Hua Zhu, independent researcher, Japan

Foreign Terms and Otherness: A Case Study of The Joy Luck Club and Its Chinese and Japanese Translations

Abstract

The limitations of Chinese transcription and the domination of Chinese scripts in print cause a difficulty in reflecting the otherness of Chinese foreign terms in English. The discrepancy among Chinese dialects has also brought about challenges. A novel form of translating Chinese foreign terms in The Joy Luck Club was invented in order to improve the representation of otherness. Since the publication of the first Chinese version of the novel, better results have been demonstrated in more recent retranslations of The Joy Luck Club. Fewer deletions and less mistranslation indicate an improvement in the latest retranslations in comparison to the older versions. On the basis of a result-oriented analysis, supported by data and real-time reading experience, this study discusses linguistic and non-linguistic factors in translating Chinese foreign terms in English in The Joy Luck Club into five Chinese and one Japanese version. Reflecting otherness can provide an accurate translation whereas the translator's visibility can bring flexibility to the work on translation.

Keywords: Chinese foreign terms, retranslation, otherness, translator's invisibility

1. Introduction

Foreign terms, also known as loanwords, act as linguistic and cultural barriers in literary translation, especially from a source language written in Latin script, such as English, to a target language written in a non-Latin script, such as Chinese. As the name "foreign term" suggests, these terms are often a symbol of otherness, which has been heavily discussed in the academic

world since the 1960s. In translation studies, foreignization, or foreignizing translation, is often discussed with respect to the translation of foreign terms. The Japanese language has a unique advantage in translating foreign terms with the help of katakana 片仮名 (a syllabary for transcribing foreign words and writing loan words in Japanese) and furigana 振り仮名 (a reading aid for indicating the pronunciation of a kanji漢字, the adopted Chinese ideographic character, or other characters, by printing small syllabic characters next to them). However, it is rather challenging to achieve the same effect in Chinese. There has been limited discussion within the field of translation research on the ways to overcome this barrier in Chinese.

1.1. Background

The Joy Luck Club is the first novel of Chinese-American writer Amy Tan, published in 1989. Since its publication, The Joy Luck Club topped The New York Times Best Seller List for 77 weeks and won the National Book Award and National Book Critics Circle Award in 1989. It was selected as an American literary classic in The Norton Introduction to Literature. It has also been adapted into a popular movie directed by Wayne Wang (1993). Tan herself has won international and national acclaim, and her works in English have been translated into over 20 languages. Her other literary works have also been received positively. In terms of its popularity in Asia, The Joy Luck Club has six Chinese translations and one Japanese translation to date.

A key feature of The Joy Luck Club is its transliteration of Chinese words or phrases, which differ markedly from the body text. The transliterated terms appear in italics, followed by literal English translations without clear syntactic signs. For example, "'I was chiszle', she says, still fuming, 'mad to death.'" (Tan 34)[1] Current Chinese versions of The Joy Luck Club have certain defects in the translation of foreign terms, and the invisibility of these original foreign terms affects the authenticity of the Chinese translations. This study aims to explore the factors behind the invisibility of foreign terms by studying the embedded case of The Joy Luck Club. As no parallel comparative research has been conducted on the Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club, this study intends to fill this gap. It also aims to provide a further exploration into the field of foreignization by comparing different translation strategies applied to the foreign terms in the Chinese and Japanese versions.

1.2. Research Rationale

A type of hybrid English is used in The Joy Luck Club, which mixes foreign terms from the Mandarin, Cantonese or Shanghai dialects into the English narrative. These foreign Chinese terms used in the novel not only create an exotic foreign atmosphere but also reflect the real life of Chinese-American immigrants, as Tan was inspired by her own experience as a second-generation Chinese-American. The practice of translating Chinese terms in English in The Joy Luck Club constitutes the primary resistance faced by translators.

According to Lawrence Venuti in The Translator's Invisibility, fluency is not necessary for a good translation, and the invisibility of the translator reduces authenticity as regards cultural values. By comparing the translation methods for foreign terms in Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club, and then examining positive retranslations of the Chinese translations, we can reveal which foreign terms were translated, the method through which they were translated and the manner in which translators reacted. This can offer unconventional and differentiated resources for better solutions to translating foreign terms into Chinese and Japanese.

1.3. Research Objectives and Questions

This study will elucidate the effects of linguistic and non-linguistic factors on the translations using a descriptive qualitative methodology and textual analysis. In order to achieve these objectives, this study will answer the following questions:

1. What linguistic factors are involved in translating Chinese terms in Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club?

