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Translation and interpreting as communication: Issues and perspectives

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Translation and interpreting as communication: Issues and perspectives

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Editorial: Translation and interpreting as communication: necessity and significance of studies about translated and interpreted communication

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Editorial on the Research Topic
Translation and interpreting as communication: necessity and significance of studies about translated and interpreted communication

1. Translation and interpreting as special forms of communication

Translation and interpreting (T&I) are forms of communication because their primary function is to bridge communication for people separated by language barriers. T&I are special forms of communication because the communication has to be conducted across languages and cultures, which means translators and interpreters have to process information and mediate between different linguistic, social and cultural contexts. Therefore, both T&I as communication and communication in T&I are complex forms of communication, which provide a rich venue for interdisciplinary exploration that can be named as "studies about translated and interpreted communication."

2. Necessity of studies about translated and interpreted communication as a new orientation in T&I studies

Despite the shaping role of T&I in mediating communication across languages and cultures since time immemorial, this Research Topic has not been investigated systematically in communication studies. Also, T&I scholars have only relatively recently started to investigate T&I as mediated and socially engaged activities from a communicative perspective. According to Wang (2018), there are different approaches to interpreting and translation in general. These include (1) cognitive approach, (2) linguistic and structural approach, (3) pragmatic and communicative approach, and (4) socio-cultural approach.

The first two approaches attend to the internal mechanism, process, and structure as well as micro-level features of T&I, thus representing a more self-reflective outlook in T&I from within. In comparison, the latter two approaches focus more on the communicative and external aspects and engage with some vital elements of T&I from sociopolitical, historical, communicative, cultural, literary, religious and civilizational planes. Arguably, this hierarchical conceptualization and layered categorization usefully encapsulate the developments of TIS over the past few decades since the genesis of the broader discipline signaled by Holmes (1972).

When we look back at the early days of T&I studies, most studies have explored T&I from within in order to establish a sense of disciplinary identity. Notably, there have been studies galore over the past few decades investigating such Research Topics as "equivalence" between the source text and target text, workflow of the T&I process, and (prescriptivist) strategies and techniques for T&I and their training. In comparison, corresponding to Wang (2018)'s discussions of the different approaches to TIS mentioned above, the external aspects (involving a pragmatic and communicative approach and a socio-cultural approach) have been significantly under-explored so far.

Moving beyond the traditional foci on such source-text-oriented and prescriptivist concepts as "equivalence" and "faithfulness" and the long-standing preoccupations with the various aspects of the T&I processes, quality and features of the T&I product, and their training etc. from within, recently more and more T&I studies are emerging to explore the external (communicative) aspects of T&I against a backdrop of interdisciplinarity from sociopolitical, cultural, discursive, journalistic, institutional, historical, civilizational and literary perspectives.

At the front and center of this more external communicative approach to T&I studies is the focus on communication from an interdisciplinary perspective. This operative word here might be understood in a narrow sense as "communication" (e.g., micro communicative events in different settings and contexts such as schools, hospitals, and police stations) and also in a broader and macro sense as COMMUNICATION (e.g., the communication of knowledge, philosophical ideas, sociopolitical narratives, institutional ideologies, religious beliefs and values, and even human civilization across cultures, societies and nations). Both ways of understanding the word "communication" inevitably involve a more dynamic, situated, contextualized, socially engaged and interdisciplinary perspective that moves beyond a static, unchanging, and decontextualized way of looking at T&I.

As part of this trend of more interdisciplinary and outward-looking research, scholars have examined the role of translators and interpreters in communicating information bilingually and multilingually, disseminating knowledge, (re)constructing discourses and narratives, and indexing sociopolitical identities and enacting realities in various historical (Lung, 2006; Guo, 2015; Wang and Xu, 2016; Wolf, 2016; Cui, 2021; Rodríguez-Espinosa, 2022), institutional (Schäffner, 2012; Wang, 2012; Beaton-Thome, 2013; Li, 2018; Wang and Feng, 2018; Fu and Chen, 2019; Gu, 2019, 2022a; Gu and Tipton, 2020; Gu and Wang, 2021; Li and Hu, 2021; Hu and Li, 2022), cultural (Conway, 2015); sociopolitical (Baker, 2006; Harding, 2011; Munday, 2012), diplomatic (Gao, 2021; Gao and Munday, 2022), media and journalistic (Orengo, 2005; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; van Doorslaer, 2009; Kang, 2014; Pan, 2014; Liu, 2017; Gu, 2018; Qin and Zhang, 2018; Filmer, 2019; Riggs, 2019; Valdeón, 2021; Zanettin, 2021; Zeng and Li, 2021; Kamyanets, 2022; Ping, 2022), public services (Wadensjö, 1998; Mason, 2001; Angelelli, 2004; Tipton and Furmanek, 2016), sociolinguistic and urban (Lee, 2022; Lees, 2022), and development (Marais, 2013, 2019; Todorova and Ahrens, 2021; Gu, 2022b) contexts.

3. This volume on T&I as communication

In view of the glaring lack of attention from both communication studies and T&I studies, the Research Topic of T&I as communication merits much-needed research efforts from an interdisciplinary perspective by scholars from different fields, areas and traditions. Aiming to bridge this gap, this themed issue presents a Research Topic on studies about translated and interpreted communication. Yuan presented a symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication. Zhao explored validation issues in assessing the interpreting competence of professional communicators. Yang et al. reported on a survey about the availability and reception of audio description as a communication aid for the deaf and hard of hearing in the Chinese mainland. Cui disclosed the role of ideology, patronage and manipulation in the translation of *Toward the Future* book series. Gao reviewed studies on interpreters' ideological mediation and intervention at international conferences. Ping examined mediation in news translation. Sun highlighted intercultural mediation and communication of meaning in literary translation. Guo and Zou discussed omission of political criticism as a case on translators' intervention in literary translation. Zhang and Zou explored the multi-sign communication system in Peking Opera stage translation.

Author contributions

CG and BW completed drafting of the manuscript jointly and did one round of revision. BW finalized the manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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A symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication—Key communication issues in face-to-face interpreting

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Communication has been conceptualized and studied in a wide range of disciplines. However, very few communication theories or models have explicitly incorporated interpreting as an indispensable process to achieve communicative goals in intercultural and interlinguistic settings where communicative parties do not share a common language. By the same token, despite a strong emphasis of interpreting as "a communicative pas de trois", there is much remaining to be explored in how existing communication theories and models could be drawn on and adapted to shed light on the key communication issues in interpreting studies. In view of such a distinct gap attributed to a striking lack of attention from both communication and interpreting scholars, as highlighted in this special issue, the author develops a symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication with a focus on exploring how an interpreter's identification with self-meanings and role management, which is key to their intrapersonal covert rehearsal process, impact on their interpreting decisions and behaviors. Through one-to-one interviews with three professional interpreters from the National Register of Public Service Interpreters, it is found that the interpreters' identification with particular self-meanings at the intrapersonal level, which gives rise to identity integration, identity accumulation and disidentification strategies, has impacted on how they managed various challenges at the interpersonal level, such as the impossibility of the neutrality expectation, dealing with inappropriate non-interpreting demands from communicative parties, and resolving identity conflicts linked to communicative contexts.

KEYWORDS

symbolic interactionist perspective to communication, interpreter-facilitated communication, identity, role, covert rehearsal

Introduction

Communication constitutes one of the most complex, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary concepts which has been theorized from a vast range of disciplinary perspectives oriented in humanities, social science and natural science, such as literary, linguistic, anthropological, sociological, psychological, neurological, and mathematical, to name but a few (Krauss and Fussell, 1996; Craig, 1999). Amongst numerous existing communication theories and models, very few have explicitly incorporated or considered interpreting as an integral component in their theorizations. By the same token, despite postulations of interpreting as a communicative activity (e.g., Wadensjö, 1998; Mason, 2005; Angelelli, 2012), there is still much work to be done to explore how existing interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary communication theories and models can be drawn on or adapted to expound pertinent communication issues that contribute to expanding and deepening our knowledge of interpreting (e.g., Ingram, 1974/2015, 1978; Wilcox and Shaffer, 2005; Deng, 2018). In view of this distinct gap as highlighted in this special issue, I shall draw on transactional communication model research and the symbolic interactionist approach to communication, in order to develop a symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication which situates interpreting in a larger and more holistic communicative process and, therefore, illuminates some key communication issues in face-to-face interpreting.

Communication constitutes a fluid theoretical construct that connects and flows through diversified disciplines. Encompassing as the term indicates, it runs the risk of "becoming an amorphous catch-all term" that may "mean all things to all men" (Luckmann, 1993, p. 68). Therefore, a meaningful discussion of how it can enrich our knowledge of interpreting requires a clearly defined focus that is conducive to achieving the research aim in this study. The paper will start with a brief review of research conceptualizing the mechanism of a communicative process and highlight that the model theorized in this research bears the fundamental characteristics of the dynamic transactional communication approach. In the respect of the sociological/dialectic relationship between the communicative components, this study will employ the symbolic interactionist perspective of communication which seeks to understand how meanings are co-constructed and emerging from reciprocal interactions between communicative agents in the social environment and how symbols, including language, are used to communicate meanings and to make sense of the world from communicators' own perspectives (Aksan et al., 2009). The proposed symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication conceptualizes interpreting as an integral part of a broader communicative loop where the integrity of the event under study, i.e., the social communication facilitated through interpreting, is preserved by paying attention to a multitude of variables and illustrating their mutual influences upon each other in a holistic, heuristic, and dialectic manner.

Theoretical framework

Research on mechanics of the communication process

Language and communication – human's unique ability "to symbolize with virtually unlimited flexibility" (Bowman and Targowski, 1987) – has been the center of intellectual pursuit since Aristotle's conceptualization of public speaking communication process for more than 2,000 years ago. In recent decades, one of the best-known communication process models constitutes (Shannon, 1949), Mathematical Theory of Communication where communication is depicted as a linear process through which a message is conveyed from a source sender to a destination receiver through (electronic) transmission channels. Shannon (1949) and other linear communication models feature communication as a one-way message transmission and are recognized as inadequate to represent the complex dynamics of human communication. In an effort to account for more relevant interpersonal, social and cultural components of the communication process, subsequent theorists (e.g., Schramm, 1954; Westley and MacLean, 1957), posit interactive models that accentuates communication process as a two-way interaction where receiver actively provides feedback to sender, and both sender and receiver encode and decode messages in the communicative context influenced by interpersonal and sociocultural variables relevant to the communication event.

The dynamic transactional communication type of model, in which this proposed model falls, highlights that both communicative agents actively participate in the communication process without distinguishing sender from receiver as both on the sending and receiving ends of the process. Communication is suggested to involve interactions that occur at two separate levels. One is at an interpersonal level between the communicative agents, and the other is at the intrapersonal psychological level of the individuals and occurs when they interact with their knowledge base. The two types of interactions take place concurrently and seamlessly to divulge shared information, which forms the basis for co-creating meanings. This type of model serves to illustrate the dynamicity, unrepeatability, and continuity of the communicative process of humans where meanings are constantly co-created and shared (Parackal et al., 2021). The process featuring the proposed symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication in this study reflects the two levels of interaction/communication happening inter-and intra-personally, with a focus on exploring how activities of connecting with internal knowledge base at the intrapersonal sociopsychological level impact on interpreter's output behavior managing interactions at the interpersonal level.

Symbolic interactionist approach to communication

Central to the symbolic interactionist approach is the interest in conceptualizing how individuals use language and symbols to create meanings, making sense of their world from their sociopsychological perspective, and to develop social structures through repeated and interactive communication. The dynamic overarching framework constitutes a bottom-up approach where individuals are conceived as agentic and autonomous in developing their self-meanings and, in the meantime, as integral and interdependent in co-creating and co-constructing their social environment through the continuous social process of communicating and interacting with others (Carter and Fuller, 2015). Philosopher, sociologist and sociopsychologist Mead's (1934) thinking provided the major thrust and influence on much current conceptualization of the self, communication and society, giving rise to "the most fully developed and central components of" symbolic interactionism (Burke and Stets, 2009, p. 32). Mead (1934) believes that socialized humans have three key capacities to enable them to carry out complicated internalized analysis before performing a particular communicative act with a view to inducing a desirable outcome. They comprise the capacity to use symbols, including languages, bodily gestures and significant objects, to construct and communicate meanings; the reflexive capacity to act upon the self as an object and the social environment to which the self is oriented, and to develop pertinent self-meanings; and the empathetic capacity to take the role of the other, and thus able to understand the other's attitudes and to evaluate things/situations from the other's perspective. The self also has the ability to decipher the position that one occupies in the social environment in relation to others and develops conscious goals. The self, Mead suggests, adapts to, adjusts and changes their environment and their own behavior through communication with others in order to achieve their own/shared communicative goals.

Following Mead, Hulett (1966, p. 5) further fleshes out the dialectic relationship amongst the self, communication, and society by positing a symbolic interactionist model of human communication with a view to theorizing "the processes and mechanisms of human communication on the social, interpersonal level where they actually operate, and that envisages *whole persons as the units*[1] involved in the process." Hulett argues that a communication model constructed entirely from the symbolic interactionist viewpoint would offer a distinct advantage of postulating a single but multilevel conceptual scheme "where some communicative events take place *within* and others take place *between* the individuals involved," and thus "could provide the linkages between levels" and of how activities taking place at one level may be influenced by activities at another level (Hulett, 1966, p. 8).

A symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication

The symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication proposed in this study will draw on the strengths of the intrapersonal and the interpersonal levels of conceptualizations featuring both the dynamic transactional model approach and the symbolic interactionist perspective. It has a distinct interest in how interpreters engage with and draw on their own sociopsychological knowledge base at the intrapersonal level to generate appropriate output behavior by incorporating and probing Hulett's (1966) conceptual notion of covert rehearsal process. It posits a new symbolic interactionist communicative process where interpreting constitutes an integral part of the communicative events. The interpersonal and the intrapersonal levels of the symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication are represented in the Figures 1, 2.

From a symbolic interactionist point of view, human communication is always initiated in a social situation which informs people of their particular communicative goals. In line with their goal, A generates and transmits a message to encourage B to respond with a cooperative behavior conducive to helping A achieve their goal. The symbolic interactionist model highlights that between the stage of communicative goal and the act of producing an output behavior, there exists an important intrapersonal stage of covert rehearsal (Hulett, 1966) where each communicator, including the interpreter, actively draws on their internal information source to interpret the input pattern of the communicative goal and organizes their forthcoming output behavior. The term "output behavior," rather than "interpreting," is adopted to describe the interpreter's act because after connecting with their internal information source, the interpreter may decide against simply interpreting the message as shown in many existing studies (e.g., Angelelli, 2004; Inghilleri, 2012; Yuan, 2022). Therefore, the term "output behavior" is more encompassing in representing the social act that an interpreter may take. In the communication loop, output behavior creates the communicative context that influences the input pattern of the message receiver's communicative goal.

At the intrapersonal level, covert rehearsal is suggested to include "internal information source" that communicators draw

1 Emphasis in italics added by the author.

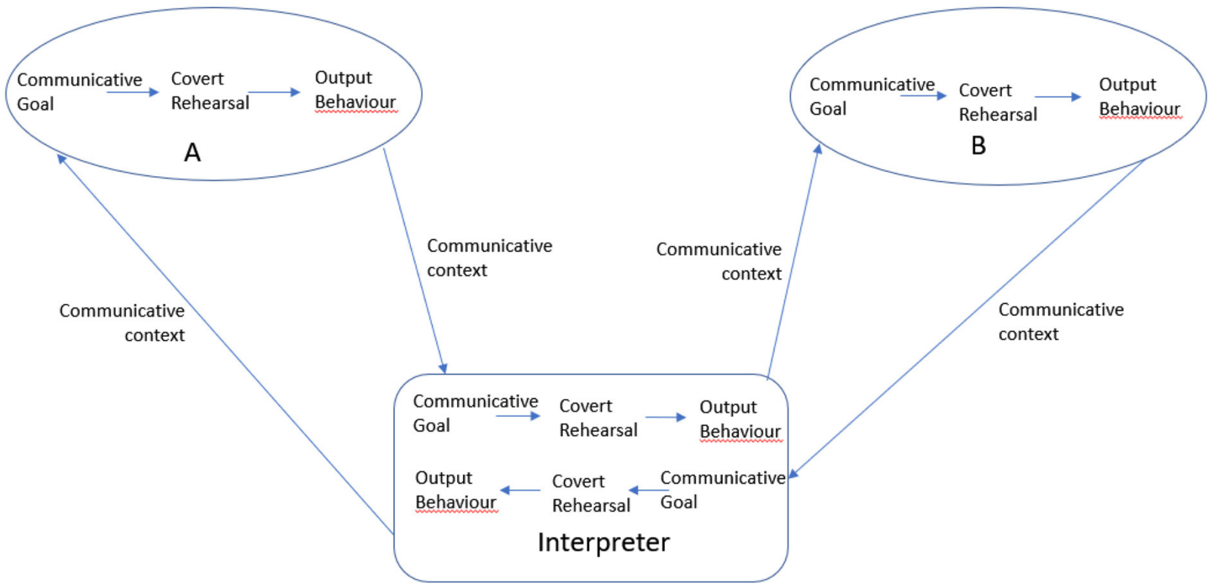

FIGURE 1
Interpersonal feedback loop of the symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication.

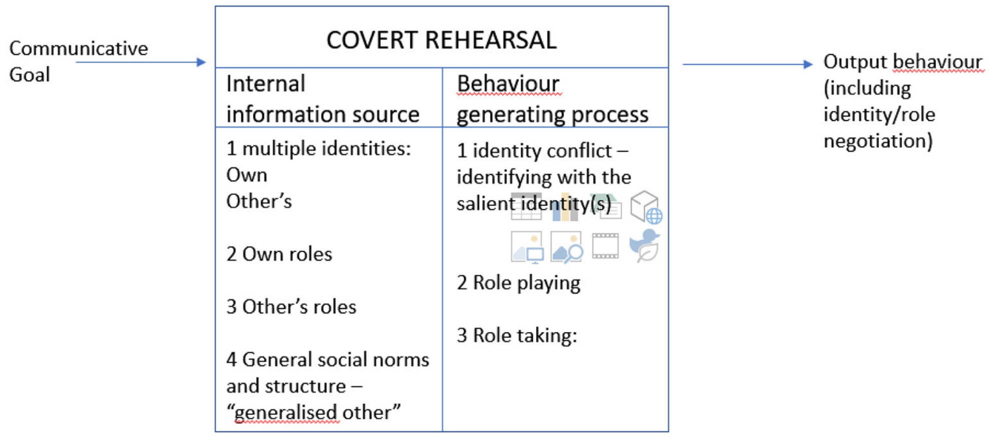

FIGURE 2
Intrapersonal level of covert rehearsal (revised based on Hulett, 1966).

on to organize their respective actions and "behavior generating process" where they make decisions on how to develop and perform an output behavior that can effectively solicit desired responses (Hulett, 1966, p. 18). In particular, the internal information source comprises important symbolic interactionist ideas of self-concept/identity, role and social norms and structure, or the "generalized other" in Mead's (1934, p. 144) language. According to the symbolic interactionist framework, a communicator deciphers their place/role in a social structure and develops self-meanings associated with that role. Depending on the relationship they have with others in the social structure, the communicator must understand and incorporate others' expectations of how they should behave when taking that role. Social norms define the nature of a communicative event and limit the repertoire of appropriate behavioral strategies that a communicator can mobilize when taking certain roles. Therefore, during the process of generating output behavior, a communicator will actively access and assess the information source of their own self-meanings and identify with those self-meanings considered to be most salient in the communicative context and take actions to fulfill the role requirement, i.e., role playing. In the meantime, the communicator must be mindful of what relevant self-meanings other may claim or pursue at the communicative event which could influence other's role-playing and role-taking patterns.

