

Study on Translation Strategies for Historical Academic Texts

A Case Study of Translation of *A Cultural History of Objects in the Medieval Age*

Wei Zhou¹ Yulu Lei²

^{1,2} School of Foreign Studies, Harbin Engineering University, Harbin, China

¹Corresponding author. Email: zhouwei@hrbeu.edu.cn

ABSTRACT

This study employs Bassnett's cultural translation theory to analyze the translation of *A Cultural History of Objects in the Medieval Age*. By examining examples at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels, it identifies key strategies: cultural compensation and transplantation for culturally-specific terms; word-order adjustment to meet target-language norms; and lexical articulation for logical coherence. It is hoped that this study will provide a reference for translating Chinese cultural history.

Keywords: *Objects, Cultural translation, Translation strategy, Historical academic text.*

1. INTRODUCTION

A Cultural History of Objects in the Medieval Age, the second volume in its series, surveys a wide range of medieval objects, from everyday items to architecture. As a historical academic work, it exhibits significant linguistic and cultural complexity due to its subject matter. Its language is rigorous and often employs specialized vocabulary, complex syntax with extended subordinate clauses, and a discourse shaped by its research focus.

The medieval context is crucial for translation, as European life was dominated by Christianity, which influenced politics, the economy, and imbued objects with religious meaning. Accurate translation therefore requires a deep understanding of both the historical context and its social nuances. This study contributes to cultural translation scholarship by applying Bassnett's theory to the under-examined genre of historical academic texts. It offers a structured methodology and practical strategies, providing theoretical depth and operational clarity.

2. BASSNETT'S CONCEPT OF CULTURAL TRANSLATION

The 1990s witnessed a "cultural turn" in translation studies, shifting focus to the interplay between translation and culture. A leading figure in this movement, Susan Bassnett, argues that the fundamental unit of translation is not the word or sentence, but culture itself. She reconceptualizes translation not as a mechanical linguistic transfer, but as a dynamic act of intercultural communication. For Bassnett, the goal is to achieve functional equivalence within the target culture, which may require cultural transformation rather than a literal description of the source text. She emphasizes that translation norms are historically and culturally specific, shaped by the needs of different societies.[1]

This cultural approach requires translations to convey not only literal meaning but also the cultural functions and values of the original.[2] Translators must anticipate the target culture's reception, ensuring that cultural nuances are accurately communicated. Ultimately, cultural translation theory prioritizes the translation of cultural factors, treating the act of translation as a

means of facilitating cross-cultural academic and intellectual discourse.

3. ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

This paper analyzes the translation strategies employed in the original context. Through adopting purposive sampling approach, examples presented in this section were purposively selected from the translation of *A Cultural History of Objects in the Medieval Age*, which were mainly based on their cultural density, representativeness, and translation complexity. Based on Bassnett's cultural translation perspective, it considers the challenges encountered at the lexical, syntactic and discourse levels. It then presents a summary of the strategies and methods typically adopted in the translation of historical academic texts.

3.1 Lexical Level

Vocabulary represents the most basic linguistic unit, upon which the construction of a text is contingent. The discrepancies between Chinese and Western linguistic practices are attributable to the disparities in geography, history, culture, and customs, which in turn give rise to divergences in vocabulary and lexical choices between English and Chinese. Consequently, in the act of translation, the translator is obliged to comprehend not only the fundamental denotations of the vocabulary, but also to consider the cultural connotations embedded within it. The objective of cultural translation is not merely to convey the literal meaning of a text, but also to encapsulate the cultural nuances embedded in it.[3] This necessitates a certain degree of creativity and subjective initiative on the part of the translator, who should utilize techniques such as augmentation and textual annotation in order to facilitate cultural compensation and transplantation at the lexical level.

3.1.1 Cultural Compensation

"As a translation technique, compensation involves strategically restoring cultural information inevitably lost in cultural transfer by making appropriate additions at other points in the translated text." [4] The original text examines the cultural history of European objects in the Middle Ages. Given the diverse geographical locations, the extensive time span and the significant cultural differences, it is not uncommon for the cultural nuances embedded in the source text to be obscured

or lost during the translation process. It is therefore vital to employ a range of techniques to ensure that these cultural elements are duly compensated for. The following examples illustrate how cultural compensation is used to facilitate cultural compensation, through techniques such as in-text amplification and annotation.