2. What non-linguistic factors are involved in translating Chinese terms in Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club?

2. Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the translation strategies for foreign terms used in both Japan and China, and it compares the adaptation of foreign terms into Chinese and Japanese from a historical linguistic perspective. Moreover, this section provides clear theoretical explanations of 'the translator's invisibility' proposed by Venuti in 1995 and also reviews the methodology of foreignization analysis.

2.1. Translating Foreign Terms in Japan

In discussing the advantages of Japanese in translating foreign terms, Wakabayashi in "Translating in a Forked Tongue: Interlinear Glosses as a Creative Device in Japanese Translations" suggests that rubi (an aid to facilitate reading; furigana is one type of rubi) is used to produce two unrelated pronunciations of a word and an extra semantic layer. Rubi helps to overcome the limitations of conventional translation strategies. The appearance and development of rubi is a result of digesting and interacting with other cultures. As Wakabayashi observes, rubi can be used to provide information on the meaning of a foreign term, add nuance, indicate phonetic values (particularly to explain foreign puns) or offer a second, destabilizing reading. In particular, rubi can retain the foreignness of the translated term and, at the same time, represent the original sound, which is usually sacrificed when translation focuses on meaning. In response to Wakabayashi, Pym in Translation Solutions for Many Languages argues that Japanese scripts imply initial complexity and can help in solving certain basic translation problems; he proposes that Japanese scripts can also offer unconventional resources for more translation solutions.

Yanabu in "Translation in Japan: The Cassette Effect" proposes a theory called Cassette Effect for describing the hybrid essence of translated words in modern written Japanese. The Cassette Effect represents in general a kind of mentality that accepts unknown foreign objects and is aware of the values which are inherent in them. The Cassette Effect has made the acceptance of foreignness easier in Japanese history. Moreover, Japanese readers generally believe that translators introduce an advanced culture to the public. Apart from that, Yanabu, Mizuno and Naganuma posit in 2010 that the Japanese translation tradition started with the adaptation of Chinese characters called Onyomi 音読 (based on the pronunciation of imported Chinese words) and kunyomi 訓読 (based on the pronunciation of native Japanese words). The succeeding

generations of Japanese translators have followed the tradition of kunyomi (訓読) and applied it to translate other western languages and literatures. However, Japanese translation still creates awareness of the original author through a conscious process.

2.2. Translating Foreign Terms in China

Compared to Japanese, rewriting a foreign word into Chinese is fairly difficult. Chao argues in 1969 that the rules of transliteration or transcription (or both) are hard to establish for writing systems such as Chinese, in which syllabic morphemes are graphic units. As a result, there are great divergences in writing foreign names in Chinese characters. Moreover, the divergence in Chinese dialects makes the situation even more complicated. For example, “Newton” was translated as Nayduan in Mandarin but Noaytoan in Cantonese. Although Chao made an effort to establish equivalences between syllabics in Western languages and Chinese characters, no system has yet been adopted either officially or in practice as a one-way consistent system of transcription, owing to considerations of elegance and compatibility in length.

Based on a study on translating foreign sources into or from Chinese discourse, He in 2009 articulated four strategies, expounded in the order of their frequency, which Chinese translators utilize to translate fiction texts. These strategies are classified as paraphrasing (“go for the meaning”), transcoding (“literal translation following SL [source language] forms, with or without an accompanying annotation”), substitution (“replace the alien source with a home-grown counterpart”), and deletion (“no translation”) (He 210–11). Among these strategies, paraphrasing is most frequently used in fictional narratives. Moreover, He points out the existence of conceptual barriers between the source system and the target system. He concludes that multiple translation strategies merge in translating alien texts into or from Chinese. He also mentions that the use of footnotes is not common in Chinese translations and seems to depend on the translator's judgment.

2.3. Contrasts between Japanese and Chinese Scripts

Modern written Chinese is the result of two main script reforms, in 1956 and 1977. Modern Japanese script reforms took place in 1946 and 1981. In the latest Japanese script reform, the use of furigana was recognized although it had been prohibited by the previous reform. Furigana allows Japanese writers and translators to enjoy the benefit of using characters from the official list of Chinese characters. In contrast to Japan, China did not reform the scripts radically by phonetizing but opted to simplify them instead (Zhou). As a result, script reforms in mainland China created two competing writing systems. At present, complex characters are used in Hong Kong and Taiwan whereas simplified characters are used in the Mainland and Singapore.

