

湖南师范大学

硕士学位论文

从心理学角度看文学翻译中的误解

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## 摘 要

（误解在翻译中是比较常见的，而文学文本由于其固有的特点，更使得译者发生误解的可能性大大增加。误解主要源于作者和读者的距离。因为文本一旦完成，作者和读者之间就会有间距。译者在阅读时“得不到作者的回应。相反，书本会将写作和阅读两种行为分离开来，使其缺乏交流。读者不会参与写作，作者也不在阅读行为中。”（刘宓庆 2001:398）在这种情况下，一切全靠译者运用已有的知识技能，透过解读获得理解。这个过程中所碰到的障碍，不管明显与否都有可能导致误解。）

传统的翻译理论往往将焦点集中在翻译结果，要么把译者假设为理想中的译者。这些理论都忽略了译者作为有意识的人，活动往往受到大脑思维活动的控制，译者在翻译中也必然有自己的心理活动并受多种心理机制的作用。本文就是将注意力转而集中在译者上，通过接纳心理学这门研究主体活动的学科的某些范畴来审视翻译过程的理解，从“误解”这一角度入手，阐释心理因素是如何介入原作的理解，并最终导致误解。

引言部分从总体上介绍了误解现象，在文学翻译中研究这一现象的意义，以及本文的写作目的。这一部分还讨论了误解和误译的区别，以及阐释学所讨论的误解和从心理学角度来讨论的误解的差异。

第一章列举了几种有影响力的翻译过程模式，并分析了各自的优势和不足。（这一方面为理解是翻译的基础这一命题提供了有力的证据，另一方面，从几种模式的变化自然而然过渡到本文的论证角度。本文是从认知心理学来讨论翻译的理解过程，提出文学翻译中的理解应包括对原文语义的认知以及对原文的审美认知。）

第二章为全文提供了理论依据。在现代认知心理学的观照下，借用其核心概念“感知觉”、“格式塔”、“图式”、“思维”、“想象”和“推理”，探讨了翻译理解的一些心理机制。

第三章专门论述了误解这一文学翻译中经常遇到的现象是如何

发生的。这种分析是按照第二章所论述的心理运行过程和一些心理机制并引用实例来完成的。本文逐个分析了译者在感知觉、思维和合成各个心理阶段出错的原因。其中最主要的原因是由于定势，定势在最小最大原则的指导下延续，就会影响到思维阶段各个心理机制的运行，最终发生误解。

结论部分指出误解不仅有以上分析的心理原因，还有一些造成其心理原因的深层客观因素。这些因素是和译者的外语习得方式有关，所以对于译者进行专门的培训是相当必要的。文章最后提出了一些可以减少文学翻译中误解的策略。

关键词：误解 感知觉 图式 思维 合成

文学翻译 心理过程

## Abstract

Miscomprehension is a common phenomenon in translation. It is more liable to happen in literary translation for the characteristics of literary texts. It mainly stems from the distance between the writer and the reader because when a text is finished, there is a distance between the author and the reader. "The writer does not respond to the reader. Rather, the book divides the act of writing and the act of reading into two sides, between which there is no communication. The reader is absent for the act of writing; the writer is absent for the act of reading. (刘宓庆 2001:398)" In such a situation, it is entirely up to the translator to activate all his ability and knowledge to interpret and finally attain comprehension of the text. During this process, obstacles, explicit or implicit, will often lead to miscomprehension.

However, traditional translation theories usually focus their attention on the translation products or presume translators as ideal. These theories ignore the fact that the translator, as a man with consciousness, has to be controlled by his mind; that therefore he is to be controlled by some psychological faculties in the translating process. The target of this research is turned from the translation product to the translator himself by employing psychology, a subject studying the activities of subjects. By adopting the perspective of "miscomprehension", this paper intends to explore how psychological factors interfere with the translator's comprehension of the source text, finally leading to miscomprehension in literary translation. Therefore, study on this topic is of unusual significance.

The thesis consists of three chapters in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction begins with a general idea of miscomprehension, then goes on to differentiate mistranslation and

miscomprehension, and miscomprehension discussed in a hermeneutic perspective and that in a psychological perspective. The significance of this research is also presented.

Chapter One introduces some influential models of the translation process, and analyzes their merits and demerits respectively. This acts not only as an argument that comprehension is the basis for translation, but also points ahead to the perspective of our discussion. We will discuss not only the linguistic cognition but also the aesthetic cognition of the text with theoretical support from cognitive psychology.

Chapter Two provides the theoretical foundation of this thesis. In the light of cognitive psychology, this chapter employs the core working concepts such as “sensation”, “perception”, “gestalt perception”, “schema”, “thinking”, “imagination” and “inference” to discuss the faculties and operations underlying the comprehension process.

Chapter Three explores how miscomprehension in literary translation takes place. Based on the discussion of Chapter Two and with illustrative examples, the chapter expounds miscomprehension in different operation stage such as sensation, perception, thinking and synthesis, in which set and the influence of minimax principle are the main reasons for miscomprehension.

In Conclusion the writer points out that miscomprehension occurs not only for psychological reasons, but is also caused by objective factors. Some of these factors concern the method of foreign language acquisition, which show that special training for would-be translators are necessary. Moreover, Some strategies are put forward to help reduce the possibility of miscomprehension in literary translation.

**Key Words:** miscomprehension    sensation and perception    schema  
thinking    synthesis

## Introduction

As we know, the process of translation can be divided into two stages: comprehension and expression. Only with correct comprehension can the original text be faithfully conveyed. Expression is the goal of comprehension, for only by faithful expression can we convey what has been comprehended. Of course, there is no clear dividing line between the two stages of comprehension and expression because the translator often considers about how to express his understanding of the original in another language at the comprehension stage and tries to gain a fuller understanding of the original at the expression stage. Thus the two stages infiltrate and supplement each other.

A correct comprehension will lead to a good translation. Some even state that a good translation is nothing else but the verbalization of one's comprehension processes. This seems true at least for cases where the world knowledge and the cultural expectations of source-text readers and target-readers are fairly similar. When they differ, there might be three possibilities. The first one is that translators may have to adapt their comprehension of the source text to the needs and expectations of the target readers. This is seen in the translation of some movies' names: *And Life Goes On...* is translated into 《春风吹又生》; *Bathing Beauty* into 《出水芙蓉》; *Sister Act* into 《修女也疯狂》. The translator's goal is to attract more people to watch the movies so he adapted the original names to meet the culture preference of the Chinese. In addition, the text may be intentionally mistranslated by the translator who has to make a choice between the two totally different cultures behind the respective languages(谢天振,1999:201). If a translator wants to introduce some new cultural model, he may intentionally use some unusual expressive way ignoring the aesthetic preference in his nation. The most convincing

example is Ezra Pound, a leading figure of the movement of imagist poetry who was greatly fascinated with the device of parallelism and juxtaposition of images used in Chinese classical poetry. Pound appreciated the piling up and juxtaposition of distinct images in different lines from which one can find a fanciful analogy in music, and the images unite to suggest an image which is different to both. In Li Bai's poem, the version “抽刀断水水更流，举杯消愁愁更愁” was rendered into “Drawing sword, cut into water, water again flows; Raise cup, quench sorrow, sorrow again sorrow.” “荒城空大漠” is translated into “Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert”. This kind of word-for-word translation into English without consideration for the grammatical rule of Chinese and English puzzled the world. The third situation is that miscomprehension arises and leads to mistranslation.

The first two cases, though deviating from the original meaning, are not due to miscomprehension. Mistranslation is not always the result of miscomprehension. It may arise in both comprehension and expression. Miscomprehension is one of the reasons of mistranslation but not the same as mistranslation.

In this research, the first two cases are not our target. We will probe into the comprehension process that leads to mistranslation.

Some may assume that according to hermeneutics a reader can freely imagine and comprehend the text he reads, so derivation from the original meaning in translation is unavoidable. Actually, as a unique reader, the translator has not so much freedom as the common reader in comprehension. Undoubtedly, with a purpose not to appreciate or entertain but to translate, the comprehension in translation requires a more thorough and meticulous understanding of the text than common reading activities. Translators ought to get well informed on all elements from the text and sometimes even those out of the text; thus the comprehension for the purpose of translation is much more painstaking

and comprehensive than other kinds of comprehension.

On the other hand, translators should try to limit his subjective interpretation in his translation, leaving as much room as possible for his target-language readers to imagine and making his works perform the same function as the ST. In fact the translator cannot avoid adding his own explanations resulting in narrowing or expanding the meaning of the ST to some extent. But freedom and faithfulness are interdependent conceptions and faithfulness is the basis as well as provides the chance of the translator's free choice. The translation process depends upon the original text, which considerably restricts the translator's freedom of choice; otherwise literary translation will show no difference from literary creation. At the same time, the translator has more freedom in the expression process; he can choose what he assumes to be the best way to express what he has understood.

Nevertheless, the main principles of philosophical hermeneutics provide new perspectives to reconsider problems in translation such as misunderstanding. From its point of view, misunderstanding comes from historical interpretation. A translation is only a product of the prejudice of its own age, for the translator's horizon, which is limited by his age, can never be the same as the author's. History, however, provides different historically situated translators with opportunities to reinterpret, reevaluate and retranslate the same text.

This paper is not to discuss the comprehension process in a historical but in a psychological perspective. It is to analyze the dynamic mental process of a translator in comprehending a literary text in order to watch how miscomprehension takes place.

Translation is an abstract conception encompassing both the process of translating and the product of that process (Bell, 1991:13). Translation theory is mainly focused on the two aspects, but they are not equally treated. "Our present situation, however, is one in which translation



theory has, for the most part, concentrated on the product to the exclusion of the process and has adopted a normative attitude to it by making inferences back to it through the description and evaluation of the product.”(Bell, 1991:13) Maybe we should attribute this to our long-term linguistic-ridden approach in translation study. However, this is not enough to establish a complete translation theory. The Russian translation theorist Л. С. Бархылапов has stated in his book *Language and Translation* that the nature of translation studies is to describe the translation process scientifically, that its main task is to model this process. The description and explanation of the translation process can provide some clue to how translators work during translating and help to find solution for their problems; at the same time, the basic sociocultural position and value system of the translator as an individual should be taken into consideration. Then “the science of translation attempts to establish comprehensive interactional categories and to develop a verifiable representational system to describe and explain the process and results of translation. This representational system may be characterized as an objectification of reflections on the problematics of translation ”(Wilss, 2000:846). This kind of process itself is essentially mental rather than physical.

This paper has two objectives. The first objective is to show how psychological faculties operate in the translator’s mind. According to Ingarden, despite the considerable diversity of literary works, every ‘cognition’ of a literary work has a stock of operations which are always the same in all these diverse cases, if it is not disturbed or interrupted by external circumstances. The second objective is to offer a detailed analysis and explanation in an effort to explore how miscomprehension, an unneligible fact in literary translation, takes place.

# Chapter One

## Comprehension, as the Basis for Translation

Translation is not a visible, fixed process but an invisible one with a lot of varieties which need more efforts than the study of the translation product. But this did not prevent the theorists from exploring the process and constructing translation models. The translation process has been greatly developed through interdisciplinary research in the past years. So first of all we are to review some influencing process models.

### 1.1 Nida's Model

Nida thought that the direct system of translating is not accurate enough to describe the nature of linguistic structure and what happened in translation because the competent translator actually goes through a seemingly roundabout process of analysis, transfer, and restructuring

According to Nida (1969:34), the phases involved in the translation process- Analysis, Transfer, Restructuring---can be schematically illustrated as follows:



(Fig: 1-1)

In the first phase, the translator analyzes the message of the source-language “into its simplest and structurally clearest forms. The analysis of the SL text has three aspects: grammatical, referential—semantic, and connotative. In the grammatical analysis, surface structures are transformed back into kernels, following early transformational

generative grammar. The referential – semantic analysis delimits the potential range of meaning of lexical items, so that their specific meaning in the respective context can be exactly detected. The analysis of the connotative component of meaning is primarily a stylistic one and comprises every linguistic unit from the sounds and sound configurations to the entire discourse. Transfer is the second phase in the translation process. It operates on the level of the kernels or near-kernels. In the third and last phase of the translation process, the kernels transferred into the target-language are transformed into surface structures.