3.1.1.1 In-text Amplification

In-text amplification can be defined as the addition of pertinent information to the source text, with the objective of facilitating comprehension for the intended audience. The objective of translation is to facilitate communication between cultures by bridging the cultural gap between the source and target languages. In order to compensate for the absence of cultural data in the source text, the translator provides supplementary information within the text itself, elucidating the underlying cultural nuances and thereby enhancing the readability of the translated text. ("Table 1")

Table 1. Examples of in-text amplification

Original Text	Translated Text
Example 1: Furniture and plate were also fungible, meaning that common and interchangeable values were abstracted from the objects themselves as dissimilar goods: a necklace and a chair, for example, needed to be compared or equated in terms of their monetary worth.	家具和餐具是可以交易的，这意味着可将物品的价值抽离出来换取不同商品，比如一条项链和一把椅子要互相交易，就需要比较它们的货币价值。
Example 2: Wulfstan of York's sour remark, however, that "a ceorl with a gold-plated sword but without five hides of land was still a ceorl," suggests that although some were dressing above their station, it only got them so far.	然而，约克大主教沃尔夫斯坦（Wulfstan of York）酸溜溜地说：“一个没有五块地皮的底层自由民，即便拿着镀金宝剑，也还是底层自由民。”言下之意是，尽管有些底层自由民穿着得体，但改变不了其（低下的）社会地位。

In the Middle Ages, the exchange of objects was based on their intrinsic value. In the original text of Example 1, the items in question, specifically a necklace and a chair, are employed to illustrate the act of exchanging these two items. This is achieved without the use of a verb to indicate the interchangeability of each item, as the action is already implied by the context and therefore unnecessary. This is consistent with

typical English usage, whereas the Chinese language tends to utilize verbs with greater frequency. If the translator adheres to a literal interpretation of the source text, the intended meaning can be conveyed with relative ease in the target language. However, if the translator were to translate directly from the literal meaning of the source text, the sentence may be perceived as incomplete by the reader. To address this, the translator employed amplification, incorporating the term “相互交易” (mutual transactions) into the text to provide a more comprehensive account while maintaining closer alignment with the original meaning.

In Example 2, the term ‘Wolfstein of York’ was rendered as “约克的沃尔夫斯坦” in the initial translation. However, upon proofreading, it was deemed that this translation was not logical, as the translated term did not accurately reflect the status of the speaker. Consequently, if this was an ordinary individual, his words would not carry as much weight. Accordingly, the translator postulated that the speaker must have been a person of some status in society. A search of the internet for ‘Wulfstan’ reveals that an entry for this individual is included on the Encyclopaedia Britannica website (<https://www.britannica.com>). The content indicates that this saint is known to have lived during the Middle Ages and to have held the position of Bishop of York, which is consistent with the historical context and subject matter of the original text. To complete the Chinese translation and to further confirm the accuracy of the information, the translator then retrieved an article on Medieval Code from the China Daily website (search date: 28 December 2023), which mentions ‘Wolfstein, Archbishop of York’. If it is translated as “约克的沃尔夫斯坦”, the reader is likely to have the same doubts as the translator when they read it. Furthermore, they will also miss the cultural information implied in the original text, which makes it difficult to fully and accurately indicate the status of the person in the original text, and even more difficult to reflect the importance of his words. Accordingly, the translator has elected to supplement the translation with the phrase “约克大主教沃尔夫斯坦”(Wolfstein, Archbishop of York), thereby incorporating the implicit cultural information.