The intrapersonal level of the model shows that covert rehearsal constitutes an important step through which all the participating communicators' output behaviors are evaluated and generated. Therefore, notions of identity, role and society are key to understanding an individual's, such as an interpreter's sociopsychological process that has a significant impact on their behavior at the interpersonal level.

Identity, role and society – impact of covert rehearsal on interpreter's communicative behavior

How do the notions of identity, role and society impact on people's decision-making and behavior has been the center of symbolic interactionist pursuit. Identity represents a set of self-meanings and values we claim and uphold when assuming a variety of roles associated with the positions we occupy in the social structure. Society is a complex system featuring numerous embedded interwoven networks. A social person often occupies multiple positions in these networks which gives rise to varied self-meanings in relation to the other. For example, a person may have the identity of a parent in relation to their child, may assume the identity of an interpreter in relation to the others in the communicative event who rely on their interpreting, and may also possess the identity of a political party member dedicated to political objectives shared by the other party members.

Burke and Stets (2009) suggest that the types of identity a social person may possess should be taxonomised on three bases: roles, persons and groups. Role identity entails components of the self that correspond to the social roles we play (Grube and Piliavin, 2000). It is developed in response to social expectations of certain behaviors a person should display/perform when taking up a role. For example, "interpreter" constitutes an important role identity when one assumes the role of facilitating interlinguistic, intercultural and/or inter-semiotic communication. During the process of facilitating communication, there are long-established social expectations of how an interpreter should behave which are systematically articulated and regulated in the code of conduct for interpreters; that is, the interpreting ethics.

Social identity refers to the ways that a social person's self-concepts are based on their membership of a social group and together with emotional and valuational significance attached to that group membership (Campbell, 2011). For example, the statement that "I am a qualified interpreter registered with the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI)" constitutes a distinct claim of social identity. The statement implies that the interpreter belongs to a recognized and reputed professional group whose membership can only be secured through attaining required qualifications and experiences. It constitutes an in-group membership where members are committed to protecting and promoting group reputation and prestige by providing high standard professional services, distinguishing themselves from non-NRPSI qualified interpreters, and therefore, members develop emotional and valuational significance attached to the group and its status. The in-group claim may demonstrate an intention to highlight the intergroup differences in quality and standard assurance by explicating the person's in-group membership. Social identity constitutes a key concept within which intergroup distinctions and discrimination are studied.

Person identity is based on a view of the self as a unique individual, distinct from other persons by the qualities or characteristics one internalizes as their own, such as priding oneself as a social being with exceptionally high moral standards. Moral identity constitutes an important person identity, and it is considered a source of moral motivation bridging moral reasoning (our evaluative judgments on whether certain behaviors are socially just or unfair) to moral actions. Therefore, it is suggested that people with a stronger sense of moral identity will be more likely to do what they believe is right, and more likely to show enduring moral commitments (Blasi, 2001). Yuan (2022) points out that an interpreter's moral identity and its relationship to role identity constitute two uncharted areas in interpreting research. Yuan (2022) illustrates with examples from a professional interpreter where their moral identity (the self-concepts prompting personal actions that promote social justice) and their role identity (the self-concepts encouraging behaviors in conformity with professional ethics) required different courses of actions. It is found that when facing such intrapersonal identity conflicts, the interpreter has taken actions guided by their salient identity that occupies a higher position in the identity salience hierarchy while doing their best to mitigate threats to self-meanings and values underpinning the other identity.

Drawing from the above, such relevant research questions duly arise: (1) How does an interpreter manage and identify with a multitude of self-meanings vis-à-vis their professional role, which is central to their covert rehearsal? (2) What is the impact on their output behavior? (3) How may an interpreter decide to perform and negotiate their identity/role at the interpersonal level? These are the three questions that this research seeks to address.

Method

To explore this, one-to-one interviews with three professional interpreters, who are members of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI), are conducted to delve into their reflections on how their sense of self and perceptions of other may have impacted on their decisions, attitudes and behaviors during the process of facilitating communication. All the interviewed interpreters possess certified public service interpreting qualifications and have been practicing members at NRPSI for at least 8 years. All the interviews are conducted in English language, and in a private setting that encourages uninterrupted elaborations. All the interviewed interpreters are highly competent in elaborating their ideas in English without any difficulty. The researcher has made conscious efforts not to lead the interpreters' answers. For example, the interpreters were not informed of the research purpose before or during the interview processes. Moreover, open-ended questions are formulated to elicit spontaneous and rich responses. The researcher has also made efforts not to interrupt the interpreters' thought process by giving ample time for reflections and pauses. The open ended questions include: How do you see yourself when helping people to communicate with each other at various settings?; What do you think how others see you at those events and why?; Can you recall some interpreting occasions that have stood out for you and what happened?; What do you think of your decisions made there and then, and why?. Further probing questions are initiated to prompt deeper reflections when an interpreter has completed the account of an incident or it is clear that their thought process has come to an end. Examples of such prompt questions are: How did you feel about it?; Why did you make that decision?; How do you perceive your decision or what you did at the time?; and so on.

All the interviews are transcribed verbatim for analysis. The transcriptions retain all the original verbal features, including fillers, hesitations, repetitions, self-corrections, ellipses and ungrammatical expressions, to reflect the authenticity and the communicative style of the interviews. Ungrammatical expressions in oral communication are common even amongst the native-English speakers. They do not reflect the interviewees' (lack of) linguistic competence in English.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) process is employed as it emphasizes the researcher's role in actively engaging with and interpreting the research subjects' efforts of making sense of their lived experiences, in this study, their interpreting experiences (Smith et al., 2009). This is achieved by the researcher reading through the transcriptions repeatedly, making descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual notes (Yuan, 2022), and extrapolating shared experiential statements among the interpreters. For confidentiality, the interpreters' names are replaced with the following pseudo-names in the analysis: Michael, Sandra, and Kathleen. The University of Birmingham research ethical guidelines are fully abided by where all the interpreters' consents to interview and to be video-recorded for research purposes are obtained beforehand and they have been informed that they have the right to withdraw from the interview whenever they wish to do so.

Analysis of shared experiential themes and findings

Identification of self: Interpreter's perceptions of self and the expected neutrality

Existing studies have critically examined the issue of interpreter's neutrality through various social lenses, such as the framework of emotional labor (Ayan, 2020), the stakeholders' expectations in diversified communicative settings (Clifford, 2004), and the narrative concept in situations of conflict (Baker, 2006). This study, for the first time, approaches it from the perspective of interpreter's identification with self-meanings.

The interviewees' comments (see Appendix 1) communicate that it is difficult to identify with the absolute neutrality role and how the role is described in the NRPSI Code of Conduct. They point out that the rules[2] around neutrality must be subject to interpretation for them to provide meaningful guidance. Nevertheless, the interpreters are seen to have varied views on how such rules should be interpreted and what constitute appropriate strategies and behavioral choices that are fit and acceptable within the neutrality boundary.

Michael suggests that the "neutrality" expectation of his role identity conflicts with his human identity by commenting that "A person who's neutral is devoid of … a soul." His identification with the superordinate categories of human qualities (Carmona et al., 2020), which is developed through life experiences and knowledge advancement, gives rise to his beliefs and values that are consistent with the broad characteristics of humanity, and therefore, in his view, prevents him from acting in a neutral and devoid manner. In the meantime, Michael also shows a standpoint that opposes interpreters taking on an advisory role by offering direct advice to the communicative party. This is in line with interpreting ethics and his role identity. Michael's identifications with his human identity and with the non-advisory aspect of his role

2 5.4 Practitioners shall interpret truly and faithfully what is uttered, without adding, omitting or changing anything; in exceptional circumstances a summary may be given if requested.

5.9 Practitioners carrying out work as Public Service Interpreters, or in other contexts where the requirement for neutrality between parties is absolute, shall not enter into discussion, give advice or express opinions or reactions to any of the parties that exceed their duties as interpreters; Practitioners working in other contexts may provide additional information or explanation when requested, and with the agreement of all parties, provided that such additional information or explanation does not contravene the principles expressed in 5.4. (National Register of Public Service Interpreters Code of Conducts accessible *via* https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/for-clients-of-interpreters/code-of-professional-conduct.html).

identity, and his dis-identification from the absolute neutrality expectation may produce emergent internal tensions, ambiguity, and paradox (Knights and Willmott, 1999), and may lead to identity ambivalence – contradictions between one's self-meanings and the expectations that society has of them (Davis, 1994). Identity integration, achieved through devising a meta-identity, is suggested in identity literature as one of the coping strategies to enable individuals to relate and embrace discrete identities as synergistic and interdependent (Gotsi et al., 2010), thus helping to achieve intrapersonal identity harmony. In this case, Michael perceives himself "as a value adder," a meta-identity that offers a superordinate self-categorization of being a helpful person (his human identity) and being a professional (his role identity) at the same time. In his view, the contradictions between self-meanings and social expectations are reconciled and synergized within this meta-identity. Influenced by the core self-meanings conceptualized in this meta-identity of a value adder, Michael proposes an interpreting strategy of signposting as a solution to maintaining an interpreter's professionalism and managing communicative incidents where one party is given inaccurate information during the communication process. He expresses his belief that the strategy of signposting enables him to "act within the boundaries, and it doesn't compromise the integrity of the setting itself, and the integrity of the people involved in that setting" (Michael's original comments). Michael gives an example of signposting as "saying: 'have you heard of the Citizens Advice Bureau? So, maybe you know, if you've, if you would like some further advice on certain such point in your situation, your case, maybe you could visit your local CAB.' So in that case, the interpreters just signpost some NGOs, you know, that might be able to provide support" (Michael's original comments).

Echoing Michael's viewpoints, Sandra also expresses in her remarks an attitude at odds with the absolute neutrality expectation of an interpreter's role identity. Sandra is qualified as an interpreter and as a lawyer. Her role identity as a qualified lawyer is seen to have consistently impacted on her decision-making and her output interpreting behavior. As Sandra reports, she often observes in the magistrate and the crown courts where some legal clerks, who do not possess appropriate legal qualifications, claim the identity of qualified lawyers, and perform in front of the other party such a self-proclaimed role identity by introducing themselves as "I'm your lawyer." This, as reported, causes a communicative dilemma for Sandra. As a lawyer herself, Sandra is acutely aware of the professional differences between a legal clerk and a qualified lawyer. She is in a position to recognize the false claim and the inappropriate performance of such a role identity by one of the communicative parties, i.e., the legal clerk, to the disadvantage and ignorance of the other party, e.g., an asylum seeker. Her comments reflect her belief that had the absolute neutrality rule been followed in interpreting faithfully such a false claimed identity, she would have been "involved in some kind of deception."

Moreover, the identity of a qualified lawyer in this case constitutes not only a role identity that enables Sandra's informed insights into the untruthful identity claim, but also a social identity that has contributed to establishing her positive ingroup distinctiveness against outgroup discrimination, as shown in her description of the legal clerks as "*they* don't have any legal qualifications, or not to my knowledge … these *so-called* lawyers aren't in fact qualified lawyers." The outgroup pronoun "they" and the pejorative adjective "so-called" communicate Sandra' salient attitude of distancing herself from and disapproving of the legal clerk's untruthful identity performance.

Sandra has expressed at the interview positive self-perceptions on possessing the social and role identity of a qualified lawyer in addition to her role identity as a qualified interpreter by commenting: "I'm definitely different to many colleagues … because I do have legal qualifications … it's definitely an advantage, in my opinion, to have legal qualifications." Hennekam (2017) finds that individuals, when managing multiple identities at play, may develop an identity accumulation strategy where the transferability of the skills attained in different types of activities is stressed as a strength and enrichment, equipping them with more creative solutions to personal or communicative problems. Such an identity accumulation strategy, combined with the intergroup prejudice analyzed as above, may have prompted her decision to initiate identity negotiation by indirectly challenging the legal clerk's untruthful identity claim. By using a broader category of "legal representative" and by informing, in an on-record manner, the legal clerk of such a change of identity category, Sandra performs a discursive identity negotiation in the interpreting to redress the identity discrepancy at the interpreter-facilitated communicative event.

Kathleen offers an example where she believes cultural references must be incorporated in the interpreting which in her view "are essential for the communication process." She illustrates through this example the difficulties of identifying with the absolute neutrality expectation of her role identity, and the confusion such an expectation leads to: "Do I add it? Don't I add it?" Kathleen draws on her own life experiences, when she was living in her home country, to inform the psychiatric nurse of the possible cultural information that may have influenced the patient's behavior during the medical assessment. Her decision and behavior of providing such an input in a proactive way, instead of upon request, demonstrate her move to dis-identify with the expectation of absolute neutrality, and her possible perceptions of self as a cultural enabler, similar to Michael's view of self as a value-adder.

Disidentification conceptualizes how one situates themselves within and against the discourses we are called to identify with (Muñoz, 1999). In the context of interpreting, disidentification entails the rejection of hegemonic role interpellations and the effort to enlarge the autonomous spaces for self-identification. It is adopted by the interviewed interpreters to tackle and challenge unrealistic role expectations and to call for more dynamic role definitions for public service settings that incorporate/take into account and respect qualified interpreters' self-meanings subsumed under their human identity and their professional judgements. Through disidentification, identity integration (devising a meta-identity), and identity accumulation, the interpreters are seen to develop communicative strategies which are guided by their identification with the self-meanings that are conceived as pertinent and salient to the communicative settings.

Interpreter's role behavior for verifying their role identity

Sociopsychologists (Burke and Stets, 2009; Swann, 2012) assert that, in social interactions, people take active actions in the pursuit of maintaining a valued and coherent self and ensuring that the upheld self-meanings would be recognized and accepted by communicative partners. Identity-confirming evaluations offer coherence between self-meanings and others' views, while the opposite instigates incongruence and arouses conscious efforts to redress the discrepancy. Burke and Stets (2009) define the process as identity verification where a communicator develops evaluations of the consistency between the self-claimed identity and the other-perceived identity, and takes active steps to eliminate any disturbance that contributes to the discrepancy. Sandra, Kathleen, and Michael report incidents where communicative parties' behaviors threatened the interpreters' role identity, and the interpreters took actions to verify and uphold their role identities.

Sandra offered examples where immigration interviewers sought direct advice from her by asking "Miss XXX, what do you think about such and such?". The question constitutes an invitation for advice and Sandra's response communicates her salient view of such invitation as a disturbance to her role identity in the communicative event. Sandra is seen to reject the advisor identity imposed on her by highlighting the remit of her role identity as a professional interpreter: "I am not allowed to give an opinion… I'm not allowed to give you that, sort of, you know, answer". By the same token, Kathleen's experience shows a similar inappropriate appropriation of the interpreter's role identity. As she reports, her institutional client has developed an expectation of her taking on the role identity of an interviewer for the police owing to her repeated experience with them. Kathleen's actions demonstrate her perception of such a behavior as a threat to her role identity as a professional interpreter. She makes remarks about using interpreting ethics as a weapon to fend off the imposed non-interpreter role identity in that context, which in her views, not only helps to verify her role identity as a professional interpreter but also avoids damaging her relationship with the institutional client. Michael makes comments on how he consciously shifts and adjusts his spatial positions in relation to his communicative parties as a strategy of discouraging any potential disturbance or threat to his role identity as a professional interpreter. These examples reflect that at interpreter-facilitated events, communicative parties may develop inappropriate expectations or demands of how the interpreters should do their work, either due to their lack of understanding of an interpreter's role identity or their possible perceptions of interpreters as exploitable resources. Such inappropriate expectations or demands from the communicative parties lead to disturbances or threats to an interpreter's role identity. The interviewed interpreters are seen to take actions to verify their role identities as professional interpreters and to reject imposed non-interpreter role identities by highlighting their role remit (I am not allowed to …), using interpreting code of conduct as a weapon, or changing physical positions to set boundaries at the communicative event.

Disassociation owing to threat to identity

Identity represents the fundamental sets of values that define who we are, and it is emotionally invested. If verification of one type of identity requires involvement in situations or events that threaten the person's upheld values or beliefs underpinning another identity, intrapersonal identity conflict ensues. A person may feel they must give precedent to one set of self-meanings and values over another (Caza et al., 2018). Identity conflict can be particularly problematic when a considerably high degree of dissonance is experienced and one feels they cannot satisfy role requirements of each identity (Karelaia and Guillen, 2014; Rabinovic and Morton, 2016). Under such circumstances, they are likely to take decisive actions to voluntarily disassociate themselves from the identity to which they are less committed, with a view to eliminating the incompatibilities among the meanings and values.

At the interview, Sandra and Kathleen gave examples where interpreters choose not to take on certain interpreting assignments because verification of the role identity as a professional interpreter in those contexts requires participation in activities that directly oppose to or threaten their social identities underpinned by salient religious beliefs or parental attachment. Activation of these two distinct social identities is foreseen as incompatible and conflicting, by some interpreters, with their role identity. Therefore, those interpreters are observed to actively disassociate themselves from their role identity owing to stronger commitment to the social identities. Michael, on the other hand, provides an example where an interpreting client – a psychiatric hospital – presents persistent challenges for him to properly verify his role identity because the hospital never gives any briefing prior to interpreter-facilitated events where communication often involves potentially violent patients suffering from psychiatric disorders. Michael clearly sees this as a threat to his role identity verification and has made a conscious decision of severing his working relationship with that client to eliminate the threat. Michael highlights throughout the interview that it is of great importance that public service interpreters should be briefed prior to interpreting assignments, but this seldom happens in reality.

Conclusion

In this paper, a symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication is proposed to address the lack of attention to interpreting mediation in the existing communication models. With a view to probing how an interpreter's covert rehearsal components at the intrapersonal level impact on their output interpreting behavior at the interpersonal level, the researcher explores with three professional interpreters, who are active members of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI), how their self-meanings, their perceptions of other's expectations, and their evaluations of other's behavior as well as the communicative context have impacted on how they carry out the interpreting tasks. It is found that all the interviewed interpreters do not identify with the absolute neutrality role stipulated in the NRPSI code of conduct, due to the perceived conflict with the interpreter's human identity, the consequence of rendering the interpreter to be involved in deception, and the confusion preventing the interpreter to represent the essential cultural elements key to the communication process. It is shown at the interview that identity integration (devising a meta-identity), identity accumulation and disidentification strategies have been developed to enable the interpreters to tackle the problems and infeasibility arising from the absolute neutrality expectation. The interpreters also report that at interpreter-facilitated events, they have to take actions to address communicating parties' inappropriate expectations and demands, in order to protect and verify their role identity as professional interpreters. To achieve this, rejecting imposed non-interpreter role identities, either directly or indirectly using code of conduct as a shield, or changing spatial positions to set boundaries has been adopted to verify their role identities as professional interpreters. Last but not least, it is demonstrated that when intrapersonal identity conflicts arise in situations where activation and verification of a professional interpreter's role identity pose a great threat to their committed social identities underpinned by religious beliefs or parental attachment, interpreters are seen to actively disassociate themselves from such communicative contexts which trigger activation of their role identity.

