

Study on the English Translation of Chinese Classics *Meditative Notes in Solitude* from the Perspective of Cultural Schemata Theory

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Abstract: The *Meditative Notes in Solitude*, known as one of the “Three Canons of Personal Cultivation”, is a representative classic of Chinese traditional culture as well as a precious philosophy. Based on the cultural scheme theory, this paper selects Zhou Wenbiao’s English translation of the *Meditative Notes in Solitude* as the research text. Then, according to Nida’s division of cultural types, the examples are categorized into ecological, material, social and religious cultural schemata. Moreover, the bar charts are used to show the quantitative weights of each schemata examples. Finally, the translation methods adopted by translators under the three aspects of cultural schemata theory are analyzed and concluded with a view to enhancing the international communication impact of English translation of Chinese classics.

Keywords: Cultural Schemata Theory, English Translation of Chinese Classics, *Meditative Notes in Solitude*.

1. Introduction

English translation of Chinese classics is an important carrier for spreading Chinese culture to the world, contributing new values to the prosperity of international culture, and helping China participate in the dialogue of world civilization equally and effectively (Xu Jun, 2019; Tao Youlan, 2022). At present, we cannot passively wait for western sinologists to translate Chinese classics according to their own will. Conversely, with a high degree of cultural self-consciousness and cultural self-confidence, Chinese translators should bear the brunt, as well as take the initiative to undertake the responsibility of translating and disseminating Chinese classics to foreign countries. As Luo xuanmin and Yang Wendi(2012) considered, cultural awareness should be based on the in-depth comparison and understanding of the differences between Chinese and Western cultural values, then carefully selecting Chinese classics texts, translating and interpreting them in a reasonable way that is adapted to the development of the times and the needs of the times, so as to promote the world’s more all-rounded understanding of China. As a key branch of schemata theory, cultural schemata theory is focused on culture. The cultural schemata correspondence, difference and deficiency mainly involved are all based on the cultural framework, which can effectively provide a brand new perspective for the English translation of Chinese classics to enhance the sense of cultural identity.

Guided by the cultural schemata theory, this paper intends to analyze the translation examples of cultural schemata with the English version of *Meditative Notes in Solitude* written by Chen Jiru and translated by Zhou Wenbiao, and explores the translation methods adopted by translators under the three aspects of cultural schemata theory. It is hoped to provide a reference for completing the “last mile” of international dissemination of Chinese classics.

2. Cultural Schemata Theory

Schemata theory first appeared in the 1930s in the *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*, the British psychological researcher Bartlett’s book. As a new branch of schemata theory, Nishida (1999) argued that “cultural schemata” is a generalized set of knowledge that people store in their memories from past cultural experiences. Liu Mingdong (2003) also held a similar view that cultural schemata is the structure of knowledge organization about culture in the human brain. And it is a mode of knowledge organization about culture that already exists in the human brain through previous experiences.

Cultural schemata is rooted in cultural experiences. There are obvious similarities and differences among the cultural schemata shared by people. Liu Mingdong (2003) illustrates the translatability of cultural schemata in three aspects according to the translation practice, namely A-A correspondence, A-B correspondence and A-Zero correspondence. The “A-A correspondence” is usually reflected in the similarity of cultural schemata, which can be interpreted as “cultural schemata correspondence”. It means that there are existing cultural schemata in the target language that are roughly the same as those in the source language. The “A-B correspondence” occurs in different cultural backgrounds. Although people create the same cultural schemata, there are often differences in the way they are expressed in another language, which can be understood as “cultural schemata differences”. The “A-Zero correspondence” means that the cultural schemata expressed in one language is temporarily vacant in another language, which can be comprehended as “cultural schemata deficiency”. Therefore, in the process of translating different cultural schemata, according to the degree of cultural similarity, the three aspects of cultural schemata translatability proposed by Liu Mingdong are categorized as: cultural schemata correspondence, cultural schemata difference, and cultural schemata deficiency.

Every period of Chinese history has creative literary forms

and representative classics that have risen to the top of their respective fields and have become the cultural markers of an era. The Ming and Qing dynasties were no exception. For more than five centuries, the novel was obviously a major cultural feature of this period. The next was the compilation of aphoristic sketches that carried the doctrines and thoughts of the ancestors, such as the *Meditative Notes in Solitude*, which was brimming with human wisdom and talent. By translating these aphoristic sketches, we can present to the world the spiritual crystallization of the words in the Chinese classics, and show the most vital part of Chinese civilization.

Susan (2001) pointed out that translation is not only a communication between languages, but also a communication activity within or between cultures. She figured out that apart from language, culture should be regarded as the unit of translation to realize cultural integration or cultural transplantation, so the target text and the source text can achieve the effect of functional equivalence in terms of culture. From this perspective, it can be seen that the analysis of cultural schemata is necessary for translation activities to be carried out properly. Therefore, this paper intends to apply the cultural schemata theory to analyze the English translation of Chinese classics, and summarizes the translation methods chosen by the translator in the process of decoding the source text and re-encoding the translation.