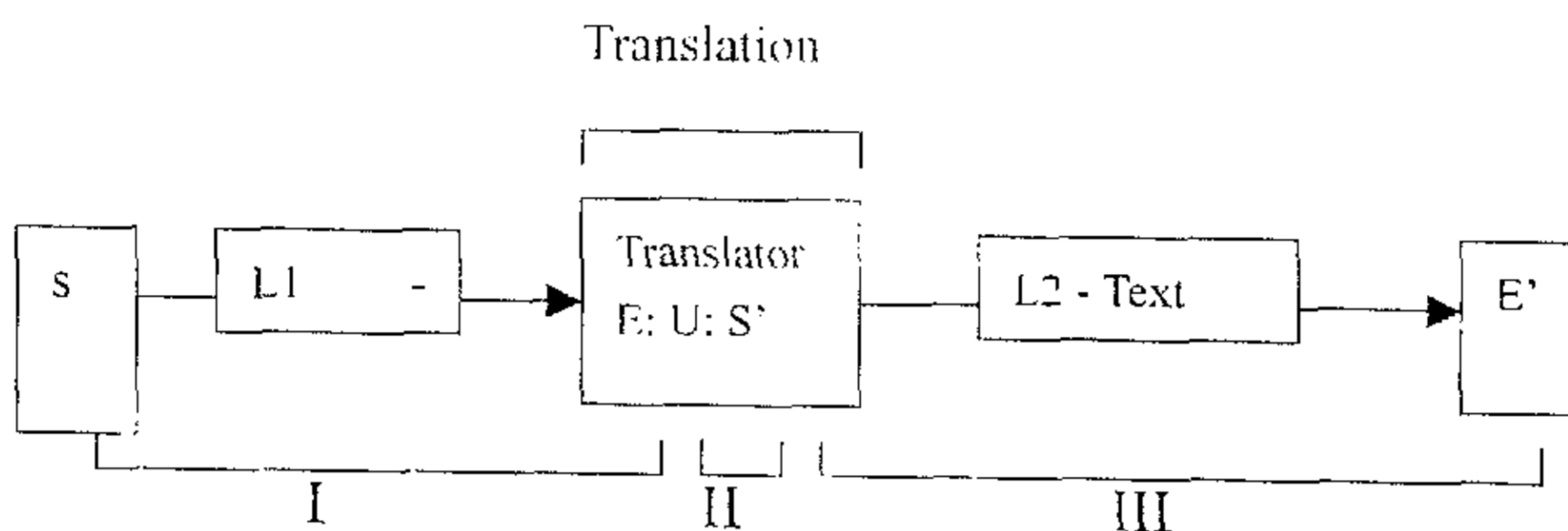
There are some deficiencies in Nida's model. First, the notion of kernel as used by Nida is nowhere defined and remains vague. It is left to the translator's discretion to determine kernels and near-kernels and to split complex structures into simple ones, which lead to different translations among different translators. What's more, the method of back-transformation is used when the SL text is syntactically so complex that it hinders the translator from interpreting its meaning (Wolfgang Lörscher, 1991:17). Second, this can still be regarded as an oversimplification of the translation process. For the discreteness of the three phases and their strict temporal succession seem not to be found in reality.

## **1.2 Kade's Model**

Kade's model situates translation within a framework of communication theory. He distinguishes between a narrow, micro-linguistic concept of translation, which restricts itself to the change of code from SL to TL, and a wider, communication-theoretical concept of translation which is represented as the following Fig: 1-2 (Lörscher, 1991:19).

According to this model, translation comprises part of phase I, i.e.

the decoding of the SL text by the translator as receiver, the whole of phase II. i.e. the change of code of the SL (L1) text by the translator (U), and part of phase III, i.e. the translator's realization of the SL text's message in the TL text for the TL receiver.



(Fig: 1- 2)

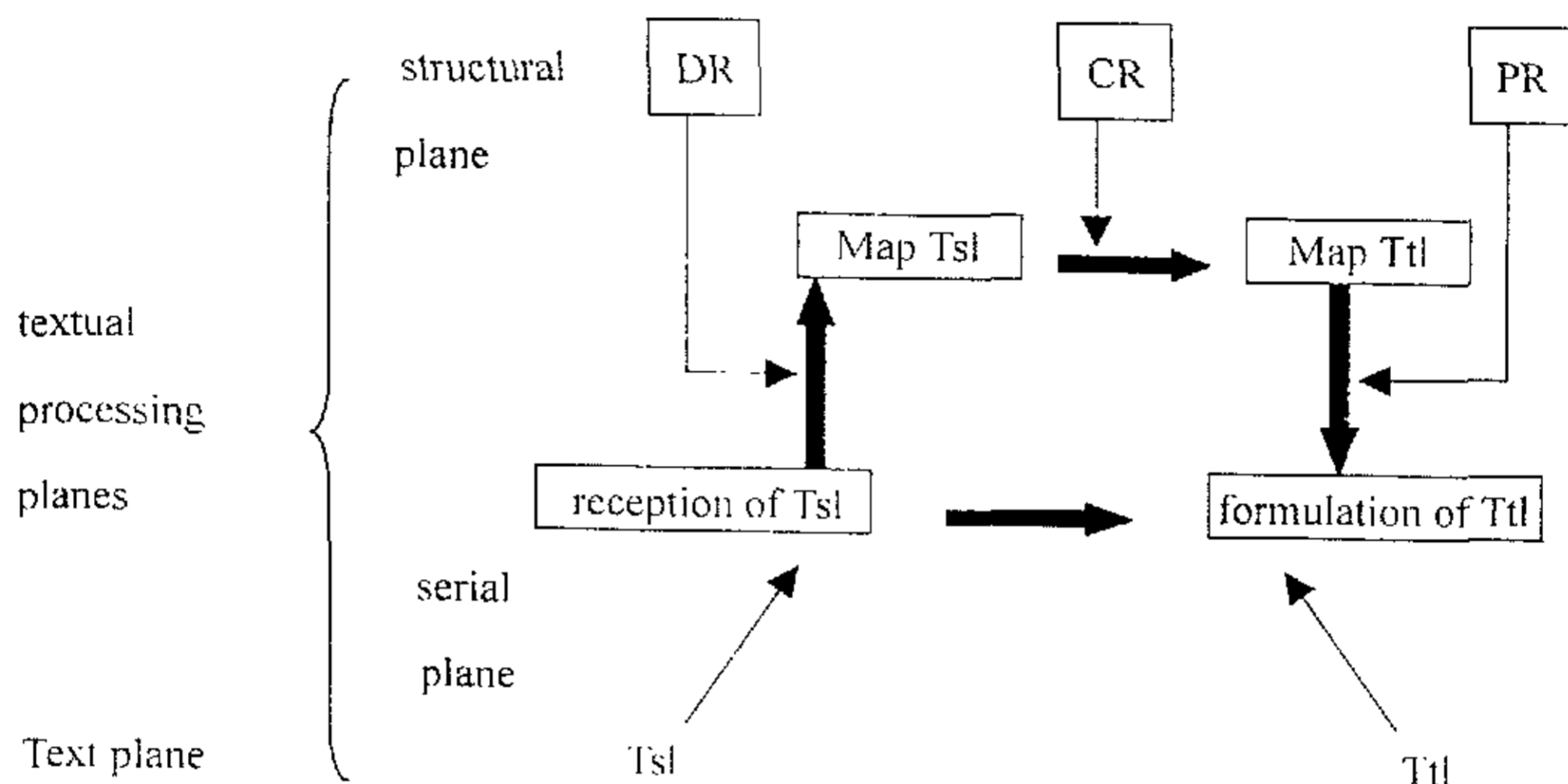
However, similar to Nida, Kade considers the translation process to be a succession of three partial processes, but he gives no information about how the translation brings about this change of code. Nothing is said about the mental operations of text processing taking place in the mind of the translator when s/he receives the SL text, organizes it into units of translation, transfers them into the target-language, and thus produces the TL text.

### 1.3 Holmes' Model

James S. Holmes presented a two-map two plane text-rank translation models (Fig:1-3).

In this text-rank model, Holmes suggested that the translation of literary texts takes place on two planes: a serial plane, where one translates sentence by sentence, and a structural plane, on which one abstracts a "map"(mental conception) of the original text. Then on the basis of this Map (Map Tsl) he develops a second map (Map Ttl) and uses the second map as a kind of general criterion against which to test each

sentence during the formulation of the new, translated text. Of the three rule sets, the first, that of the derivation rules (DR), determines the way in which the translator abstract his map of the source text from the text itself, and the third, that of projection rules (PR), determines the way in which he makes use of his map of the prospective target text in order to formulate the text, while the second, that of correspondence rules (CR) or matching rules (MR)---or, if one prefers, equivalence rules (ER)---determines the way in which he develops his target-text map from his source-text map.



(Fig: 1 - 3)

Tsl=source-language text ; Ttl=target-language text; DR=derivation rules; CR=correspondence rules; PR=projection rules

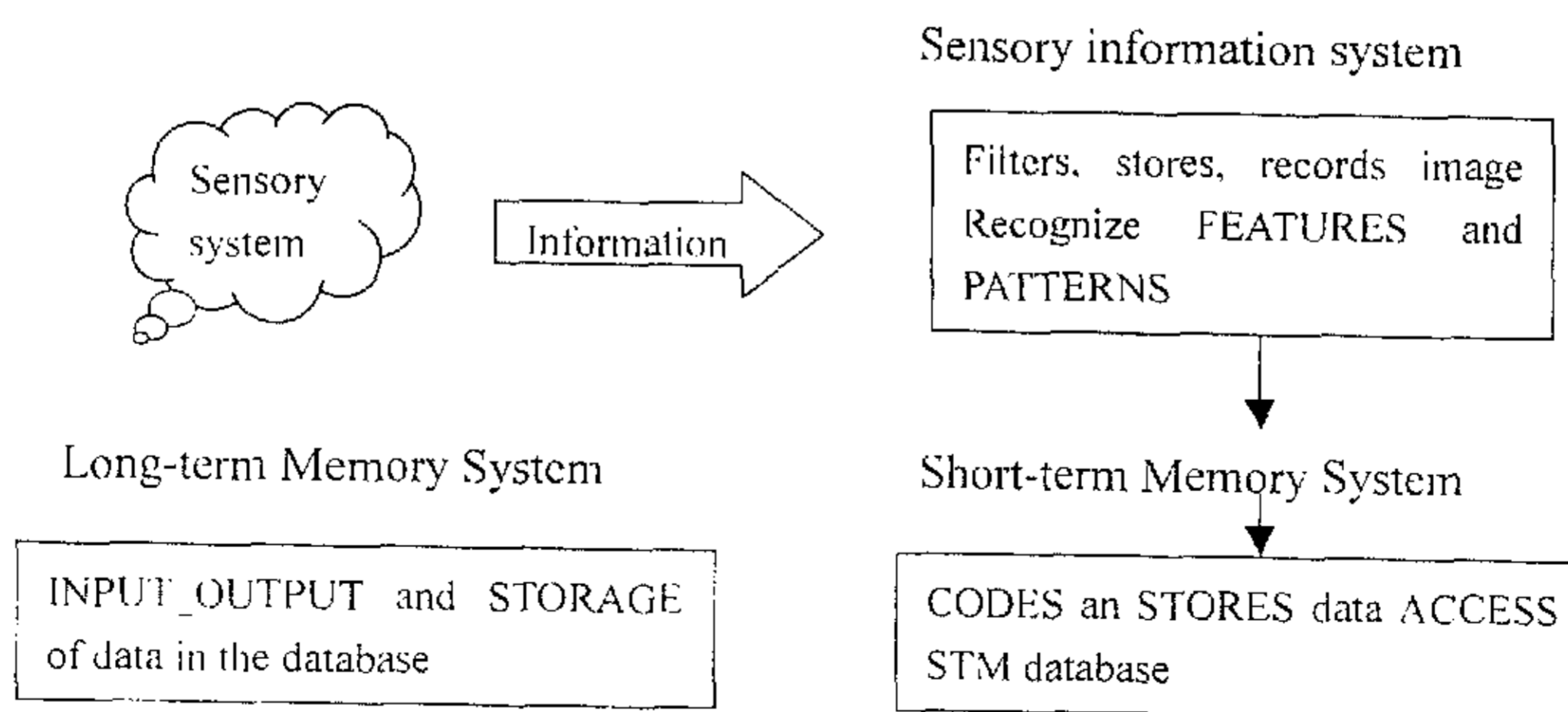
Holmes' model is a further step forward, since he has specified three phases in the transferring process, of which the second is a unique operation in translation. In this phase the translator develops a target-text map from his source-text map by means of correspondence rules. Yet his model is still based on linguistic schemata, leaving the mental processing untouched. What's more, his idea of two maps is hardly tenable since there is no evidence available to classify these two maps of the mental

representation. It is perhaps applicable to the process of translating from one's mother tongue to a foreign language. As for the reverse case, i.e. from a foreign language to one's mother tongue, there is no distinct transference of two maps.