The widely used Hanyu pinyin汉语拼音 (phonetic alphabet for Chinese) is a scheme for spelling the sounds of Chinese characters rather than their shapes, a scheme for spelling Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) rather than dialects and a scheme for spelling vernacular rather than classical Chinese (Zhou 222–23). Hanyu pinyin aims to facilitate the acquisition of Chinese characters and improve literacy rates of the Chinese population, but it is not an independent writing system. In addition, Chen explains that the fact that few publications are printed in pinyin prevents pinyin from becoming independent. Moreover, the existence of negative attitudes toward pinyin and other such schemes is another important reason why they lack independence. Official organizations, such as the language planning institutions of the Chinese government, along with famous scholars have all been concerned about the prospects of these new schemes, which enable distinct writing of different dialects. In their opinion, this could destroy the uniformity of written Chinese or even the unity of China as a nation-state. (Chen 87–88).

Drawing from historical linguistics, Yanabu argues that historical factors decided that kanji should be maintained in modern written Japanese and that Japanese has thus not evolved into an alphabetic script. Kanji exemplified the concept of advanced civilization in history and has been used to express academic or technical terms from foreign cultures for a long time. However, the recent trend has European words translated into katakana directly and Chinese characters dropped from many loanwords.

2.4. Theoretical Explanations of the Translator's Invisibility

In The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation, Venuti opposes the emphasis on transparency and fluency in contemporary literary translation in English. He argues that such an emphasis reflects "ethnocentric violence" (20), meaning that the English language and culture have been used as the only standard to interpret English translations. He criticizes this "ethnocentric violence" for being "imperialistic abroad" (Venuti, The Translator's Invisibility 308) and "xenophobic at home." (17) He claims that translation must be a visible place where different cultures come into view; otherwise it only gives a partial view of the cultural other.

2.5. Foreignization and Resistance

In order to achieve a translator's visibility, Venuti in The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation calls for foreignizing translation through resistance, which is an aesthetic discontinuity, to preserve the difference and otherness in literary translation. The appearance of resistance also offers readers a clue as to what was gained and lost in the translation process and the extent of unbridgeable gaps between cultures. Venuti illustrates resistance through his translation of the Italian poet Ugo Iginio Tarchetti, selecting foreignizing elements deliberately and including a close adherence to the source language structure and syntax. Otherwise, he supposes resistance to be an ideology of autonomy, which discovers the place of the cultural other in translation, foregrounding linguistic and cultural variances with the transformation of cultural values in the target language. In addition, resistance carries out the process of restoring culture and crashes into domestic canons. In the light of the above said, he suggests a set-up in translation viability and the cultural and social conditions in which it is produced; he names this set-up the "call to action" (Venuti, The Translator's Invisibility 307-13). He also points out the importance of considering the context of translators' lives and their different historical moments for understanding translators' various motives and methods.

2.6. The Eth(n)ics of Translation

In his second influential book, The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference, Venuti concludes that translation is not communication between equals insomuch as it is

ethnocentric in essence. Moreover, he claims that translation, similarly to any cultural practice, requires the merits of creative reproduction. He mentions that economic value squeezes translation in a commercial and cultural bind. In particular, he points out that a bestselling translation is expected to lead to further revelations in the domestic culture, for which it was produced, rather than in the foreign culture, which it is deemed to represent. Venuti compares two English translations of Kitchen, written by female Japanese writer Banana Yoshimoto (The Scandals 125). He praises Megan Backus's translation of Kitchen as it diverges from dominant English translation methods. For example, many Japanese words are italicized and stated in the text, reflecting many aspects of Japanese culture, including food, clothing, and furnishings. This feature is complementary to the original Japanese text, which explicitly names many icons of American popular culture. The heterogeneity of vocabulary offers English readers a foreignizing reading experience.

2.7. Previous Research on The Joy Luck Club

From the point of view of Hanyu (汉语) in The Joy Luck Club, Sondrup in "Hanyu at The Joy Luck Club" finds that the Romanization of Chinese words in the novel is inconsistent and does not follow any of the major systems. Although Romanization is mainly a combination of the Pinyin and Yale systems, occasional different forms are presented in this novel. In addition, the Wade-Giles system appears to be used only for spelling personal names (for example, An-Mei Hsu). Sondrup believes that the complex combination of consonants may not be easily understandable to most readers but is beneficial in terms of phonetic precision. He also suggests that unsystematic and non-standardized Romanization stresses the underlying orality, which is related to the author's experiences. Moreover, he highlights other unconventional textual features in the novel, including the literal English translation with crafted syntax, accompanied by visibly italicized Romanized Chinese words or phrases, which results in the non-Chinese-speaking readers' incapability of perceiving that translation has taken place.