3.1.1.2 Text Annotations

Text annotation can be classified into two main categories: in-text annotation and outside-text

annotation. In-text annotation involves integrating the annotated information directly into the translated text, employing the appropriate target language symbols, such as colon, parenthesis, hyphen, and so forth. This approach ensures that the annotation is conveyed in a concise and clear manner, which is particularly advantageous for the concise content of the compensated information. In contrast, outside-text annotations assume the form of footnotes, endnotes, and so forth. These are spatially separated from the original text and serve to elucidate the difficulties inherent in the original text, furnish the reader with the requisite information to comprehend the original text, or present the translator’s interpretation of the content. Outside-text annotations are employed to familiarize readers of the translated text with cultural phenomena and the context of events, including historical allusions, religious concepts, customs and habits, and so forth. They are also utilised to introduce characters, place names and proper nouns from the original text, thereby assisting readers in comprehending the original meaning.(“Table 2”)

Table 2. Examples of text annotations

Original Text	Translated Text
Example 3: The arrest of John/ Eleanor Rykener tested these assumptions.	约翰或埃莉诺·莱克娜 (John/ Eleanor Rykener) (此人自称埃莉诺, 其实就是约翰—译注) 被捕就证实了这些假设。
Example 4: Lusterwares, from Spain, were relatively rare and expensive, but they were indemand in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; by the fifteenth century, German stonewares had flooded the market as cheaper utilitarian and more widely accessible vessels.	西班牙的虹彩陶器 (Lusterwares) ①相对稀少且价格昂贵, 但它们在 13、14 世纪很抢手; 到了 15 世纪, 更便宜、更实用、也更容易获得的德国石制器皿涌入市场。 ①虹彩陶器: 是古代伊斯兰地区烧造的一种釉陶, 起源于 9 世纪的美索不达米亚, 因其虹彩效应呈现出金属光泽而得名。——脚注

Example 3 explores the relationship between people’s clothing and their identity in the Middle Ages. The wearing of similar clothing served to unify people of the same ethnicity and class, promoting a common appearance that eventually became a defining characteristic of a particular ethnicity or class. During the Middle Ages, there was a greater differentiation in clothing for different genders, classes, statuses and occupations within society. This resulted in a pervasive

conviction, particularly among those in positions of authority, that women who wore men's attire were attempting to secure the privileges typically associated with men, and that men who wore women's clothing were relinquishing the rights associated with their gender. He identified himself to the police as Eleanor Rykener at the time of his arrest but was identified as John Rykener during interrogation. This contradiction is used as a basis for investigating the relationship between personal attire and personal identity. The translator's clarifications in the parenthesis facilitate comprehension of the rationale behind the author of the original text's selection of this example for the reader.

In Example 4, the explanatory translation note represents the most prevalent form of textual annotation in the field of linguistics. The objective is to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the source text among target language readers. Such an apparatus serves to elucidate the text's purpose and intention, as well as to provide explanations for any potential difficulties in understanding. This is done in order to assist readers in grasping the nuances of the translated text[4]. In the context of historical academic texts, the most common explanatory translator's notes pertain to concepts or proper names. The translator postulated that the term "lusterwares" in this context should be understood not merely as "pottery with a metallic surface," but as a specific type of pottery discernible through the context. To verify the accuracy of this hypothesis, the translator entered the term 'Spanish lusterwares' into online search engine and located the entry for 'lusterware' on Encyclopaedia Britannica website (<https://www.britannica.com/art/lusterware>, 29 December 2023). The article outlines the origin and defining characteristics of this category of pottery. The evidence substantiates the hypothesis that this is a discrete type of pottery. The translator then conducted an online search and located an article pertaining to the restoration of multicoloured pottery by Japanese potter Takuo Kato (https://www.nippon.com/cn/views/b02327/?ivk_sa=1024320u). The article (retrieved on 29 December 2023) states that rainbow-coloured pottery is known in English as 'lustreware'. Furthermore, the article offers a description of rainbow-coloured pottery that aligns with the Encyclopaedia Britannica entry for 'lustreware'. It can thus be concluded that the term "虹彩陶器" is an accurate translation of 'lusterware'. As the source text is a historical academic text, the target audience will no

longer be limited to those with a background in or knowledge of the field. It is possible that a significant proportion of the target audience may be unfamiliar with the term and its cultural background. Accordingly, the translator conducted an online search and consulted relevant literature in order to ascertain an explanation of the terminology, which was explained in the form of footnotes. This was subsequently validated as accurate and employed as an aid to comprehension of the source text. Moreover, readers were furnished with a concise overview of the cultural context associated with this category of material.

