attention by scholars at home and abroad. According to Shen Dan, character's narration could also give rise to the unreliability of narrative discourse, no matter whether it is first-person or third-person narration. Also noteworthy, this kind of unreliable narrative exerts great influence in character shaping (Shen, 1995). Unreliable narration of character in *Hongloumeng* is also conducive to presenting the personalities or miserable fate of characters by producing ironic rhetoric effect.

E.g.(3)

ST: 雨村见他回了头，便以为这女子心中有意于他，便狂喜不禁，自谓此女子必是个巨眼英豪，风尘中之知己。

TT: Yang: Yu-tsun seeing this was overjoyed, thinking that she must have taken a fancy to him. He decided that she had good judgment and was one of the few who could appreciate him in his obscurity.

Hawkes: Yu-cun saw her turn back and at once assuming that she had taken a fancy to him, was beside himself with delight. What a perceptive young woman she must be, he thought, to have seen the genius underneath the rags! A real friend in trouble!

The vividness of the example triggers students' interest and develops an interconnected understanding of the situation in the original text. Jia Yucun is thrilled with the illusion that he is favored by Jiaoxing, which contradicts with the fact and can be regarded as his unreliable narration. In Yang's version, "thinking" and "decided" are to disclose Yucun's mental movements, echoing the subjective words "便以为" and "自谓" in the source text. Likewise, Hawkes uses "assuming" and "thought" as a signal to readers in target language to make a clear distinction between the fact and illusions of character. Moreover, the second exclamatory sentence "a real friend in trouble" with appropriate

exaggeration, as the indirect free speech, guides the readers to enter into the psychological world of Jia Yucun directly and intensify the ironic effect by the sharp contrast between his self-assertion and ruthless reality. In this way, a blood-and-fresh character is vividly revealed to all the readers.

E.g.(4)

ST: 明仗着贾宅是慈善宽厚之家，……，二则贾府中从不作践下人，只有恩多威少的，……。

TT: Yang: [...]although they thought the Chia family might be generous enough [...] they also knew that the servants there were not ill-used but shown more kindness than severity.

Hawkes: [...] was the well-known fact — already mentioned by Aroma— that the Jia household did not ill-treat its servants and relied more on kindness than coercion in its dealings with them.

Indicative of blind evaluation of Xiren's mother and brother, the boldfaced phrases of "慈善宽厚" and "恩多威少" are not conformed to the reality when readers have an in-depth grasp of indifference and cruelty of Jia family. According to students' observation and comparison, the both versions attach great importance to underline the speaker who is uttering the unreliable narration about Jia family. The repeated adding of "[T]hey thought" and "they also knew that" in Yang's translation makes it stand out that the character's subjective point of view, and widens the gap between the personal impression and the objective fact. Similarly, the skillful employment of "well-known fact" and "mentioned by Aroma" in Hawkes' version, invokes the readers to judge the reliability of the narration of Xiren's household more effectively, as they are provoked to find that narration of characters is no more than unconvincing hearsay.

E.g.(5)

ST: 宝钗笑道："姨娘是慈善人，固然是这么想；据我看来，他并不是赌气投井，……岂有这样大气的理？纵然有这样大气，也不过是个糊涂人，也不为可惜。"

TT: Yang: "You feel that way, auntie, because you're so kind-hearted. But I can't believe she drowned herself in a tantrum. [...]stands to reason. How could she work herself into such a passion? If she did, that was very foolish. She doesn't deserve any pity."

Hawkes: 'It's only natural that a kind person like you should see it in that way,' said Bao-chai, 'but in my opinion Golden would never have drowned herself in anger. There's no earthly reason why she should have felt angry enough with you to drown herself. If she did, all I can say is that she was a stupid person and not worth feeling sorry for!'

Combined with the contextual analysis, students come to realize that Baochai's words are designed to comfort Lady Wang and gain her recognition and favor. Her evaluation about Lady Wang — "慈善人" is also completely divergent from mercilessness and blindness Lady Wang behaved. Whereas Jinchuan, who died uncleared of a false charge, is "不过是个糊涂人，也不为可惜" in Baochai's eyes. Both Yang's and Hawkes' translation— "very foolish"，"does not deserve any pity" as well as "a stupid person"，"not worth feelings sorry for"—correspond with the original manner in source text and pass on the original meaning in the source text. More noteworthy, by adding adverbs of degree like "only", "never", "no" and "all", Hawkes enhances definiteness of Baochao's comforting words and highlights her character as a cold-blooded and hypocritical young master, which triggers students to distinguish the unreliability of her subjective narration more easily.

E.g. (6)

ST:尤二姐见了这般，便认做他是个极好的人，……，竟把凤姐认为知己。TT: Yang: Second Sister, quite taken in by her protestations, thought it was only natural for disgruntled servants to run down the mistress, [...] treating Hsi-feng a trusted friend.

Hawkes: Er-jie was so lacking in guile herself that she had no difficulty in believing that Xi-feng was a good woman who had been slandered. [...] confident that in Xi-feng she had found a friend.

According to students' response and feedback, the teacher finds that this example is rather demanding to comprehend. Blinded by honey-sweet words, You Er-jie wholeheartedly counts on Xifeng as the trusted friend, where the foreshadowing of her tragic death is embedded. While the key appraisal "极好的人" is overlooked in Yang's version, the readers can still be impressed by the subjectivity of Erjie's narration, announced by the parenthesis "quite taken in by her protestations" as a supplement. Then, students have concluded that Hawkes makes full use of "so…that…" to point out that Erjie's "lacking in guile" is the main cause of "no difficulty in believing" Xifeng as "a good woman", well reproducing and strengthening the ironic effect in the source text, thereby it provides readers with more obvious clues to digest the unreliable narration of Erjie.

After the overall project-based activities, students are required to hand in a report or a feedback about the project, including the results of self-examination and peer evaluation. In doing so, teacher could have access to drawing upon students' own funds of knowledge and learning enthusiasm into the classroom discourse, and then to forming into a learning community.

4. CONCLUSION

After elaborating the interdisciplinary approach to a comparative analysis of unreliable narrative in the most acclaimed two versions of *Hongloumeng*, this paper throws light upon the effective strategies to strengthen learning in individual subjects in an effort to rekindle new and profound understandings which transcend any isolated discipline. Targeted at facilitating EFL learners' translation competence and language proficiency, this paper also makes narratology notably versatile for teaching purposes in China's tertiary education. Within an integrated interdisciplinary framework utilizing project-based approach to tertiary education, the learners' academic motivation, self-efficacy, and acquisition of encyclopedic knowledge have been gradually fostered and enhanced after the course. By explicating diverse translation strategies, students come to realize that it is apparent to keep faithful to the source text ranks in the first place. As the foundation of translation, greater importance should be attached to scrutinize the implicit values of the "implied author" and then the proper employment of words, phrases and sentence patterns, which coincides with the original manner and tone of the source text. With the skillful manipulation of effective translation strategies, unreliable narrative, more than an obstacle for target readers in comprehension, abridges the gap between diversified cultures and further enhances the spreading of Chinese literature works across the world. In a nutshell, it is further proposed that teachers focus more on interdisciplinary approaches to teaching that are comprehensible and appropriate to students, which highlights that the synergy between the various disciplines has the huge potential to unlock how interdisciplinary experiences provide affordances and magic for all learners.

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