As regards the subject of translation and identity, Myers conducts her research on Asian Pidgin English (or "broken" English) in The Joy Luck Club, which she describes as untranslated Romanized Asian language (a word or a paragraph) and colloquialism (regional, ethnic or both).

Based on a comparison between the Chinglish spoken by the Chinese mothers in the novel and examples of Tan's mother's living speech furnished in Tan's essay "Mother Tongue," Myers concludes that the paragraphs with the mothers' speech in The Joy Luck Club are not the same Chinglish, except for certain shortened and blunt sentences, missing articles or subjects, contracted endings, and descriptive qualifications, such as "English explanation voice" and "mock scolding voice." Therefore, Myers argues that Tan translated her mother's Chinglish into the text of the book so that the readers could have an illusion of the unmediated Chinglish spoken by the mothers. Specifically, she believes that Tan rendered the mothers' speech in an errorless form to ensure fluency and readability of the text in English. She also believes that Tan removed many foreign or minor-language words from the text and shaped the speech further into standard English.

As mentioned above, all foreign terms are shown in italics. Tan wrote in-text translations for many of these foreign terms in The Joy Luck Club. Myers' evaluation of this issue is that, although translation in a certain form is necessary in the book, these translations cause readers to be inattentive in perceiving the constructed language of the translated text as an example of the translation strategy of transparency (posed by Eugene Nida). Moreover, Myers considers the domestication translation strategy, used by Tan in the text, as a kind of resistance targeting the awareness of difference and cultural other through language discontinuity. Anthony Pym in his Method in Translation History recommends a method for researching positive retranslations. Following these discussions, this study aims at exploring resistance further as a translation strategy, as well as positive retranslation in the Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club.

3. Methodology

The Chinese terms cited in this study are based on the list of foreign terms from Tan's works edited by Snodgrass in 2004. This study used five available Chinese translations, one Japanese translation and one English edition of The Joy Luck Club as the sources of parallel corpora for demonstrating whether the relationships among the five Chinese translations can be seen as

positive retranslation. All of the selected translations were published by well known publishers. Cheng is among those Chinese translators who are also famous writers.

In addition, only written materials were collected and no questionnaires or interviews were conducted as a consequence of restricted research conditions. Moreover, relevant data from the translators' prefaces or postscripts, previous research and communication between translators and publishers are all taken into consideration as extra corpora.

4. Comparing Chinese and Japanese Versions of The Joy Luck Club

4.1. Difficulties in Translating Cantonese Loanwords in English

Chinese terms in The Joy Luck Club can be divided into two types, namely, Chinese loanwords assimilated into English and Chinese terms that are less familiar to the English readers of the book. As the majority of the former type of foreign terms are Cantonese, they are new and less comprehensible to Mandarin speakers, the speakers of other Chinese dialects or Japanese speakers; such a situation causes mistranslation.

Example1

ST: Hoisin sauce

TT: 酱油, 香味太浓, 花生醬

The TT's here are from Tian's, Cheng's and Yu's versions, respectively. The literal meanings are "soy source," "strong scent," and "peanut butter." The correct translation is "海鮮醬" in Li's version. The ST is a featured source in Cantonese cuisine, which means "seafood" sauce.

Example 2

ST: Gung-ho

TT: 和蔼, 慈祥, 幹勁, 朗らか

The TT's here are from Cheng's two versions, Yu's and Ozawa's versions, respectively. The literal meanings are "kind," "kindly," "vigor," "bright." Referring to the definition of "enthusiastic, eager, zealous" ("Gung-ho") and based on the pronunciation of Cantonese, it is obvious that the better translation is "热心肠" in Li's version, which means "enthusiastic."

Example 3

ST: Koutou

TT: 关怀备至

The TT here is from Cheng's versions. The literal meaning is "caring." The correct translation is "叩头" in Yu's and Li's versions. The "kou" is "叩" ("Kou"). Moreover, "koutou" is in Hanyu pinyin, where it means "to kneel and touch the ground with the forehead."

Example 4

ST: Wok

TT: 绒线披肩

The TT here is from Cheng's versions. The literal meaning is "thread shawl." The correct translation is "镬" but "炒菜锅" in Tian's, Yu's and Li's versions is a more general translation, referring to the Chinese stir-fry pan.