3.1.2 Cultural Transplantation

Bassnett identifies two categories of untranslatability, as defined by Catford, linguistic untranslatability and cultural untranslatability. The latter refers to the inability to identify and reproduce the same contextual features present in the original text in the target language[5]. Translation is not merely a linguistic activity; it is also a cultural communication activity. The dissemination of culture is inextricably linked to the act of translation, and consequently, the translator must address the cultural untranslatability resulting from linguistic communication, the universality of thought, and cultural diversity through the utilization of a range of techniques. Cultural transplantation is the process of transferring information from one cultural context to another, ensuring that the source is accurately represented while preserving the intended connotations. "The essence of cultural transplantation resides in preserving the intact semantic integrity of cultural properties carried by the source language, thereby allowing diverse elements of the source culture to be assimilated into the target culture with their original denotations." [6] Cultural backgrounds and language habits exhibit considerable variation from one context to another[7]. "Languages embody the distinct historical, axiological, and customary dimensions of their respective nations and ethnicities." [8] In the process of cultural transplantation, the translator must identify an appropriate strategy to reconcile the source language culture with the translated culture. This should be done in a way that is faithful to the source text while also ensuring that the translated text is readable and acceptable to the target audience. The objective is to ensure that the cultural information contained within the original text can also be comprehended by the readers for which it is intended. This subsection demonstrates how

culturally embedded terms are translated through cultural transplantation, either by interpretation or equivalent substitution.

3.1.2.1 *Interpretation Transplant*

The term ‘interpretation’ is defined as the process of clarifying and explaining a specific concept or idea. It is employed to delineate the cultural disparity that exists between the cultures of the source and target languages. The translator’s role is to enable communication by elucidating and interpreting the cultural nuances and phenomena present in the source text during the process of translation. (“Table 3”)

Table 3. Examples of interpretation transplant

Original Text	Translated Text
Example 5: Old English glosses include, among their words for wizards and augurs, wonderful compounds like fugelhælsere (bird-beseecher) and fugelhwata (bird-diviner), emphasizing these creatures’ role in foretelling the future.	古英语对巫师和占卜者的词汇注释中有一些奇妙的复合词，比如 fugelhælsere (bird-beseecher，寻鸟者) 和 fugelhwata (bird-diviner，鸟类占卜师)，这些词强调出了这些生物在占卜中的作用。
Example 6: A striking facet of many European populations at this time is their interest in—and demand for—Roman objects, including personal items, spolia and sculptures, ceramic and metal vessels, and glass.	在这一时期，许多欧洲人的一个显著特点是对罗马帝国物品的兴趣和需求，包括个人物品、重复使用的建筑石材（拉丁语为 spolia）和雕塑、陶瓷、金属容器及玻璃

The utilization of animals for divination during the medieval period was a widespread practice. However, with the widespread dissemination of Christianity, those in positions of authority within society converted to Christianity and sought to eradicate the practice of animal divination in order to preserve Christianity and their own dominance. In Example 5, the subsequent analysis aims to shed light on the cultural impact of animal divination by examining its lexical aspects. The terms “fugelhælsere” and “fugelhwata” were identified through an online search (<https://bosworthtoller.com/46567>, accessed 30/12/2023). Both them are Old English words from the Anglo-Saxon period, which in modern English are

represented by the bracketed words “bird-beseecher” and “bird-diviner”. In Chinese culture, there is an absence of a direct equivalent to the concept of divination and the associated occupation. Accordingly, the translator has elected to translate the words in accordance with the denotation of their modern English counterparts. In addition, to align with the compound words mentioned in the initial portion of the sentence, these words have been directly incorporated into the translation. The translation elucidates the meaning of the words by employing parentheses, which visually present to the readers of the translation the original composite words that the author intends to convey and disclose the meaning of the words, thus facilitating comprehension.