This research constitutes the first effort to examine an interpreter's sociopsychological process at the intrapersonal level and its impact on their interpreting behavior at the interpersonal level, situated within a symbolic interactionist communication model. In future studies, key issues around communicating parties' covert rehearsal processes, the impact on interpreter's output behavior, and how identity is discursively performed, negotiated, and represented at interpreter-facilitated events should be investigated to provide illuminating answers enriching our understanding of interpreting as socially shaped and socio-psychologically engaged communicative activities.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/Supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by University of Birmingham Ethics Review Manager. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2022.1000849/full#supplementary-material

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Setting the cultural agenda for domestic readers: A corpus analysis of news translation in *Culture Weekly*

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Drawing on the notion of cultural translation and agenda-setting theory, this study examines the role that translation plays in facilitating cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication within the context of news translation. It is based on a case study of *Culture Weekly*—a four-page section published every Monday in *Reference News*, the most widely circulated daily newspaper in China. This study analyzes a comparable corpus of Chinese news articles from *Culture Weekly* and their English-language versions from various media outlets between February and March 2022. The study finds that the newspaper mainly used strategies of acculturation and literal translation and that it set the agenda for its domestic readers by highlighting particular cultural issues and disseminating certain cultural values. This case study provides insight into how news translation, as a form of recontextualization, strikes a delicate balance between accuracy and acceptability and how it mediates between source and target cultures within the institutional setting. The resulting translation reflects the editorial attitudes of the media outlet toward various cultural issues and manifests the relationship between the newspaper and its readership.

KEYWORDS
agenda-setting, *Reference News*, *Culture Weekly*, news translation, cross-cultural communication, corpus analysis

Introduction

There has been increasing emphasis on examining the contexts of translation from a cultural studies perspective since the cultural turn in translation studies (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1998). A growing body of literature has recognized the importance of culture in translation (e.g., Liddicoat, 2016; Katan and Taibi, 2021; Valdeón, 2021). These studies point out that translation is not only an interlingual but also an intercultural or cross-cultural act. They argue that translation is cultural mediation and the translator is a cultural mediator playing a critical role in communication. This is particularly evident in news translation, since it is pivotal to cross-cultural communication in the context of globalization.

Many studies in the field of news translation have focused on the effects of the media on news translation, especially in relation to gatekeeping (Vuorinen, 1995; Song, 2017; Valdeón, 2021, 2022) and framing (Valdeón, 2014; Wu, 2018; Liu, 2019). To date, few studies have investigated the effects of translation on agenda-setting in cross-cultural communication. As Valdeón (2021, p. 34) suggests, "agenda-setting could contribute to revealing some of the factors that affect the nature of translation as 'mediation' and how these factors shape personal, collective and institutional narratives". This paper presents a case study which examines agenda-setting in translated news articles in *Culture Weekly*, a four-page section published every Monday in *Reference News* (*RN*) and the role of news translation as cultural mediation in setting the news agenda for its readers.

The paper firstly gives a brief overview of the recent literature on agenda-setting and news translation as recontextualization and a cultural activity. The next section provides details on the corpus and methodology used. The next presents the findings from the corpus analysis before discussing the factors that contribute to the agenda-setting function of news translation.

Agenda-setting theory

Research into agenda-setting has a long history. The notion of agenda-setting was first discussed by Lippmann (1922) and popularized in his *Public Opinion*, in which he describes "the world outside and the pictures in our heads" (p. 3), although Lippmann (1922) did not call this phenomenon agenda-setting. The first serious analysis of agenda-setting was McCombs and Shaw (1972), which outlined the agenda-setting function of mass media and tested the hypothesis that "*the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues*" (p. 177, italics in original). The term "agenda" refers to "issues or events that are viewed at a point in time as ranked in a hierarchy of importance" (Rogers and Dearing, 1988, p. 556). The agenda-setting process has three main components: the media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda (Rogers and Dearing, 1988). Researchers distinguish agenda-setting from agenda-building. Rogers and Dearing (1988, p. 556) argue that agenda-setting is "a process through which the mass media communicate the relative importance of various issues and events to the public", whereas agenda-building is "a process through which the policy agendas of political elites are influenced by a variety of factors, including media agendas and public agendas".

It is generally held that there are two levels of agenda-setting (Rogers et al., 1993). As McCombs and Ghanem (2001, p. 68) note, "[t]he first level of agenda-setting is the transmission of object salience, and the second level is the transmission of attribute salience". In agenda-setting theory, an issue is defined as "a social problem, often conflictual, that has received mass media coverage" (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 3) and salience is described as "the degree to which an issue on the agenda is perceived as relatively important" (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 8). The first level of agenda-setting relates to the salience of issues from media agenda to public agenda. The second level of agenda-setting relates to attributes of a process regarded as framing by some scholars (McCombs and Ghanem, 2001). However, other scholars argue that second-level agenda-setting is not equivalent to framing. Weaver (2007, p. 145) argues that "[t]here are similarities between second-level agenda-setting and framing, even if they are not identical processes". Both framing and agenda-setting are concerned with "*how* issues or other objects … are depicted in the media than with *which* issues or objects are more or less prominently reported" (Weaver, 2007, p. 145, italics in original). However, framing includes "a broader range of cognitive processes" (Weaver, 2007, p. 146) than agenda-setting. Agenda-setting and framing are different in several aspects, including in relation to news production, news processing and locus of effect (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007).

Extensive research on agenda-setting has been carried out in media communication and political communication, and a few studies have examined agenda-setting in other contexts (Kosicki, 1993; McCombs, 2005; McCombs et al., 2014). McCombs and Reynolds (2009, p. 13) point out that "[t]he transmission of culture is also linked to the agenda-setting process". Several studies have analyzed the setting of cultural agenda in the salient attributes in the cultural domain (e.g., Bantimaroudis et al., 2010; Zyglidopoulos et al., 2012; Bantimaroudis and Zyglidopoulos, 2014; Symeou et al., 2015).

Scholarly interest in news translation is primarily focused on framing as a media effect, but this is just one effect among many others. Agenda-setting and priming, for example, are two similar yet distinct concepts which journalism scholars have applied to the analysis of news coverage (Iyengar and Simon, 1993). However, whether translation has an influence on agenda-setting remains unclear and has not yet received much attention in translation studies. News translation sets the agenda of original news coverage and affects the attitudes of recipients toward the subject discussed. This study explores this intersection between translation studies and communication from the perspectives of cultural agenda-setting and examines whether and/or to what extent the salience of cultural issues and attributes in a source text (ST) is transferred to a target text (TT).

News translation as recontextualization and socio-cultural activity

The term "recontextualization" can be traced back to Bernstein (1990) who used it to describe the transfer of knowledge in relation to pedagogic discourse. Its meaning has broadened from its original definition within discourse studies and has been defined as "the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context (the context being in reality a matrix or field of contexts) to another" (Linell, 1998, p. 144–145). Critical discourse analysts refer the term to "a relationship between different (networks of) social practices—a matter of how elements of one social practice are appropriated by, relocated in the context of, another" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 222). They argue that discourse as "recontextualization of social practice" (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 4) plays a critical role in the construction of social reality. Some translation scholars argue that translation is a form of recontextualization that transfers the meanings from STs to TTs (Greenall and Løfaldli, 2019). News translation is a recontextualization practice which is "a complex site of institutional goals and procedures, coupled with tension and conflict among different representations, ideologies and voices" (Kang, 2007, p. 219). These studies indicate that recontextualization is an important concept for news translation research and highlight a critical role for recontextualization in news translation.

The consideration of cultural aspects is common in news translation research and yet culture is a concept difficult to define precisely. Culture is a broad concept which encompasses different aspects, such as "the arts and artistic activity; the learned, primarily symbolic features of a particular way of life; and a process of development" (Longhurst et al., 2008, p. 2). There has been increasing emphasis on examining the contexts of news translation in the target culture and this cultural approach analyzes news translation beyond the textual level. Conway states that news translation is "a key site of mass mediated intercultural contact" (Conway, 2010, p. 979) and considers news translation to be a form of cultural translation by which "journalists try to explain to one group how another sees the world" (Conway, 2012a, p. 998). This definition of cultural translation is a "process of understanding" (Conway, 2012b, p. 272) which goes beyond the traditional view of translation as mere linguistic transformation. However, this distinction between linguistic and cultural translation is opposed by Davier (2015), who argues that the very notion of translation is itself linguistic and cultural and that the concepts of "cultural translation" (Conway, 2015) and "acculturation" (Bassnett, 2005) are unnecessary and illegitimately prescriptive. Davier (2015) advocates a broader definition of translation in news agencies and proposes a methodological triangulation of textual, fieldwork and corpus analysis in a study of how multicultural readers of Agence France-Presse and Agence Télégraphique Suisse understand Switzerland as the cultural other.

The cultural approach to news translation addresses the significance of translators and/or journalists in a broader social and cultural context. Conway and Vaskivska (2010) state that news translation contributes to better cross-cultural communication. Conway (2008) proposes a circuit model of culture in news translation, linking it to various elements such as cultural artifact, production, reception and socio-historical context. The studies so far reviewed here mainly view news translation as a socio-cultural activity, but the mechanisms for the transfer of cultural elements from one text to another have not been sufficiently researched. This study explores the role played by translation in setting the agenda of various cultural issues and attributes between the STs and TTs and seeks to address the following research questions (RQs):

> RQ1: What are the salient cultural issues in the English and Chinese news? Is the salience of cultural issues in the English news transferred to the issue agenda in *Culture Weekly*?
> RQ2: What are the salient attributes of these cultural issues in the English and Chinese news? Is the salience of cultural attributes in the English news transferred to the attribute agenda of *Culture Weekly*?
> RQ3: What are the contributing factors that cause any differences in salience?

Corpus and methods

Corpus

A small *ad hoc* comparable corpus was built for the Chinese and English articles on Sketch Engine, an online corpus software. The Chinese and English news articles were firstly converted into plain text format then formatted and noise eliminated. The Chinese texts were segmented by the CoreNLP tokenizer in Sketch Engine. The Chinese and English news texts were then compressed into an archive file and each uploaded to Sketch Engine.

The corpus consists of 35 pairs of translated Chinese articles from *Culture Weekly* (*CW*) and their original versions from various English-language media outlets. The Chinese articles were published in the eight issues of *CW* published in *Reference News* (*RN*) between February and March 2022. Several globally significant issues occurred during this period. Of particular relevance here are the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics because they naturally attracted high global media attention and were a stage for displaying Chinese culture. The Russia-Ukraine conflict also broke out in this period.

The articles selected for this study were chosen because their sources of information and publication dates were identifiable, making it easy to identify their STs. The sources are presented in Figure 1. Five articles were selected from the *New York Times*, making it the most frequent source. Two articles each were chosen from the *Spectator*, *New Scientist*, *Independent* and *Atlantic* journals' websites and the Vox and CNN websites. The other 18 articles come from a range of global media. Most of these articles are in English, with the rest in French, Spanish, or German. The STs were retrieved by searching online for the media outlet, date of publication and news headlines provided at the beginning of translated articles in CW. The headlines of STs and TTs are listed in the Supplementary material.

The English subcorpus consists of 80,515 tokens or 68,685 words, whereas the Chinese subcorpus contains 37,410 tokens or 31,576 words. Thus, the size of the Chinese subcorpus is

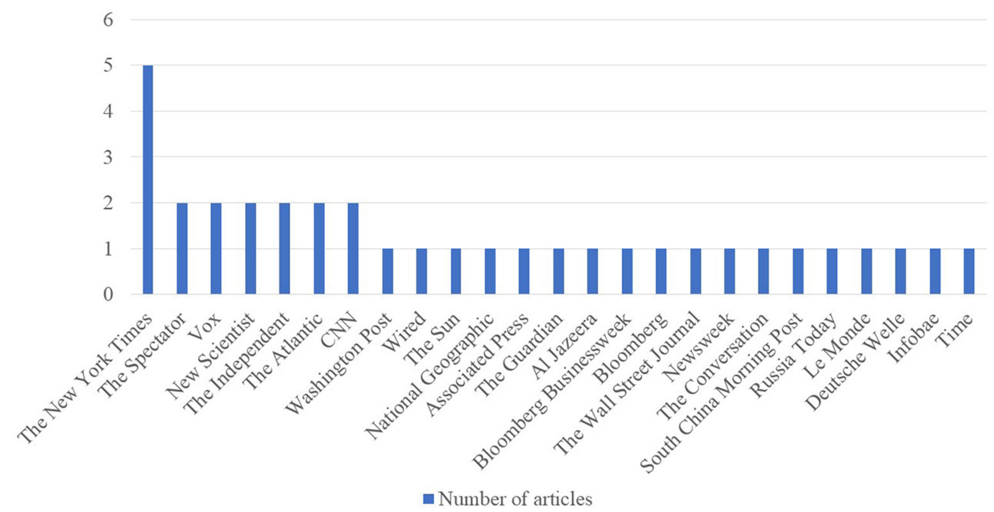

FIGURE 1
Sources of articles.

TABLE 1 Corpus information.

Language	Tokens	Types	Type/token ratio	Sentences
English	80,515	68,685	85.3	3,507
Chinese simplified	37,410	31,576	84.4	1,709

less than half (46%) that of the English subcorpus, which may be attributable to the omission of parts of the texts, given that "omission is a key strategy in the translation of news items, where material is tailored to the needs of a specific local audience" (Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009, p. 8). Table 1 provides the details.

Methods

Researchers in agenda-setting mainly employ traditional methods such as content analysis and manual coding to identify media and public agendas. As Dearing and Rogers (1996, p. 18) note on the measurement of agendas, "[t]he media agenda is usually indexed by a content analysis of the news media to determine the number of news stories about an issue or issues of study". With the rapid growth of online media, researchers adopt innovative methods such as "big data" to explore agenda-setting in media spheres (Neuman et al., 2014). The present big data-based study utilizes MonkeyLearn, a text analytic tool powered by artificial intelligence and natural language processing to examine the comparable corpus, identifying keywords and conducting collocation analysis.

The analysis is conducted at two levels. First-level agenda-setting examines the cultural issues in the English and Chinese news respectively. The study employs the corpus tool of keywords analysis to identify the most salient keywords from the STs and TTs and classifies these keywords into various cultural issues. The term "keyword" is used in corpus linguistics to mean "a word that is more frequent in a text or corpus under study than it is in some (larger) reference corpus" (McEnery and Hardie, 2012, p. 245). The word list of the English subcorpus is compared to that of the reference corpus English Web 2020 (enTenTen20). Likewise, the word list of the Chinese subcorpus is compared to that of the Chinese Web 2017 (zhTenTen17). These keywords were classified by the topic classifier in MonkeyLearn which automatically detect topics in text data. This was then followed by a second-level agenda-setting analysis of the salient cultural attributes in the English and Chinese news agendas. The word sketch corpus tool compared the collocation of key cultural attributes in English and their equivalents in the Chinese news agenda, as described in Kilgarriff and Tugwell (2001). The collocates of these attributes were examined in their contexts to identify patterns of translation strategy.

Results

First-level agenda-setting

Table 2 illustrates the top 100 keywords in the English news subcorpus. These keywords mainly fall into the eight topic categories of politics, health, humanities, food, entertainment, environment, science, and sports. Over half of the keywords relate to politics, making it the most salient issue in the

TABLE 2 Top 100 keywords in the English subcorpus.

Issue/topic	Keywords
Politics	MBS, Khashoggi, Neom, Hamdi, Riyadh, Addario, Lynsey, MBN, Saudis, Salman, Saudi, jihadist, Wahhabis, jihadism, al-Sarrah, al-Jabri, al-Hathloul, al-Awda, al-Qahtani, Taif, abaya, Abdulaziz, Ritz-Carlton, Saud, Ritz, Shihabi, iqama, monarchy, Arabia, Lindh, Tamim, Wahhabi, Ukrainians, Volnovakha, Donetsk, Parekh, Putin, Ukrainian, Donbass, Kyiv, Ukraine, Donbas, Kostetskiy, Grandi, Zelensky, Stepan, Sharafutdinova, Chamorro-Premuzic, Vasily, Getty, Vasyl, Mariupol, Tatyana, ruble, Kiev, Vasilyuk, Culberston, Ribakova
Health	Omicron, SARS-CoV-2, Luban, coronavirus, transmissible, transmissibility, Scheeringa, Kolk, Krueger, Whitlock, trauma, traumatize
Humanities	DWP, Clotilda, Edenton, Sadiki, Africatown, Yarborough, handkerchief, Chieftainess, dystopia, Infobae, Tsu, charade
Food	clam, pomelo, linguine, onaga, littleneck
Entertainment	Fisher-Quann, TikTok, Rayne
Environment	Caldor, Gorden, Graedel, Meighan
Science	Richon, Webb, flight-dynamics
Sports	Shiffrin, Versluis, Hawayek

English news agenda. These keywords relate mainly to two political matters: the activities of the Saudi crown prince and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. A total of 32 keywords come from "Absolute Power", an article about Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman published in the April 2022 issue of the *Atlantic*. The Russia-Ukraine conflict, which started in February 2022, generated 26 related keywords. The second most salient issue in the English news is health. Six keywords on COVID-19 originate from an article published in *Time* in January 2022 (Park, 2022). An equal number of keywords were derived from a Vox story in January 2022 (Pandell, 2022). The third most prominent topic in the English news agenda is humanities. Six keywords are from a story which appears in the March 2022 issue of *National Geographic* magazine. A few topics related to humanities, such as the history of the handkerchief, science fiction, the tragic deaths of famous persons, and the evolution of Chinese characters. The food topic features five keywords from three recipes. The entertainment topic is marked in a Vox article about how Rayne Fisher-Quann, a famous writer and cultural critic on TikTok, spends her day online. Environment issues such as climate change and waste recycling are highlighted in two articles, including one about Thomas Graedel, a professor of industrial ecology at Yale University, and the other about the Caldor Fire in California and Thomas Gorden, a member of Fire Twitter. The science issue is featured in an article in the *Atlantic* about Karen Richon, an aerospace engineer at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. The sports topic occurs in just three keywords relating US skier Mikaela Shiffrin, Finnish ice dancer Matthias Versluis, and US ice dancer Kaitlin Hawayek being interviewed about the food they ate in the Beijing Winter Olympic village.

TABLE 3 Top 100 keywords in the Chinese subcorpus.