3. Quantitative Statistics of Cultural Schemata in the *Meditative Notes in Solitude*

The cultural imagery of Chinese classics often contains

humanistic spirit, aesthetic origin, philosophical thoughts and poetic connotations, from which translatology with contemporary characteristics and spiritual heights can be extracted. In the *Linguistics and Ethology in Translation Problems*, Nida (1945) proposed that culture can be divided into ecological culture, material culture, social culture, and religious culture. In this part, by combining the classification of culture by Nida and the characteristics of cultural schemata, the types of cultural schemata examples appearing in the *Meditative Notes in Solitude* are mainly divided into four categories, i.e., ecological cultural schemata, material cultural schemata, social cultural schemata, and religious cultural schemata. And the bar charts are used to show the quantitative statistics of each schemata example.

3.1. Quantitative Statistics of Ecological Cultural Schemata

The ecological cultural schemata shows different characteristics depending on the region where the ethnic groups live, briefly focusing on the flora and fauna, climate, geography, etc.

A total of 52 examples of ecological cultural schemata have been collected in the *Meditative Notes in Solitude*, including natural phenomena, animals and plants, and geographical environment. Among them, there are 13 examples of natural phenomena, 26 examples of animals and plants, and 13 examples of geographical environment. In order to visually present the relevant statistics, the percentage account of each example of ecological cultural schemata is shown in Figure 1.

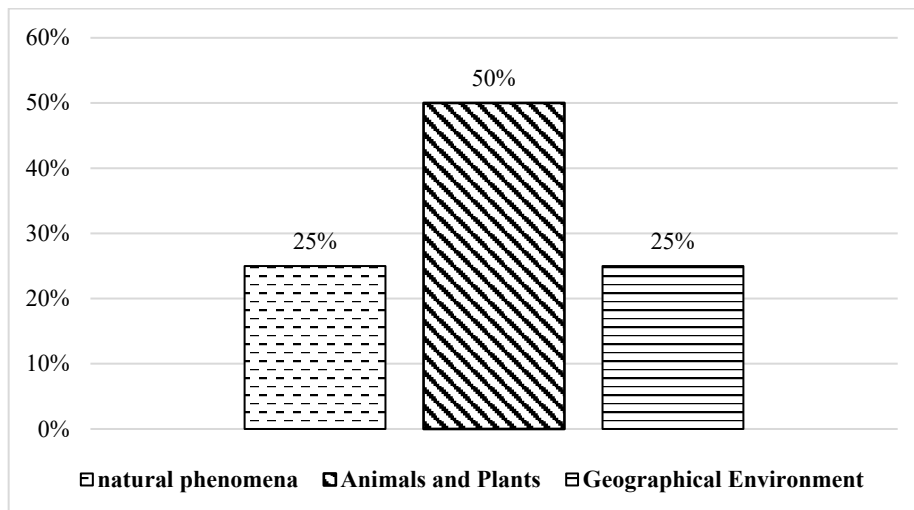


Figure 1. The Proportion of Each Example of Ecological Cultural Schemata

There are many ecological cultural schemata in the *Meditative Notes in Solitude*, some of which are related to plants and animals that correspond to the ecological cultural schemata in the western cognitive system, such as “樊笼鸡鹜(a caged chicken or a fenced duck)”, “苍蝇附骥(flies attached to the tail of a horse)”, “鸟栖高枝(birds perch on high branches)”, etc. Moreover, compared with the Chinese readers, western readers perceive the river and mountain differently. In Chinese classics, some examples not only refer to the physical geographical environment, but are also endowed with unique connotations, such as “湘岸(River Xiang—Also known as Xiang River, Xiangjiang or Xiangjiang River, a tributary of the Yangtze

River, the longest river in Hunan Province. It was in this way the two princesses expressed their loyal and constant love to the king)”; “巫山(Mount Wu—A mountain sitting along the two banks of the Yangtze River, often literally used as a metaphor to symbolize the love between man and woman)”. Other ecological cultural schematas are unique to Chinese culture in both name and imagery that is vacant in the West, such as “蜉蝣(planktons)” and “蚋(the rancid matters)”, etc.. These examples are difficult for the target readers to recognize and understand. Therefore, it's particularly important for translators to choose proper translation methods to deal with these ecological cultural schematas.

3.2. Quantitative Statistics of Material Cultural Schemata

Material cultural schemata is associated with the material products made in the production and life of different ethnic regions, mainly including clothing, food, housing, transportation and so on.