The Medieval period, which extends from the late 5th century to the mid-15th century AD, is a significant era in history. It commenced with the decline of the Western Roman Empire and continued until the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire, a period that resulted in the preservation of a substantial amount of knowledge and technology from the former. Roman technology and knowledge played a pivotal role in the construction of buildings and other structures throughout Europe for approximately a millennium. However, the assertion by European nations of their status as the successors to the Roman Empire precipitated conflicts among them. In order to substantiate their claims of succession and legitimacy, they employed the re-utilization of Roman-era building materials. This practice served to reinforce claims of both succession and orthodoxy. In Example 6, the term “spolia,” derived from Latin, denotes the symbolic utilization of aged construction materials in the erection of new edifices or monuments. This practice was widespread among Europeans during this period, serving as a symbol of legitimacy and continuity. Given that medieval structures were constructed using various types of stone, the translator has opted to maintain the term “spolia” in the translation, provide an explanation of its meaning, and transpose it into the translation using brackets. This approach serves to elucidate the cultural characteristics of building stone, while concurrently enabling the reader to gain insight into the unfamiliar terminology employed in the source culture, thereby facilitating cross-cultural communication.

3.1.2.2 *Equivalent Transplantation*

Equivalent transplantation is of the utmost importance for the translator to possess a comprehensive understanding of the cultural connotations inherent to both the original and translated languages in order to ensure the accuracy and cultural appropriateness of the translation. Such an understanding should then be employed in the pursuit of cultural equivalence, which emphasizes the mutual intelligibility of the translated and source languages in terms of both cultural expression and cultural content[9]. In the context of reciprocal transplantation, the translator must ensure that the translated text is not only form-equivalent to the source text, but also conveys the same cultural connotations as the source text. This facilitates the generation of a similar emotional response in readers of the translated text as that which would be evoked by the source text.

Table 4. Examples of equivalent transplantation

Original Text	Translated Text
Example 7: His brother-in-law had used his wife's fancy wooden drinking bowl and a pair of silver aglets as collateral when he borrowed money.	而他的妻兄（妻弟）借钱的时候，用妻子精美的木碗和一对银带扣做抵押。
Example 8: As John Moreland has argued, we must listen to the dialogue between "the Voice, the Object and the Word" if we are to understand the ways that these communities developed their conceptions of time, place, and being	正如约翰·莫兰德（John Moreland）所说，如果我们了解这些社区发展的时间、地点和存在的方式，我们必须聆听“声音、器物 and 文字”之间的对话。

The bond between family members is a phenomenon that is observed across cultures and transcends cultural boundaries. In English language, the term "brother-in-law" is used to denote the in-laws of any of the three relationships, the brother of their husband or wife, or the man who is married to their sister. Despite the cultural affinity shared by China and English-speaking communities, the terminology employed to describe in-laws varies significantly between the two languages. While English speakers are not able to discern the relationship between two individuals from a single term, Chinese speakers have developed a distinctive vocabulary for each type of relationship. A

thorough examination of Example 7 reveals that the term "brother-in-law" is used to denote either the elder or younger brother of one's wife. The corresponding Chinese terms are "大舅哥（妻兄）" and "小舅子（妻弟）". Accordingly, the translator elected to utilize these terms in line with Chinese culture. The translator's decision to employ these specific terms is indicative of a meticulous approach to cultural preservation, ensuring that the original text's nuances are accurately conveyed to the reader.

In Example 8, the source text contains a plethora of references to other research documents and historical data, in addition to a multitude of foreign words, including personal and geographical names. These names lack direct equivalents in Chinese, and the translator was unable to identify corresponding expressions for them when researching the personal and geographical names. The two fundamental principles that govern the process of name translation are "name is in line with its master" and "convention". These principles must be adhered to in both the English translation of Chinese names and the Chinese translation of British and American names.[10] For instance, "John" is conventionally translated into Chinese as "约翰", and consequently, the English name "Moreland" adopts the reciprocal transplantation strategy, which is translated according to the pronunciation into "莫兰德". This approach not only ensures the equivalence of cultural information in the translated language but also preserves the cultural characteristics of the original language, thereby enriching the language and culture of the translated language.

3.2 *Syntactic Level*

Sentences serve as the fundamental building blocks of a chapter and represent the basic units with which translators work when translating from one language to another. The primary benefit of utilizing a sentence as the fundamental unit of translation is that it enables the translator to exercise complete autonomy within the sentence, thereby allowing them to adapt the constituent linguistic units in accordance with the desired alignment with the source text. This approach facilitates the creation of sentences that resonate more closely with the stylistic conventions of the target language, thereby enhancing their comprehensibility and readability for Chinese readers[11]. It is important to note that there are significant differences between English and

Chinese languages in terms of grammatical structure and linguistic and cultural conventions. Consequently, translators must refrain from replicating the grammatical structure and word order of the source text. To ensure a translation that is both fluent and aligned with the expression norms of the target culture, translators must employ appropriate techniques.