Issue/topic	Keywords
Politics	乌克兰人(Ukrainians), 顿涅茨克(Donetsk), 乌克兰语(Ukrainian), 乌克兰(Ukraine), 瓦西里(Vasily), 泽连斯基(Zelensky), 俄罗斯人(Russian), 沃尔诺瓦哈(Volnovakha), 顿巴斯(Donbass), 人道主义(humanitarian), 俄语(Russian), 塔季扬娜(Tatyana), DPR, 金融战(financial warfare), 阿纳托利(Anatoly), 彼德(Peter), 表亲(cousin), 难民(refugee), 富季诺娃(Sharafutdinova), 种族主义(racism), 马里乌波尔(Mariupol), 普京(Putin), 防空洞(dugout), 难民署(refugee agency), 姑父(uncle), 语族(language family), 弹孔 (bullet hole), 公仆(servant), 斯拉夫(Slavic), 民族主义者(nationalist), 分离主义者(separatist), 普雷穆日奇(Premuzic), 民主党人(Democrats), MBS, 王储(crown prince), 卡舒吉(Khashoggi), 君主制(monarchy)
Humanities	手帕(handkerchief), 千禧(millennial), 字谜 (charade), 敲出(type), 女权主义(feminism), 语法化(grammaticalization), 王照(Wang Zhao), 石静远(Jing Tsu), 语言学家(linguist), 历史学家(historian), 科幻小说(science fiction), 敌托邦(dystopia), 信息论(information theory), 猜谜(charade), Instagram, 改革者(reformer), Alegría, 潜水员 (diver), DWP, 非洲人(African), 开普敦(Cape Town), 奴隶(slave), 豪什(Haush)
Environment	扫描器(scanner), 迈克尔(Michael), 推文(tweet), 推特(Twitter), 山火(blaze/fire), 卡多尔(Caldor), CAFireScanner, 利弗拉茨(Flats), 陶朗阿(Tauranga)
Health	克鲁格(Krueger), 创伤(trauma), 舍林加(Scheeringa), 惠特(Whitlock), 普林斯顿(Princeton), 奥密克戎(Omicron), 德尔塔(Delta), 宿主(host)
Food	意面(linguine), 蛤蜊(clam), 闪灼(sparkling), 红钻鱼(onaga), 柚子(pomelo), 麦当劳(McDonald), 白米饭(rice)
Sports	冰舞(ice dancing), 霍维耶克(Hawayek)

Table 3 shows the top 100 keywords in the Chinese subcorpus. These keywords mainly fall into the six topic categories of politics, humanity, environment, health, food and sport. In the Chinese news, political issues are still the most prominent, with a total of 33 keywords featuring the Russia-Ukraine conflict and four keywords featuring the Saudi crown prince. The environmental issue of wildfire is highlighted with nine keywords from an article in *Wired*. The health issues of trauma and COVID-19 were discussed in two articles in Vox and *Time* with five and three keywords respectively. Food topics, such as the recipes already mentioned, reoccur. Besides these, the closing of McDonald's restaurants in Russia as a result of the war in Ukraine and rice as a popular food with foreign athletes in the Olympic village were presented. Like the English news, the sports topic has the least prominence on the Chinese news agenda, with two keywords featuring ice dancing athletes from Spain and the Czech Republic, and the US ice dancer Kaitlin Hawayek.

Political issues rank among the first issues in both the English and Chinese news agendas. The Russia–Ukraine conflict was a political issue that is both salient in the English and Chinese news agenda. The activities of the Saudi crown prince were another political issue that is salient in the English news agenda with 32 keywords. However, it is less salient in the Chinese news agenda, with five keywords. The issue of the Saudi crown prince's activities received considerably less attention in the Chinese news agenda than in the English one. The royal attributes are largely maintained, with a set of keywords representing monarchical power, whereas the cultural attributes are greatly undermined, with only a few keywords on the historic and political attributes. The environmental issue of wildfire is given more prominence, whereas waste recycling receives less. The health issues of COVID-19 and trauma had less emphasis in the Chinese news agenda than its English counterpart, particular in the case of the issue of trauma. The topic of food was given slightly more attention in the Chinese agenda.

Second-level agenda-setting

This subsection compares the salient attributes of the cultural issues in the English and Chinese news agenda and examines whether the salience of cultural attributes in the English news is transferred to the attribute agenda of the Chinese news. It compares the collocations of "culture" and "cultural" and their Chinese equivalent "文化" (culture) in the English and Chinese subcorpora. These examples were selected to discuss instead of others because they are prominent collocates and examples are presented to show how these collocates are translated in specific contexts.

Figure 2 shows the word sketch of "culture" in the English subcorpus. Table 4 illustrates the scores and frequencies of these collocates in the English subcorpus. "Culture" appears 33 times in the English subcorpus and mainly collocates with words in five categories. The modifiers of "culture" include "many", "Asian", "pop" "American", and so on. Regional or national cultures like African cultures or Saudi and religious cultures such as Christian, Islamic and Jewish are represented in the English news. "Culture" also encompasses popular and "throwaway" culture, as well as subcultures of a specific historical period, like Pythagorean culture and plantation culture. This word often collocated with others like "religion" and "language". Culture is often placed on an equal footing with religion and language, as the roles of all of these are important in society.

The adjective "cultural" occurs 17 times in the English subcorpus. The word sketch of "cultural" in the English subcorpus falls into two categories, as shown in Figure 3. The scores and frequencies of the collocates of "cultural" in the English subcorpus are shown in Table 5. The nouns modified by "cultural" are "evolution", "bankruptcy", "touchstone", "reference", "decade", "artifact", "value", "difference", "shift", "Fisher-Quann", "term", "trauma" and "language". "Evolution" is the most frequent noun modified by "cultural" in the English subcorpus. The adjectives used together with "cultural" are "intellectual", "seismic", "technical", "religious", "current", "historical", "social" and "political".

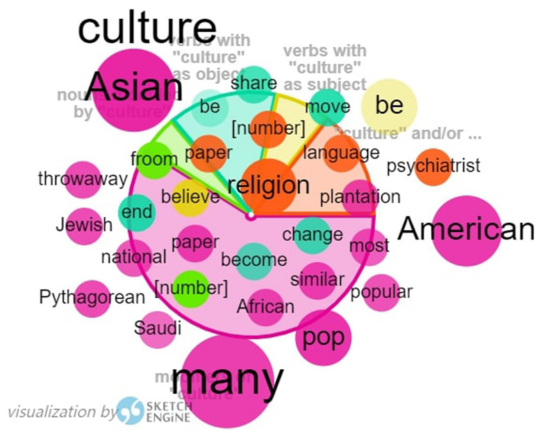

FIGURE 2
Word sketch of "culture" in the English subcorpus.

TABLE 4 Collocates of "culture" in the English subcorpus.

Collocate	Frequency	Score	Collocate	Frequency	Score
Modifiers of "culture"			Verbs with "culture" as object		
Asian	4	11.91	end	1	11.83
pop	2	11.24	move	1	11.54
American	3	11	change	1	10.75
many	5	10.78	share	1	10.47
Pythagorean	1	10.3	become	1	9.83
throwaway	1	10.3	be	1	5.69
plantation	1	10.24	Verbs with "culture" as subject		
Jewish	1	10.19	believe	1	11.99
paper	1	10.14	be	2	6.09
similar	1	10	"culture" and/or . . .		
popular	1	9.95	religion	2	12.68
national	1	9.79	[number]	1	12.19
African	1	9.75	psychiatrist	1	12.19
most	1	9.44	paper	1	11.99
Saudi	1	8.81	language	1	11.54
Nouns modified by "culture"					
[number]	1	13.41			
froom	1	13			

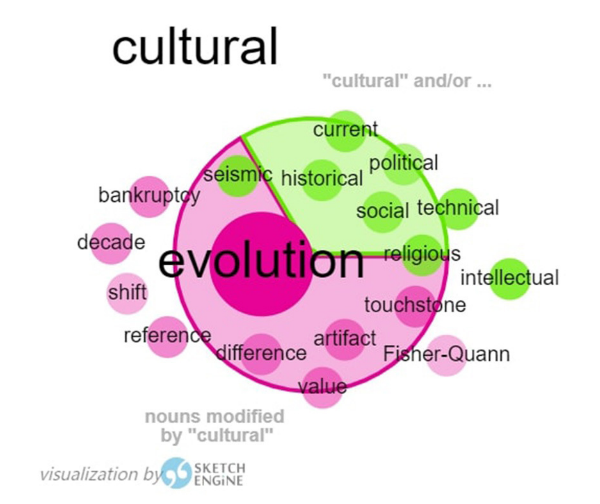

FIGURE 3
Word sketch of "cultural" in the English subcorpus.

TABLE 5 Collocates of "cultural" in the English subcorpus.

Collocate	Frequency	Score	Collocate	Frequency	Score
Nouns modified by "cultural"			**"cultural" and/or . . .**		
evolution	4	12.47	intellectual	1	11.83
bankruptcy	1	10.91	seismic	1	11.83
touchstone	1	10.91	technical	1	11.67
reference	1	10.82	religious	1	11.54
decade	1	10.82	current	1	11.41
artifact	1	10.75	historical	1	11.3
value	1	10.75	social	1	11.19
difference	1	10.68	political	1	10.91
shift	1	10.35			
Fisher-Quann	1	10.3			

The Chinese equivalent "文化" (culture) occurs 32 times in the Chinese subcorpus, almost the same number as in its English equivalent. Figure 4 shows the word sketch of "文化" (culture) in the Chinese subcorpus falling into six categories. The frequency and score of its collocates in the Chinese subcorpus are shown in Table 6. The nouns which are used to adjectivally modify "文化" (culture) are "亚洲" (Asia), "美国" (America), "当今" (present), "美国人" (American), "民族" (nation), and "英国" (Britain). "文化" (culture) is used together with phrases including "语言" (language), "纽带" (tie), "医生" (psychiatrist), "知识" (knowledge), and "历史" (history). "文化" (culture) modifies "巨变" (shift), "大臣" (secretary), "价值观" (value), "试金石" (touchstone), "象征" (symbol), "文物" (artifact), "术语" (term) and "创伤" (trauma). The other nouns in possessive constructions with "文化" (culture) are "隔阂" (barrier), "琳达·郑武" (Linda Trinh Vo), "传统" (tradition) and "变化" (change).

FIGURE 4
Word sketch of "文化" (culture) in the Chinese subcorpus.

The word sketches of "culture" and "cultural" and their Chinese equivalent "文化" (culture) represent the cultural attributes in the English and Chinese news agenda. Some cultural attributes of the English news agenda were maintained in the Chinese agenda. As Example 1 shows, one *New York Times* article says that there are many kinds of cultures, the most prominent of which are Asian, American and Asian American cultures. As most of *RN*'s readers are Chinese, its translated article maintained this cultural attribute by translating it faithfully to "亚裔美国文化" (Asian American culture), thus maintaining the cultural attribute that resonates with the readers.

> Example 1
> ST1: "It's hard in many Asian American cultures to say the words 'I love you,'" she said, "so they do it through serving these special delicacies." (*The New York Times*, 29 January 2022).
> TT1: 她说:"在许多亚裔美国文化中,'我爱你'这几个字很难说出口, 所以, 他们通过这些特别的美味来表达爱意。" (*RN*, 7 February 2022).
> Gloss: "In many Asian American cultures, the words 'I love you' are hard to say, so they express their love through these special delicacies," she said.

As Figure 3 shows, one of the most frequent nouns modified by "cultural" is "evolution". Examples 2 and 3 show two of the four instances of "cultural evolution" which occur in a *New Scientist* 26 March cover story about how languages evolve. These two examples relate the evolution of languages to cultural evolution which is translated into "文化进化" (cultural evolution) or "文化的进化" (cultural evolution) in the two instances in the corresponding 28 March *RN* article.

TABLE 6 Collocates of "文化" (culture) in the Chinese subcorpus.

Collocate	Frequency	Score
and/or		
语言(language)	4	12.6
纽带(tie)	1	11.54
核武库(nuclear arsenal)	1	11.54
医生(psychiatrist)	1	11.41
知识(knowledge)	1	11.09
历史(history)	1	10.82
一(one)	1	10.75
Modifies		
巨变(shift)	2	12.41
大臣(secretary)	2	12.41
价值观(value)	1	11.54
试金石(touchstone)	1	11.54
象征(symbol)	1	11.41
文物(artifact)	1	11.41
术语(term)	1	11.19
创伤(trauma)	1	10.75

Collocate	Frequency	Score
N_Modifier		
亚洲(Asia)	2	12.54
当今(present)	1	11.83
美国人(American)	1	11.83
民族(nation)	1	11.41
美国(America)	2	10.82
英国(Britain)	1	10.82
Possession		
隔阂(barrier)	1	12.68
琳达·郑武(Linda Trinh Vo)	1	12.68
传统(tradition)	1	12.41
变化(change)	1	12.41
Subject_of		
磨炼(hone)	1	13
进化(evolve)	1	11.67
产生(produce)	1	11.19
Possessor		
游戏(game)	1	13
影响(influence)	1	13

Example 2
ST2: If languages are honed by cultural evolution, through generations of improvised charade playing, that also explains why children can acquire their native tongue with such apparent ease. (*New Scientist*, 26 March 2022).
TT2: 如果语言是通过几代人即兴猜字游戏的文化进化磨炼出来的，这就解释了为什么孩子们可以如此轻松地掌握母语。(*RN*, 28 March 2022).
Gloss: If language has been honed through generations of cultural evolution of improvised word-guessing games, that explains why children can master their native language so easily.
Example 3
ST3: We believe the answer is culture: language evolution is cultural evolution. (*New Scientist*, 26 March 2022).
TT3: 我们认为答案是文化：语言的进化就是文化的进化。(*RN*, 28 March 2022).
Gloss: We think the answer is culture: the evolution of language is the evolution of culture.

Some cultural attributes of the original news agenda regarding popular cultures were omitted in the translated news agenda, as is shown in Example 4 from a Deutsche Welle article about the meaning of numbers, which was originally written in German and translated into English. However, the mention of pop culture in the middle of the sentence was omitted as well as the name of the director Sean Cunningham at the end of the sentence. This might be because the movie is the only example of pop culture in this sentence and the film director may not be familiar to the Chinese readers.

Example 4
ST4: Friday the 13th is not only unpopular among brides and grooms: it has also been ingrained in pop culture, most famously via the 1980 horror film of the same name directed by Sean Cunningham. (DW, 22 February 2022).
TT4: 13日星期五不仅不受新娘和新郎的欢迎—美国有一部叫《13日星期五》的同名电影，就能说明情况。(*RN*, 28 March 2022).
Gloss: Not only is Friday the 13th unpopular with brides and grooms – there's a movie of the same name in America called Friday the 13th, which illustrates the situation.

The religious attributes of the cultural agenda in the Chinese news are greatly downplayed in the Chinese versions. When "culture" occurs with "religion", it is not translated into Chinese, as is shown in Examples 5 and 6. Example 5 is from a *Newsweek* cover story about the Ukraine refugee crisis which quotes the deputy director of an NGO describing Ukrainians as sharing cultural and religious connections with Europeans. Example 6 quotes author Udo Becker comparing the meanings of numbers in different cultures and religions. These two sentences are not translated into the Chinese versions.

Example 5
ST5: Benjamin Ward, deputy director of Europe and Central Asia for Human Rights Watch, says that non-Ukrainian nationals, including people from Afghanistan and India, have weaker legal positions at European borders and might not be received as openly and kindly as Ukrainians who mostly share similar cultures and religion with Europeans. (*Newsweek*, 5 March 2022).
TT5: omitted.
Example 6
ST6: Author Udo Becker says in his work "Lexicon of Symbols," that numbers "in most cultures and religions are symbol carriers with meanings that are rich, often complicated and not always transparent today." (DW, 22 February 2022).
TT6: omitted.

The linguistic attribute in the Chinese news agenda is strengthened. When "culture" occurs with "language", it is translated into Chinese in the way shown in Example 7 from the *Wall Street Journal* review of *Kingdom of Characters* on the history of Chinese characters. "文化" (culture) and "语言" (language) are used together in a similar footing, as is shown in Example 8 from an *Independent* piece about the TV show "Servant of the People" that features now-Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. "Cultural" and "language" are used together as a modifier for "barriers", which is translated into "语言和文化的隔阂" (language and cultural barriers) in Chinese.

Example 7
ST7: Today the world is suddenly interested in learning about China's language and culture. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 1 March 2022).
TT7: 今天，世界突然对学习中国的语言和文化产生兴趣。(*RN*, 7 March 2022).
Gloss: Today, the world is suddenly interested in learning Chinese language and culture.
Example 8
ST8: The show is very funny, even with language and cultural barriers. (*The Independent*, 3 March 2022).
TT8: 尽管有语言和文化的隔阂，这个剧还是很好玩。(*RN*, 7 March 2022).
Gloss: Despite the language and cultural barriers, the show is fun.

Example 9 from the *New York Times* describes close cultural and linguistic bonds between Russia and Ukraine. The adverbs "culturally" and "linguistically" were translated as "在文化和语言上" (culturally and linguistically) in Chinese.

Example 9
ST9: We in the south of Russia weren't just physically close to Ukraine — my grandmother was born in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, just 70 miles away — we were culturally and linguistically intertwined. (*The New York Times*, 22 February 2022).
TT9: 我们生活在俄罗斯南部, 不仅在地理上毗邻乌克兰—我的祖母出生在仅70英里外的乌克兰城市马里乌波尔—我们在文化和语言上也交织在一起。(*RN*, 28 February 2022).
Gloss: We live in southern Russia, not only geographically adjacent to Ukraine — my grandmother was born in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol just 70 miles away — we are also culturally and linguistically intertwined.

Discussion

Editorial attitudes toward cultural issues

This paper has argued that news translation, as a form of recontextualization, performs the agenda-setting function in the case of *CW*. Translation sets the agenda of the original news texts for the readers of the TTs. When translated into Chinese, the salience of cultural topics in the English news is mostly transferred into the issue agenda of *CW*. Some of the cultural topics were given more prominence, such as the linguistic attribute, whereas the religious attribute is greatly undermined in translation. A possible explanation for this may lie in the news outlet's editorial policy, which discourages the dissemination of religious beliefs among its domestic readers. However, the findings of the current study do not support those of Cheng et al. (2016) that limited salience of issues and attributes occurs between the news produced by Xinhua News Agency (XNA) and the US news outlets. This result may be explained by the fact that the data examined in Cheng et al. (2016) are not necessarily translations.

As XNA runs *RN* and heavily regulates the views expressed in it. Many regard XNA as an agent of the Chinese central government and the Communist Party of China (CPC). The current study has found that the translated news in *CW* clearly aligns with the central government's view on various cultural issues. This finding supports previous studies of the ideological positioning of *RN*'s translation practices (e.g., Pan, 2014; Xia, 2019; Pan and Liao, 2021). The newspaper strictly adheres to the XNA style guide which bans the cultural use of sensitive words in relation to religion. This may be because, as Shirk (2011, p. 24) suggests, that XNA "has undergone a remarkable makeover" in recent years in order to compete with emerging commercial media outlets. These results also accord with He's (2003, p. 198) findings which showed that the Chinese media bodies, including

XNA, employ a discursive strategy of "ideological re-pitching" which commingle the narrative of "order" with communist ideology and maximize patriotic sentiment.