### 1.4 Bell's Model

An even more forward step in this area is made by Roger.T. Bell(1991) who has conducted a systematic study on the mental process of translation providing a model presented in a more substantial manner. In this translation model, he has explored the mental processing stage, which he explains as the involvement of the "analysis" of the source language text, the "organization of the semantic representations" of the individual clauses into an integrated schema which contains the whole of the information the reader has been able to accumulate in the course of reading the text. Roger Bell has drawn from cognitive science and located his model of translating within the model of human information-processing, and thus gone deep into the translator's mental processing of the text at the intermediate stage, as illustrated in fig 1-4.

Roger Bell has undoubtedly provided insight into a darker area and advanced a great deal in theoretical study of the mental activities in



(Fig: 1-4)

translation process. But he has failed to account for features characterizing literary translation. Ingarden has said a literary work of art is a result of the particular activity of the creative acts producing them. Once the creative intentionality has thus been actualized, it becomes to a certain degree binding for us. We must adjust ourselves to it; or, if for some reason it does not satisfy us, we must transform it, or further develop it, by means of a new creative act.

### **1.5 A Brief Summary**

As shown by the four models discussed above which claim to capture the translation process, the perspectives of research have shifted from linguistics to communication theory and then to psychology. The first two models describe some components of an optimal translation by an ideal translator. The dynamics of the translation process as a largely mental activity of an individual are not explained. The translation process cannot be described with any degree of completeness within the framework of a linear, left-to-right decoding/encoding model. Such a model shows too little differentiation. It does not do justice to the translator's cognitive achievement, either in handling the source text or in the production of an acceptable target text. It also does not give an adequate picture of the mental complexity of the translation process. A most systematic model is done by Bell who has studied on the building of an integrated model of the process of translation. This is set within a more general model of human information-processing and a systemic theory of language form and language use but given little consideration of the aesthetics and culture elements in this process.

In considering the issue, three points should be emphasized. First, comprehension is the basis for translation. In all of these models

comprehension is the first step, no matter what disciplinary framework is used to discuss the translation process. In this thesis, I intend to explore comprehension with the aim of deepening the understanding of the nature of the translation process and helping translators reduce miscomprehension.

Second, the study of literary texts requires an integrated approach that involves not only linguistic analysis, but also by a study of aesthetics and art criticism. As a result, an investigation of the mental process in translation would require a study of information processing and cognitive mechanisms, and, within that, a study of the aesthetic progression with the help of aesthetic psychology.

In China, a lot of scholars have mentioned aesthetics but in most occasions they have focused on the aesthetic problem of content and form. For example, Yan Fu's "faithfulness", "expressiveness" and "elegance", Fu Lei's "spiritual similarity" were put forward as translation standards. Liu Miqing also has done much systematic work and made great contribution in this field. However, little work has been done as yet on the research into the translator's psychology in translation. Recently, Jiang Qiuxia has explored the aesthetic process in translation by using the gestalt perception. However the gestalt perception is limited in perception faculty, which is not enough to demonstrate man's psychology in translation, which is basically a process of thinking.

Third, cognitive psychology is the scientific study of the thinking mind and is concerned with how we attend to and gain information about the world, how that information is stored and processed by the brain and how we solve problems, think, and formulate language. (Robert L. Solso, 2001:2) The study of the psychology of the comprehension process is in essence a study of the translator. The description of the translator's cognitive and aesthetic process can develop his competence and help him to do his work more efficiently.



## Chapter Two

### Analysis of the Comprehension Process from a Psychological Perspective

Wilss (2000: 849) pointed out: “if we decided to describe and explain translation processes by means of a cognitive framework of representation and legitimation, this has meaning only if we are prepared to investigate these processes in accordance with operational concepts.” The present study will try to describe some psychological operations by analyzing translation products. In the comprehension process such operations include sensation, perception, thinking, schema, synthesis, imagination, and inference. Before we analyze them, some psychological models of text processing will be discussed.

#### 2.1 Psychological Models of Text Comprehension

In reviewing the history of psychology we find that there are three models of text comprehension: *top-down* model, *bottom-up* model and *interactive* model. It appears that while purely bottom-up models of text comprehension have been proposed (e.g., LaBerge and Samuels 1974), purely top-down models are regarded as implausible.

Purely bottom-up models claim that comprehension is exclusively determined by textual features. These are perceived by perceptual processes, which trigger some low level language comprehension processes (e.g., procedures for lexical access), which, after they have done their job, in turn set off a series of higher level processes (syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic procedures, respectively). At each level, procedure take as their input only data from lower level processes. What bottom-up models suggests is that reading proceeds in a serial manner: first there are perceptual procedures, then there are lexical access

procedures, and so on.

Purely top-down models, on the other hand, are logically implausible. These theories claim that the comprehension process is completely driven by the goals, knowledge, cultural background, etc. of the reader and not by textual information, which makes one wonder what actually is interpreted.

This leaves psychologists the possibility to assume some degree of interaction, in which both bottom-up and top-down processes influence each other. “Available evidence suggests that text comprehension is actually some mixture of top-down and bottom-up processes”<sup>①</sup>.

Nevertheless, “the advantage of a bottom-up strategy is that it is much more flexible which is useful when dealing with ambiguous texts. However, the disadvantage is that the processing is more time and resource consuming.”(Zwaan, 1993:151) If readers expect the text to be determinate, they will mainly use a top-down approach for texts which are usually not ambiguous, such as news stories and other scientific works. However, many literary texts are ambiguous, one may claim that literary comprehension is predominantly bottom-up. Readers who have been exposed to these texts will tend to develop a bottom-up approach to texts considered to be literary.

Thus we will first of all analyze the translator’s sensation and perception of literary texts.

## **2.2 Sensation and Perception of the Linguistic Meaning**

From psychological point of view, our ability to recognize familiar types of things is a spectacular human characteristic. This attribute allows us to recognize an old friend in a sea of faces, to identify an entire musical theme from a few notes, to read words, to enjoy the taste of a

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<sup>①</sup> 王建 译安圣, 《认知心理学》, 北京: 北京大学出版社, 1992, P351。

vintage wine, or to appreciate the smell of a rose. It is a cognitive endowment that we mostly perform seamlessly, rapidly, and without effort.

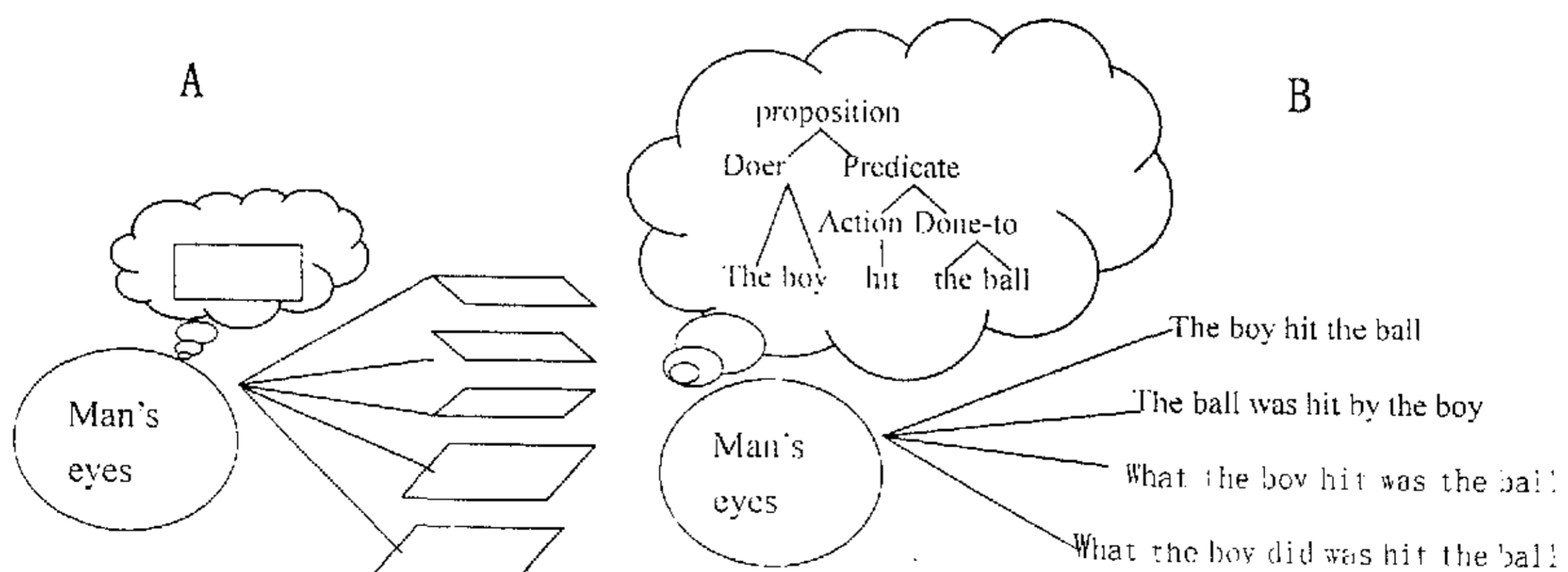
The term “sensation” (Soloso, 2001:75) refers to the initial detection of energy from the physical world. At the beginning of our reading, we find ourselves confronted with a passage, a book, a volume in the real world consisting of a collection of pages covered with written or printed signs, thus the first thing we experience is the visual sense of these “signs”.

However, as soon as we “see” printed signs and not drawings, we perform something more than, or rather something different from a mere visual perception. The term “perception” in cognitive psychology (Soloso, 2001:76), on the other hand, involves higher-order cognition in the interpretation of sensory information. When we read a book, hear a concert, have a massage, smell cologne, or taste caviar, we experience far more than the immediate sensory stimulation. Each of these sensory events is processed within the context of our knowledge of the world; our previous experiences give meaning to simple sensory experiences.

Perceptual psychologists have developed some theories of how the world is perceived by human. One theory, *constructive perception*, holds that people “construct” perceptions by actively selecting stimuli and merging sensations with memory. The theory of constructive perception is based on the notion that during perception we form and test hypotheses regarding percepts based on both what we sense and what we know. Thus, perception is the combined effect of what comes in through our sensory system and what we have learned about the world through experience. When you see a friend approaching from a distance, you recognize him because his features, his nose, his eyes, his hair and so on, are sensed by your eye and because you have knowledge that he usually can be seen at this time at this place. You may even be able to recognize him in spite of

the fact that he may have grown a mustache recently or changed his hair styling or is wearing sunglasses. According to the constructivists, the brain has a rich supply of knowledge about the world and the eye (and other sensory organs) provides us with the raw sensory input. The theory is consistent with the interactive model of text comprehension. From this point of view, when we perceive the words on the page as we are reading, we “understand” their meaning because we have semantic knowledge of what they mean.

In sentence comprehension (Gleitman, 1991:354), there is a Sentence Analyzing Machinery (SAM) operating in terms of several strategies. The most important of them is that the propositional roles appear in the order: DOER, ACT, DONE-TO. It is called Simplest Form. There is an analogy between linguistic paraphrase and perceptual constancy. The perceptual constancy means a tendency for a percept to remain constant despite changes in the stimulus. For example, a white cloth continues to appear white whether viewed in bright sunlight or in deep shade. When we look at a tabletop, the image that actually falls on our eyes is a trapezoid whose exact shape depends on our orientation to the table. But shape constancy allows us to perceive the unchanging rectangular shape that gives rise to these images. When facing a variety of surface sentences, the linguistic system still interprets them all as containing the same proposition.