3.2.1 Word Order Adjustment

In English, the subject-predicate structure serves as the foundation of the language, with a multitude of other linguistic elements—including participles, prepositions, conjunctions, and relational adverbs—interwoven to create a cohesive and meaningful sentence. In contrast, Chinese sentence formation is contingent upon the interconnection of multiple verbs or the delineation of events in a linear or causal sequence. Subsequently, these elements are distributed in a layered fashion to construct a coherent and fluid sentence. The formal distinctions between English and Chinese call for translators to adjust the original word order during the translation process, ensuring that the translated text aligns with the cultural norms and stylistic conventions of the target language. This section presents examples where the English sentence structure is reshaped to conform to Chinese syntactic norms through word order adjustment. (“Table 5”)

Table 5. Examples of word order adjustment

Original Text	Translated Text
Example 9: Proximity, planned or otherwise, meant that medieval people and their animals shared common illnesses and catastrophic epidemics.	在中世纪，人类和其饲养的动物有意或无意地近距离接触意味着他们常患有同类疾病和灾难性的流行病。
Example 10: Medieval people were attracted to “thingyness” and commodities, but the entangling of the material and textual, we argue, defines the era under consideration in this volume.	中世纪的人们关注“物品属性”和商品，但我们认为，制造物品所使用的材料和物品本身才是能定义本卷所研究的时代的東西。

In Example 9, the term “proximity” is understood to signify a state of close distance or nearness serves as the subject of the sentence, “planned or otherwise” is an interjection, and “meant that” leads to the object clause, “people and

their animals share common illness and catastrophic epidemics” is the subordinate clause. The translator initially positioned the interjection at the beginning of the sentence as a gerund in Chinese, which resulted in the main clause being combined with the subordinate clause. “无论有意还是无意，近距离接触意味着中世纪人们和其饲养的动物常患有同类疾病和灾难性的流行病。” (Whether intentionally or unintentionally, close contact meant that people and their animals shared common illnesses and catastrophic epidemics in the Middle Ages.) In the subsequent revision process, the translator elected to adhere to the Chinese convention of situating the temporal phrase “in the Middle Ages” at the sentence’s commencement and translating the interjection as a gerund, “intentionally or unintentionally,” to modify the verb “close contact.” The final translation ensures the original meaning is conveyed accurately and aligns with the cultural nuances of the translated language, thus ensuring an accurate and culturally appropriate representation of the source text.

In Example 10, The interjection “we argue” in the original sentence serves to introduce a new subject, which is distinct from the predicate. The subject of the second half of the sentence is “the entangling of the material and textual.” The noun that follows the preposition “of” is formed with the addition of the definite article “the+ an adjective”, which can be reduced to “the entangling of material and text”. Prior to the process of translation, the translator undertakes a restructuring of the sentence’s structural elements, strategically positioning the phrase “the material and textual entangling” at the onset, and subsequently modifying the sentence as, “but we argue that the material and textual entangling defines the era under consideration in this volume,” in strict accordance with the prevailing rules of English grammar. The translated text is consistent in meaning and can be connected to the subsequent text in a logical and smooth manner.

3.2.2 Sentence Structure Splitting

The structure of English sentences is characterized by its rigidity, interlocking nature, with a higher prevalence of long sentences. In contrast, Chinese sentences tend to be more straightforward and frequently shorter in length. As previously stated, the translated text demonstrates a propensity for extensive and intricate sentences, incorporating both long and compound sentences. The utilization of long and compound sentences in

the source text, if translated without modification, often results in a translation that is challenging to comprehend for the intended readers. Consequently, when translating from English to Chinese, it is essential to first categorize the grammatical structure and logical relationship of the sentences, then split them according to its structure. Finally, they should be translated in accordance with Chinese expression habits. This approach ensures that the original meaning is preserved while adhering to Chinese linguistic conventions. The following is the example selected.