Relationship between the newspaper and its readership

Consistent with previous ones (e.g., Wu, 2018; Xia, 2019), this study has found that translated news in *RN* undergoes a recontextualization process. *RN* translators are often required to recontextualize their textual productions to make them suitable for their diverse readerships and the target culture (Davies, 2006). Rogers and Dearing (1988, p. 571) note that "[m]edia gatekeepers have a general idea of the news interests of their audience, and this perceived priority of news interests is directly reflected in the news values with which media personnel decide the media agenda". The media outlet converts news articles designed for another, largely foreign, readership and rewords them for readers in different environments who may have different ideological and linguistic backgrounds. Thus, many ideological and linguistic shifts are likely to occur during this process of news translation. The original news is intended for readers of English who are mostly outside the Chinese mainland. The readership of translated narratives in *RN* is mainly Chinese mainland residents. *RN* also runs an official website and social media platforms accessible around the world, but much of the material online differs from that which is in the newspaper (Zeng and Li, 2021). *RN* readers are mostly members of the CPC or government cadres who have received higher education. Hence, one could reasonably argue that the newspaper is a party mouthpiece creating articles which cater for its clientele's reading habits.

Although news stories claim to present an objective account of an important event (Tuchman, 1972) and the translator purportedly aims to provide a faithful rendition of the original narrative, many factors contribute to this complex agenda-setting process, including translation conventions, institutional procedures, and socio-cultural contexts. Taking all these factors into consideration, the original news tends to undergo linguistic changes to cater for the audience's needs. The news translator needs to deal with various power dynamics relating to the political stance of the original journalist, that of the editor and owner of the media outlet, and those of the target readership. Translated news is often the product of mediation between different power relations in the media outlet and a manifestation of the relationship between the media outlet and its target readers. From the perspective of the function that translation plays, translated news set the original agendas both linguistically and ideologically through various forms and mechanisms. This creates a range of different text trajectories and recontextualizations that seek to cater for a diverse target readership.

Conclusion

The study has identified the ways in which the salience of cultural issues in the original agenda was set through translation. It found that *CW* mainly uses strategies of acculturation and literal translation and sets the agenda for its domestic readers by highlighting particular cultural aspects and disseminating certain cultural ideas. The various factors that shape the salience differences are highly complex and include differences between the source language and target language conventions, the nature of translation, the outlet's institutional news production routines, and the political and cultural contexts in which the media outlet is situated. News translation is pivotal to cross-cultural communication within the context of globalization. The purposes of news translation and the inherent functions of news discourse mean that translators must select the most appropriate news text for it to fulfill its function and maximize its purpose in the target culture. The translator's political position, cultural orientation and ideology will affect the selection of STs, translation strategies and methods, and largely determine the final product.

This study is one of the first attempts to thoroughly examine the agenda-setting function of translation through a case study. This case study provides insight into how news translation, as a form of recontextualization, strikes a delicate balance between accuracy and acceptability and mediates between source and target cultures within an institutional setting. The outcomes reflect the editorial attitudes of the media outlet toward various cultural issues and the relationship between the newspaper and its readership. One limitation of this study is the small size of the corpus which generated a limited number of collocations in the word sketches, it nonetheless offers valuable insights into the application of machine learning and corpus analysis in news translation research.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

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A brief review of studies on interpreters' ideological mediation/intervention at international conferences

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In interpreter-mediated international conferences, it is the interpreters' "voice" rather than the speaker's "voice" that is heard by world leaders. With a focus on the political discourse (re)produced at international conferences, this paper presents a brief review of relevant studies on interpreters' ideological mediation/intervention. The review starts with an introduction of related terminologies for ideological intervention in conference interpreting research (CIR). The review paper examines relevant studies in terms of (1) the international conferences as discursive events, (2) meeting/panel/speech topics as discourse topoi, and (3) interpreters' use of linguistic means to realize ideological shifts in the reconstructed discourse. The review concludes with a summary and gaps paralleled by future directions for CIR.

KEYWORDS

international conferences, interpreters' ideological intervention/mediation, political discourse, CDA, linguistic means

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, interpreting activities are increasingly playing a vital and indispensable role in inter/transnational communication (e.g., Schäffner, 2004, 2012; Perez-Gonzalez, 2012; Cronin, 2013). Such cross-language/cultural communication often happen in international conferences, whereby world leaders rely on the interpreted speeches to understand and communicate with one another, subsequently making decisions that potentially influence a country/region, even the entire world. The discourse reproduced from the source texts (STs) into the target texts (TTs) by conference interpreters, in fact, constitutes "part of the development" of the speaker discourse (Schäffner, 2004, p. 120), and the reproduced part in interpretations will be discursively "consumed" by world leaders.

Despite that political leaders in international conferences may tacitly assume that the interpreted speech "functions seamlessly as part of the discourse" of the source speech (Kang, 2009, p. 144), the interpreted speech does not often "mirror" the source speech due to the interpreter's agency. In the words of Hatim and Mason (1997, p. 147), conference interpreters may ideologically mediate/intervene and "[feed] their own knowledge and beliefs into a text." Therefore, interpreters' ideological beliefs play a role in "editing" the source texts (STs) that may become a "different version" discursively in the resultant target texts (TTs) (Gao and Munday, 2022). In other words, it is the interpreters' "voice" rather than the speaker's "voice" that is heard by world leaders. The interpreting "shifts"[1] made "surreptitiously," as it were, through the interpreter "voice" can reach afar, passing onto world leaders *in situ* the conference sites and feeding into a chain of media circulation in the world.

In conference interpreting research (CIR), there have been growing scholarly interests in interpreter ideological intervention with different terminologies, *inter alia*, stance-taking (Munday, 2012; Wang and Feng, 2017), mediation (Fu and Chen, 2019), agency (Gu, 2018; Gu and Tipton, 2020), and ideological positioning (e.g., Gao, 2021a,b; Gao and Wang, 2021; Gao and Munday, 2022), which more or less point to the same thing—interpreters' socio-cognition that shapes, conditions, and alters the ST discourse in the interpreting products. Pöchhacker (2006) discusses in-depth the role of the interpreters' socio-cognition, connecting it with the interpreters' "within-one-side" position rather than the "between-two-sides" position. In other words, the "super-norm" of impartiality and loyalty to the speaker (Zwischenberger, 2015), promoted by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), is challenged; interpreters introduce ideological shifts to the discourse (re)produced in international conferences.

A review of studies on conference interpreters' ideological intervention

The review primarily presents relevant studies in CDR from two perspectives: a macro-level perspective alongside a meso/micro-level perspective. The review with macro-level perspective looks at (a) international conferences (as the discursive events) and meeting/panel topics (as discourse *topoi*) that are considered as key contextual factors (cf., van Dijk, 1998) in discourse (re)production. Then, the review with meso/micro-level perspective covers the group of the interpreters' use of linguistic means that realizes discourse reconstruction in conference interpreting.

International conferences as discursive events and meeting/panel topics as discourse topoi

According to discourse scholars, event backgrounds and topics are deemed as key contextual factors in the macro-analysis of discourse production given that they are intrinsically discourse-relevant properties (e.g., Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). They constitute crucial factors in analyzing the ideological aspects in the interpreters' reconstruction of the ST discourse (Gao and Munday, 2022).

Relevant studies in CIR focus on international/transnational conferences in which importance issues of regional/global concerned are discussed and deliberated. These conferences often offer a multi-voiced platform for world political leaders to air and exchange their views, and reach collective decisions. Among others in CIR, scholarly attention has been drawn to the European Parliament meeting, which is uncontrovertibly a most studied discursive event by European interpreting researchers (e.g., Beaton, 2007; Beaton-Thome, 2010, 2013; Bartłomiejczyk, 2020, 2022), thanks to the data availability of the European Parliament interpreting corpus. China's political press conferences with foreign media is a discursive site that Chinese interpreters' ideological intervention is systematically investigated (Wang and Feng, 2017; Gu, 2018; Fu and Chen, 2019; Gu and Tipton, 2020). Some other studies incipiently begin to look into supra-national conferences, such as the World Economic Forum's annual meetings (Gao, 2021a,b; Gao and Munday, 2022). In these studies, discourse-relevant ideological factors are discussed from a macro-level perspective, which establishes these events as ideologically contested or charged.

While relevant CIR studies tend to focus the discourse reproduction regarding the overall discourse of a discursive event, some studies specifically focus on certain speech/discussion topics (or, discourse *foci*) that dominate conference sessions/panels. Relevant speeches and discussions discursively constitute *a* discourse with a certain *foci*. There are some studies that focus one particular discourse in the light of interpreters' ideological intervention, such as the refugee discourse (Beaton-Thome, 2013), the discourse of racism (Bartłomiejczyk, 2020), the Eurosceptic discourse (Bartłomiejczyk, 2022), the discourse of China's image (Gu, 2018), and the nationalist discourse (Gao, 2021b). These topics are not only relevant to the world/regional politics but are ideological-laden. Thus, the focus on one of these particular topics gives these studies a pivotal linchpin, with which the macro-level structure can be connected to the meso/micro-level structures of discourse and linguistic patterns.

Linguistic means that realizes discourse reconstruction

The analysis of discourse structures (at a meso-level) is connected with analysis of linguistic means (at a micro-level) in CDA. In relevant studies that examine interpreters' ideological intervention, how the discourse is reconstructed by conference interpreters is interrogated through a plethora of linguistic means, such as modality (Li, 2018; Fu and Chen, 2019; Gao,

1 The notion of shifts was originally defined in translation studies on the lexicogrammatical level as "departures from formal correspondence when going from ST to TT" (Catford, 2000/1965). It is now used changes or alternations made on the discourse-semantic level (as discourse shifts) or ideological level (as ideological shifts) in translation and interpreting studies.

2021a), the use of perfect tense (Gu, 2018), lexical labeling or terminologies (Beaton, 2007; Beaton-Thome, 2013), pronouns and self-referential nouns (Guo, 2018; Gu and Tipton, 2020), and evaluative language (Munday, 2012; Wang and Feng, 2017; Beaton-Thome, 2020; Gao, 2021b).

These studies uncover that the shift of these linguistic means serve to strengthen or weaken the speaker discourse, introducing ideological shifts and indexing interpreters' ideological stance-taking. For example, Gu and Tipton (2020, p. 420) reveal that Chinese interpreters strengthen the speaker discourse by frequently adding self-referential items (*we, our, China* or *government*), which is construed as their "active interpreter alignment" with Beijing. For another example, Beaton-Thome (2013) focuses on positive/negative lexical labels (comparably between the STs and the TTs) that reflect the ideological positions (e.g., *terrorists, criminals* as negative labels or, on the contrary, *innocents* as a positive label). Her study suggests that the interpreters tend neutralize positive/negative lexical labels to weaken the original ideological stance.

On the discourse level, van Dijk (1998, 2006) *Ideological Square* is usefully harnessed by CIR scholars. This conceptual framework accounts for, from a socio-cognitive perspective, the mental models reflected in discourse structure. It is an ideological polarization of "us"-vs.- "them," where positivity about "us" and negativity about "them" are emphasized while positivity about "them" and negativity about "us" are understated (ibid). Gu (2018) draws on this concept to examine interpreters' strengthening of the positive image of Beijing. Gao and Munday (2022) also employ this concept to examine the shifts of positive/negative evaluative expressions, revealing an accentuated discourse of positive-Self and Negative-Others.

Conclusion and future directions

This brief review has covered the ground of conference interpreters' ideological intervention/mediation at international conferences from the macro- and meso/micro perspectives. Despite that only a few studies in CIR has focused on the ideological shifts introduced by conference interpreters, these studies have investigated some influential international discursive events and vital political topics of regional/global concern. These studies have also effectively utilized linguistic tools and approaches in CDA to reveal the interpreters' use of linguistic means that serve to alter the discourse structure.

While the existing studies seem to map out a promising research avenue for CIR, this avenue needs to be widened in the three aspects.

Firstly, how the interpreters respond to ideological stimuli during the process of interpreting is currently overlooked. This oversight is entrenched in the paradigmatic "divide" between the discursively reconstructed TT discourse (as the interpreted product) and cognitive processing operations (as the interpreting process) (Gao and Munday, 2022). It is possible to integrate the two sides by importing methods from the reference discipline of psychology. Future studies can benefiting from collaborations between CIR researchers equipped with neuroscience methods such as ERP and fMRI and CIR researchers who are experienced with CDA approaches.

Secondly, paralinguistic elements (such as prosody) that bear ideological values in conference interpreting are little talked about. The sound of language is the main medium for conference interpreting, and prosody can convey the "attitudinal position" (Munday, 2012, p. 67). With importation of methods and theories from phonetics and phonology into CIS (Ahrens, 2005; Gao, 2022), future studies can profitably examine the paralinguistic data to explore patterns of ideological shifts.

Thirdly, current studies only focus on a limited number of interpreter-mediated conferences, as discussed in Section International conferences as discursive events and meeting/panel topics as discourse topoi, largely due to the difficulty in building the interpreting corpora that derived from audio/video data. The task of transcribing the textual data for a corpus from the audio/video data is highly labor-intensive and time-consuming. Nonetheless, with the increasing affordance of speech-recognition technology, CIR scholars are able to develop more interpreting corpora and explore more influential international conferences attended by political leaders. For example, the speech recognition programs (*Dragon Naturally Speaking* and *IBM Via Voice*) were used to develop EPIC (European Parliament Interpreting Corpus), for which the speech recognition programs were trained to recognize the speakers' voices and produce a draft transcript automatically (Bendazzoli and Sandrelli, 2005). The fast evolving speech-recognition programs will surely facilitate CIR scholars to develop interpreting corpora of their interests in a more efficient way.

Overall, conference interpreters' ideological intervention is a promising research avenue that awaits harmonized views, methods, and theoretical accounts from different disciplines in future studies.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Literary translation and communication

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The translator's main role is that of a communicator—and a cross-cultural one at that. Literary translation communicates more than semantic meaning. A range of literary features is also expected to be reproduced. Reconstructing the literary value and aesthetic experience of the source text is significantly hampered by literary untranslatability. The fundamental purpose of translation is communication, but because it is subject to a multitude of constraints that seriously limit communicative possibilities, literary untranslatability constantly threatens to hinder successful communication. Since translation is often said to transfer the original message to the target reader, communication breaks down when this attempt fails—which occurs more often than not. Literary translation purports to capture, convey and communicate multi-layered and interconnected information and feelings about another situation and community. Any monolithic perception of this inherent irreducibility of all-round functionality is at odds with the nature of literary translation. From a communicative perspective, literary translation aims at developing sophisticated forms to better convey and communicate ideas and feelings, as well as to provide situational cues to elicit appropriate responses from the target reader in tandem with that of the source reader. In light of this, cross-cultural adjustment predicted by contextual conditioning is constantly required to competently communicate the transcultural dimension that is intrinsic to literary translation. Translation is often referred to as a means of cross-cultural or intercultural communication, but how exactly translational communication operates still warrants further investigation. This article aims to examine this relationship from several interrelated aspects and, in this respect, to make a distinction between communication and convey, the latter being a commonly used verb in translation studies.

KEYWORDS

literary translation, literary communication, cross-cultural context, rewriting and mediation, referential communication, retranslation

Introduction

Translation involves two languages to communicate with two different audiences. The two languages may be similar or dissimilar, and in the latter case, communication problems abound. Literary translation serves as a network and nexus to make connections between languages and cultures by introducing the foreign to the target reader. Literary translation is often motivated and designed to serve one or more purposes. Since literary translation is never an innocent activity, the translator's purpose may well be different from that of the original author. Cross-cultural communication is a fraught endeavor that requires mediation, appropriation, and negotiation. Because a literary text is processed and consumed by the target reader with a different background of literary tradition and from a different perspective of culture, ideology, and aesthetics, the translated text is interpreted and thus experienced differently, all of which contribute to the functioning of communication. An overarching awareness of the essential role of interactive communication underscores the interconnectedness of cross-cultural communication in literary translation. Acceptability has always been closely linked to literary translation. It is not only a matter of commercial considerations but also of the prospective literary status of the translated text in the target system. Literary translation is much more than semantic, and due consideration must be given to the reproduction of literariness that determines and informs the ultimate reception of the translated text. Another challenge that needs to be addressed in terms of adequate and reliable communication is the lack of substitutability in literary translation. With this in mind, some basic questions need to be addressed, such as what and how to communicate in terms of literary translation. In answering these questions, literary translation must first and foremost involve contextualization and recontextualization. Intercultural mediation works in tandem with literary translation, without which it would be impossible to communicate literary meaning. The necessity of retranslation(s) is in a sense justified by the concatenation of literary irreducibility and communicative referentiality, both of which are considered essential attributes of literary translation.

What and how to communicate?

Translation is concerned with situations of protracted displacement in which meaning becomes brittle and susceptible. Literary translation conveys the experiences of those who reside in different cultures yet reading literature from other cultures may cause meaning to become unclear and communication to disintegrate. First and foremost, communication connotes accessibility, which prefigures acceptability to a considerable extent. The question of what is communicated and how is of pertinent importance. It seems that, as dictated by common sense, the translator must find out the authorial intention so as to know for sure what is to be communicated. However, even if the translator strives to reflect the authorial intention, it is far from certain that this intent can even be ascertained. This complicates the entire process of communication. What does the translator communicate? Dixon and Bortolussi (1996, p. 406) contend that "... it is often unreasonable to ascribe a single, coherent intention to the author of a literary work". The fact is that it is often not only unreasonable but impossible to ascertain with reasonable certainty the exact intention of the author. The widespread but misguided assumption of authorial intention is at odds with the communicative reality of literature, which is defined by dialogic and polyphonic narrative discourse. What needs to be questioned is whether there is an intentional interpretation of the intended message.

At any rate, communication requires mediation: it is impossible to communicate well without paying due attention to reception. This is particularly the case when it comes to the need to cross both linguistic and cultural boundaries. Simply put, communication cannot be taken for granted if the transmission of only a partial view of the original is to be avoided. While clarity is an important aspect of communication, it is not in the least the only one in literary translation. Evidently, the literary translator grapples with not only semantic information but also poetic features. If stylistic peculiarities in the original are to be reproduced in translation, a communication infrastructure must be established to represent the relative fullness of meaning. Viewed in this light, the primary concern of communication remains semantic intelligibility but for literary translation, both cultural and literary irreducibility is invoked in challenging the hypothesis of homogeneity. The intelligibility and irreducibility of cultural meaning pose a precarious situation to the translator, who strives to reconcile and balance these competing demands. In practical terms, however, an either-or dichotomy can be thus created. Out of necessity, communication sometimes favors reductionism "for the sake of pragmatic effect" (Newmark, 1982, p. 18). In fact, this dichotomy is a false one. A combined semantic and communicative translation is remedial to oversimplification in translation. A host of factors may be attributed to the complexity of literary translation with regard to communication. Newmark speaks of a "balancing act" by the translator that takes into account factors such as the author, the reader, the norms and culture of the target language, and, in the case of literary translation, literary traditions (Newmark, 1982, p. 18). The performative act of literary translation is an integral part of cross-cultural communication, the success of which depends on a balanced scheme that brings out all facets of cultural meaning.

Translation is meant to serve a purpose or purposes, overt or covert. Thus, the functions of translation are prioritized according to the needs of the translator. In late Qing-period China, the famous reformist Liang Qichao (1873–1929) was particularly committed to the translation of political fiction (Luo, 2005). He gave priority to politics over art, claiming, "Politics is the first priority, art the second" (Liang, 2001, p. 147). In order to promote the effectiveness of the political reforms, he altered or abridged the source text. This is an exemplary case of the decided shift from source-orientedness to target-orientedness, which signifies that the emphasis is placed on the effect or impact of communication. "Communicative translation is on the whole responsible for importing many ideas and discoveries into a culture..." (Newmark, 1982, p. 19). Literary translation can be a powerful political or ideological weapon with which the translator communicates certain beliefs and values by selecting the appropriate source texts, which are variously manipulated in the process of translation. In this regard, "Who is the translator?" question is of great relevance to what functions a translation is aimed at serving.