(Fig: 2-1)

## 2.3 The Law of Closure and Image Actualization

What determines how a pattern will be organized? Some factors that determine visual grouping were first described by Max Wertheimer, the founder of Gestalt Psychology, a school of psychology which believes that organization is basic to all mental activity, that it reflects the way the brain functions, and that all of the conception has a common characteristic, i.e. seeing things as wholes. Wertheimer regarded these grouping factors as the **laws of perceptual organization** that include Proximity, Similarity, and Closure. (Gleitman, 1991: 213)

Among them, **Closure** means man often tends to complete figures that have gaps in them. For example, if shown the patterns of visual stimuli,

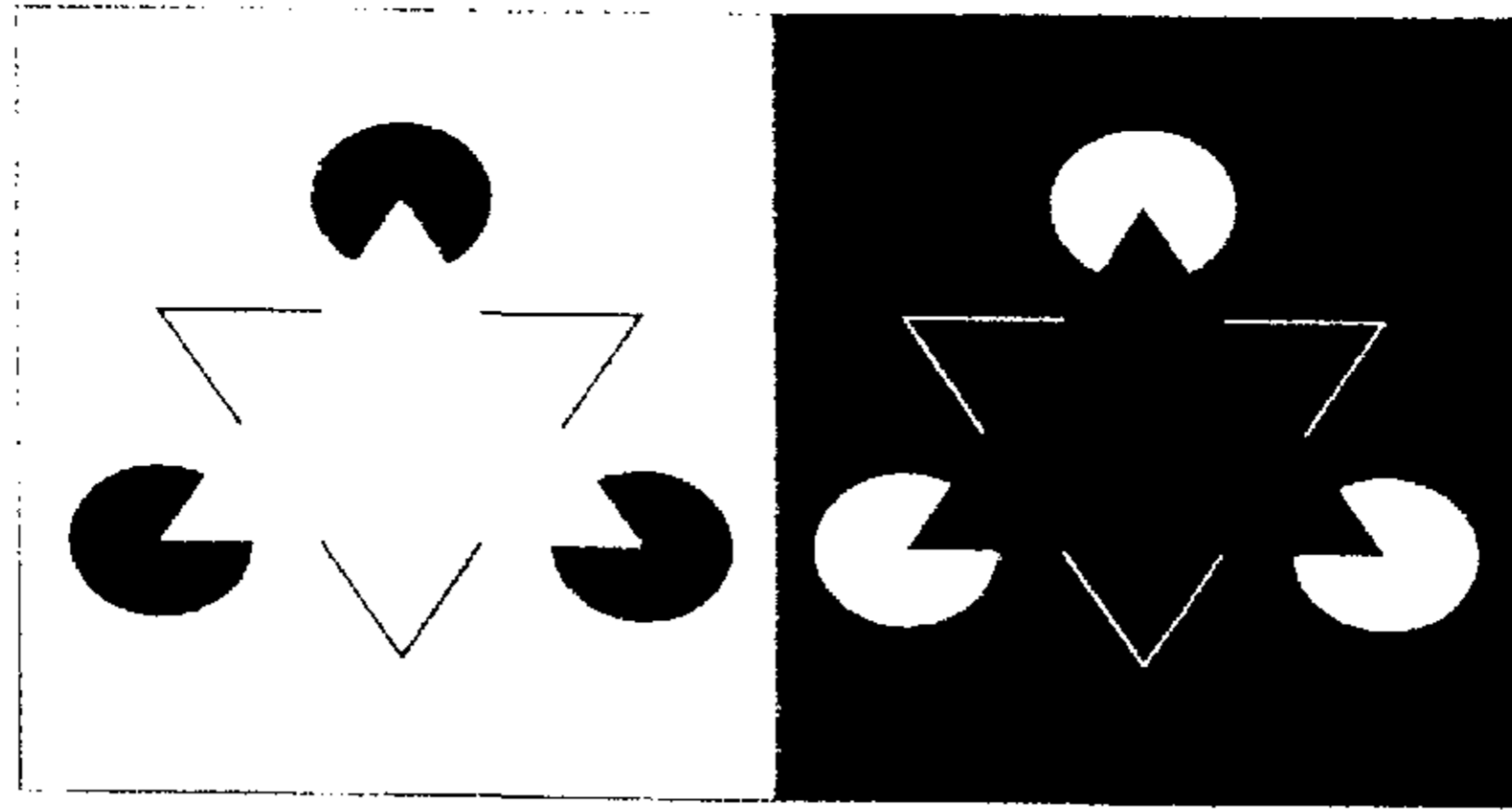


(Fig: 2-2)

most people would recognize them and respectively label them a triangle and a square. A closurelike phenomenon yields subjective contours. The following figure (Fig: 2-3) is contours that are seen, despite the fact that they don't physically exist.

Some theorists interpret subjective contours as a special case of good continuation. In their view, the contour is seen to continue along its original path, and if necessary, jumps a gap or two to achieve the continuation.

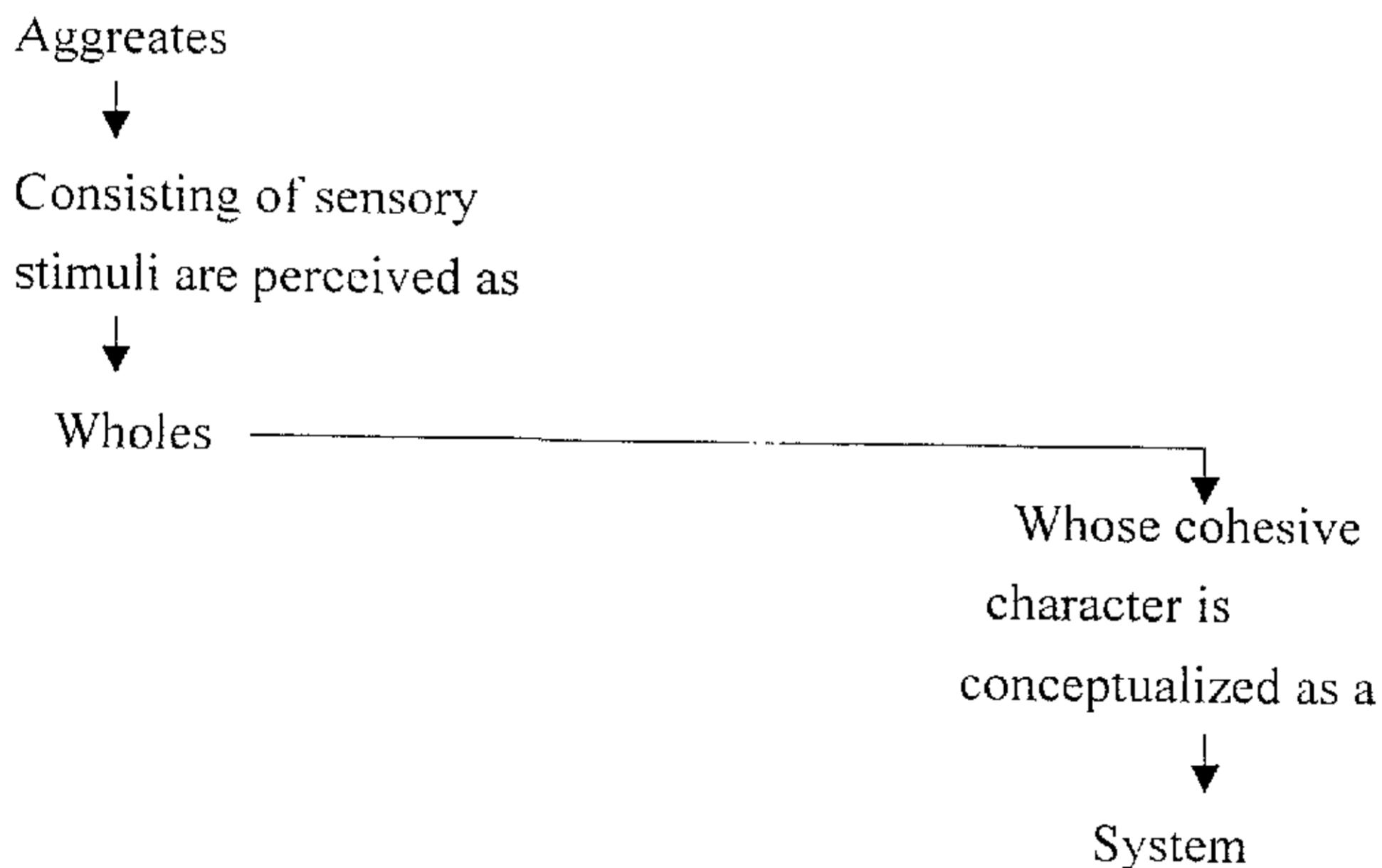
In reading a text, the effect of this law can also be perceived. Ingarden said in a reading which is properly carried out, the content of the work is organized quasi-automatically into an internally coherent, meaningful whole of separate sentence meanings which are completely independent of one another.



6.26 *Subjective contours* Subjective contours are a special completion phenomenon in which contours are seen even where none exist. In (A), we see a white triangle whose vertices lie on top of the three blue circles. The three sides of this white triangle (which looks brighter than the white background) are clearly visible, even though they don't exist physically. In (B), we see the same effect with blue and white reversed. Here, there is a blue triangle (which looks bluer than the blue background) with subjective blue contours. (Kantza, 1976)

(Fig: 2-3)

Bell(2000:16) has illustrated this processing by the following figure:



(Fig: 2-4)

According to Bell, perception operates in the following way: chaotic aggregates are fed into the mind through senses and are then converted into information-bearing “wholes” by the processes of perception.

Bell (2000:237) also put forward an image demon which is charged

with the task of converting stimuli received from the sensory system into images. This demon “takes the incoming aggregate and converts it into a whole, an image”. However, Bell has not discussed further on the demon, nor on image itself.

In fact, the literariness of literary texts requires the translator to focus not only on the inherent meaning and general idea, but also on the aesthetic consistency. “If one wants to achieve an aesthetic apprehension of the work, one must often go far beyond what is actually contained in the objective stratum of the work in the process of objectifying the portrayed objectivities. One must “concretize” these objects at least to a certain degree and within boundaries set by the work itself.”(Ingarden, 1973:50)

In translating a literary work, the most important element to concretize is its image. Image visualization is very important in literary translation. Andre Lefevere<sup>1</sup> also claimed that translators as rewriters “created images of a writer, a work”. And when translators as readers “say that they have ‘read’ a book, what they mean is that they have a certain image, a certain construct of that book in their heads.” Translation, as Lefevere put it, is to project the image of an author and a (series of) work(s) in another culture.

To perceive images is to visualize images, which is defined by Richards as “to think of something in any concrete fashion”. Perception of linguistic meaning is a cognitive mechanism, while image perception is to some extent an aesthetic experience, in which the translator sketches the psychological contours of the poetic subject, experiences the aesthetic picture of the author and finally experiences certain feelings or emotions. During this process, the perception mechanism of the translator tends to fill in details to form a whole image from the linear linguistic structure.

For instance, when we imagine Tom Jones, during our reading of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lefevere, A. *Translation: Rewriting, and the manipulation of Literary Frame*, Routledge, 1992.

novel, we tend to put together various facets that have been revealed to us at different times--- in contrast to the film, where we always see him as a whole in every situation. Nevertheless, the different facets always contain references to others, and each view of character only gains its significance through being linked to other views which may overlap, restrict, or modify it. It follows that our image of Tom Jones cannot be pinned down to one particular view, but finally a whole image of Tom Jones will be formed in the translator's mind.

Whether in novel or poetry, any image can strike us with a certain contour or atmosphere, just as we identify an individual by a certain air which he has and which no particular sign can determine exactly. Take as an example the following section from "In Memoriam" by Tennyson:

Dark House, by which once more I stand  
Here in the long unlovely street  
Doors, where my heart was used to beat  
So quickly, waiting for a hand.

A hand that can be grasped no more—  
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,  
And like a guilty thing I creep  
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away  
The noise of life begins again,  
And ghastly through the drizzling rain  
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

With all the relevant items such as "dark house", "the long unlovely", "the noise of life" and "the bald street", the section creates a vivid



atmosphere of an anonymous, ugly and unfeeling city. This atmosphere is created to set off the pain of the poet as he stands outside the house where his dead friend lived.

The aim of the literary translator is to reconstruct the image in another language arousing a corresponding aesthetic feeling in the TL readers, which makes the image actualization indispensable. In the comprehension process, the formulation of image will facilitate the translator's aesthetic experience. In the expression process, the translator can employ this image to integrate all items to form a corresponding whole image in target language preventing the substitution of words or sentences and the wrong selection of words.

## **2.4 The Translator's Mental Schema**

Dissatisfied with attempts of moral philosophers and others to explain human knowledge through rational speculation alone, Jean Piaget adopted a unique and ultimately influential attitude. He decided that since intellect, like all biological and evolutionary adaptation, it could best be explained from a biological and evolutionary point of view. The best way to understand the nature of the adult mind was to study mental activity from birth, observing its development and changes in adaptation to the environment. Though Piaget's theory was formulated in the long course of observing and experimenting children's cognitive psychology, it has a great inspiration to the construction of the translator's mental structure.

The newborn starts life with a rather limited repertoire of built-in reactions, such as gross bodily movements in response to distress,

sucking and swallowing reflexes, and after a few days, certain orienting response such as head and eye movements. These recurrent action patterns are the first mental elements—or *schemas*—through which the infant organizes the world that impinges upon it. At first, these various schemas operate in isolation. Later these schemas can operate in an integrated way and become more sophisticated. According to Piaget, the answer lies in the joint action of the two processes that in his view are responsible for all facts of cognitive development: *assimilation* and *accommodation*. At any given point, the child has to be able to interpret the environment in terms of the mental schemas he has at the time; the environment is assimilated to the schema. But the schemas necessarily change as the child continues to interact with the world around it; they accommodate to the environment. This process continues, with further assimilations followed by yet further accommodations, until finally merging into one unified exploratory schema.