In general, there is less discrepancy in translating foreign terms using Chinese terms which are less familiar to the English readers as these are similar to Mandarin pronunciation and the in-text translations by the author herself make the translation easier.

4.2. Differences in Transcoding Solutions

Although transcoding is the most frequent translation strategy in the Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club, certain differences among translation solutions exist. Diverging from other Chinese versions, which merely use single or double quotation marks to strengthen the translated text, and which fail to separate foreign terms from other words, Tian's version retains 31 Romanized Chinese foreign terms with their corresponding Chinese characters in the parentheses, such as "butong (不同)," "chuabudwo (差不多)," "Chun-wang chihan (唇亡齿寒)," "Shemma

(什么?).” Although Li does not retain the Romanized Chinese in the text, he uses certain annotations to bridge the gap between the readers’ understanding and these Chinese terms, for example, “ ‘璋’[4],” “ 婆婆 [1],” “头脑汤 [5],” and others.

Benefiting from the unique linguistic feature of mixing katakana, furigana and kanji, Ozawa’s version retains not only the pronunciation but also the otherness of the Chinese foreign terms, such as “海鮮醤(かいせんしょう)(ホイシン・ ソース)”, “ワイグオレン--外国人”, “牌(パイ)” or “叩頭(こうとう),” among others. From the viewpoint of Pym’s typology given in Translation Solutions, the translation solutions applied by Tian and Ozawa here can be defined as copying, including copying words and structure. On the other hand, the solution adopted by Li can be classified as compensation or cultural correspondence.

According to Pym’s definition of typology (Translation Solutions 221–31), copying words includes copying sounds, morphology and script; copying structure, on the other hand, means copying prosodic features, fixed phrases and text structure. Both Tian’s and Ozawa’s versions copy the sound, morphology and script of the foreign terms into their target languages to different extents. However, in terms of structure, although Ozawa copies the structure in her translation, in all but a few cases, the Chinese versions do not make an equivalent effort.

Example 5

ST: chunwang chihan: If the lips are gone, the teeth will be cold.

TT 1: “チュンワンチーハン”--唇亡びて歯寒し。

(“cyunnwannchi-hann” – if the lips are gone, the teeth will be cold.)

TT 2: “唇亡齿寒”，假如嘴唇不复存在，牙齿当然就会觉得冷了。

(“Chunwanchihan” – if the lips are gone, the teeth will be cold.)

TT 1 (Ozawa’s) and TT 2 (Cheng’s 1) copy the sentence structure in Example 5. Conversely, example 6 shows that the sentence structure is adjusted in Chinese versions.

Example 6

ST: “choszle!” – stinks to death in there!

TT 1:「チョウス–ラ！」ーものすごい臭い！

(“Cyowusu-ra!” – there is stinking!)

TT 2: “那里臭死了！”

(“There is stinking!”)

TT 3: “臭死了!”

(“Stinking!”)

TT 1 (Ozawa’s) keeps the sentence structure of ST whereas TT 2 (Li’s) and TT 3 (Tian’s) shorten the sentence, which is text tailoring in Pym’s mentioned typology.

Example 7

ST: I was lihai, wild and stubborn.

TT 1: わたしは“リ–ハイ”だった。お転婆で頑固で。

(I was “ri-hai.” Because I was a tomboy and stubborn.)

TT 2: 我是很厉害的。中国人的“厉害”的意思，就是泼野而固执。

(I am a tough nut. What “lihai” means in Chinese is wild and stubborn.)

TT 1 (Ozawa’s) and TT 2 (Cheng’s) in Example 7 use text tailoring to make additional content by adding the inferred linkage.

As verbs are often at the end of the Japanese sentence, a change of perspective is fairly common in the Japanese version of The Joy Luck Club, but the Chinese versions tend not to change the original perspective. However, if the main verb is at the end of the sentence, the original perspective can also be kept in the Japanese version.

Example 8

ST: She said the two soups were almost the same, chabudwo.

TT 1: 二つのスープはほとんど同じー “チャーブドゥオ”だと母は言った。

(The two soups were almost same – “cya-budwuo” said mother.)

TT 2: 她说这两种汤几乎是一样的，chuabudwo (差不多）。

She said the two soups are almost same, chuabudwo (not much difference).

TT 3: 她說兩種湯「差不多」。

(She said the two soups “not much difference.”)

