ABSTRACT

Confucianism has a long tradition in China and has been a major influence on Chinese culture. When the Confucian classics were first introduced to the West in the 18th century, they also became a source of inspiration to many European scholars. In the 19th century, the most well-known English translation of the Analects, or Lun-yü (《论语》), was by the Rev. James Legge, published in 1861. To date, there are various translations of this Confucian classic by both Western and Chinese scholars. The latest of which is Professor D.C. Lau's (刘殿爵教授) version, published in 1979.

In this study, five English versions of the Analects will be discussed and analysed. They include, besides the two works abovementioned, the translations of Arthur Waley, Ezra Pound and Ku Hung-ming (辜鴻銘). The aim of this study is to understand the role of the translator in the process of introducing Chinese culture to the West. At the same time, the study tries to discover the problems faced by the translators in translating Chinese classics.

This paper is divided into 7 chapters, inclusive of an Introduction and a Conclusion. One chapter is devoted to each translator and his translation, except Chapter 4 which is a combined study of Arthur Waley and Ezra Pound and their translations. Chapter 6 is a comparative study of all five translations.

The findings of this study indicate that the most important factor that influences the success of a translation is the translator's comprehension and interpretation of the original work, while the technique of translation is secondary. For without a thorough understanding of the original, the translation will defeat its purpose.