A total of 48 examples of material cultural schemata have been collected in the English translation of the *Meditative*

Notes in Solitude, which are mainly categorized into food, clothing, building, wares, currency and jade, paintings, books and musical instruments. Among them, there are 8 examples of food, 4 examples of clothing, 13 examples of building, 8 examples of wares, 7 examples of currency and jade, and 8 examples of books, painting and musical instruments. The percentage account of each example of material cultural schemata is shown in Figure 2.

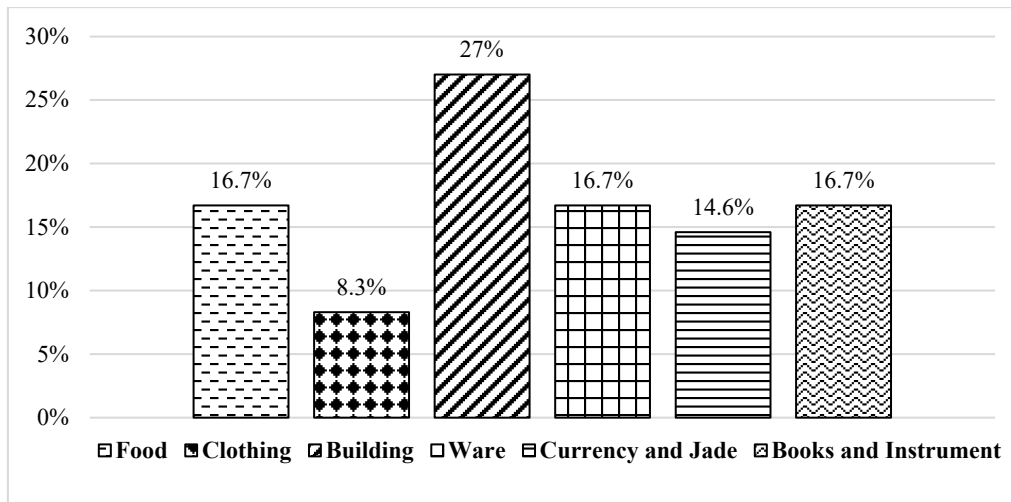


Figure 2. The Proportion of Each Example of Material Cultural Schemata

Examples of material cultural schemata that appears in texts can be found in both Chinese and Western cultural contexts, such as “书橱(bookcase)”, “古玩(antiques)”, “玉石(jade)”, and so on. What’s more, there are often a large number of products in special background in classic works, which makes it difficult for target readers to understand. When encountering with these words, translators should not only consider the feelings of the target readers, but also deliberate the contextual meaning of these words in the source text, for example, “铜臭” refers to the stink of copper coin; “恶酒” refers to the inferior alcohol; and “芒鞋” refers to the straw sandals. There are differences in the meaning of “市朝” between China and the west. In ancient China, it mainly refers to the imperial court. While in Western ancient times, it refers to the Privy Council, the administrative body. The words “车” and “琴” are also different from “car” and “piano” of the West. In the Chinese classics, they are more commonly regarded as “cart(马车)” and “lute(琵琶)” that is absent of the

West in the traditional sense. Therefore, this shows that the translation of material culture schemata has a profound impact on the acceptability of English translations in Chinese classics.

3.3. Quantitative Statistics of Social Cultural Schemata

Social cultural schemata is related to the culture of various aspects of society formed by different ethnic groups, including social customs, values, social rules, lifestyles, historical backgrounds, ideologies, moral principles and so on.

A total of 94 examples of social cultural schemata are collected in the *Meditative Notes in Solitude*, which are mainly divided into historical figure, social identity, and social manner. Among them, there are 9 examples of historical figure; 71 examples of social identity; and 14 examples of social manner. The percentage account of each example of social cultural schemata is shown in Figure 3.