How translation communicates is related to the attitude and feelings of the translator. There is little doubt that translation is subject to interpretation and manipulation. According to Nida, in the context of translation, communication entails encoding and decoding (Nida, 1972, p. 310). In order to decode what is encoded, the reader must be active. Translation problematizes the "facility" with which people communicate because the "codes of two languages are never the same" (Nida, 1972, p. 310). In this sense, the codes in translation must be formulated in such a way that the target reader can decode the meaning conveyed. While encoding requires interpretation, the act of re-encoding in the target language is influenced by the attitude of the translator, whose way of doing so contributes significantly to the shaping of the target text and its effect on the target reader. The feelings of the translator may enter into the process of re-encoding. As for the translator's attitude, it makes a significant difference to reception whether it is a case of detachment or involvement. Resonant empathy and subsequent interaction are unmistakable indicators of successful cross-cultural communication. Translation is the result of asynchronous re-encoding, and the temporal distance allows a host of factors, including affective ones, to play various roles in shaping the final product of translation. Given a given semantic range, the interpreted signifieds are re-encoded in linguistic and cultural signifiers and representations, the selection of which reveals the preferences and performing decisions of the translator. The signifieds represented in the source text require interpretive effort and communicative competence because the chosen signifiers are capable of representing what the signifiers are intended or presumed to be intended by the author or the translator.

The workings of literary translation can be better understood by considering how literary communication functions. Literary translation is by no means limited to semantic representations. The heuristic nature of literary translation means that focusing exclusively on conveying semantic information risks losing the aesthetic appeal of the source text. For literary translation, semantic elusiveness is no less a problem than aesthetic elusiveness. Often, the proper rendering of the stylistic features of the original is undervalued in favor of semantic accuracy. However, literary translation cannot be separated from literary irreducibility, which implies the fullness of meaning, including cultural and aesthetic meaning. The aesthetic dimension, including its norms, values, qualities, and implications, is also expected to be communicated to the target reader. To be sure, literary irreducibility must be paramount in order for literary translation to stand out from other types of translation. Seen in this light, the connotations of words with associative meaning in the original feed into the very essence of literary communication and must be carefully reproduced in translation so as not to diminish or detract from the aesthetic pleasure of reading the translated text. A proper understanding of the distinctiveness of literary communication enables the translator to find a way to enliven translation, which can then be considered both aesthetically and culturally acceptable.

Context of situation

Cross-cultural dialogue cannot exist without context, and the act of literary translation is shaped and constrained by contextual factors. Further research is required on the underlying function or role of cross-cultural context in literary translation. Translation invariably entails contextual changes or adjustments, and although rendering the commonly assumed textual transfer is problematic, when it comes to context, the situation is somewhat different. The existence of context helps to specify or clarify meaning, but since translation is involved in two sets of contexts, the intersection of which destabilizes the production of meaning in the target text, possibly leading to confusion or unintelligibility, or misunderstanding. The two sets of contexts, which may or may not be similar or comparable and which may or may not belong to the same historical periods, are capable of generating different meanings. This is due to the fact that translation is produced in a different language, in a different context, and for a different audience, resulting in a transformation that is defined by a different meaning, thus adding a great deal of complexity to the whole practice of cross-cultural communication. In the absence of the awareness of cultural displacement and cultural interface, literary translation can barely function. Literal translation accentuates cultural meaning transfer since textual reproduction is cross-culturally conditioned and aesthetically dependent in this situation. Meanwhile, in conjunction with this new context, a different perspective is brought to bear on cross-cultural adjustment to avoid dichotomizing the two sets of contexts created by translation.

To be more precise, translation is not just about one context, but about multiple contexts, some of which may be invisible or seemingly unworthy of attention. However, they are all conducive to the reproduction of a given literary text that is being translated. An overarching translational context consists of an array of related or interrelated contexts. First and foremost, there is a historical context. A source text belongs to the past, and possibly a distant one, as in the case of William Shakespeare. When translating such texts into the target language, the existence of a historical context cannot be denied and must be taken into account by the translator. Derrida argues:

> And it is already clear that, even in French, things change from one context to another. More so in the German, English, and especially American contexts, where the same word is already attached to very different connotations, inflections, and emotional or affective values (Derrida, 1988, p. 1).

Different cultural locations and contexts give meaning to different interpretations. Contextual changes generate interpretative possibilities and also subtly or not so subtly change various aspects of meaning and how they relate to the changed contexts. Different meaning construction and reconstruction processes provide for the shaping of the translated text.

It is probably very difficult to repudiate the emphasis on extra-literary context, as the New Critics are wont to do. The translator's effort is placed in jeopardy if the related historical context is disregarded. Moreover, New Criticism holds that close reading provides the context for its own interpretation of the text being read, and the text in question is responsible for creating its own context, which gives rise to the translator's context of interpretation: this is significant in terms of the motive or conditions in which meaning is processed and interpreted. Equally relevant and important is a wider social context that governs and constitutes the reality of translation. The translator examines and evaluates their "text-transformation strategies within the opportunities and constraints of interpersonal contacts and the wider social context" (Jones, 2004, p. 722). In summary, a multiplicity of functions is ascribed to literary translation determined by contexts. The wider social context of communicative activities can be analyzed in relation to the contextual parameters of the linguistic and extra-linguistic context of literary translation.

The reception of literary translations is of importance to patrons, publishers, and translators alike. The context that influences reception encompasses a variety of agencies that mediate the reception of literature. A plurality of perspectives from these agencies on various facets of translation activity underpins consideration of the extraliterary factors that dictate the reception of translated literature. In general, it may be asserted that poor translations impair reception and imperil the literary status of the translated text. In his dissertation on the reception of Latin American literature in the United States, James Remington Krause points out that a "failed translation" induced by a distorted, i.e., unreliable version "hinders" reception by the American reader (Krause, 2010, p. 2). While not always the case, this is true in many instances. A distorted and unreliable translation of the original can be quite successful commercially because it accommodates local preferences. And also because it saves the target reader from having to sift through a labyrinth of cultural allusions and references, an abridged translation can sometimes be very enticing and worth reading. In this view, a lack of readability rather than a lack of accuracy perfectly encapsulates poor translations, which represent poorly communicated cultural content and values.

The situation of reception of translated literary texts is assigned a specific context. The needs and expectations of the target reader are decisive factors. A certain degree of mutability is required to make adjustments and adaptations to a new context:

> Translation recreates past texts and becomes an autonomous act creating solely sustainable texts for the present and the future. In the same vein, adaptation treats intertextuality as a kind of versatile creativity that generates multiple forms to meet the changing requirements of new readers and contexts (Tsui, 2012, p. 58).

The shift of focus from source-orientedness to target-orientedness in modern translation studies shows the importance of responding to the new context in which the needs and expectations of the target reader are to be met. Of course, all source and target texts are written and rewritten in different contexts and are also consumed in different contexts. Moreover, the target reader, with their cross-cultural knowledge and communal frames for reading must be appropriately contextualized and situated in a particular sociocultural setting in order to enhance reception.

Another crucial point is that literary translation must pay attention to the efficacy of communication in terms of cohesion, as is shown in the following excerpt from *The Deer and the Cauldron*, a martial arts novel by Louis Cha, also known as Jin Yong (Minford, 1993, p. 87):

> 韦小宝 …. 问道："这小子是什么来头？瞧你吓得这个样子。茅十八道："什么小子不小子的？你嘴里放干净些。" This is rendered by the translator as:
>
> "Who is this man?" he (Trinket) asked. "He seemed to put you in a dreadful funk all of a sudden."
>
> "Mind your language!" retorted Whiskers.

The back translation of "这小子是什么来头?" is "Who is this guy?" and is translated literally without considering the context, whereas 什么小子不小子的 does not allow for back translation because it makes no sense in its literal meaning. Thus, it is simply reduced to the verb "retorted". Obviously, the word 小子 is context-dependent, the repeated use of which is significant here. For this reason, the word must be contextualized to account for Whiskers' hostile reaction.

The translator lacks circumspection in rendering the Chinese word 小子, although it can indeed mean "man" or "boy" and is often used as a term of endearment, as in "my dear mate" When contextualized, this situation inevitably sounds disrespectful or abusive, without which "mind your language" would be completely out of place, and the target reader is puzzled by Whiskers' brusque retort, which seems unwarranted.

Word choice is crucial in this situation. The original function of 小子 must be correlated with its offensive character. The choice, therefore, falls on the word "sod":

> "Who is this sod?" he asked. "You look scared out of your wits."
> "Don't you sod me and stop your insolence!" said Whiskers.

In the second line, "sod" is used as a verb to counteract the grossly simplified "retort." The irreducibility of "Don't you sod me" should not be replaced by "retort" marked by explicitness. Adequacy and irreducibility are intertwined, and both are overshadowed by an overt emphasis on effective communication.

Intercultural mediation

It is generally known that there is no such thing as an unmediated literary translation. Literary translation is so entrenched in any attempt to convey cultural information that no literary translation can function without it. Therefore, it must be said that the act of translating literary texts must necessarily engage with the cultural dimension of literary texts. The target readers' insufficient knowledge of the source culture must be acknowledged, and it would be irresponsible to pretend that missing linkages and gaps do not exist. According to Hatim, "cross-cultural misunderstandings" are often ascribed to "a breakdown in communication" (Hatim, 1997, p. 157). There is no denying that breakdowns in communication are due to cultural differences and implications. Unless cultural meaning is more or less immediately understood by the target reader, the reading of a literary translation is seriously affected. The contextually embedded meaning-making in various cross-cultural encounters is fundamental to the way cultural meaning is reproduced in translation. In the context of literary translation, cultures are necessarily mediated, leading to the operationalization of appropriation and ultimately acculturation and assimilation.

The intervention and manipulation that constitute this process of cross-cultural rewriting are tempered by re-adjustments and realignments that represent the translator's perceptions of cultural differences that can subsequently be integrated into the target culture. All this suggests that the translator's task is that of a cross-cultural communicator and that mediation and appropriation are an essential part of literary translation in order to improve communication. According to Anthony J. Liddicoata:

> The mediational role of the translator "(…) goes beyond the expression of meaning through language to encapsulate the need to communicate the meanings that are present in text but which are expressed implicitly, through context" (Liddicoata, 2015, p. 355).

In other words, interpretation is required on the part of the translator to express clearly in the target text what is implicitly expressed in the original. Mediation is administered through a given cross-cultural context in which communication is open and subject to manipulative interpretation and performance. Literary translation vacillates between implicitness and explicitness and also between inclusion and exclusion.

Translation is a rewriting process but also a recontextualizing process. Rewriting and recontextualizing are conjoined together. Translation inevitably leads to some form of recontextualization. To recontextualize foreign ideas and practices means to interpret them in a different cultural context. Cross-cultural dialogue and engagement take place in the setting of reception. Venuti outlines the various functions of recontextualization in relation to the recontextualizing process, which is.

> [...] the creation of another network of intertwining relations by and within the translation, a receiving intertext [...] [as well as] another context of reception whereby the translation is mediated by promotion and marketing strategies' (Venuti, 2007, p. 30).

The relocation of the setting of reception suggests that certain changes are inevitable. Essentially, recontextualization is motivated by the perception of situations for various communicative functions. The resulting different context of reception requires translation to be mediated in view of the market.

Usually, the target reader is not the intended audience of the original work, and there may be some problems in conveying to them the originally intended function, although it is not so difficult to communicate to them the function intended by the translator. When a translation is consumed in the indigenous context, the target reader is provided with an opportunity for interpretation and understanding of the source material. Liddicoat points out that "mediation is fundamentally an interpretive act" (Liddicoata, 2015, p. 354). Perhaps it is more accurate to say mediation is based on and underpinned by interpretation. The mediating role of the translator.

> The translator as mediator stands between the reader and writer and rewrites the text for an audience that is not the audience imagined by the writer and does not share the language, knowledge, assumptions, etc. that the writer has assumed of the imagined audience for the text (Liddicoata, 2015, p. 356).

This suggests that rewriting is culturally ingrained with mediation, which at least partially initiates rewriting. It is the unsharable or less sharable parts of the original text that require cross-cultural processing. A new cultural context thus created is a direct outcome of literary translation, generating an interpretive framework for retargeting a different group of readers. Translation produces a text that has been rewritten to contextually address the target audience.

Decontextualization pertains to the necessity to disregard the previous context associated with the source text. This is sometimes done to circumvent the constraints the translator faces when trying to "transfer" cultural material from the original. When the translation process becomes too alienated, which can hinder communication, the need for recontextualization arises, signifying that the context of the original author is replaced by the context provided by the translator, which is no longer the immediate context of the original text, but a recreated one for the target text. Once this immediacy is lost, "... a far more recurrent designation to describe this notion is 'oblique translation'" (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995, p. 1). Recontextualization, however, does not imply a complete substitution, i.e., the replacement of the original context with the target context; rather, a derivative context may appear as a result of recontextualization. Given that the unfamiliar may represent the unperceivable, the existing habits and norms associated with the familiar in the target language and culture require and influence recontextualization. This can lead to a recontextualization of the original in a native cultural milieu and ethos. Another related consideration is that the original context may well be multifaceted and situation-dependent, the cultural-political conditions and practices of the target system may simplify or override the original functionality, which likely determines and establishes a specific semantic range within which interpretation can take place and be reasonably deciphered. Simply put, the production of the source text and the reproduction of the target text are contextualized somewhat differently. However, even though strict semantic equivalence is difficult to achieve, dynamic equivalence in a holistic sense is a powerful way of communicating.

Referential communication

Literary translation is marked by cultural references and allusions that can bring translation to the brink of untranslatability and cast a shadow over intercultural communication. On the surface, these references and allusions exhibit a tendency to make understanding difficult. If the literary translator, however, decides to communicate meaning only by disregarding all the seemingly non-essential material, the outcome will be disastrous. References and allusions are by no means superfluous, and effective literary communication depends on them. The source and target readers have ways of decoding, which complicates the task of communication for the target reader in a translation situation. The referential function is often different in a different linguistic and cultural context. Yet while adhering to the referential integrity of the original constrains translation, the translator still needs to find a way to reproduce the referential multiplicity one way or another. Referential transfer can be problematic. When emphasized, it indicates a source-oriented tendency; when not, it indicates a target-oriented inclination. However, even if target-orientedness is the chosen option, referential processing cannot be precluded. It goes without saying that translation cannot communicate everything and inclusiveness including referential connectedness is impossible. In sum, when literal transfer of references or allusions does not work, the translator's search for functional equivalence seems to be a conciliatory alternative. Based on constructing the dynamic functioning of communication, literary translation can employ a range of related strategies to reproduce the effect of the original on the target reader.

The question is: does the translator communicate with an original author, living or dead, one way or another, or simply get on with what they have interpreted from their reading of the source text? In reality, certain cultural references or allusions appear to be non-essential and are therefore considered unimportant or less relevant. The referentiality of cross-cultural communication resists simple treatment. As for translating or writing in the original, the question remains: what is to be communicated? What about culture-specific lexis or cultural referents? It is common knowledge that literary translation is referentially difficult. If the translator plays it safe, the end result may well be bland and aesthetically unappealing. A successful literary translation is predicated on the idea of imaginative boldness and adventure. At the same time, referential versatility is vitally required for identifying and distinguishing between dead or hackneyed metaphors and vibrant or compelling metaphors. On the other hand, an interpreted treatment of a reference or allusion is also required when references or allusions are recognized as being of little aesthetic value or significance. It is often observed that when a metaphor is translated idiomatically, it is naturally adjusted, modified, adulterated, or even substituted. In this process of supposed replication, various forms of transformation are often manifested as a result of the demand for a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability for the sake of readability, pointing to the creative dimension of literary translation.

Another important indication of cross-cultural communication lies in the relationship between signification and intertextuality in literary translation, where meaning refers to other texts in the source culture. After references and allusions, intertextuality poses a greater challenge to translation in conveying what is intended in the source text. Given cultural and historical differences, the precariousness of intertextuality in relation to reading is exacerbated by the act of translation and also not less importantly, by the rewriting process in which other texts are read by the author who then rewrites them by interweaving them into the source text, which is the result of rewriting intertexts. According to Venuti, intertextuality is the key to the production and reception of translations. Yet it is almost impossible to translate most foreign intertexts completely or accurately. "As a result, they are usually replaced by analogous but ultimately different intertextual relations in the receiving language" (Venuti, 2009, p. 157). This is undoubtedly an inevitable but benign reconfiguration to ensure communicative access. The translator is dealing with signifiers that refer only to other signifiers in a multidimensional space. At times the other signifiers represent other texts, and it is the translator's task to help the target reader recognize the intertextuality in translation.

The establishment of "analogous … intertextual relations" in the target text is by no means easy, for the loss and dysfunction of intertextuality are difficult to avoid. Venuti proposes a "solution" but immediately refutes it:

> To compensate for the loss of intertextuality, the translator might rely on paratextual devices, such as an introductory essay or annotations, which can be useful in restoring the foreign cultural context and in articulating the cultural significance of an intertextual relation as well as its linguistic basis. Yet in making such additions the translator's work ceases to be translating and becomes commentary (Venuti, 2009, p. 159).

Paratextual devices are obviously a less-than-ideal way of addressing the issue of intertextual relations in the source text. Venuti's concern is well-grounded, and this would call into question the identity of translation. But if additions are used sparingly and judiciously, and only in a paraphrasing way, the translated text does not necessarily become a commentary. Perhaps what is in the source text is not fully conveyed, but the important dimensions are communicated to the target reader.

A related consideration in terms of translating references, allusions and intertexts is for the translation scholar to decide which of the two words "convey" and "communicate" to choose to describe how the translation is presented and received. It is observed that in translation studies, the two verbs are sometimes used when referring to the transmission of information across linguistic and cultural boundaries. However, there seem to be some subtle differences between them. When we look at translation as a form of communication, it is necessary to address these differences. For instance, translation is said to convey the same meaning as the original (Gutt, 1990; Menacere, 1992; Gonzales and Zantjer, 2015). The implicit emphasis is on source-orientedness, which refers to carrying the message, including its referential and pragmatic effects, from the source language to the target language. In this sense, it is akin to transfer or delivery. Communicating, on the other hand, suggests imparting or transmitting and is less straightforward and involves a more conscious effort. Therefore, it suggests a certain form or degree of mediation, the overarching purpose of which is to ostensibly make provision for reception. It is comparatively more purposeful, seeking to ensure the message is delivered to the target reader in a certain way, with greater emphasis on target-orientedness. It is possible for something to be conveyed, but it does not necessarily mean that it is communicated with an emphasis on the effectiveness of transmitting information, which contributes to intelligibility. This is reflected in Newmark's statement that communicative translation can be overly differently motivated by the translator who intends to "achieve a certain effect" (Newmark, 1977, p. 167). It is no surprise that authorial intention and translatorial intention in communication do not always converge. This is a double communication: the translator communicates first with the source text and then with the target reader. Moreover, communication tends to be interpretive in order to match a particular translated text with a contextualized understanding of reality.