The speaker is put at the end of TT 1 (Ozawa’s) whereas the speaker is at the beginning of TT 2 (Tian’s) and TT 3 (Yu’s). However, TT 3 trims the sentence.

Example 9

ST: My mother nodded toward my four brothers and reminded me: “dangsying tamende shenti,” which means “take care of them,” or literally, “Watch out for their bodies.”

TT 1:
母は四人の弟のほうに顎(あご)をしゃくりながら「ダンシンターメンダシェンティ」と言った。「この子達の

(Mother toward four brothers’ side lifted her chin while “dannshinnta-menndasyenntie” said mother. “To be this kid’s amulet please” so that meant, but if direct translate “this kid’s body defend as so” so that meant.)

TT 2: 我媽衝著我四個弟弟點點頭, 用中文提醒我說:
「當心他們的身體。」意思是:「好好看顧他們。」

(My mum toward my four brothers nodded, by Chinese reminded me “take care of their bodies” means: “properly watch them.”)

TT 3: 母亲把头朝我四个弟弟的方向点了点，提醒我“当心他们的身体，”意思是要我“照顾好他们”。

(Mother take head toward my four brothers’ side nodded, remind me “take care of their bodies,” means ask me “take good care of them.”)

TT 1 (Ozawa’s) keeps the perspective of the first part and, at the same time, changes the perspective of the second. TT 2 (Yu’s) and TT 3 (Li’s) do not change any perspective but cut the clauses.

To conclude, the Japanese version is rather consistent with the word order of the English edition of The Joy Luck Club whereas Chinese versions tend to paraphrase and simplify clauses.

4.3. Differences in Translating Sound-Associated Loanwords

There is a number of sound-associated loanwords in The Joy Luck Club, resulting in different translation strategies. Apart from a few cases of transcoding or deletion (text tailoring in Pym's typology), the Japanese version also uses substitution (cultural correspondence). Meanwhile, the Chinese versions take advantage of paraphrasing to adapt the loanwords into Chinese. In other words, alternative expressions with different sounds but similar functions are used in their target languages.

Example 10

ST: Aiii-ya: Chinese exclamation of surprise.

TT 1: 哎呀, 啊呀, 天呀, 哎-呀, 「唉呀」

(aiya, he, ao, aya, tian ya, ai-ya, "ai ya")

TT 2: アイやー

(Aiya-)

TT 1 (five Chinese versions) and TT 2 (Ozawa's) use transcoding here, but certain words in TT 1 are not precise if transposed into Hanyu pinyin.

Example 11

ST: Wyah!

TT 1: 嘈嘈切切凄凄!

(Cao cao qie qie qi qi!)

TT 2: ひゅウ！ヒュウ！

(hyuwu! hyuwu!)

TT 1 (Yu's) and TT 2 (Ozawa's) use substitution here. Tan does not provide a translation but Snodgrass refers to it is a sound that is supposed to signify lute music. TT 1 is extracted from "The

Song of the Pipa Player" by Bai Juyi, a famous Tang poem which describes Pipa's sorrowful sounds. TT 2 means "whistle" based on the definition provided by Sanseido Web Dictionary.

4.4. Judgments and Mistranslations

In certain instances, translators apply their own judgments, based on their knowledge, language background or context, to the Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club. A number of these instances are cases of mistranslation.

Example 12

ST: Tao

TT 1: タオ, 儒教

(Tao, Confucianism)

TT 2: 道教

(Taoism)

TT 1 is from Ozawa's version whereas TT 2 comes from the five Chinese versions. There are two places where "Tao" appears in The Joy Luck Club. The first place is "Tao society" and "道教" is the correct translation here. However, in terms of the second instance, which is "It was because when you're Chinese you're supposed to accept everything, flow with the Tao and not make waves" (Tan 149), it is debatable whether the reference here is to Taoism or Confucianism. From the standard viewpoint of Chinese philosophy, whether Taoism or Confucianism is acceptable depends on the extent to which the concept of "Tao" overlaps between the two philosophies.

Example 13

ST: I willingly gave up my chi, the spirit that caused me so much pain.

TT 1: わたしの耐え難い苦しみの元となった "チー"ー智(ち)を喜んで捨てた。

(My intolerable sufferings' cause turned into "Chi-" – wisdom, happily throw it away.)

TT 2: 我愿意放弃自己的利齿，它曾经使我伤痕累累。

(I willingly give up my sharp teeth, it had made me scarred everywhere.)