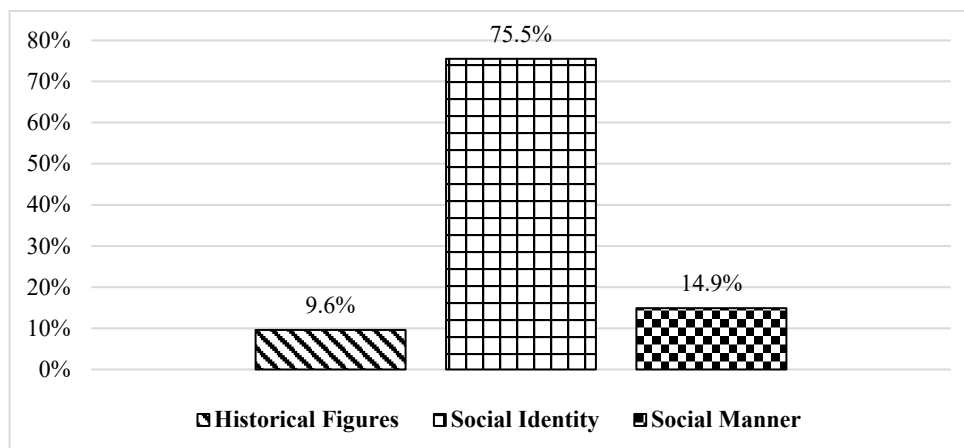


Figure 3. The Proportion of Each Example of Social Cultural Schemata

To accurately interpret the social culture contained in the Chinese classics and achieve cultural confidence, the prerequisite is to achieve “cultural self-consistency”, that is, to have a proper understanding of one’s own culture and a full awareness of it (Zhong Shu’eng, 2020). In the English translation of the *Meditative Notes in Solitude*, words such as “伴侣(companion)” and “乞丐(beggar)” are similar to the cognitive understanding of people in both Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds. In addition, different societies in the development process formed a variety of social classes, title system, ideology, etc.. There are differences among the same kind of things in different social and cultural environments, such as “公卿(duke)”, “游侠(chivalry)”, “讨贼(invader)” and so on. In addition, praised as an excellent Chinese classics with rich traditional Chinese cultural connotations, words such as “费长房(Master Fei)”, “客衫黄(a fickle fellow)” etc., are very culturally indicative, and these words are cultural deficiency in the West. To improve readability of the target language and develop a sense

of cultural identity, translators should consider social cultural schemata carefully when translating.

3.4. Quantitative Statistics of Religious Cultural Schemata

Religious cultural schemata is related with a core of beliefs, reflecting the religious characteristics of a particular language group. Buddhism and Taoism were the major religions of ancient China. Based on these two religions, Chinese people created special schemata that were closely related to their religious culture.

A total of 55 examples of religious cultural schemata have been collected in the *Meditative Notes in Solitude*, which includes Taoist terms, Buddhist terms, and ghosts and gods. In the categorization of religious cultural schemata, there are 5 Taoist terms, 34 Buddhist terms, and 16 examples of supernatural beings. The percentage account of each example of religious cultural schemata is shown in Figure 4.

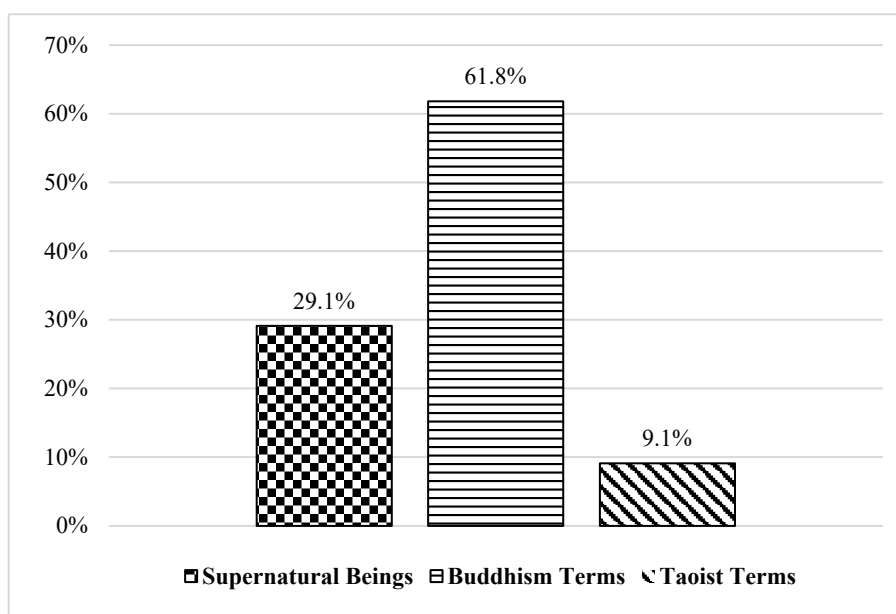


Figure 4. The Proportion of Each Example of Religious Cultural Schemata

People have similar understandings of basic terminology of religions, such as “佛(Buddha)”, “上帝(god)” and so on. However, due to different religious beliefs and dogmas, they have different understandings of the religious content. Examples of different religious cultural schematas are found in the Chinese classics, such as “虐崇(a cruel demon)”, “顽仙(a stubborn immortal)”, and so on. Besides, Taoism in China is a native religion that is unfamiliar and vacant to the West, such as, “空趣(the realm of phantoms)” and “道人之魔障(a barrier in the heart set by a monster)”. Translators need to establish a new cultural schemata to explain and avoid cultural homogeneity caused by simple cultural substitution. Therefore, interpreting religious cultural schemata accurately is an important criterion to test the translator’s ability.