Retranslation

The reasons for re-translating certain texts can be manifold but improving the effectiveness of communication is one of the main reasons. The outdated nature of earlier translations may have hindered or impaired communication, creating the need to "update" existing texts. With earlier translations, ideological and aesthetic issues come into play in the context of changing cultural standards and the ceaseless pursuit of an ideal translation. A new translation may not be ideal, but it signals a conscious effort to improve. Moreover, as Massardier-Kenney notes, a number of steps can be taken to get things right: "...corrections of mistranslations, reinstatement of censored or deleted passages, datedness of the language, new insights into the text, allusions clarified, improvement of the awkward style of the first translation, etc." (Massardier-Kenney, 2015, p. 73). When retranslation is deemed necessary, the communicative situation in the target culture has usually changed and a contextual evolution can be observed. In addition, the changed circumstances can bring about tolerance of the foreign, and the target reader is more willing to experience or even embrace foreign otherness. As a result, more accuracy and reliability are provided by the retranslator, who is able to actualize, in the new version, the potential meaning that is not included in the previous version(s). Improved inclusiveness is a strong justification for retranslation.

The aforementioned are some general patterns for retranslation. The history of literary translation is not a clear linear progression. D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Chinese translation has gone through many versions since 1936. Many of them are abridged versions, and so far, two complete translations are available. The first of the two, translated by Rao Shuyi, was released in 1936. The retranslation by Zhao Susu was published in 2004. With a temporal gap of 68 years between the two versions, one would expect some significant differences. Not surprisingly, the retranslation is more circumspect in translating sex scenes than the early version when censorship regarding sex scenes was not as strict. Yet the most extraordinary part of the story was the 1986 reprint of this 1936 translation by Hunan Renmin Chubanshe (Human People's Publishing House). It caused a sensational stir. 50,000 copies of the first edition were printed. However, the timing of the publication was not favorable. Soon after its publication, some people considered the book "pornographic" and reported it to the highest authorities. The release of this translated text was banned. However, when Zhao Susu, who would be the retranslator, came across this Lawrence's novel, he believed that it deserved wider circulation in China. Almost immediately after its publication in January 2004, followed by a new edition in March of the same year, Zhao's retranslation became a seasonal bestseller and sold over 100,000 copies, making it a popular book among readers (Liu, 2013, p. 75).

While the 1936 translation was republished in 1986—half a century after its first release, the retranslation was not published until 2004, 18 years after the controversy over the reprint. Both translations are marked "Complete Translation" on the front cover. Yet, as mentioned above, the new version is a bowdlerized one, perhaps because the translator or/and the publisher did not want to get into trouble with the censors. So, in the 1936 version practically all the "sensual" sexual descriptions of the original text are retained. In this sense, it is an unabridged translation. However, the retranslation is not strictly a complete version of the original, since many of the sex scenes are either missing or heavily abridged, or simply marked by apostrophes. Some of the "offensive" words have been toned down by the translator. An outstanding example is "fuck". In the translation, it is rendered "love making" (zuoai) as opposed to "sexual intercourse" in the original translation. It is, admittedly also a less direct way of translating. Another word is "penis." Rao's translation is quite simple, calling a penis a penis. However, Zhao's translation is euphemistic and is rendered as "spear" (qiang), "root of life" (minggenzi), and "that thing" (nahuo). He conceded the publisher should eliminate hundreds of sexual organ allusions and explicit sex scenes, which must be appropriately toned down to avoid being grouped with pornographic literature (Liu, 2013, p. 75). Despite everything, the translation primarily serves the purpose of proving an "acceptable" translation for the target reader. It can be felicitously interpreted as an "improvement" in terms of acceptability in the sense of circumventing censorship.

Given the improved reception situation (even if this is not always the case, as the example above shows), the intertextual possibilities can be further explored so that the reading experience of the target reader can be reshaped. According to Venuti, "Intertextuality enables and complicates translation, preventing it from being an untroubled communication and opening the translated text to interpretive possibilities that vary with cultural constituencies in the receiving situation" (Venuti, 2009, p. 157). The reception situation has no doubt changed. The intertextually untranslatable has become somewhat translatable, or at least less untranslatable. While it is true that "... intertextual relations, in particular, cannot be reproduced merely by a close rendering of the words and phrases that establish those relations in the foreign text" (Venuti, 2009, p. 159), a retranslation can take advantage of the changed "intertextual relations" and open up more dimensions of the source text to the target reader. The richness and magnitude of cross-cultural communication can be better realized. Against this background, canonical works are more likely to be retranslated in the belief that what is merely inchoate and amorphous in the earlier translation can be rendered or developed, possibly in a different light but more in line with what was originally intended. Also, more aspects of empathy, motivation, and emotional involvement should be conveyed to the target reader.

All this is made possible by the changed situational context that has become the basis for the development of meaning. What was explicitly rendered becomes redundant. With better-developed cross-cultural knowledge on the part of the target reader, more of the implicitness can be recovered in the new translation, along with more referential properties of the original words. In short, the once-impaired adequacy of the previous translation can be restored. As Susanne Cadera notes, "… a new translation of the same literary work can indicate historical, social and cultural changes in the target culture that lead to the need for a new version" (Cadera, 2016, p. 11). The retranslator also has the opportunity to bring out more of the multiple implications and nuances, reconcile cultural incompatibilities, and eliminate metaphorical incongruities. Moreover, the retranslator should be better able to convey the ineffable or the untranslatable. The resulting more interpretive possibilities lead to a greater variety of manipulations. Furthermore, "… comparison of retranslations of the same work can reveal different types of manipulation due to the social and historical context" (Cadera, 2016, p. 14). Manipulations suggest that a slightly different message is being conveyed, or they may be motivated by an effort to overcome untranslatability. Retranslation is an act of re-rewriting based on the previous rewriting, and different spatial scales are created to allow for re-mediated communication.

Conclusion

Translation is a means of communication between different worldviews and cultural experiences connected by a communication infrastructure that enables the flow of knowledge and information. One of the ways to enable and promote global communication is through literary translation. The effectiveness of translation is a primary concern that is inextricably linked to whether it succeeds in bringing outstanding literary works to the target reader. This depends largely on the quality of communication and involves more than semantic translation, for the communication of literary meaning through translation must be central. The socio-political dimension cannot be separated from the difference and diversity inherent in the practice of translation. Unlike other types of translation, poetics plays a prominent role in literary translation in a cross-cultural context, and the transmission of aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic taste is essential. The incommensurability of one context with another leads to a form of recontextualization. The uprooting and displacement caused by translation are unsettling and contextualization on the part of the translator can help situate a text in a particular historical moment, providing a basis or framework for interpretation. The originally contextualized cultural material is decontextualized to facilitate communication and then recontextualized so that the target reader can engage with the introduced cultural material. Interpretation, contextualization, and recontextualization involve cross-cultural references and allusions as well as intertextual understanding. The recoverability and irrecoverability of the original context aside, in order to bring foreign otherness manifested as the unknown or the unfamiliar into the target text and for it to make sense to the target reader, mediation is an essential part of cross-cultural communication, which leads to intercultural rewriting since forceful transfer is not conducive to communication. Therefore, literary irreducibility is required, which underlines the instability and indeterminacy of literary meaning. All this contributes to the complexity and interconnectedness of the multiple dimensions of literary communication.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Ideology, patronage, and manipulation of translation in *Zouxiang weilai congshu*: With special reference to the translation and introduction of Max Weber

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Cultural Studies helps us to see that translation is not merely a simple and isolated process but is intricately bound to ideology, patronage, and poetics. Through the study of translated texts, we can explore power relations, and this has the potential to reflect such power structures within a wider cultural context. This paper examines 走向未来丛书(*Zouxiang weilai congshu*), literally "Toward the Future Book Series," and focuses on its selection and introduction of western texts and its interaction with Chinese ideological trends, to explore the relationship between translation and politics in the 1980s, focusing on discussing the translation and introduction of Max Weber. Current studies of Max Weber largely focus on Weber's thought, while the few that touched upon translation in China were merely brief descriptions lacking deep analysis. Moreover, there have not been any papers which place Weber in historical and cultural context to explore the interaction between translation and politics. This paper employs a different approach where the focus is placed on the series' translation of Weber and the social ideology behind the translation. Not only does it unearth the influence of publishers' and patron's identities on the act of translation, but it also reflects on the role of the editorial board's unique mode of operation in the translation process. The case study of this paper not only focuses on diachronic translation activities, but is also concerned with the cultural space in which translation events occurs, translators' cultural objectives of translating, as well as foreign authors who enter the cultural context where the target language is used. By placing translated literature against a specific cultural time and space, this paper explains the cultural objectives and forms of literary translation, as well as translations that were specially made to achieve certain cultural objectives and the cultural effect of such translations.

KEYWORDS

ideology, patronage, and manipulation of translation in *Zouxiang weilai congshu*: with special reference to the translation and translation, ideology, patronage, Toward the Future Book Series, Max Weber

1. Introduction

Following the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, China entered a nationwide period of cultural introspection. The authoritarian culture and politics in Mao's China (1949–1976) were characterized by closedness, ignorance, and cruelty (Zha, 2006, p. 273) and was unable to meet the needs of both intellectuals and ordinary citizens for ideological emancipation and new enlightenment post-Cultural Revolution. This caused a shift of authoritarian culture and politics to the periphery of the target language polysystem from the center.

As Itmar Even-Zohar puts it, translated literature plays a dominant role within the target language polysystem under the following three circumstances: first, when the polysystem has yet to be fully formed, as its home literatures are "young" and underdeveloped; second, when its literatures are "weak" or in the "periphery;" third, when its literatures are in a state of crisis, at a turning point, or are existing in a vacuum (Even-Zohar, 2000, p. 193–194). Not only is this argument applicable to the relationship between the translation of literature and the target language polysystem, but it may also be useful in studying the translation and introduction of foreign cultures during the Chinese Cultural Fever of the 1980s. At the height of the Cultural Fever in the 1980s, translation of non-literary texts played a significant role. Through selected case studies, we are able to deepen our understanding of the polysystem theory and apply the theoretical framework to the analysis of such non-literary texts.

In the 1980s, China's cultural system experienced a cultural vacuum at its center. The academics and people of China thus immediately directed their attention to Western societies, hoping for cultural and ideological reconstruction. The academics and publishers began massively translating foreign works across disciplines and the critique of subjects such as foreign philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, and ethics experienced exponential growth. As Wang Xiaoming put it, "[i]f one has a good knowledge of the translation activities of the 1980s, s/he will have grasped the key to understanding the 'new period' of cultural reform in China" (Wang, 2005, p. 172).

走向未来丛书(*Zouxiang weilai congshu*; hereafter *Congshu*) was published in November 1983. It positions itself as having a mission to "present the ever-changing face of contemporary natural sciences and social sciences; reflect on the torturous pursuit of truth; record a generation's reflections on its country's destiny and Man's future" "in yet another great rejuvenation of the nation" and "on the arduous yet lively road to revolution" [Editorial Board of 走向未来[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 1]. The series was intricately connected to the political and cultural contexts of Chinese society. The authors and translators of *Congshu* were drawn from the Chinese intelligentsia of the 1980s and it published a total of 74 works between June 1984 to May 1988, most of which related to social and natural sciences and included 25 foreign works in translation. There were as many as a million copies printed of the series and every article undergone reprinting. As "a series which popularizes new Western ideological trends, and the first to effect widespread changes in China," it became "a major think-tank which started an array of ideological trends in the humanities in China," (Su, 1992) as a result creating a significant impact on an entire generation of Chinese.

This paper focuses on examining *Congshu* and discussing its translation and introduction of Max Weber's 新教伦理与资本主义精神(*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; *Xinjiao* hereafter) [translated by Peng and Huang (1986)] and Frank Parkin's 马克思•韦伯(*Max Weber*, *Weibo* hereafter) [translated by Liu and Xie 1987]). As these two books were published in quantities of astounding numbers (38,000 and 96,000 copies, respectively), and were pertinent to the Weber Fever of contemporary China, they will be used to explore the interactions between translation and politics in the 1980s, by situating the translation of foreign literature within the history of social thought in China.

Current studies of Max Weber focus on Weber's thoughts, while the few that studied the translations of his works in China were merely brief descriptions. Moreover, there have not been any papers that contextualize Weber in historical and cultural contexts to explore the interaction between translation and politics. While there is a considerable amount of literature on the introduction and study of *Congshu*, introducing the people and events behind its publication in the form of memoirs or interviews, there are far fewer papers that place the series within the context of the Chinese literary history of the 1980s to observe its significance and influence. Yet, it must be noted that such literature carries significant historical value. Having said that, Wang Xiaoming's "Exploring Translation Activities in China of the" 80s from a Unique Translation Organizational Structure' is the only paper which makes its analyses from the perspective of translation studies. The paper analyses the editorial board's mode of operation and its influence on translation activities. However, the discussion of the paper lacks depth when exploring the three editorial issues of the 1980s simultaneously: the relationship between translations and publishers, the relationship between editorial boards and patronage, as well as the background and identities of patronage (Wang, 2005). In contrast to Wang, this paper employs a different approach where the focus is placed on the series' translation of Weber and the social ideology behind the translation. Not only does it unearth the influence of publishers' and patron's identities on the act of translation, but it also reflects on the role of the editorial board's unique mode of operation in the translation process. This present case study not only focuses on diachronic translation activities but is also concerned with the cultural space in which translation events occur, translators' cultural objectives, as well as foreign authors entering the cultural context of the target language. By setting translated literature against a specific cultural time and space, this paper explains the cultural objectives and forms of literary translation, as well as translations that were specially made to achieve certain cultural objectives and the cultural effect of such translations.

2. The translation context of Max Weber in the 1950s–1970s: The absence of Weber's works

When exploring the relationship between translation and politics in China and the constructive function of translation on the target language culture through studying the translation of Weber in *Congshu*, any analysis would be superficial if it were limited to the 1980s, as it would result in incomplete observations due to a lack of understanding Since Weber's prominence in the history of Western social thought is already clear, then why is it necessary to consider the 1980s, 30 years after the founding of the PRC, when discussing translations of Weber? As noted by Gentzler and Tymoczko, academics of translation studies "ought not only to analyze translated parts of source texts and source cultures but should also study those which have not been translated," as studying relevant works that were neglected in the translation process brings about a recognition of "how dominant cultural forms and power result in the peripheralization of other forms and interpretations" (Tymoczko and Gentzler, 2007, p. xxxii–xxxiii).

Since the early 1950s, translation has under centralized mainstream ideology, become an essential component in the construction of national discourse. Translators and affiliated (i.e., the Chinese Writers Association) were brought to the Communist Party. As the ruling party, the Communist Party of China (CPC) established a Central Publicity Department and subordinate Bureau of Arts and Culture to implement top-down management of all central and local literary arts organizations. As such, an organizational relationship has arisen between the Party and various literary arts groups. Joining these organizations implies, to a certain extent, supporting and submitting to the CPC as well as the mainstream ideology that it advocates while displaying, in their works and translations, features oriented toward the mainstream ideology (Cui, 2019, p. 38). At the same time, a translation office has been officially established under the General Administration of Press and Publication. It plans and organizes translation activities and regulates the mode of operations in publishing agencies (Cui, 2019, p. 45–46). The centralization of ideology brings about the nationalization of publishers and disciplining translators into the system, resulting in the state's role of patronage in the target language system, while suppressing literary concepts such as aesthetics and poetics. As professionals of the system, translators and critics are held responsible for building the patron's ideology.

In a closed social system, conflicts are bound to arise between translations of Weber and the mainstream ideology of the target language context. The propagation of Weber in China cannot be separated from Karl Marx. The intense dispute that arose between western sociology and Marx's ideas during the 19th and 20th centuries is perceived as one of the most important catalysts of modern sociology. Among multitudinous arguments, "Weber's criticism is considered the most severe, the effects of which the most far-reaching" (Hong, 1998, p. 1–2). Ironically, due to the Sovietization and Sinicization of Marxism in the first half of the 20th century, Weber's and Marx's thoughts, which are more academic-oriented in Western societies, took on a far more overtly politicized status in China. During the Cold War period, the theories of Marx and Weber became political weapons or victims of the ideological conflict between socialism and capitalism.

It is worth noting that when Marxist theories and principles are integrated with Chinese revolutionary theories and practice, and when the theories are granted the position of mainstream ideology due to revolutionary fervor, political struggles, or the construction of the national discourse, they become politicized and ideologized. Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the CPC formed an alliance with the Soviet Union out of national interest and established Marxism-Leninism as its dominant governing ideology and theoretical basis. The complete works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, V.I. Lenin, and Joseph Stalin were translated and published by the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau as part of an ideological system essential for the construction of a new national discourse. In fact, upon entering China, Marxism had been perceived as a political doctrine for transforming China, averting its national crisis, and "fighting against imperialism and feudalism" (Zuo and Wang, 1991, p. 74). Therefore, when studying Marxism in the target language context, it is necessary to analyze Marxism and its place in the source language context, to explore the striking political significance of Marxism as it was propagated in China.

Due to the manipulation of Marxism by China's the centralized political ideology between the 1950s to 1970s, an absence of Weber's thought (including his debates and disagreements with Marxism, which are well-known elsewhere) from China then is reasonable. Evan as early as 1921, Mao Zedong announced that "[t]he materialist conception of history is the philosophical basis of our party" (Mao, 1993, p. 4) when embracing Marxism as the national ideology. Despite numerous misappropriations by Mao and Chinese Communists, historical materialism, a core idea of Marxism, has invariably existed as a fundamental principle of Sinicized Marxism. However, Weber made a sharp criticism of historical materialism in 1922:

> The so-called "materialistic conception" with the crude elements of genius of the early form which appeared, for instance, in the Communist Manifesto still prevails only in the minds of laymen and dilettantes [...] they content

> themselves with the most threadbare hypotheses and the most general phrases since they have then satisfied their dogmatic need [...] The inevitable monistic tendency of every type of thought which is not self-critical naturally follows this path (Weber, 1922; Wu, 1993, p. 124–125).

Weber rejects the idea of dividing history into multiple stages and objects to Marx's use of historical materialism in its interpretation of historical change. Their debates were not limited to sociology, but also extends to philosophy, history, social science methodology, capitalism, and democratic politics (Hong, 1998, p. 2). Yet, it is not imperative that we inspect the substantive content of their debate. Instead, by situating this debate with the above analysis, it is apparent that since the lack of translation of Weber was an outcome of manipulation by the target language's political and cultural contexts, which deliberately ignored the introduction of Weber, leaving Marxist thoughts with no ideological opponents. Conflicts among academics in Western academia had evolved into ideological struggles under the Cold War. While Weber's criticisms against Marxism had advanced from the level of personal discourse to that of collective discourse and institutionalization, his advocacy of value pluralism, rejection of holism, and support for individualism are of no benefit to the CPC's disciplining of people from all classes with a centralized ideology and construction of a collectivist national discourse. For want of under ideological manipulation, Sociology as a discipline was abolished during an overhaul of Chinese higher education institutions in 1952, and these institutions were isolated from international academia for a considerably prolonged period. While Weber's reputation in international academia rose in the 1950s, his works and ideas hardly ever appeared in Chinese academia.