In Piaget's view, the filter and changing of the input of stimuli is called *assimilation*, and the changing of the internal schema for adaptation to circumstances is called *accommodation*. In specific sense, assimilation means that if the object is adaptable to the subject's current schema, it will be absorbed and stored in the schema, and as a result the quantity of the current schema is enlarged and the existing schema is enriched, but the mental schema itself isn't changed in quality.

Accommodation is a kind of adjusting process, in which, when the current schema is not adaptable to the object and can't be assimilated, it will adjust, revise and change itself so as to be suitable for the changing object. As a result, the current mental schema is not only enriched in quantity, but also changed in quality.

The current mental schema is steady and in a state of balance. When assimilation and accommodation occur, the balance is broken. Because the subject has absorbed new experience and knowledge, the current schema reaches a new balance from the broken balance and a new mental schema is produced. This constant process, i.e. balance → unbalance → balance, is just the continuous construction process of mental schema. As a result, the mental schema is developed from a low level to higher one in the course of continuous assimilation and accommodation. Hence, Piaget pointed out that every structure was the result of psychological function, which lead to the transition from a little preliminary structure to a much more complicated one.

Similarly, the literary translator's understanding the original is a cognitive process, including recognizing the stimulus of language, images, and emotion. Therefore, the construction of the translator's mental schema can also be explained by Piaget's theory. But the translator's mental schema here has been changed to include not only the linguistic elements but also aesthetic ones. The constructing principles are also

assimilation and accommodation. When the two occur, a new schema is formed. As a result, the current schema is enriched.

First, we will analyze the process of assimilation in translation when the schema between the text and the translator is similar. Even though each individual is characterized by his own way of perception, there are biological, psychological and anthropological universals underlying human faculties. We know that there are between languages semantic similarities and syntactic similarities at the so-called kernel, core level. And it has always been a common sense that humans can even actualize similar expression out of an inanimate object. We often find peace in the green and associate red with enthusiasm. It is for the same reason that translation is made feasible in human history.

It is also the very reason why passive synthesis occurs in reading or aesthetic cognition. Passive synthesis is a kind of unconscious operation mainly based on similar schema of human perception. As Iser claimed, passive syntheses do not denote processes of passive and automatic acceptance but the processes of composition that took place below the threshold of consciousness. The translator as a reader assembles aspects of a totality of the text without the reader's knowing just why, and the aesthetic perception and presentation recorded unconsciously. Iser also pointed out that in the formation of images, the reader synthesizes subconsciously the linguistic signals which "project"

themselves into him.

This unconscious process happens due to the similar schema existing between the text and the reader. For the literary translator, the unconsciously perceived mental structure is registered in the translated texts. And the more similarity between the schema of the translator and the text, the more effective the comprehension process will be. The translator will find it handy to actualize and represent the linguistic structure and artistic image. Take the following familiar poems as examples:

And I will love thee still, my dear,  
Till the seas gang dry,  
Till the seas gang dry, my dear,  
And the rocks melt wi' the sun!  
And I will love thee still, my dear,  
While the sands o' life shall run.

我会永远爱你，亲爱的，  
一直到四海涸竭。  
直到四海涸竭，亲爱的，  
直到太阳把岩石消融！  
我会永远爱你，亲爱的，  
只要生命无穷。

The translation confirms to the original in that it arouses a similar feeling in the reader whose success is due to the similar schema shared. The similarities of mental schema between the translator and the text

make the image realizable and the transference direct and natural.

To know how much spring pervades amidst flowers

Just peer at the delicate shades of green and red

-- Kates

欲知花间春多少？

但看绿红浅与深。

This English poem is coincident both in form and in essence with famous Chinese line “欲知湖上春多少，但看台前柳浅深”（黄龙，1988:233），so it is easy for the translator to comprehend and metamorphose them into Chinese. We can see that when the perceptual patterns operate in a similar way, i.e. when the symbolic expression plays a same role in the translator’s mind as in the author, the expression may bring about the corresponding state of mind.

Thus we come to the point of “simpatico”. (Venuti, 1995:274) By simpatico, the translator seeks an identity, a self-recognition:

*The translator should not merely get along with the author; not merely find him likable; there should also be an identity between them... In this instance, the translator can follow the author’s progress, accumulating exhaustive knowledge of the foreign texts, strengthening and developing the affinity which he already feels with his author’s ideas and tastes, becoming, in effect, of the same mind. When simpatico is present, the translation process can be seen as a veritable recapitulation of the creative process by which the original came into existence; and when the translator is assumed to participate vicariously in the author’s thoughts and feelings, the translated text is read as the*

*transparent expression of authorial psychology or meaning. The voice that the reader hears in any translation made on the basis of simpatico is always recognized as the author's, never as a translator's, nor even as some hybrid of the two.*

This is a psychological state for a person to seek the identity, similarity and unity between himself and the object in order to reach agreement by way of assimilation. It is through this psychological operation that the translator's horizon coincides with the writer's. Consequently, the translator sees his essential strength from the original, meanwhile appreciate the beautiful. Thus an emotion of sympathy appears in the literary translator. A.H. Maslow, an American psychologist, believes that sympathy is a state of "being oblivious of oneself". It means that the boundary between the subject and object disappears in their emotional exchange, and that the subject assimilates the object into his own emotional realm, as a result produces a kind of remarkable happiness. We know that Lin Shu was once so moved by what he was translating that he had to stop his pen for a while to shed tears. This was due to sympathy aroused in his mind.

However, the principle of simpatico merely accounts for processes under a parallel condition of psychological experience. It leaves aside the occasion when dissimilarities emerge in psychical patterns.

## 2.5 Thinking in the Comprehension of Literary Works

In ordinary language, the word *think* has a wide range of meanings. It may be a synonym for *remembering* (as in “I can’t think of her name”), or for *belief* (as in “I think sea serpents exist”). It may also refer to a state of vague and undirected reverie as in “I’m thinking of nothing in particular”. But thinking from a psychological perspective means a set of internal activities that are aimed at the solution of a problem. Psychologists found that the components of thought are mental imagery and abstract elements. (Gleitman, 1991:290)

Translation is a process overlapping with the phases of analysis. We can see this from Nida’s back-transformation method, i.e. the translator goes back to elementary structures (kernels of near-kernels). However, this method is probably not practiced generally for economical reasons. Only when the translator does not automatically associate a TL text segment for dissimilar schema exists between the text and the translator, does s/he split the complex SL text segment into more elementary structures. At the same time, “the aesthetic experience is often not completely unfolded, for quite incidental reasons. It is interrupted before the constitution of the aesthetic object is achieved.” (Ingarden, 1973:187), so the aesthetic experience is not a mere experience of sympathy, which stirs in us as a kind of reaction to something given in sense perception.



That is to say, the translator as a reader should not only receive sensory stimuli and assign meaning in their perception in a passive synthesis way, but also has some problems to solve in their thinking. He needs use some accommodative operations to imagine, to reason, to make decisions and finally be adaptable to the dissimilar schema of the text, i.e. to grasp the real meaning of the text. So we can also say that thinking is the guarantee for correct comprehension.

Now we can come to our discussion of the process of accommodation when the schema between the translator and the text is dissimilar. The translator deals with two languages and two cultures. The literary images are always cross culture and cross time and space. Sometimes we can even see conflict psychical patterns. A familiar instance is that the moon arouses an aesthetic association in the mind of westerners totally different from that of the easterners.

According to Piaget, when the current schema is not adaptable to the object and cannot be assimilated, it will adjust, revise and change itself so as to be suitable for the changing object. Confronted with the existing dissimilarities, the translator is inclined to establish similar schema, or to get actively and consciously accommodated with the author to be simpatico with the author. The reason is that the translator's mental image actualization is conducted to confine to the original, he is to reproduce the image which corresponds to that in the original. He has fewer choices

than the writer who can freely choose his handy way of expression. To represent the image in the target text, the translator has to follow the facts and the experience in the original.

The conscious accommodation of the translator can result in a change in, or development of his schema, that is, it can modify his passive perception of the image schema in the original, adjusting his own to the original. Of course sometimes the translator also adjusts the original to his own for the consideration of the target readers. Once the accommodation happened, the image is readily assimilated in the mind of the translator.

There are two main forms of accommodation in the cognitive sense, which means the creation of new schema or the modification of old schema by the psychological operations of imagination and inference.

Of course, even for ordinary readers, mental and psychological operations are necessary and indispensable, but for translators, some of the faculties operate more consciously and voluntarily. Let's see how the following operating faculties operate in the translator's mind.

### **2.5.1 Imagination**

Imagination refers to the psychological phenomenon that a new image is reproduced on the basis of the existing idea in one's mind through the reorganization and recreation of former images. Hegel said:

*The most prominent artistic competence is the imaginative power.*<sup>①</sup>  
Addison, an American critic, also held that one had to be a person with born excellent imaginative power if he would like to appreciate a work and meanwhile to make an appropriate valuation on it. Because most of the literary words are words of figurative use, which are most effective in image-generating and in carrying a strong sense of beauty. The aesthetic meanings of these words are relatively vague and flexible, which hinges on the reader's imagination in particular.

The most important feature of imagination is its creativity. Hegel held imagination is creative. Since literary translation is a kind of recreation, it is important for the literary translator to have rich imagination so as to begin an imaginative activity shortly after being stimulated by literary language symbols and to form a new aesthetic image on the basis of the existing aesthetic ideas.

When imagination operates sufficiently and appropriately, a translation presenting a vivid picture may be produced. We can find a lot of examples:

From Estella she looked at me, with a searching glance that seemed to pry into my heart and probe its wounds.

(Ch. Dickens *Great Expectations*)

后来她又把目光从艾丝黛拉身上移到我身上，那目光犹如火炬，一直照到我心里，窥察着我心灵上的创伤。

Evidently, the translator was not confined by the original words but

<sup>①</sup> 邱明正，《审美心理学》，复旦大学出版社，上海，1993，P22-23

<sup>②</sup> 傅仲选，《实用翻译美学》，上海：上海外语教育出版社，1991，P182

visualized the scene through imagination and represented the picture just as consistent. Language has the power to stimulate imagination, but aesthetic experience did not happen in language. The translator should have the ability to formulate a pictorial scene out of the linguistic schemata and organize mental image into a unified entity. Thus what the translator should transfer is not only the meaning of words but also a unified scene.

The sky, now overcast and sullen, so changed from the early afternoon, and the steady insistent rain could not disturb the soft quietude of the valley; the rain and the rivulet mingled with one another, and the liquid note of the blackbird fell upon the damp air in harmony with them both.

(Daphne du Maurier: Rebecca)

天空这时黑云密布，阴沉沉，和下午三四点钟的时候不大一样，雨又不住地下着，但这却惊扰不了山谷地静谧；雨声和溪水声交融在一起，画眉的婉转的曲调在湿润地空气中回荡着，和雨声，溪水声相应和。<sup>①</sup>

The translator visualizes the picture, hearing all the sounds as if present at the scene. This is the imagination of auditory. In reproduction he is able to use his result of imagination in comprehension to recreate the vividness of the original, rendering “rain and rivulet” as “雨声和溪水声”，of which “声” is not stated in the original, so that the T-text reader can experience the melody of what seems silent.

Imagination, naturally involved in the comprehension process, is an

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<sup>①</sup> 张今，《文学翻译原理》，河南：河南大学出版社，1994。

automated process based on his linguistic and other comprehensive knowledge. Nevertheless, for translator as reader, when facing two languages conflict in structure and patterns, more conscious and active imagination should be integrated. On the other hand, different from the common reader who can freely execute his imagination, the translator has to limit his imagination to the content of the text, produce an image equivalent to that underlying the original text to the best of his ability, and finally be simpatico with the author.

### **2.5.2 Inference**

Inference concerns the rational factor in the translator's psychology in the comprehension process. The literary work is the product of the writer's thinking in images by his choosing and using artistic language. Accordingly, reading a literary work depends on the reader's thinking in image. But this is not enough. A real aesthetic appreciation cannot escape from the influence of one's rational thinking. Likewise, in the literary translation research, we cannot neglect the function of inference in the translator's mind. It is necessary in the aesthetic progression for a translator, in a way to adjust the workings of his imaginative faculties and provide access to a more faithful meaning since the working of these faculties are of occasionally spontaneity. What's more, inference can help translators adjust his schema to the original, making the pursuit of

simpatico possible.