To summarize, there are 52 examples of ecological cultural schemata, 48 examples of material cultural schemata, 94 examples of social cultural schemata, and 55 examples of religious cultural schemata in this classic. From this point of

view, social culture schemata and religious culture schemata account for the majority, while material culture schemata and religious culture schemata account for the second. It reflects that the original author mainly expounds philosophical thoughts through religious beliefs and physical social phenomena, and supplement them with corresponding ecology and material culture.

4. Analysis on the English Translation of the Cultural Schemata Examples in the *Meditative Notes in Solitude* under the Cultural Schemata Theory

As it is mentioned above, schema is considered as the past cognitive knowledge in people’s mind. Cultural schema theory holds that people may correlate the new information they receive with their schemata (relevant knowledge and prior experience) so as to evoke understanding of the imported information.

The *Meditative Notes in Solitude* contains a wealth of

traditional Chinese culture, involving reflections on the philosophy of daily life, such as survival and death, the conduct of people, and their own moral cultivation. It is full of interpretations of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. After categorizing these examples, it can be seen that the cultural schemata inside this classic book are the accumulation of cultural connotation. It is regarded as the most culturally distinctive part of translation activities.

Therefore, this part will analyze and conclude the translation methods mainly selected by translators in coping with cultural schemata correspondence, difference and deficiency in this Chinese classic.

4.1. Analysis on English Translation of Cultural Schemata Correspondence

The similarity of body structure, behavior pattern and emotional needs among people leads to similar cultural schemata, regarded as cultural schemata correspondence. Cultural schemata correspondence can apply the existing cultural schemata in the target language to translate the cultural schemata of the source language (Liu Mingdong, 2003). Each example of cultural schemata correspondence will be analyzed as follows.

4.1.1. Correspondence of Ecological Cultural Schemata

The ecological cultural schemata in Chinese classics includes animals, plants and natural environment.

Example 1:

Source

text:

蝶憩香风，尚多芳梦；鸟沾红雨，不任娇啼。

Target text: Bathed in the fragrant wind, even an emotional butterfly will have sweet images in succession. Petals fallen onto the plume of a delicate bird make the twitter sound more unbearable.

In example 1, both Chinese and Western literature tend to use familiar animal cultural schemata to express the author's thoughts and feelings. As it shows the commonality of cultural schemata among both countries, it's easy to remind the target readers of actual thing when reading. “蝶” and “鸟” in the source text thoroughly illustrates the author's sentiment. When translating these words, the translator adopts a combination of amplification translation and literal translation, translating them as “emotional butterfly” and “delicate bird” respectively. Two adjectives, “emotional” and “delicate” is added to describe the moods and emotion that these two animals carry. It is helpful for the target readers to comprehend the sentiment embodied in the “蝶” and “鸟” on the basis of the original cultural schemata.

Example 2:

Source

text:

花繁柳密处拨得开，才是手段；风狂雨急时立得定，方见脚跟。

Target text: A good performance can only be affirmed when one moves freely through the density of flowers and willows. A steadfast foothold can only be recognized when one stands firmly in the raging wind and rain.

In example 2, it depicts a variety of plants, which is a common literary expression in the Chinese classics that attaches author's love for natural objects. In poems and other literary works, it is often founded that empathizing with the natural environment endows the text with the temperament and interest. This Chinese classic is no exception. In this example, the experience accumulation of “拨得开才是手段”

is put forward through “花繁柳密”, while the natural law of “立得定方见脚跟” is revealed through “风狂雨急”. The translator chooses the literal translation to faithfully translate “花繁柳密” and “风狂雨急” as “the density of flowers and willows” and “the raging wind and rain” individually. This translation not only evokes the original schemata of the target readers, but also establishes the natural philosophy about the plants in the Chinese classics.

4.1.2. Correspondence of Material Cultural Schemata

Given that the basic needs of individuals are broadly similar, people produce many similar material goods.

Example 3:

Source

text:

古之人，如陈玉石于市肆，瑕瑜不掩；今之人，如货古玩于时贾，真伪难知。

Target text: The ancient people were like jades in the fair, with their defects and merits not concealed; while the modern people are like the antiques peddled to antique stores, about which, no one can tell the real from the false.

In example 3, “玉石” and “古玩” are both material goods associated with Chinese and Western cultural schemata. “玉石” refers to a green hard stone that is used in making jewellery and decorative ornament. “古玩” is an old object that is valuable because of its beauty or rarity, such as a piece of china or furniture. The translator adopts the literal translation to translate them as “jade” and “antique” respectively, which is in accordance with the cultural schemata familiar by the target readers.

4.1.3. Correspondence of Social Cultural Schemata

There is cultural integration in the society among different countries. It is a prerequisite for cultural exchanges and communication. People tend to have a common cognitive understanding of a specific social phenomenon, thus forming a corresponding cultural schemata in the brain.

