Abstract

This thesis provides an overall study on the translation of body languages in the Chinese Classic Hong Lou Meng, or Dream of the Red Chamber. A comparison between the original Chinese novel and its two English translations is given as an illustration to the main topics dealt with in the study, namely: the difficulties in the translation of body languages, the strategies available to translators as well as the principles that translators should abide by when they translate body languages.

The meaning of body language in this study has been divided into three interdependent parts, namely: the semantic meaning, the pragmatic meaning and syntactic meaning. For translating the semantic meaning of body language, the difficulties commonly occur as both cultural and linguistic barriers. In order to overcome the barriers, the translators often adopt at least four strategies, which are omission, contextual amplification, adaptation and onomatopoeia. For translating the pragmatic meaning, the most difficult part lies in how to maintain the ambiguous and ample meanings of body languages and how to reach a balance between faithfulness to the original and respect for the literary convention of the target language. To solve these problems, two strategies are available to translators: omission and amplification. As for the syntactic meaning, translating difficulties are caused by the so-called “poetic language”, or the use of rhetoric in the novel, such as parallel structures and unique metaphors. The strategies used to solve these difficulties include footnoting,
keeping the original images and rhetoric in the target language. The last chapter summarizes the discussions of the thesis and suggests that there is a close relationship between semantic and pragmatic meanings, that ultimately the respect for literary convention of the target language and the importance of contexts should be observed by the translators.