TT 1 (Ozawa's) reflects that Ozawa is perhaps confused by the same pronunciation of "智(ち)" and "Chi" in Japanese even though "智(ち)" means "the ability to distinguish" rather than "spirit" in Japanese ("Chi," Sanseido). However, "chi" is obviously mistranslated in TT 2 (Tian's). The correct translation is "气" in Li's and Yu's versions, which means "circulating life force" ("Chi," Oxford).

Example 14

ST: "Sz! Sz! Sz!" – Die! Die! Die!

TT: "杀！杀！杀！-死！死！死！"

("Kill! Kill! Kill! – Die! Die! Die!)

TT (Tian's) is possibly reflecting the similar pronunciation of the translator's language. The correct translation is "死" in Li's and Yu's versions. The following in-text translation reflects its meaning of "die."

Example 15

ST: haule

TT 1: ピカッ

(Pikatsu means "brightly," according to Sanseido Web Dictionary).

TT 2: "好了!"

(It is done!)

TT (Ozawa's) is possibly influenced by the context in which two mirrors reflect each other. As Tan does not provide an in-text translation here, a discrepancy exists not only among the translators but also in the glossary and in Snodgrass's notes. The "好了!" translation is better as it includes in Tian's, Li's and Yu's versions the whole structure of the sentence.

Example 16

ST: Auntie Lin says "Pung!" and "Mah jong!"

TT 1: 林阿姨说："碰！和了。"

(Li Auntie said: "Pung! Hu le.")

TT 2: 靈多阿姨卻說「碰!」、「麻將」。

(Lindo Auntie yet said “Pung!”, “Mahjong.”)

TT 3:リンおばさんが「ポン！」に続いて「ロン！」と叫んで牌を開き。

(Rinn auntie yet “Ponn!” and continuously “ronn!” cried tile open.)

TT 1 (Tian’s) and TT 3 (Ozawa’s) perhaps reflect the background knowledge of playing mahjong. In a real situation, people generally say “胡了” (Hu le) rather than “Mah jong!” In addition, the similar expression in Japan is “ronn!” (“Rong”) – mahjong being popular in Japan as well. However, “麻将” (Mah-jong) is a faithful translation in TT 2 (Yu’s).

To put it briefly, owing to similar pronunciation and the interference originating from the translators’ background, Chinese and Japanese translators can at times incorrectly apply their judgment. Although in certain cases this does not result in a problem, it can result in mistranslation.

4.5. Domestication and Foreignization

At the ethnic level, the Japanese version mainly comports with the Chinese-American culture, which is mainly Cantonese culture. Fewer cases of mistranslation and the usage of annotations enable Li’s version to restore the Chinese-American culture in the text. However, other Chinese versions conform to their own Chinese culture. At this level, the other Chinese versions fail to restore the Chinese-American culture to a greater extent. At the level of discourse, Tian’s version achieves the effect of resistant reading by copying the sound and retaining the script of the foreign terms. Moreover, Tian’s creation can be seen as a kind of implementation of the translator’s autonomy. Ozawa uses Japanese scripts such as kanji and katakana to transliterate the Romanized Chinese; since kanji and katakana have the conventional function of recording foreign terms, the heterogeneity of the foreign terms can be retained. Conversely, other Chinese translators rarely try to challenge the convention of written Chinese to keep the Romanized Chinese or achieve resistant reading. Instead, other Chinese versions pursue “transparent reading,” merely using single or double quotation marks and sacrificing the in-text translations. The utilization of paraphrasing in Chinese versions also decreases the heterogeneity of these foreign terms.

In general, the Japanese version shows a strict adherence to the English structure except for a few changes made due to grammar rules. Nevertheless, although Yu's version retains the structure of the English version to a certain extent, the other Chinese versions adjust the sentences to be fluent and smooth in Chinese.

4.6. Publication(s) and the Translators' Invisibility

Apart from Tian's version, where the translator's name is put in an inconspicuous place, all the Chinese and Japanese versions print the name of the author and translator side by side, with the author's name highlighted. While almost all Chinese and Japanese versions have an introduction about the author (except Tian's version) and, in particular, about the literary success of The Joy Luck Club, Yu's and Li's versions also have an introduction with notes about the translator. Cheng is the only one who mentions in her postscript that she utilized direct translation and compilation as her translation strategies, in a nod to her Chinese readers' reading habits. Ozawa does not mention her translation strategies but writes that she was taught the correct pronunciation of Mandarin by another person. Li mentions the methods by means of which he selected the right words for his translation in the annotations. Other translators do not note their translation strategies in their postscripts or prefaces. Departing from the main format in the Chinese versions, where the translator introduces the literary theme of The Joy Luck Club, a "解説" (commentary) written by a well known literary critic is included in the Japanese version. It is important to note that only Ozawa's version translates as well as retains the family tree from the English edition of The Joy Luck Club in its original form. Tian's and Yu's versions do not edit or retain the family tree. In contrast to these translators, Li's and Cheng's two versions edit the family tree in a new format – a list of characters, i.e. mothers and daughters.