Example 4:

Source

text:

士君子尽心利济，使海内少他不得，则天亦自然少他不得，即此便是立命。

Target text: The accomplished gentleman helps others wholeheartedly, and therefore becomes the one the world needs and the heaven needs as well. This is how a gentleman establishes his worth and his estate.

Example 5:

Source text: 圣贤不白之衷，托之日月。

Target text: All aspirations unable to be expressed by the sages can be entrusted to the sun and moon to declare.

In example 4, “士君子” in the source text refers to a knowledgeable man with high moral character. In Western culture, “gentleman” means a man who is polite and well-educated. He who has excellent manners and always behaves elegantly. In example 5, “圣贤” refers to those with outstanding moral talent and wisdom, to which Confucius and Laozi belong. Similarly, “sage” is used to describe wise men in the West, such as Socrates and Plato. The translator adopts the literal translation to translate them as “gentleman” and “sage” separately. This translation is consistent with the cultural schemata of the source language.

4.1.4. Correspondence of Religious Cultural Schemata

China is a multi-religious country. Since ancient times, many religions have been rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese

culture. They not only retain their unique religious and cultural characteristics, but also constantly collide, exchange and learn from Western culture. Eventually, Chinese religious culture cultivates some similar religious schemata with the West.

Example 6:

Source text: 佛只是个了仙，也是个了圣。

Target text: Buddha is but an immortal free of mundane concerns, and also a saint that has extricated himself from the way of the world.

Example 7:

Source text: 斜阳树下，闲随老衲清潭。

Target text: How leisurely the moment is when the old monk and I are sitting under a tree with a slanting sun in the west, chatting as we will!

As can be seen from examples 6 and 7, most of the cultural schemata correspondence between Chinese and Western religious cultures are the titles of religious figures. The translator adopts the literal translation, translating “佛” as “Buddha” and “老衲” as “old monk”. On the premise of not running counter to the Western Christian religious beliefs, the translator retains the denotative meaning of the source language in the translation to achieve the cultural schemata correspondence between the translator and the reader.

4.2. Analysis on English Translation of Cultural Schemata Difference

Cultural schemata differences are reflected in the fact that the cultural connotations of cultural schemata expressed in the source language are inconsistent with or sometimes even opposite to those expressed in the target language. Cultural schemata difference can apply the cultural schemata of the target language, which is close to that of the source language, and convey the cultural information clearly carried by the source language schemata (Liu Mingdong, 2003). Each examples of cultural schemata differences will be analyzed as follows.

4.2.1. Difference of Ecological Cultural Schemata

Due to geographic differences, people’s perceptions of the ecological environment can change, which results in differences in the meaning of references when people describe the same thing.

Example 8:

Source text: 欲见圣人气象，须于自己胸中洁净时观之。

Target text: One who intends to see the dignified bearing of a sage can do so only when one has made his own heart pure and clear.

In example 8, “气象” means climate and weather in both Chinese and Western cultures. However, it has another meaning in Chinese classics. In the *Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, “气象” not only refers to climate, but also refers to bearing, manner, and so on. In this example, it mainly refers to the “elegant demeanour” of the sage. The translator translates “气象” as “dignified bearing”. It reflects that the translator pays more attention to the difference between Chinese and Western cultures, and makes free translation according to the context of the source text. This translation ensures the accurate expression of the original meaning and draws closer to the cultural schemata of the target readers.

4.2.2. Difference of Material Cultural Schemata

This Chinese classic includes many material products during a particular period context, all of which are uniquely designed to meet the needs of people’s daily production and life.

Example 9:

Source text: 听静夜之钟声，唤醒梦中之梦。

Target text: Listen to the sound of a temple bell on a still midnight, and so one will wake up from a fancy and stay sober.

In China, “钟” refers not only to a wine vessel, but also to a percussion instrument in ancient times, or a ceremonial instrument struck by the noble families, monks and temples with the purpose of telling the time and gathering the people. According to the context of the source text, the “钟” here refers to the bronze instrument used in temples to tell the time or to gather the congregation. Notably, from bell towers to household clocks are only timekeeping instruments in the West. The translator adopts a combination of literal translation and amplification translation to translate “钟” as “the temple bell”. This translation reveals the function of “the bell” and also points out the place where it is used in the source language. Most importantly, it prevents the target readers from ignoring the culture of the source language by bringing their own cultural schemata into it when reading this classic.

4.2.3. Difference of Social Cultural Schemata

Although people live in a specific social culture for a long time, they form a fixed social cultural schemata in their minds with the accumulation of relevant experience and knowledge. Therefore, there are differences of social cultural schemata between China and the West.

Example 10:

Source text: 柔玉温香，观想可成白骨。

Target text: Women, even with jade-like skin and fragrant flesh, will become white bones the minute we are to admire.