“When we make an **inference** during reading, we activate information that is not explicitly stated in a written passage. People always combine their information about the world with the information presented in a passage, and they draw a reasonable conclusion based on that combination”. (M.W. Matlin, 1998: 301) In psychological circle, there are two contrasting views of these inferences: **the constructionist versus minimalist views of inference**. According to the former, readers usually draw inferences about the causes of events and the relationships between events. When somebody reads a novel, for instance, he constructs inferences about a character’s motivations, characteristics, and emotions. He also develops expectations about new plot developments, about the writer’s point of view, and so forth. The latter argues that readers do not consistently construct inferences when they read. According to these theorists, the only inference that readers automatically create are ① based on information that is readily available or ② necessary to make sense of sentences that are next to each other.

The translator, first as a reader, will naturally construct inference about motivations, characteristics, and emotions. However, with the aim of transferring the content as faithful as possible, he should consciously construct inferences as raised by the minimalists, reducing his own expectation in his translation.

Then what's the main factors influencing the translator's inferences? The first is context information. The British linguist Firth points out, "Each word when used in a new context is a new word"<sup>①</sup>, which means that meanings of words are conditioned and influenced to a great extent by the context. Without being placed in context, meanings of words enjoy great flexibility. But in a given context, they enjoy little independence. Take the Chinese character "打" for example, we are not sure of the exact meaning of "打" here if it is placed in no context as it is a polysemous character. But when we have it used in the following phrases, its meanings are fixed: "打家具" (制作 - make, manufacture), "打毛衣" (knit), "打酱油" (buy), "打游击" (be engaged in), "打鼓" (beat, strike) .

The second one is culture knowledge. Sometimes the translator does not activate the same image a native speaker of the language would activate, or the image the author intended, because the image realized by a linguistic frame are closely linked to a different social-cultural background of the foreign language. Similar schema is more likely to be realized when the author and the translator live in the same historical moment. Thus they might share a common sensibility and enjoy a common part of schema. Therefore, the process of understanding a foreign text requires the translator to try to learn about as much cultural knowledge as he can to enlarge and change his current schema to make a

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① 马方珠,《英汉翻译原理》,安徽:安徽大学出版社,1997,P156

thorough understanding of the original.

Last but not least, the translator's world and life outlook are also a constraint on inference. They are usually demonstrated unconsciously in the translator's action and thinking. Different people have different views on the world and life. The literary translator handles the original with his own style in both reading and recreating. Some translators have tried to make the reproduced images fit their ideology by using all kinds of manipulative techniques, while others try to merge the poetics of the original with a poetics acceptable in their own ideology. This is one of the reasons why the same original work leads to different understanding, i.e., "a thousand readers can recreate a thousand Hamlets."

## **2.6 Active Synthesis**

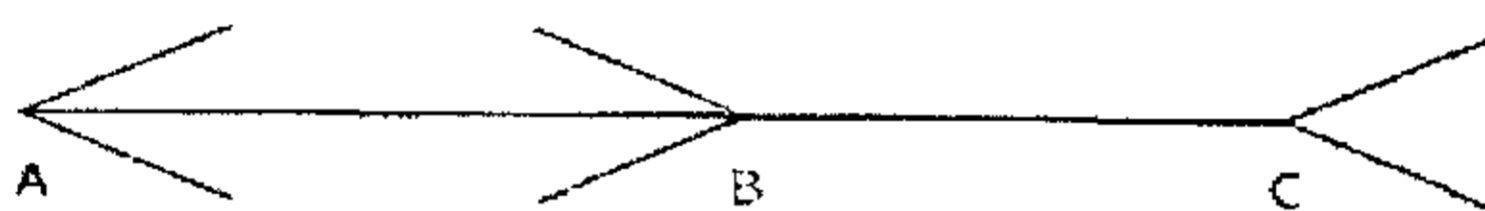
The reason why we use "active" is to differentiate the kind of synthesis we are concerned with from that proposed by Iser. The translator's aim is to translate rather than appreciate a literary text. In this sense, the translator is something of a critic. In effect, it is impossible for the translator to be a complete appreciator or an entire critic. He always acts as both.

Why is active synthesis necessary? First, it is not enough for a translator to read the original text once. "The first reading is particularly



important for literary works of art, which are perceived in an aesthetic attitude and which make possible the constitution of the aesthetic object”(Ingarden, 1973:145). However, all the aspects of the literary work cannot be apprehended at once, in a single act—just as a statue cannot be seen from all sides at once.

Second, after the sensation, perception, and thinking of the original text, the translator has converted the original into a semantic representation. However, the translator decides on the option of translating, so active synthesis becomes indispensable. We can explain this from a psychological perspective with the following figure.



(Fig: 3-1)

Most people will feel Line BC is longer than Line AB when in fact they are of the same length. It is because they are in different spatial context that we make the mistake. The same is true for temporal context. Mozart’s music may appear serene and cheerful to a modern listener, who perceives it in the temporal context of twenty-first century music, whereas it conveyed the expression of violent passion and desperate suffering to his contemporaries against the background of the music they knew. Shelley’s poems might be difficult to comprehend and the fierce reality of the poem hard to detect if they are not related to the specific context of war. We have discussed context in thinking stage, however that is the direct context which means a few words juxtaposed with the key word you are to focus on. While indirect contexts means additional

linguistic factors relevant to the contents of a book (or an article) but not yet expressed in written form by the author. It consists of the author's point of view, his common sense, historical background, local conditions and customs relevant to the key words. These two are closely connected with each other. Only by making a thorough analysis of the direct context in which the key words are placed, can the translator have an insight into the complicated indirect context of the situation through the surface of language and then have a grasp of the accurate meanings implied in the relevant words and then have all these important factors well expressed in the target language. The translator, with a totally different spatio-temporal context and also different emotion experience from those of the author, should consciously relate the text to the specific context in synthesis, or an illegitimate reception and reproduction of meaning will appear. Wilss (2000:858) also distinguishes between macrocontextual problem-solving operations and microcontextual problem-solving operations. For the former, the translator needs a plan that is oriented to the totality of the text to be translated and excludes arbitrary assignment of meaning. This means that the translator must gain a clear idea of what the content of the text implies, what its communicative purpose is and for what reader or group of readers the target text is intended.

Three key problems should be coped with in this stage, i.e. the emotion, the style and the purpose of the original work. These elements are neither manifested in the printed text, nor produced solely by the reader's imagination. They are of a dual nature: they emerge from the translator, but they are also guided by signals which project themselves into him. The translator must consider how to preserve these elements implied in the original and decide or whether to change them for his own purpose. This synthesis does not add facts, one to another, but integrates them. Through the interweaving of the facts and details the translator grasps a unified state of affairs or the form of the aesthetic object.

In summary, the active synthesis of the translator involves integrating all the elements concerned with the content and form of the original, putting the text into the specific temporal context of the author and consciously supplying some non-semantic information in order to totally comprehend the original.

## Chapter Three

### Psychological Analysis of Miscomprehension

“Of course it is not seldom that one makes mistakes and misunderstands this or that word in the text of the work, that is, gives it a meaning other than the one it actually has in that language” (Ingarden, 1973:26).

As we have discussed before, mistranslation is not the same as miscomprehension. Mistranslation may be caused intentionally and unintentionally. The text may be intentionally mistranslated by the translator who wants to cater to the aesthetic flavor of target language readers or to introduce some new expressions or cultures<sup>①</sup>. However, most mistranslation is unintentionally caused. For instance, some English translator translated the sentence “阿舒已二八” into “Ashu is eighteen years old.”, thinking that “一八” must have been misprinted as “二八”. Such mistranslation occurs when the translator has difficulties in receiving a source-language text segment, i.e. in the intake of information from a source language lexeme or combination of lexemes, and in the subsequent sense constitution. Miscomprehension of this kind is the object of this thesis. Researches done on the cognitive and aesthetic progress of the translation process in Chapter Two are the best clues for this study. At the same time, examples from literary translation products are available and will be adopted as empirical data to support the description and analysis.

#### 3.1 Miscomprehension in Sensation Stage

This kind of miscomprehension is seldom found. It appears due to the translator's carelessness in receiving the stimuli so that the original

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① 陈淳 孙景尧 谢天振. 1997. 《比较文学》, 高等教育出版社. P210

becomes deformed in sensation. A verse in Tagore's poet "Some unseen fingers like idle breeze, are playing upon my heart the music of my heart" has been translated into "有些看不见的人物, 如懒懒的微风似的, 正在我们的心上, 奏着孱缓的乐声". Here "fingers" has been misread as "figures" because of the translator's distorted sensation of the original verse. Look at the notorious example in which the translator mixed up "cow" with "crow"<sup>1</sup>:

The wheel-track leading to the door, as well as the whole breath of the avenue, was almost over-grown with grass, affording dainty mouthfuls to two or three vagrant cows and an old white horse who had his own living to pick up along the roadside (Nathaniel Hawthorne, Preface to *Mosses from an Old Manse*: The Old Manse)

园门里的林阴大路河宅门前的马车道, 杂草蔓生, 偶尔有两三只乌鸦飞来, 随意啄食, 在路旁觅食的那头老白马, 也可以在这里吃到几口可口的美餐。

### 3.2 Miscomprehension in Perception

The main obstacle to correct comprehension in this stage is set. The psychologists have noted two major difficulties most of us fall prey to when trying to solve problems; set is one of them. "Set means a tendency to solve new problems the way old ones were solved, or to continue to use objects in the environment the same way they have always been used". (McMahon, 1986: 350)

We have discussed the translator's mental schema which means the accumulation and store of aesthetic and cognitive experiences after assimilation and accommodation. This mental schema in Heidegger's words, is called "pre-understanding", and in Jauss's words, is termed

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<sup>1</sup> 罗新璋, 《翻译论集》, 商务印书馆, 1984, P774-775.

“expectant horizon” of aesthetic experience. Every translator, before reading a literary text, has a fixed cognitive schema, which is prerequisite for translation. It’s positive function is to help the translator accelerate his comprehension process. Look at the following sentence:

The challenge from the Third World countries has always been foreseen by our shipping companies. But P&O has no intention of *throwing in the towel*.

When the translator receives the sensory stimuli, his linguistic knowledge in his schema makes him recognize the meaning soon, at the same time his world knowledge helps him find the recognized meaning inconsistent with the context. The phrase “throwing in the towel” can’t be comprehended by its literal meaning. Then he may consult some references and finds out that this is a jargon in the boxing where the towel is used to wipe away the sweat and can also be thrown in the boxing ring by one of the boxer’s manager to stop the boxing when the boxer has the danger to lose his life. The phrase then means, “admit defeat and give in”. Thus the translator can correct his first comprehension and translate the sentence into:

我们的船运公司长期以来一直预见到来自第三世界国家的挑战。但是半岛与东方航运公司并不想偃旗息鼓甘拜下风。

However, at many times, this schema forms the translator’s psychological set and prevents correct comprehension. “Cognitive schema is an intellectual or perceptual pattern used as a reference for future experiences, usually based on past failure and successful experiences as well as consideration of what made the difference, leading

to a general attitude and set to meet similar situations”<sup>1</sup>. Dan Sperber and Wilson also stated in *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* that the idea behind such notions as schema, frame, prototype or script is that humans are disposed to develop stereotypical assumptions and expectations about frequently encountered objects and events. For example, if we hear that Lily has bought a pet, we will assume that it is something like a dog or a cat rather than an elephant or a spider.

The formation of set in translation results from vocabulary equations the translator learned in the foreign language lessons at school or at the university. The decontextualized purely sign-oriented vocabulary learning, which even today is rather widely used, forms and provides a large number of purely surface-structure lexeme equations, such as English “development” is equal to Chinese “发展”, or “association” in English means “联系” in Chinese.

This kind of miscomprehension always takes place in the lexical domain. Some examples<sup>2</sup> are listed below:

①Mr. Nixon said, “We two countries have common interests over and above our differences.”

Undoubtedly, many translators would translate this sentence into: 尼克松先生说：“我们两国具有远远高于我们分歧的共同利益。” They quickly find the corresponding meanings from their mental schemata: “over” and “above” all have the meaning “in or to a position higher something/somebody”. In fact, “over and above” here is a phrase with the meaning “besides”, so this sentence should be translated into:

尼克松先生说：“我们两国除了有分歧，也有共同的利益。”

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<sup>1</sup>凌方轮，方俐洛. 《英汉心理学词典》，北京：机械工业出版社，2000. P861

Example 1 and 2 are quoted from the web site <http://www.pep.com.cn/200212/ca40256.htm>

②To my joy, my son **knows a thing or two** about Italian.

