

A Literature Review of the Studies on the English Translation of Literary Works by Chi Zijian

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Abstract: As one of the most representative ethnic literature writers, Chi Zijian has written myriads of works, some of which are translated into many foreign languages. This paper aims to collect and study on these English translational works so that more relevant research results can be supplied to the study on the translational works by Chi Zijian.

Keywords: Chi Zijian, English translation, Literary works.

1. Introduction

Chi Zijian, born in Beiji village, Mohe city in Helongjiang province, in 1964, is elected as the member of the 10th National Committee of the Chinese Writers' Association. She has written 12 long stories, over 40 middle grade novels, 13 short stories together with many anthology works and translation works. She is awarded by Lu Xun Literature Prize, Mao Dun Literature Prize and many other prizes.

As one of the Chinese contemporary writers in the 21st century, Chi Zijian has received much domestic concerns while little research about Chi's works is made at abroad although many of her works are translated into some foreign languages like English, Japanese and French. Therefore, based on national articles mostly, this paper tries to collect some relevant studies about English translation of works by Chi, analyzing its current translation status to figure out the underlying problems worthy of note.

2. Status of the English Translation of Chi's Works

France is the country that translates Chi's works earliest. Two publishers in France contribute to this success. On the one hand, the publisher named Bleu de Chine always focused on the strength of its representation of the changes and conditions of Chinese society and life in general when selecting texts for translation. On the other hand, the publisher Editions Philippe Picquier decided to devote itself to Chinese culture out of curiosity about the country's long history and mysterious culture [1]. As a result, in 1997, two books whose French name were *La danseuse de yangge* and *Voyage au pays des nuits blanches* were successfully translated with the effort to reflect the change of the society in China.

However, until many years passed did translation editions of Chi's works appeared in English countries. Before 2000, almost books were translated by the press Chinese Literature in China, aiming to introduce national literature and local culture to foreign countries. But at the beginning of the 21st century, some foreign publishers set out to translate Chi's works like *Figments of the supernatural* and *The Good Times Are Slowly Slipping Away*. Even now, despite many English translations circulating in these Western countries, few people spend effort and energy doing in-depth studies on the English versions. This condition was changed and improved until the issue of English translation, *The Last Quarter of the Moon*, by

Humes Bruce in 2013. In conclusion, although there are lots of Chi's works translated into many foreign languages, lacking researches about these translations becomes common and ordinary, especially in English countries, which is totally unbalanced to the number of translational versions.

In the face of the above situation, most studies on the English translations of Chi's works stem from domestic sources, supplied with some from abroad. Observing all these available resources, it is obvious that the form of studies can be classified into two kinds. The first category is mainly written in the form of dissertation and journal articles whereas the other one is book review at abroad. Compared with the studies from nation, these book reviews only briefly introduce the main plot, added with the author's comments on this book in the end. So to some extent, these reviews do not make thorough analysis on the English versions.

3. Analysis of the English Translational Studies of Chi's Works

Searching in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wangfang Database, Weipu Database, Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index(CSSCI) and ScienceDirect with these key words like "Chi Zijian" and "translation", "Chi Zijian" and "English translation" and the name of Chi's works that have been translated accompanied with "English translation" or "translation", the author ignores some paper and articles that do not meet the requirement and collects the data to analyze.

To begin with, it should be noticed that due to the research status at abroad, almost these collected data comes from domestic. So after dividing these data in terms of their sources (Figure 1), we can see obviously that the studies on the English translation of Chi's works mainly originate from journal and dissertation, and the number of the two forms is the same approximately, among which 24 studies are in the form of dissertation while 29 in journal in which 2 accomplishments are CSSCI.

Secondly, although Chi possesses works including novels and essays and many of them have been translated into English, not too many are studied broadly and deeply no matter at home or abroad. And though there are more researches on these translations at home than that at abroad, almost domestic research bibliographies are the same with no exception. If we classify the data further according to the name of books studied, the result following will be obtained

(Figure 2). It is apparent that whatever it is long stories, novella, short stories or essays, one certain representative work of each category are selected as the research object. Of all these books, one book is worthy of attention. Compared with other books, the long story *The Last Quarter of the Moon* has been considerably studied for 39 times, which nearly accounts for 75%.