In example 10, “柔玉温香” can literally mean white jade and flowers with delicate fragrance. In fact, “柔玉温香” simply refers to “woman” of exquisite beauty, looking like a slender flower of jade. It is worth noting that the translator has adopted variational translation in this case. To be specific, variational translation is a non-complete translation. It is a translation activity in which the translator adopts alternative translation methods such as adding, deleting, editing, repeating, condensing, merging, changing, imitating and so on to include the relevant contents of the original work according to the special needs of the specific readers under the specific conditions (Huang Zhonglian, 2011). Variational translation has a different effect from full translation in that it expresses the information in a faster, more economical and targeted way. Obviously, the translator, noting the differences between Chinese and Western societies and cultures, did not strictly translate word for word in the target language. He translated “柔玉温香” into “woman”. By doing so, the author makes full use of concise and clear language to express this cultural schemata difference.

4.2.4. Difference of Religious Cultural Schemata

Buddhism and Taoism are the most common religions in people’s daily life and have a great influence on the development of Chinese culture. In Western culture, the religion that people believe in is mainly based on Christianity.

Therefore, there is a difference between China and the West in terms of religious cultural schemata.

Example 11:

Source text: 魑魅满前，笑著阮家无鬼论。

Target text: When everywhere are seen the ones who appear as sinister as the ghosts, I can't help pouring ridicule on Ruan Zan's viewpoint of non-existence of ghosts.

There is a difference between Chinese and Western references to “鬼”. “魑魅” and “鬼” have similar meanings, mostly referring to the existence of human beings in the form of souls after death. In ancient China, it was believed that the soul still existed after death, and that the identity of the ancestors would continue to exist in the underground world and influence secular life. However, “鬼” does not represent evil in this context. In Western culture, “鬼” refers to “demon”, which is related to Christianity. Symbolizing the evil, “demon” is an angel humiliated by Satan, who exists in the form of a physical entity with a hideous face. Therefore, the translator uniformly applies the variational translation to translate “鬼” and “魑魅” into “ghost” instead of “demons” that carries the wicked meaning in the West. In this case, while drawing closer to the schemata of the target reader in cognition, the translator distinguishes the differences of religious cultural schemata between China and the West.

4.3. Analysis on English Translation of Cultural Schemata Deficiency

Each country has its own social customs, political systems and historical traditions. In this case, the target readers will encounter with cultural schemata deficiency. They lack the corresponding cultural background to recognize some cultural schemata in Chinese classics. Under such circumstances, it is required to reconstruct a new cultural schemata for the target readers to translate the cultural information in the source language (Liu Mingdong, 2013). Each example of cultural schemata deficiency will be analyzed as follows.

4.3.1. Deficiency of Ecological Cultural Schemata

The ecological culture of each ethnic region has diverse perceptions due to the fact that they live in different natural environments. As one of the Chinese classics, the *Meditative Notes in Solitude* has a unique ecological referent that belongs to the cultural context of the specific time.

Example 12:

Source text: 机息忘怀磐石上，古今尽属蜉蝣。

Target text: Banish the plots and schemes from the heart by standing on a big rock, and you will come to realize that all the living creatures are but planktons.

In example 12, “蜉蝣” refers to a short-lived insect. The larvae of “蜉蝣” live in freshwater lakes or streams. When it becomes adults, it does not feed and has a shortest life span within one day, with most surviving for only a few hours and a few for up to seven days. Hence, there is a saying that it borns in the morning and dies at night —the brevity of life. The concept of “蜉蝣” is absent in Western culture. According to the living environment of “蜉蝣”, the translator applies free translation to translate it as “plankton”. The meaning of “plankton” is a mass of tiny animals that live in the water. This translation vividly explains the biological characteristics of the metaphor, but also effectively matches

“蜉蝣” with the cultural schemata of the target readers. Both the acceptability of the target readers and the semantic retention of the source text are taken into account by the translator, thus achieving the role of cultural equivalence.

4.3.2. Deficiency of Material Cultural Schemata

In ancient Chinese, the material goods produced to satisfy people's needs often carried specific cultural connotations and were characterized by the times. The same is true of the Western culture.

Example 13:

Source text: 至音不合众听，故伯牙绝弦。

Target text: Highbrow music played to its extreme is difficult for all to appreciate, so Bo Ya smashed his qin (A traditional Chinese musical instrument with seven or five strings, rather like the zither).