The author of the source text utilizes a colon to establish a causal relationship between the two clauses that precede and follow it. The objective of this is to employ the subsequent example as a means of exemplifying the specific penalties that were in place for those who contravened the ban at that time. In Example 11, The original sentence contains two expressions that indicate time, namely: “in the seventh century” and “in the eighth century.” The employment of these terms suggests that the two clauses are arranged in chronological order. In Chinese context, this expression is conventionally employed to denote either the temporal occurrence of an event or the identity of an agent. In this context, a “time + event” can be delineated by a full stop, and thus the translator regards the two clauses in the original as two discrete sentences of “time + event,” separated by a full stop. From the perspective of the content of translated text, replacing the colon used to delineate the description in the original with a full stop does not alter the original meaning of the text while simultaneously preventing the translation from becoming excessively lengthy. This approach aligns the translated text more closely with the established conventions of Chinese writing.

3.3 Discourse Level

Consecutive words are combined to form sentences, and sentences into parts of speech, which are linguistic wholes made up of consecutive words and phrases. A discourse can be defined as a linguistic entity comprising a series of consecutive words and sentences, which collectively constitute a complete chapter. In the context of translation, a chapter can be defined as the entire discourse that a translator is tasked with translating. This can encompass a range of textual forms, including, but not limited to, works, theses, speeches, and poems. This concept is further elaborated by Li Yunxing(2011), who states that “a chapter refers to

the entire discourse that a translator has to translate in a given translation task.”[12] To ensure the precision of the translated chapter and to ascertain its fidelity to the original, translators must engage in repeated readings of the source text and engage in careful reflection.

3.3.1 Lexical Articulation in Discourse

Lexical articulation can be defined as the semantic connection that exists between certain words in a discourse, which constitutes an integral part of the linguistic context^[11]. It is imperative for translators to consider lexical articulation within sentences and paragraphs, as well as the articulation between paragraphs and even within the scope of the whole text, when translating. In instances where there is a discrepancy in the manner of lexical articulation between English and Chinese, translators must address this issue in a manner that ensures the translated discourse is articulated in a manner that is appropriate with respect to lexical articulation. This example followed shows how repeated or ambiguous terms in the original are clarified in the translation to maintain semantic coherence across discourse.(“Table 6”)

Table 6. Example of lexical articulation in discourse

Original Text	Translated Text
Example 12: Various identities were articulated, underscored, insisted upon, or assumed with the aid of material culture associated with dress.... The so-called discovery of fashion in the fourteenth century reaffirmed this connection.	在这种与服装有关的物质文化中，人们的身份和社会地位得到了充分体现.....14 世纪所谓的时尚新潮再次强化了服装与个人身份和社会地位之间的联系。

In Example 12, the following is an exemplification of the pertinent section of the aforementioned paragraph, situated several sentences apart. In the initial translation, the term “this connection” was translated literally as “这种联系”，without recognizing that it referred to the core content of the paragraph, namely the connection between clothing and individuals. This oversight highlights a deficiency in the translator’s familiarity with the discursive context of the text. Given the ambiguity surrounding the term “this connection,” the translator conducted a further review of the

chapter in question to establish the central premise of the text. This entailed a process of clarification, whereby it was established that the core concept under discussion was the relationship between clothing and individuals. This refinement led to a more precise understanding of the term “this connection.” The term “this connection” was revised to “服装与个人身份和社会地位之间的联系” (the connection between clothing and individual identity and social status), thereby restoring it to a more precise and concrete reference to the content of the chapter. This refinement enables a more precise interpretation of the original text.

3.3.2 Logical articulation in discourse

The term “logical articulation in discourse” is employed to denote the profound and pervasive interconnection that characterizes a discourse. A notable disparity emerges when comparing the logical connections evident in the English language with those observable in Chinese. In English, grammatical connections are employed to reflect logical relations, with connectives or grammatical structures serving this function. In contrast, Chinese employs a diverse array of rhetorical devices and semantic relations to express logic, including associative words, as well as the logical relations inherent in the content itself. A notable distinction between these two languages lies in their respective emphasis on linguistic form. English places a stronger emphasis on form, while Chinese is more concerned with conveying meaning. Consequently, logical relations are typically expressed in an explicit manner in English, whereas in Chinese, they are usually implicit. This distinction necessitates that translators possess a profound comprehension of the logical relations intrinsic to the original text and convey them accurately in the translated version. (“Table 7”)