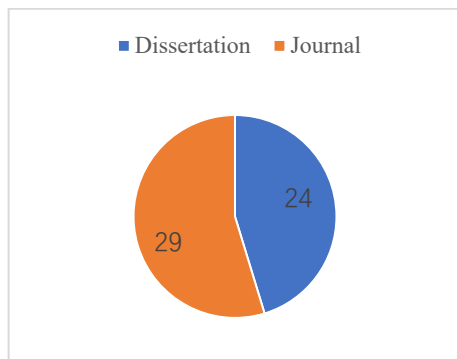


Figure 1. The Source of English Translation of Chi's Works

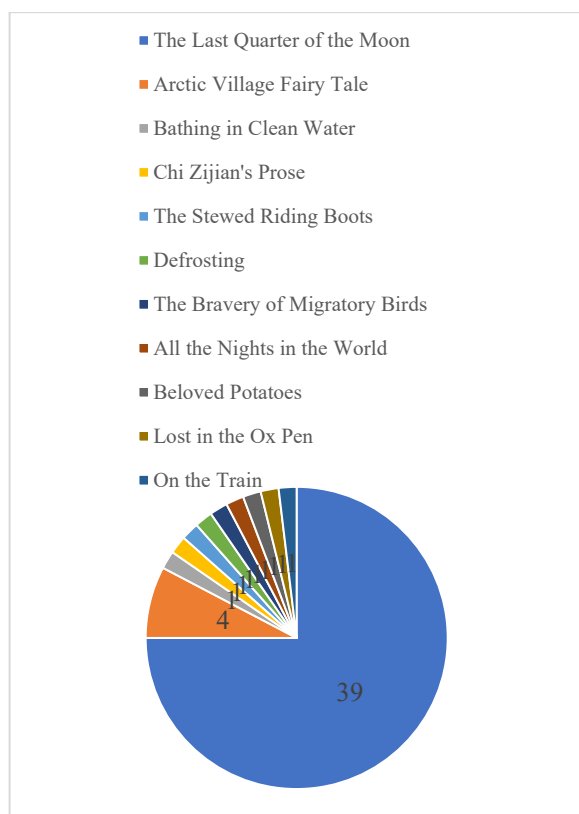


Figure 2. The Names of Books Studied

Finally, after careful analysis and classification on the basis of the research topic, these studies on the English translation of Chi's works can be roughly divided into three kinds, among which one is purely about the translation theory and strategy, the second one is on the micro-linguistic level which probes into the translation method of some local expressions from the national cultural perspective, and in a more broad view, the last one is about the way of and the influence made by the national culture communicating internationally by the means of translating local literature.

3.1. Studies on Translation Theory and Strategy in Chi's Works

Viewed from the perspective of translation theory and strategy, most studies come from dissertations. Jiao discusses how Hermeneutic motion theory is employed when translating *The Last Quarter of the Moon* by comparative analysis and quantitative research, finding that driven by translators' concern for the language and culture at the stage of trust, they adopt translation techniques like omission and substitution at the aggression stage, emphasize foreignization strategy at the incorporation stage and compensate for the original text by addition [2]. Jing explores how Nida's functional equivalence theory is applied from three aspects that are lexical level, syntactic level and textual level, finally coming to the conclusion that translation of novels should transmit the ideas and style of the work based on breaking through the surface structure of the original text [3]. Lin talks about how vocabulary and grammar are translated from level shift, category shift and class shift by the usage of Catford's translation shift theory [4]. Qian looks into how translations of Chi's works are guided by Newmark's correlative translation theory, concluding that free translation should be exploited when translating insignificant narrative paragraphs while literal translation plus annotation in order to maintain exotic beauty [5]. Besides, there are also some studies from journals studying on the adoption of translation theory and strategy in Chi's works. For instance, He, Liu and Wang explore and analyze the English translation of *The Last Quarter of the Moon*, attaching great importance to the linguistic and cultural features of the original text together with its theme [6]. Jiang advocates three suggestions to translators from three dimensions: the linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension based on the perspective of eco-translatology [7].

3.2. Studies on Micro-linguistics in Chi's Works

Changing to another perspective, some studies focus on the micro-linguistic level, among which most attach importance to the research on the defamiliarized expression and translation. Wang explores the translation of culture-loaded words with the instances of address, place name as well as words about life and religion in ethnic literature *The Last Quarter of the Moon*, underlining that the characterized translation of culture-loaded words in ethnic culture also plays great role in popularizing Chinese culture [8]. From the perspective of readers' expectations, Meng finds that the translator of *The Last Quarter of the Moon* not only mainly applies foreignizing translation to translate these culture-loaded words but also uses domesticating translation to make the text more fluent so that it can cater for readers' expectations [9].

3.3. Studies on Intercultural Communication in Chi's Works

The third view on the translation of Chi's works is the communication of these translation texts. Lü and Dai emphasize that intercultural communication should not only satisfy foreign readers' reading habits but also to the maximum extent retain the beauty of the original text so that these readers can know and appreciate Chinese literature world [10]. Chu comes to the conclusion that foreign readers have not realized the value of Chi's works, resulting the gap between translation and induction of Chi's works and their

degree of reception.

Besides the study fields above mentioned, some researchers also pay attention to other angles which have been studied by only a few persons so far. For example, Wang focuses on how focalization and speech presentation are transferred in the translation text of *Right Bank of the Argun*, exploring the importance exerted by narratology on translation studies [11]. Wang and Hu find out that translators' ethnic ideology can potentially have great influences on their process of translation [12].

4. Conclusion

As one of the most representative contemporary writers in China, Chi Zijian has created a load of works that circulate and popularize no matter at home or abroad, receiving extremely hearty welcome and appreciation. But there still lack studies of the translation of Chi's works, among which most come from China. Domestically, these studies are published mainly in the form of journals and dissertations, paying attention to several books of Chi's and three major research fields. In spite of the attributions made by the national research, there are still many failings and shortcomings needed to be correctly improved. Also, the research status at abroad is even more serious, with such little efforts exerted to studies on translational versions of Chi's works. Therefore, it is necessary and imperative to deeply and broadly explore into these versions so that the style and characteristic of Chi's works, the profound mystery of Beiji village and what the most important is that Chinese ethnic culture can be revealed and carried internationally.

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