In example 13, “伯牙绝弦”, is also known as “伯牙鼓琴”. It's a story about a friend keenly appreciative of one's talents. In the process of cultural schemata translation, both the acceptability of target readers and the mission of cultural dissemination should be taken into account. Translators can follow the principle of cultural communication and adopt the zero translation to reproduce the cultural schemata of source language. It is recommended to translate the words in the source language without using the existing words in the target language (Liu Mingdong, 2014). The annotation in the English translation of the Chinese classics is a bridge between the author, the translator and the reader. It is the most common means of translation compensation (Zhang Lu, 2020). The translator obviously pays attention to the unique cultural significance of “弦”. Then, he adopts the transliteration method of zero translation, where the use of pinyin “qin” in the target language is conducive to maintain the original cultural schemata, thus disseminating the traditional Chinese musical instrument. Finally, in order to enable the target readers to understand the basic cultural information conveyed by this cultural schemata, the translator also adopts the compensatory method of annotation in parentheses to provide the target language readers with background information for easy comprehension.

4.3.3. Deficiency of Social Cultural Schemata

In the long course of historical development, each country has formed its own unique social cultural schemata under the influence of its political system and social traditions.

Example 14:

Source text: 深雪堂中，戏与骚人白战。

Target text: How joyful the occasion is when the poet and I stay indoors at a heavy-snowy day, chanting playfully the poems with a moody tune!

In example 14, “骚人” does not literally refer to a person who is a womanizer and a debauchee. In Chinese culture, “骚人” generally refers to literati, represented by poets. This term was originally derived from Qu Yuan's Li Sao. Moreover, “白战” has a special meaning, which is not literally referring to “white war”, but means to “prohibit the use of certain commonly used words when engaging in poetic duets”. Therefore, the translator choose the free translation to translate these two words as “the poet” and “chanting playfully the poems with a moody tune” respectively. This translation faithfully conveys the schemata connotations that are absent in Western culture. At the same time, it provides

great help for readers to accumulate knowledge about new cultural schemata in Chinese classics.

4.3.4. Deficiency of Religious Cultural Schemata

The two distinct religious cultures in China and the West are not only limited to religion itself, but also to the religious spirit embedded in them.

Example 15:

Source text: 业净六根成慧眼，身无一物到茅庵。

Target text: Remove the six root sources of sins (a Buddhist term referring to eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind) completely, and one will naturally have exceptional insight. Banish the material desires, and one will know how to refine oneself even in a thatched hut.

In example 15, Buddhism, as a religious system that emphasizes compassion, wisdom and liberation, fits in with traditional Chinese thought. The introduction of Buddhism brought new philosophical concepts to the Chinese classics and had a profound impact on Chinese society. “净六根” is a Buddhist term, also known as “六根清静”, which refers to the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. Buddhists believe that these “六根” is the root of sin. “净六根” is regarded as a state of inner purity aimed at eliminating one’s worries and attachments, thus freeing one from suffering. Therefore, according to its cultural attribute, the translator applies the combination of free translation and annotation to translate it into “the six root sources of sins (a Buddhist term referring to eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind)”. This translation integrally preserves the Buddhist cultural meaning of “净六根”, and presents its metaphorical significance to the reader.

5. Conclusion

Cultural schemata theory plays a positive guiding roles in the study of stratification in English translation of Chinese classics. The choice for English translation methods of the *Meditative Notes in Solitude* is flexible and varied regarding to the examples of ecological, material, social and religious cultural schemata reflecting from cultural schemata correspondence, cultural schemata difference and cultural schemata deficiency.

In terms of cultural schemata correspondence, the translator fully arouses and activates the original cultural schemata of the target readers. Most of the examples are mainly handled by literal translation and supplemented by amplification. Through the literal translation, the cultural and lexical information in the source text is presented to the target readers in a complete way, and supplemented by amplification translation to add explanatory information to further minimize the subtle differences in the schemata correspondence in the target language.

In terms of cultural schemata difference, the translator adjusts the original cultural schemata, so that the target readers can correctly understand the viewpoints and cultures intended to be conveyed in the source text. The choice of translation method changes according to the specific cultural context of the source text. For the schemata with large cultural differences and strong impact on the source context, a compromise approach is mostly adopted, that is, a combination of free translation and amplification translation. For schemata with subtle cultural differences and little impact on the source context, the variational translation is adopted to

effectively convey the original cultural context, which is conducive to the readers to generate a sense of cultural identity.

In the terms of cultural schemata deficiency, the translator helps the readers to reconstruct a new schemata to enrich the culture of the target readers. In order to preserve the cultural features in the source text, free translation plus annotation and transliteration plus annotation are mainly adopted to get closer to the source language. All these translation methods supplement the cultural information about the source text in the translation, and fully demonstrate the classic nature of the *Meditative Notes in Solitude*.

In conclusion, while correctly interpreting the cultural schemata of Chinese classics, we can effectively promote the English translation of Chinese classics with the help of the specific translation methods of cultural schemata theory under cultural schemata correspondence, difference and deficiency. Eventually, it will enhance the influence of international communication and promote the “last kilometer” of the international dissemination of Chinese culture.

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