There is no sufficient explanation in the Chinese and Japanese versions, and few of the translators have written in detail about the manner in which the Chinese or the Japanese versions were produced. This silence reflects the fact that the translation process of the Chinese and Japanese versions is so "invisible" to the readers that the translators are literally "invisible" in their final products.

5. Conclusion

The results indicate that annotation is infrequently adopted whereas transcoding is frequently adopted in the Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club. This further suggests that the latest Chinese version is a positive retranslation of earlier ones, as the latest simplified and traditional versions are significantly similar. In addition, supporting evidences show that the latest retranslation has no mistranslations but only one deletion. However, this result is less favorable when compared to the loss of otherness. Moreover, the results confirm the hypothesis that the unacceptability of printing pinyin and Romanized Chinese in general in Chinese translations is the same as in any other published literary work in China. There are no technical options for reflecting the aesthetic visibility of Chinese terms. The comparison shows that foreignization creates more accurate translation results. Based on the publishing format, it can be assumed that the practice of translating is more visible in the latest Chinese version. Moreover, the contributions of the translators have been overlooked thus far in other simplified Chinese translations.

5.1. Findings

This study offers the following answers to the two research questions posed at the beginning of the study:

What linguistic factors are involved in translating Chinese terms in Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club?

The Japanese translator has plenty of latitude as a result of various transcription conventions in Japanese. Conversely, Chinese translators have only limited solutions for achieving equivalent textual effects. The prevalence of fluency forces Chinese translators to adjust the sentence structure and assimilate foreign terms into Chinese. What is more, the status of various dialects that coexist in China creates difficulties in achieving a consistent translation. In addition, the cognitive perspective, namely, the “Cassette Effect” in Japan, such as katakana, furigana and kanji, renders the representation of otherness easier in translating Chinese terms into Japanese. On the other hand, there is seemingly no similar cognitive perspective in Chinese.

What non-linguistic factors are involved in translating Chinese terms in Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club?

This study found that the translator, who is a professional writer, makes more deletions than other translators and prefers to use multiple translation strategies. However, such deletions cannot be seen as the deletion of redundant information. At the same time, the writer as well as the translator tends to paraphrase the context in which the deletion appears. On the other hand, professional translators who have interacted with the target culture make fewer cases of mistranslation and deletion. This reflects conceptual barriers; different domains affect translation strategies. The study also found that translators use their background knowledge and judgment during the process of translating. In other words, the translator's native language transfer affects their translation. In addition, the results show that the close connection between Japanese and Chinese cultures is more likely to create than deter an accurate translation.

In addition, this study assumes there is no direct link between transcoding and foreignization, and foreignization is achieved to a reduced extent in the Japanese and Chinese versions of The Joy Luck Club. As for resistance, it does not occur in direct proportion to the visibility of the translator in the Japanese and Chinese versions of The Joy Luck Club.

5.2. Implications of the Study

This study fills a research gap concerning the comparison between the Chinese and Japanese versions of The Joy Luck Club. The analysis of translation strategies of Chinese terms serves as a reference for possible future research on relevant topics. This study demonstrates that there is an inadequate involvement of translators in the production of translation, and the research has resulted in a solution to improve the situation by justifying the theory and methodology of the translator's invisibility. The methodology adopted in this research is integrated with logical rationale and has come to a reasonable conclusion.

As no interviews were conducted due to the restrictions of research conditions, some important facts which could have been obtained in this manner are not available at present. In future research, coauthors, interviewers, publishers, editors and translators are recommended to

enhance the research by further investigating the process of translating Chinese terms in The Joy Luck Club into Chinese and Japanese.

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[1] References to Tan denote the English version. Different translations of The Joy Luck Club will throughout the paper be referenced by their translators so as to avoid any potential confusions. The complete list of all the editions of The Joy Luck Club used for this research can be found in the Works Cited list.



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