**Wrong Version:** 使我高兴的是, 我儿子对意大利语也略知一二。

**Correct Version:** 使我高兴的是, 我儿子对意大利语还很精通哩。

The true meaning of “know a thing or two” is “to have practical and useful information gained from experience(非常熟悉, 了如指掌)”, rather than its literal meaning “略知一二” .

Wilss (2001: 201) pointed out that comprehension errors can have intra- or extralinguistic reasons. He used as an example the translation of a short story by Marie-Luise Kaschnitz:

The experience which I have in mind began in the theatre, and more precisely at a performance of Shakespeare’s ‘Richard II’. I was then in London for the first time and my husband like-wise, and the city made a tremendous impression on us. We normally lived in the country, you know, in Austria, and of course we knew Vienna and also Munich and Rome, but we sincerely did not know what a great city was. **I remember that *even* on the way to the theatre, gilding up and down the steep underground escalators and hurrying to the trains in the city blast on the platform, we got into a curious mood of excitement and glee...**

His emphasis of discussion is put on the interpretation of “even” in “I remember that even on the way to the theatre...” He distinguishes two main interpretations from the selected variants. The two interpretations equating “even” with German words “sogar” and “schon” respectively, thus interpreting “even” as a means of intensification. He explains “this error is the consequence of a failure to recognize the logico-semantic



dependency relations between “even” and other text-intral instructions. But he does not analyze the reason why the subjects make these errors.

Actually, “even” is such a common word that most translators will quickly search out the frequently-used meaning of “甚至, 即使” as soon as they receive the stimuli. Its true meaning of “evening” here is hard to detect for the weak context adds difficulty for the translator to make further consideration.

“Obviously, some intuitive leaps are ‘good’ and some are ‘bad’ in terms of how they turn out. Some men are good intuiters; others should be warned off.” (Wilss, 2000:868) To this extent, we cannot rely only upon our intuition; it often helps us in an emergency, but without guarantee. And to be worse, we frequently don’t realize these mistakes, sometime influencing further understanding of the whole text.

Set also influences the aesthetic cognition, showing an aesthetic stereotypical tendency in image actualization. This stereotypical tendency sometimes facilitates the capture of information about aesthetic in a stimulating and relatively fast and easy way. However, “each object, person, event, etc., portrayed in the literary work of art contains a great number of places of indeterminacy, especially the descriptions of what happens to people and things.”(Ingarden, 1973:50) The reader then reads between the lines and involuntarily complements many of the sides of the portrayed objectivities not determined in the text itself. How this happens in specific cases depends upon the peculiarities of the work itself and also on the reader. “This circumstance carries special dangers for the correct understanding of the literary work and for a faithful aesthetic apprehension of the literary work of art.” (Ingarden, 1973:53) For the translator who confronts a different culture and a different aesthetic habit, he might activate images that diverge from the author’s intentions or deviate from those activated by a native speaker of the source language.

For example, the moon has different meanings for people in the west and those in the east. People in the west always link the moon with change, death, and rebirth. Eclipses are often seen as a sign of bad luck. And in the Middle Ages in Europe, there were many superstitions about the moon, such as sleeping in moonlight would cause someone to go insane. In their vocabulary “moonlight flit” means remove from one house to another secretly to avoid something. In China, however, the moon is associated with beauty and even “hometown”. It is not difficult to find such verses as “露从今夜白，月是故乡明。”“海上升明月，天涯共此时。” Similarly, in the following poem, the author expresses his homesickness when he sees the bright moon but not “youth’s sweet memories”:

静夜思  
床前明月光  
疑是地上霜  
举头望明月  
低头思故乡

### **The Moon Shines Everywhere**

Seeing the Moon before my couch so bright,  
I thought hoar frost had fallen from the night,  
On her clear face I gaze with lifted eyes:  
Then hide them full of Youth’s sweet memories

(trans. W.J.B.Fletcher)

### On a Quiet Night

I saw the moonlight before my couch,

And wondered if it were not the frost on the ground.

I raised my head and looked out on the mountain moon,

I bowed my head and thought of my far-off home.

(trans. S.Obata)

The second version is translated by a Japanese. His cultural background shares a lot of similarities with that of Chinese, which makes his schema similar to that of the poem. No wonder his comprehension of the aesthetic meaning of the moon is more exact than the first version.

### 3.3 Miscomprehension in Thinking

When the schema between the translator and the text is similar, comprehension will happen in an automatic way with little obstacles. However miscomprehension is usually caused by this kind of intuition. Even if the translator confronts with dissimilar schema, he doesn't consciously activate active operations. He still believes in what he comprehends in his sensation and perception. Psycholinguistics clearly suggests the existence of a minimax principle (Lörscher, 1991: 267). According to it, the subjects try to keep the cognitive load as light as possible during their translations. They generally do not proceed to a deeper level of cognitive processing, which is more abstract and implies a higher cognitive load, before the processing on the higher level has turned out to be unsuccessful or unsatisfactory. Accordingly, Lörscher found in

his empirical investigation that his subjects generally use mental less complex strategies and elements of strategies in translation. We will discuss this phenomenon in detail.

### 3.3.1 Lack of Imagination

The function of imagination in the comprehension of literary works is to turn the static words, sentences or discourses of the original into the dynamic mental pictures or activities of the translator. Unlike other forms of art, the artistic image produced by language symbols does not endow people with a visual picture. Instead, it can be perceived and grasped only through the power of imagination. In creating a literary work, the writer tends to adopt those words that are apt to stimulate images. So there are always traces to be followed. On the other hand, the writer would purposely leave some parts out as “vacancies” for the reader to think and imagine. These vacancies are not to be seen overtly through the words; sometimes the meaning is suggested or vaguely hinted making the operation of imagination necessary. For the translator, his conscious and active imagination might produce effects on the degree of vividness of the image actualization. Miscomprehension under this condition means the failure to grasp the aesthetic effects of the literary text. Let's see the following examples<sup>①</sup>:

Not yet, however, in spite of her disappointment in her husband, did Mrs. Bennet give up the point.

(J. Austen *Pride and Prejudice*)

Version One:

尽管丈夫的话令班纳特夫人大失所望，但她仍不放弃自己的观点。

Version Two:

班纳特太太虽然碰了一鼻子灰，可是并不甘心罢休。

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<sup>①</sup> 傅仲选，《实用翻译美学》，上海：上海外语教育出版社，1993. P182。

Version One transferred the semantic meaning correctly, but not the aesthetic meaning, making the image of Mrs. Bennet plain and flat. While in Version Two, the translator consciously activated the operation of imagination and finally formulated a pictorial scene before the readers.

A fearful man, all in coarse gray, with a great iron on his leg.

(Ch. Dickens *Great Expectations*)

Version One:

一个可怕的人，身穿粗布灰衣裤，腿上带着一副大铁镣。

Version Two:

好一个可怕的人！穿一身灰色粗布衣，腿上栓一副大铁镣。

The little boy Pip sat in the isolated village churchyard one evening, staring at his parents' tombstones. He was afraid to see the surroundings and began to cry. Suddenly a man with terrible voice started up from among the graves and threatened Pip to keep still, making pity Pip frightened. So the word "fearful" is not used to objectively describe the man but to depict the feeling of Pip. The translator of Version Two imaginatively visualized this in his image actualization. As a result he vividly reproduced the frightened feeling of Pip. Although only a word "好" is added, this single word is worth a thousand pieces of gold, producing strong artistic appeal.

Lack of imagination in literary translation, on the one hand, is due to the lack of an awareness of the necessity of imagination. On the other hand, as researchers in creativity often make the case that education is aimed at developing our ability to learn by rote, to follow the formulas, recipes and rules, we are argued to obtain the sole right answer. Thus from an early age, many of us valued logic, practicality and established rules over our creative faculties—imagination, fantasy and insight.

### 3.3.2 Lack of Cultural Knowledge

We have discussed that when dissimilarity happens between the schema of the text and that of the translator, culture is the main factor. The translator should have wide knowledge of a foreign culture. Culture in Tylor's definition is "...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."<sup>①</sup> Bilingual competence is regarded as the fundamental requirement for the translator. But this is not enough. To be a fully competent translator, one should be bicultural in order to read between the lines. In terms of translation from a foreign language to one's native language, since the translator is relatively unfamiliar with the foreign culture, it seems particularly important for him to have a comprehensive understanding of the foreign culture.

An excellent foreign literary work is like a mirror which reflects the politics, economy, history, cultural tradition, religion, etc. of a certain foreign society. The translator should have the awareness that facing a foreign work is to face another culture rather than just a foreign language. In some foreign works, some expressions are found to carry cultural information. Even if the translator is not so familiar with these expressions or cannot understand the cultural meaning immediately, he can refer to some references. However, miscomprehension occurs when the translator hasn't the awareness that such expression contains cultural information and translates only the literal meaning. Liu Miqing(2003:436) holds that lack of cultural analysis or rejection of considering cultural elements will inevitably lead semantic analysis to deviation or errors. We can also find explanations for this in psychology. Antos (cf Lörcher 1991:267) has shown that, in principle, the more exactly and unambiguously a problem is realized, the more easily it can be solved. If a problem is realized in a fully conscious way, it is thus placed into the

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This definition is cited from the web site <http://ihome.cuhk.edu.hk/~s000356/vaal/ethnicity-paper.htm>

translator's focus of cognitive attention<sup>1</sup>. For example,

When You Are Old

When you are old and grey and full of sleep  
And nodding by the fire, take down this book  
And slowly read, and dream the soft look  
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,  
Murmur, a little sadly, how **Love** fled  
And paced upon the mountains overhead  
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

当你老了 袁可嘉译

当你老了，头白了，睡意昏沉，  
炉火旁打盹，请取下这部诗歌，  
慢慢读，回想你过去眼神的柔和，  
回想它们昔日浓重的阴影；

多少人爱你青春欢畅的时辰，  
爱慕你的美丽，假意或真心，  
只有一个人爱你那朝圣者的灵魂，

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Wolfgang Lörcher. *Translation Performance, Translation Process, and Translation Strategies: A Psycholinguistic Investigation*. Gunter Narr Verlag Tiibingen, 1991.P267.

爱你衰老了的脸上痛苦的皱纹；

垂下头来，在红光闪耀的炉子旁，  
凄然地轻轻诉说那爱情的消逝，  
在头顶的山上它缓缓踱着步子，  
在一群星星中间隐藏着脸庞。

当你年老时 傅浩译

当你年老，鬓斑，睡意昏沉，  
在炉旁打盹时，取下这本书，  
慢慢诵读，梦忆从前你双眸  
神色柔和，眼波中倒影深深：

多少人爱你风韵妩媚的时光，  
爱你的美丽出自假意或真情，  
但唯有一人爱你灵魂的至诚，  
爱你渐衰的脸上愁苦的风霜；

弯下身子，在炽红的壁炉边，  
忧伤地低诉，爱神如何逃走，  
在头顶上的群山巅漫步闲游，  
把他的面孔隐没在繁星中间。

In this poem, "Love" is written in capital letter by the author, but many translators neglect it unconsciously for it is so common a word that when they read it they will search it in their memory and find the corresponding word of "爱" or "爱情" immediately. Many translators believe in their intuitions, concretely, their perception of this word without further thinking over it, because when translated as "爱", it



coincidentally complies with the subject of this poem. In fact, the capitalized Love in western culture can be used to refer to the God of love Cupid whose winged form, bow and arrows are commonplace. This meaning descended from the ancient Greek myth. The religions of ancient Greece and Rome belong now not to the department of theology, but to those of literature and taste. Shakespeare used *Love* to refer to Cupid in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* :

Helena: ...

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity.  
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;  
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind  
"Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;  
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste;  
And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.  
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,  
So the boy Love is perjur'd everywhere;

Love in this poem also contains this cultural meaning. Such phrases as "pace upon the mountain" "hid his face" in the following verses are further proof. However, most translators neglect the cultural meaning of this word because they are so familiar with this word that they directly assign the most common used meaning.

One possibility cannot be removed that some translator noticed this capitalized word but purposefully neglected it and added his own interpretation in the translation. In fact, the responsibility of a translator, builder of the Bible, is to be as faithful as possible to the original, and at

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It is cited from the web site: <http://www.shuku.net:8082/novels/english/zhongxiaye.html>

the same time to leave much room for readers to think and imagine. To this extent, Fu Hao's translation is better in that it catches the cultural meaning of "Love" by rendering this word literally. For another example,

武行者心中要吃，哪里听他分说，一片声喝道：“放屁！放屁！”

Now Wu the priest longed much in his heart to eat, and so how could he be willing to listening to this explanation? He bellowed forth, "Pass your wind---Pass your wind!"

