Abstract

This thesis attempts to examine the cross-language translation of classifiers in Chinese and English literary texts, from the perspective of textual functions.

Most linguists have noted that, unlike the Chinese language, English is believed to have no classifiers. Nevertheless, in English there are certain constructions that resemble Chinese classifiers-constructions in terms of semantic meaning and textual functions, which are, therefore, discussed in this study on a par with their Chinese counterparts.

Textual functions of classifiers refer to the functions which classifiers perform as textual units when they operate in a phrase-like construction identified here as classifier-constructions. In a literary text, a classifier can similarly serve as a syntactic bearer, information carrier and/or stylistic marker. These functions constitute its 'textual integrity' that should be observed and preserved in the course of translation.

In the thesis, we have noted that: (1) owing to the difference in the frequency of occurrence between Chinese and English, it is not possible to locate a lexical equivalent for every Chinese classifier in English, or vice versa; (2) classifiers, when used as live metaphors in literary texts, tend to exhibit more than one semantic meaning in textual context, which in turn is open to different textual functions and may thus create difficulty for translation. Such issues, in consequence, deserve a closer analytic attention as exemplified by this study.

The thesis has basically followed a line of argument from semantic/syntactic level (Chapter 2) to textual/functional level (Chapter 3) in its comparative study, before it concentrates on classifier translation per se (Chapter 4).

We hope that our study would not only provide some insights in classifier translation, but also serve as a starting point for more research on this and other related topics.