Table 7. Example of logical articulation in discourse

Original Text	Translated Text
Example 13: Things did more than convey identity and rarely had single meanings for their medieval makers, owners, and viewers. They were multivalent and their meanings could change over the course of their existence.	对于中世纪的创造者和观察者来说，器物不仅仅传达出一个人的身份，它们还有多重意义，而且这些意义在其存在的漫长岁月中还会发生改变。

It is imperative that the translator exhibit a thorough comprehension of the underlying logic in the source text and demonstrate the capacity to construct a coherent and logical structure during the translation process. This approach is instrumental in ensuring the precision and intelligibility of the translation. The following example is an independent sentence that is adjacent in terms of its grammatical structure, yet it is directly related in terms of its discourse information. In Example 13, the pronoun “they” in this case refers to the objects mentioned in the previous sentence. The phrase “their meanings” is employed to denote the meanings of the objects. In the former sentence, the objects are conveyed with multiple meanings, and in the subsequent sentence, the term “meanings” is used in the plural form. Consequently, the two grammatically independent sentences in the original text can be combined into a single sentence in Chinese by using the pronoun “它们” to refer to the objects and the logical relationship between the information presented before and after can be established through the use of conjunctions such as “还有” and “而且”, thereby facilitating a clear understanding of the logic for the readers of the translated language.

4. CONCLUSION

This historical text abounds with proper nouns and archaic terms from Old English and Ancient Greek. Translating such culturally dense material requires attention not only to lexical meaning, but also to underlying historical and cultural connotations. To effectively convey this cultural information, translators should employ strategies such as cultural compensation and transplantation.

Substantial differences between English and Chinese in syntax and discourse further complicate the task. Adjustments to word order and textual coherence are necessary to align the translation with target-language conventions while faithfully representing the original. By applying cultural translation theory to historical texts, this study proposes a three-tiered framework and practical strategies, supported by case examples, to bridge theoretical and applied translation practice.

However, the study has limitations. Its analysis relies on a limited sample of thirteen representative examples, which may not encompass the full range of translation challenges. While historical and linguistic references were consulted, the translations lacked formal expert validation. Future research would benefit from larger, more diverse

samples and incorporation of peer review to strengthen methodological robustness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The paper is supported by Key Research Project for Economic and Social Development of Heilongjiang Province (Special Project for Foreign Languages Discipline)(2025): Constructing International Discourse Power of the “Ice Silk Road”: The Role and Strategy of Heilongjiang Province (Grant No.: WY2025037).

REFERENCES

- [1] Bassnett, S. & André. L. Translation, History and Culture (eds). London & New York: Pinter Publishers. 1990.
- [2] Sun Yifeng. Confusions and Challenges of Cultural Translation[J]. Chinese Translation, 2016,(03), 5-14+128.
- [3] Liu Miqing. Outline of cultural translation. Beijing: China Translation Press. 2016.
- [4] Zhou, S. Y. Translator’s note types, norms and translator’s literacy in academic translation[J]. Shanghai Translation, 2021, (06), 89-94.
- [5] Liu, Junping. A general history of western translation theory. Hubei: Wuhan University Press. 2009.
- [6] Cong Xin. Cross cultural perspective shift and translation strategies in English translation [J]. scientific consulting (Science and technology · Management), 2023, (9): 199-201
- [7] Su, Xiuyun, Exploration of cultural transplantation phenomenon and strategy in Chinese-English translation[J]. Fujian Tea. 2019, (03), 255-256.
- [8] Li Feng. Research on English translation from the perspective of language and culture transformation [J]. Journal of Jiangxi Electric Power Vocational and technical college, 2024, (3): 136-138
- [9] Zhang Guanghua, Li Jianjun. On cultural transplantation in foreign translation[J]. Journal of Zhejiang Institute of Science and Technology, 2017(02), 130-133.
- [10] Bao, Huinan. Cultural context and language translation. Beijing: China Translation and Publishing Corporation. 2001.
- [11] Ye Zi Nan. Advanced English-Chinese Translation Theory and Practice Beijing: Tsinghua University Press. 2001.
- [12] Li Yunxing. English-Chinese Translation. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2011.