This sentence is from the Chinese classical work *All Men Are Brothers*, and the translation is made by the famous American writer and translator Pearl. S. Buck. Buck came to China with her parents when she was three months old. She lived in China for forty years, so her Chinese cultural knowledge was comparatively good. But as she was brought up in a missionary family and received a formal education, the slang“放屁”, which means “nonsense” in this context, wasn't stored in her schema. Meanwhile, she must be very confident in her knowledge of Chinese culture without further verification. It's no wonder miscomprehension happened.

### 3.3.3 Lack of Context Information

For the specification of meaning of lexemes and ultimately of sentences, it is necessary to draw on the context. That much is generally agreed. In the process of specifying appropriate meaning, the immediate context of the underspecified verb has provided some but not all the information necessary for the translator to understand the meaning. So some way or other the translator will have to appeal to the wider context in order to specify appropriate meaning. This of course raises the difficulties of understanding. Once the translator isn't aware of the necessity of looking for the wide context, miscomprehension is ready to

take place:

most things pursued by men for the happiness of public or private life, or wit or folly have so refined, that they seldom subsist but in idea: a true friend, a good marriage, a perfect form of **government**, with some others, require so many ingredients, so good in their several kinds, and so much niceness in mixing them...(Jonathan Swift)

Version:

不管是聪明还是愚蠢，人们为了公私生活的幸福而奋力以求的大多数事情，都被我们弄得十分奥妙，以至只能存在于理念之中。真正得朋友呀，美满得婚姻呀，完善得政府形式呀，以及别的什么，都要求如此多的要素，而且各有各的妙处，调配起来又须如此精当……<sup>11</sup>

“Government” has several meanings: ① [U] governing; power to govern ② [C] body of persons governing a State, among which the second one is more usual than the first one. The second meaning is widely used and is familiar to us all. The translator automatically searched the second meaning in his memory when reading it. Actually as long as we notice that no article is placed before this word, we can infer that “government” here cannot be assigned the second meaning.

Miscomprehension is likely to take place when the context doesn't play a strong role for the translator to make a correct decision. In such sentence as “The new principle has no previous experience of school government.” the semantic meaning of “experience” and “school” can offer clues for the translator to choose the first meaning and translate “government” into “管理”.

### 3.4 Miscomprehension in Synthesis

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<sup>11</sup> 杨自伍，《英国文化读本》华东师范大学出版社，1996，p55

The necessity of synthesis has been discussed in Chapter Two. As Wilss(2000:858) said the translator needs a plan that is oriented to the totality of the text to be translated and excludes arbitrary assignment of meaning.

The question is that most translators usually don't consciously synthesize what he has recognized in his reading neglecting the consideration of emotion, style and time traits of the original work due to the influence of minimax principle existing in them. Therefore they are likely to mechanically assign meaning.

The translation of President Abraham Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* is used as an example to illustrate the miscomprehension in the synthesis stage<sup>③</sup>.

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new Nation, conceived in Liberty, and ① dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now, we are engaged in a great Civil War, testing whether that Nation, or any nation so conceived and so ② dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to ③ dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who gave their lives that that Nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot ④ dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be ⑤ dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here ⑥ dedicated to the great task remaining before us— that from these honored dead, we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of

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<sup>③</sup> 喻云根,《英美名著选读与翻译》,西安:西安交通大学出版社,1989,P205

devotion— that we here highly resolve that these dead **shall**<sup>1</sup> not die in vain, that this Nation, under God **shall**<sup>2</sup> have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the People by the People and for the People **shall**<sup>3</sup> not perish from the earth.

This is a famous speech by President Lincoln. It seems easy to transfer because of its common words and its well-known background. However, has everyone thoroughly understood it? Let's expound it in detail.

After the first reading, we should put ourselves in America in the 19th century, considering the totality of the text and its communicative purpose. As president, Lincoln was to persuade and encourage his people to continue fighting and eventually win the war. He was sure to know nobody wasn't afraid of death. So the emotion of patriotism and the emphasis of dedication are two key points in this speech. As a result, he skillfully used parallelism to gain the strong verbal and emotional effects. The translator must make clear how the author fulfills his communicative purpose in such a short text and keep these characteristics in mind to exclude arbitrary assignment of meaning

First, the word "dedicate", used six times in such a short passage, will be analyzed. Lincoln is a noted orator, so he must have worked and reworked his speech, seeking to make it as perfect as possible. He skillfully used the familiar word "dedicate" to clinch the point. The six "dedicate" are not used equally here. The first two are followed by a definite object "proposition"; the objects of the third and fourth "dedicate" are "field" and the last two with the strongest emotion are used to express Lincoln's call for people to dedicate themselves to the country. The last two "dedicate" in the parallel structures *represent the climax of the emotion.*

But in the following translation, the translator did not consider this and translated all "dedicate", except the first two, into "奉献" without

any change. Especially, the last two “dedicate” were translated in a Chinese sentence pattern “把……”, which is an evident proof that the translator neglects the key point in translating this speech is to transfer the emotion.

87 年以前，我们的先辈们在这个大陆上创立了一个新国家。它孕育于自由之中，<sup>①</sup>奉行一切人生来平等的原则。

现在，我们正从事一场伟大的内战，以考验这个国家，或者说考验任何一个孕育于自由而<sup>②</sup>奉行上述原则的国家是否能够长久地存在下去。

我们在此集会是为了把这个战场的一部分<sup>③</sup>奉献给他们作为最后安息之所。

但是，从更广泛的意义上来说，这块土地我们不能<sup>④</sup>奉献，我们不能够圣化，我们不能够神化。

倒是我们这些还活着的人，应该在这里<sup>⑤</sup>把自己奉献于勇士们已经如此崇高地向前推进但尚未完成的事业。

倒是我们应该在这里<sup>⑥</sup>把自己奉献于仍然留在我们面前的伟大任务

We can also find a similar mistake in the translation of the three *shalls*, which are used with the second and third persons to form a future or conditional statement expressing the speaker's will or intention<sup>①</sup>. For example, “You shall come at once.” actually should be translated as “你必须马上到。” Nevertheless, the Chinese version of the sentence containing “shall” is:

我们要在这里下定最大的决心，不让这些死者白白牺牲；我们要使国家在上帝福佑下得到自由的新生，要使这个民有、民治、民享的政府永世长存。

“不让”“使” in Chinese are not the words expressing strong emotion, which greatly reduced the strength of the original.

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<sup>①</sup> Quoted in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English with Chinese Translation*, 1995, 北京：商务印书馆，天津大学出版社，P1050.

Another question lies in the translation of “We are met on a great battlefield of that war.” The Chinese version is “我们在这场战争中的一个伟大战场上集会。” Then why the author used passive voice and “we” are met by who? The answer cannot be found in this passage itself. As a qualified translator, he should refer to Lincoln’s other addresses or some other comments. It’s not hard to find that Lincoln, who self studied the Bible when he was young, liked to show his belief in God in his address. He always resorted to God when he wanted an excuse in persuading his people to abolish the slavery so that he can win people’s support. If the sentence were changed into “we are meeting on a great battlefield of that war”, the religious color and the hidden power would disappear all together.

In term of this, we can draw forth that intertextuality is a very important and effective method in synthesis. “A work exists between and among other texts, through its relation to them. To read something as literature is to consider it as linguistic event that has meaning in relation to other discourses: for example, as a poem that plays on possibilities created by previous poems or as a novel that puts on stage and criticizes the political rhetoric of its day.”<sup>1</sup> Texts are never totally original or particular to a given author. They are always dependent on the prior existence not only of clearly identifiable texts but also of general conditions of appropriateness. Therefore would-be translators should cultivate a particular interest in the literary experience, discovering not isolated texts but a whole body of literature. However, most translators can’t consciously do that because they didn’t grasp this method in their literature classes. According to Brumfit and Carter(2000:188), the ability to perceive and explore relationships between literary texts (hence developing understanding of the notion of convention and tradition) will be developed by reading texts deliberately associated with each other for

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Culler. *Literary Theory*. Oxford. Oxford UP, 1997, P34 – 35

pedagogical purposes. Text may be linked by subject matter, by formal and structural similarity, by thematic intention, or by any other appropriate device.



## Conclusion

It is well known that comprehension and expression constitute the translation process and there will be no good translation without a thorough comprehension of the original text. However, we can see from the above analysis that some innate faculties of human beings make miscomprehension in theory unavoidable. In practice we can also find a lot of examples of miscomprehension. Nevertheless, the possibility of making mistakes can be decreased.

To achieve this aim, a translator should first study the comprehension process. While focusing on the analysis of some psychological faculties such as sensation, perception, thinking, imagination and reference, and using some psychological concepts as gestalt, schema, and synthesis, we should be cautious enough not to ignore the fact that these factors are not isolated and don't happen in a linear order. Text comprehension in today's psychology is still an area to be further explored because human comprehension is a very complex phenomenon. In this paper we utilize the achievements gained in cognitive psychology to promote the study of comprehension in the translation process.

An analysis of the reasons for miscomprehension is necessary for translators. On the one hand, some subjective reasons underlie miscomprehension. These are psychological reasons because different people have different sensory or perceptual ability; and the way their sets act is not the same for their diverse learning and life experiences. On the other hand, it is some objective factors concerned with the educational system that lead the translators to miscomprehension. For instance, the vocabulary equation method widely used in the foreign language acquisition class always makes translators see words as lists of "equivalents" between the source language and the target language, not as temporary, tentative, incomplete and potential meaning. What's more,

although most people agree that learning a literary text should be supported by the reading of a wide range of other works, few schools or teachers actually help to establish the habit of wide, serious reading in their students. Translators trained in this way seldom consciously relate the text to be translated with other works. They always have confidence in what they have comprehended.

Finally, as Wilss (2001:214) said, “the function of error analysis is rather to create, on the basis of empirical evidence, the preconditions for an optimal translation teaching and learning situation.” Here with the analysis of miscomprehension, some strategies can be proposed for attaining optimal comprehension.

Strategy One: weakening the force of set and focusing on the sense of meaning.

As we have seen, if the problematic SL text is not placed into the translator’s focus of cognitive attention, for the lack of evidence for the translator to make decision, miscomprehension is likely to happen. This is mainly due to the translator’s set formed through stereotyped understanding of words, expressions and sentence structures, which is suggested as solutions.

On the other hand, translators lack an awareness of wittingly focusing on the sense of meaning. Text can be translated in basically two different ways: form-oriented or sense-oriented. Sign-oriented translations are brought about by automatic association processes, searching for the TL forms which correspond to the respective SL forms. In sense-translation, the translator makes explicit the sense inherent in the SL text and then separate it from the SL text. On the basis of the sense thus constituted, the translator searches for adequate TL signs. In order to do this, the translator should consciously remove his set, regarding the structure of SL text as unfixed one and searching what situational and contextual factors determine the range of sense of an SL text.

Strategy Two: enriching emotional experience.

Emotion is a kind of aesthetic response aroused in the subject when the object meets the subject's demands. Its psychological form is emotional experience. Since a literary work is the product of the writer's emotional externalization, in literary translation, the comprehension process is an activity of the translator's experiencing the writer's emotion. According to Liu Miqing, emotion is the most active and subjective psychological element that runs through the whole process of aesthetic reading. It is also an internal motive power to produce one's imagination. Rich emotion is needed by a translator in regulating himself to be congenial to the varied characteristics of different authors or different texts, thus gaining correct comprehension.

Strategy Three: improving the teaching of translation

Translators should receive special training in translating in addition to learning the foreign language. The notion that anyone who has bilingual knowledge and competence can be a good translator is misguided to most of us. Besides the teaching of techniques, the training in awareness is very important in the teaching of translation including the awareness of the dynamic meaning of the words and the importance of the context. As Wilss (2001: 185) pointed out "translation problems can, at least to a large degree, be isolated in their respective context; if one wants to eliminate them it is necessary to build up a teaching and learning situation which must take into account all the contextual factors relevant for TLT reproduction." At the same time, the awareness of the necessity of imagination, cultural connotations and intertextuality are also indispensable.

In this paper, we have expressed the view that psychological research can be an important area for contemporary translation studies. The psychological elements involved in the process of translating need a deeper investigation and more thorough description. This paper has

attempted to use psychology, a theory emphasizing the process study, to throw light on the phenomenon of miscomprehension. Much remains to be done in the exploration of the psychological aspects of translation, both in the comprehension and the expression stages. With more investigation in this area, a better understanding may be gained of nature of the problems in translation, which is a precondition for their solution.

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