Interestingly, Weber's *Wirtschaftsgeschichte* was translated into Chinese by Zheng Taipu in 1936. Yet, the influence Zheng Taipu had on translation in China is still questionable, as there is no consensus on the degree of socio-economic impact stemming from the translation of *Wirtschaftsgeschichte* in China. On the one hand, Guo Luo found that Zheng Taipu's work had pioneering and ground-breaking contributions to the development of science in China, with his translations becoming important references for Mathematics and Physics in universities (Guo, 1987, p. 571). On the other hand, the literary magazine 读书(*Reading*) held a seminar, "Max Weber: Portrait of a Thinker" in 1985 and only mentioned the translation in passing:

> Due to the conservatism and the disregard for science in the academy, Chinese intellectuals was little known about Weber in the 1950s. There was only one translated book published in China. The research paper was almost nothing (Wang, 1985, p. 35).

In the summer of the same year, there was an international conference on history in Stuttgart. The historians spent 3 days on the discussion of Weberian theory (Fan, 2007, p. 139). However, due to the influence of the mainstream ideology during the 1960s to 1980s, there was no research on Weber in Chinese academia and Zheng Taipu's translations made no significant impact on society. After the 1980s, there has seen growing importance placed on Weber's research on the rise of Capitalism in the context of China, also known as Weber Fever.

3. The context of translating Max Weber's book in the 1980s

The late 1970s was another critical period in Chinese history, especially after the catastrophe of the Chinese Revolution. The Ideological Emancipation Movement led by the CPC began to unfold, accompanied by slogans such as "emancipate our minds, use our heads, seek truth from facts and unite as one in looking to the future—the primary task is to emancipate our minds" (Deng, 1994a, p. 141). Ideologies from Western capitalist nations was introduced to the country, impacting young intellectuals heavily. As Gan Yang, who led the introduction of western studies into China in the 1980s, recalled, "[t]he entire nation was filled with an atmosphere of the humanities, and an atmosphere of the humanities is an atmosphere with western texts as its basis" (Zha, 2006, p. 196).

The Chinese literary scene began reflecting upon the longstanding direction of using class conflicts as a key principle' in literary works. In October 1979, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that literary artists should abide by the characteristics and laws of literary arts, while leaders were responsible for "ensuring, through various areas including material needs, that literary artists fully utilize their intelligence and talent," "according to the characteristics and laws of the literary arts" (Deng, 1994b, p. 213), attempting to break through the overly politicized literary arts, and striving for independence. Such a declaration from national leaders invigorated the literary community's pursuit of ideological emancipation and provoked further reflection on the relationship between politics and the literary arts.

The Cultural Fever of the 1980s catalyzed the translation of Weber's book. The seminar "Max Weber: Portrait of a Thinker" in 1985. As noted by Xiao:

> Weber's theory caters to the participants' desired sense of liberation, as historical development is no longer restrained by productivity like that of a high-pressure steam engine, while the active human brain is equally capable of leading global movements (Xiao, 2010, p. C08).

With *Congshu* upholding its historical mission of "recognizing world developmental trends scientifically" and "paying special attention to the ideological development of science and the introduction and application of other peripheral disciplines" [Editorial Board of 走向未来[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 2], the translation of Weber's book became incredibly significant.

Paradoxically, it is worth nothing that while ideological emancipation became a new theme of the era, the pursuit of Marxism continued to in mainstream ideology. On the one hand, the Editors' Note in *Congshu* emphasized the importance of Marxism in understanding the value of science. "On the torturous yet vital route to reform, I stood strong in the Marxist religion, understood the value of science, and gained progressively deeper insight into our era and nation;" "Today, the great ideology which shines upon our nation is none other than Marxism, the scientific spirit, our nation's exceptional tradition, and innovation, which begins from this!" [Editorial Board of 走向未来[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 1–2]. This implies that Marxism continued to be a guiding principle of its editorial direction. On the other hand, the series published translated works of *Xinjiao* and *Weibo* in 1985 and 1986, respectively. As aforementioned, the sinicization of Marxism is precisely the reason for the absence of translations of Weber's book in China from the 1950s to 1970s.

How should this paradoxical phenomenon be interpreted?

3.1. Impact of political ideology and publishers as patrons on translation activities

This section begins by examining the Sichuan People's Publishing House, the publisher of this book series. The publisher played a crucial role throughout the process from editing to its eventual publication. The final translation was completed and produced by the publisher, then presented to readers through market circulation, thereafter, generating certain social effects. Sichuan People's Publishing House is the patron of *Congshu*. Manipulation of translation activities can be conducted by patronage, which consists of the ideological, economic, and status components.

It is worth noting that before the 1980s, because of the CPC's extensive manipulation of publishers, that is, the nationalization of publishers after the implementation of socialist joint state-private ownership of businesses in 1953, publications publishers had to closely abide by the mainstream ideology, neglecting market demands. Under the state control, editorial departments conducted stringent inspections of many areas of operations, including the selection of translated works. Publishing houses looked more closely at works in translation, under the pretext of examining their educational significance, and only allowed publication of those that fit into the centralized ideology, regardless of market demand. Following the end of the Cultural Revolution and the implementation of economic reform, the CPC reformulated an ideological policy for the literary arts. In December 1977, the State Publishing Bureau held a National Publishing Conference, where Wang Kuang, then the person-in-charge, proposed to "break political shackles; break free from the constraints of publishing direction and content" (Fang and Wei, 2008, p. 232). In 1979, the State Publishing Bureau held another National Publishing Conference and promulgated the Publishing Regulations, which mentioned the need for the publishing industry to stand firm on its principle of "letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools contend" (Deng et al., 1984, p. 86).

It is evident that in this new context, subtle changes had taken place in the relationship between publishers and mainstream ideology. The authoritarian manipulation of publishers by "centralized" ideology began to crumble. Although mainstream ideology continued to pursue Marxism and Maoism, the diversification of a national ideology had begun to take shape. With the reform of national political ideology and opening to foreign ideologies, publishers gained more freedom. In 1983, the Central Committee of the CPC abolished the formulation of "class conflicts as a key principle" and replaced the slogan "serving politics" with "serving the people and socialism" (Ding, 2008). These adjustments offered an opportunity for publishers to break free from national control and reorient their operations to meet market demands. In the initial stages of economic reform, as demands for western culture and texts arising from the end of long-term material and spiritual deprivation during the Cultural Revolution increased continuously, it would only be a matter of time before the Sichuan People's Publishing House (SPPH) conducted its large-scale publication of *Congshu*. Conscious efforts were made to meet large demands for cultural products.

Under the diversification of ideological forces, the atmosphere of Cultural Fever, as well as the marketization of publishers' operations, it seemed necessary that the SPPH translated and introduced Weber's works to cater to its readers' curiosity toward and desire for fresh knowledge from other countries, despite Weberian thought being taboo in the former Chinese target language context.

A strategic approach was employed in the publication of *Congshu*, where Weber's works were translated based on Marxism as a guiding principle. As SPPH continued to be a state-owned unit in the system, it had to act in accordance with the affirmation and promotion of Marxism by mainstream ideology. While the translation industry enjoyed more independence in the 1980s than in the past 30 years, the state, as the patron of translation activities, continued to retain some degree of control over publishers and translators. Although Deng pointed out in his 1980 speech, "目前的形势与任务" (The Present Situation, and Tasks before Us), "the slogan that literature and art are subordinate to politics… … has done more harm than good," he also mentioned that "in no way does this mean that literature can be divorced from politics. Every progressive and revolutionary writer or artist must consider the social effects of his works and the interests of the people, the state, and the Party" (Deng, 1994c, p. 255–256). Deng's statement sent a clear message regarding the relationship between literature, art, and politics. The cautionary, supervisory, and manipulative functions of politics on literature and art would remain: "Once political ideology deems literature and art as a form of intervention and a threat to politics, political action will be taken to stifle its development" (Zha, 2003, p. 81). Even as the Publishing Regulations promulgated in 1979 responded to the call for "ideological emancipation," they also affirmed that "publishers must uphold the four basic principles, serve the people, and serve socialism," coinciding with Deng's statement.

When *Congshu* was published in 1984, it found itself in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, it had to promote Marxism. On the other hand, it also sought to mission was to introduce Western texts, including Weber's writings, many of which conflicted with the ideas of Marxism. Interestingly, *Congshu* benefited from these two contradictory positions. It abided by the mainstream ideology, and thus, avoiding censorship, but concomitantly fulfilled market demands and gained popularity. As the SPPH began its pursuit for profits and marketization in the 1980s, and as its relationship with mainstream ideology started to evolve, it seemed only reasonable that it would translate Weber's works to meet market demands. Yet, even if there were a deliberate effort to break literature and art free from political manipulation, the government would continue to keep an eye on literature, art, and publishers. After the movements such as the Campaign against Bourgeois Liberalization 资产阶级自由化in 1982 and the Anti- Spiritual Pollution Campaign 反精神污染in 1983, SPPH, as a patron of translation activities, ensured that the editorial principles of *Congshu* were politically correct and gained the initiative before the potential interference by the central government. When discussing its editorial strategy, the editor-in-chief Jin said that the project would "dare to innovate and take wild adventures in academics, but never cross the line in politics." This is no passive strategy, but one that "sets a new line of attack: launching a folk academic cultural movement that would make ideological breakthroughs, to emphasize "Chinese cultural reform" (Qian, 2012, p. 214–215).

It is not a coincidence that this highly influential series, edited byelite intellectuals from Beijing, was not published by Beijing publishing houses or core publishers elsewhere, but by SPPH, a local publishing house. By publishing at SPPH, the series could avoid direct manipulation by Beijing, the center of the nation's political ideology, allowing it to publish a large volume of translated Western texts. Additionally, it is also worth noting that Jin's wife, Liu Qingfeng, is an important contributor to *Congshu*. Her father, Liu Yangjiao, was formerly a ministerial cadre in the central ministry, while her brother, Liu Maocai, was formerly publicity director of the Sichuan Provincial Committee. The publication process was therefore aided by Liu Yangjiao's former position and the support the series received from political figures in charge of publishing and publicity activities in Sichuan. The latter had played the role of "hidden patron" in the series' translation process.

The close relationship between the editorial board and party cadres meant that the editorial board of *Congshu* had to promote reflections of Marxism prominently in its Editors' Note. In this way, SPPH ensured that both the publisher and editorial board maintained a stable, politically correct stance while allowing the books in the series to enter the market and influence readers. Later events showed that a crucial component of Weber Fever was the perception that there was, in fact, no contradiction between Weber's thought and Marxism, which arose from readers' reflections on the relationship between the two thinkers since the publication of Weber's book translation in *Congshu*.

As Liu Dong put it, an important reason that led him to translate Max Weber was to address misinterpretations of Weber's thought in China due to the long-lasting influence of Marxism on the conceptualization of Weber. Liu later recalled:

> Even though the main purpose of this book was not to "market" Weber, but to evaluate him accurately and rationally, it nevertheless displayed the vitality of Weber's thought. Precisely because I did not begin with a superstitious mindset, I found everything about Weber more attractive [...](Liu, 2011).

This implies that there existed "superstitious" worship of Marxism among the public, resulting in the irrational long-term absence of Weber's thought in translation. Thus, Liu's translation objective corresponds with Jin's and the other editors' publishing objective, to "liberate a young generation of students from a linear, formulaic understanding of history and the world" (Ma, 2008).

3.2. Impact of political ideology and the consultant committee (as patron) on translation activities

As André Lefevere points out, a patron is an individual or organization capable of using professionals (including writers and translators) to influence the literary ecosystem for it to act in accordance with certain ideologies (Lefevere, 2004, p. 16). In the case of *Congshu* and the translation of Weber's book, the Consultant Committee, which was a particularly special group in the Chinese literary scene, played the role of patron.

Congshu was published in 1984. Two of the translated works related to Weber were published in 1986 and 1987, respectively. It is worth noting that literature was independent of politics during this period, the mid-1980s. As noted by Zha, the themes and subjects of literature published after the mid-1980s were "clearly in discordance with politics," and "literary theorists have proposed a theory of 'literary subjectivity' to break literature free from political control and subvert firmly entrenched poetic norms" (Zha, 2003, p. 81).

This tendency is also reflected in changes in selection criteria for translated literature. Certain works that were once condemned by the mainstream ideology or considered politically taboo could now be translated in China. After the mid-1980s, as "economic reform" progressed, political authorities gradually shifted their focus to economic construction. This shift in focus, following the determining influence of Chinese society's economic base on its cultural superstructure, resulted in ideological forces loosening their grip on translation. This made it possible for politically independent works, even potentially anti-Marxist ones, such as Weber's, to be translated.

There was a significant reason behind this weakening of political control over the literary arts. During the CPC's promotion of "economic reform" in the 1980s, there arose an ideological controversy within the top political faction (Kou, 2005; Zhao, 2009) which directly influenced the translation activities of *Congshu*.

In September 1986, the series published Weidlich Haag's 定量社会学(*Concepts, and Models of a Quantitative Sociology*), which included a list of consultants and members of the *Congshu* editorial board. Bao Zunxin, who held the post of editor-in-chief in 1984 and 1985, was listed as a consultant, while former editor Jin Guantao took over the position of editor-in-chief in 1986. The rest of the list consisted of two deputy editors Chen Yueguang and Tang Ruoxi, and 29 other members. This structure continued until the last book of the series 探索非理性的世界(*Exploring the Irrational World*) was published in June 1988. Back in 1982, a *Congshu* editorial board had already been established, consisting of 24 members with Bao Zunxin as the editor-in-chief. An executive editorial board was set up under this editorial board, with Jin as the leader (Wang, 2005, p. 177). If the executive board led by Jin took charge of the material selection and copyediting of the series, then Bao and other consultants, regardless of status, played the role of ideologist for the series, while Jin and his members were the actual editors.

This subsection begins with an analysis of the list of consultants from September 1986 onwards, including Bao Zunxin, Yan Jici, Du Runsheng, Zhang Liqun, Chen Yirong, Chen Hanbo, Zhong Peizhang, Hou Wailu, and Qian Sanqiang. Bao was a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of History (1981–1989). Yan served as Dean of the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC) Graduate School (1978–1985) and was also the President of USTC (1980–1984) and a long-term Vice-Chairperson of the National People's Congress Standing Committee (1983–1993). Du held important posts in rural work as Mao and other top managers of the CPC thought highly of him when the PRC was founded. In 1983, he was made Director of the Rural Policy Research Office of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Rural Development Research Center of the State Council. From 1982 to 1986, he chaired the drafting of the annual "Document No. 1 of the Central Government," promoting rural reform with other reformist leaders including Hu Yaobang and Wan Li. In the 1957 Anti-Rightist Movement, Zhang was exempted from being associated with the rightists due to Hu's protection. In 1980, Zhang transferred to the Institute of Youth, which was affiliated to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the research institute that collaborated with the SPPH and Chinese Academy of Sciences to publish *Congshu*. In 1983, he was transferred to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, where he was made Director of the Office for Propaganda and Education, establishing close ties with Hu. Chen Yizi worked at a think-tank that led rural, economic, and systemic reforms in China, and was the main driving force behind rural reforms in the 1980s. In the mid to late 1980s, he was promoted to Director of the Institute for Economic Structural Reform and was highly regarded by Hu and Zhao Ziyang. In 1976, Chen Hanbo headed the Publication Administrative Bureau under the State Council. During his 4 years in office, the Chinese publishing industry stepped out from the shadow of the Cultural Revolution, gradually becoming more open and revitalized. From 1980 onwards, he served successively as the first Chairperson and second Honorary Chairman of the Publishers Association of China. In 1982, Zhong transferred to the Publicity Department of the CPC's Bureau of News, becoming its director. "Following Hu's commitment to the nation's economic reform, Zhong worked furiously throughout his 4 years in office" (Zhong, 2011) until Hou took over the post. Qian was well-known in China's scientific industry for returning from the United States after the founding of the PRC. In 1980, he gave a lecture titled "A Brief Introduction to the Development of Science and Technology" to the leaders of the CPC.

These consultants shared the same ideals and goals. They were either outstanding scholars and thinkers of Chinese society who shared close connections with the high- ranking reformist leaders of the CPC, such as Bao, Yan, Zhang, and Qian, or were high-ranking reformist leaders of the CPC themselves who directly participated in the process of ideological reform, such as Du, Chen, Zhong, and Hou. Although this group of consultants did not have direct involvement in the editing and publishing work of the series, the ideology which they represented had turned them into powerful patrons of the series in its introduction of Western texts. They could utilize professionals such as critics, reviewers, teachers, and translators to manipulate the literary system, provide support for literature and artistic creations or translation activities, or safeguard the social status and political security of other editors, writers, and translators.

3.3. Impact of the editorial board's mode of operations on translation activities

To prevent the manipulation of publication and editorial work by mainstream ideology, the organizer of translation activities must subvert the established system of publishing and translation. As all publishers in China then were state-owned, there were plans to establish an editorial group independent from the publisher during the initial stages of planning for *Congshu*.

When Jin and other editors first discussed publishing the series with the Hunan People's Publishing House (HPPH), HPPH wanted a series about youth knowledge and self-cultivation, but Jin preferred one that encouraged thought enlightenment among adults as well as youth (Han, 2008, p. 57). This raised the question of whether the publisher or the editor had more say in the direction of the series. Jin determined that the first condition for collaboration was for him to hold the right of final review.

With the help of Liu Maocai's networks, Jin established an independent editorial board outside Chengdu during his collaboration with SPPH. Upon realizing that they needed a "body bearing political responsibilities to manage" them, Jin collaborated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Youth, which precisely played this role. Through this affiliation, the editorial board rode on the coattails of the Institute of Youth to gain legal status (Ma, 2008). However, "the Institute of Youth had no right to replace the editor-in-chief or editors or intervene in specific and internal operations of the board" (Qian, 2012, p. 214).

> Having full control and dominance in all areas, the editorial board could then establish a robust three-tier review system for its time. An editorial board independent from the publisher, combined with a thorough review system, signified the establishment of a brand-new translation-led mechanic (Wang, 2005, p. 177).

Support from patrons sharing the same ideals as the editorial board was needed for the board to gain independent legal status. To that end, the list of consultants consisted of thinkers and officials who were supportive of reform in China and held executive positions in major organizations or who were from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. As their role was to "bear political responsibility," the translation work would have been impossible without their support.

How would such an editorial ecosystem influence the actual translation of Weber's book? To answer this question, an analysis of the editorial influence on the selection of material to be translated is first required. As mentioned in the Translators' Note of *Xinjiao*, while Weber was an influential philosopher in Western academia, his the "long-term closure and confinement" of China (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 1). Thus, Weber's representative work in religious and sociological theory was chosen (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 1) to "introduce readers to the generative relationship between religious ideas (Protestant ethic) and the psychological drive behind capitalist development (the spirit of capitalism)" (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 2). The translators' introduction of Weber's "essence of the capitalist spirit" (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 2) and the advocacy of "ascetic Protestantism" as a "sociocultural foundation" (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 2) contradicted long-held Marxist ideology that pursued socialism and atheism in the target language context.

Part of the objective of translating this work was to reflect on and even dispel Marxist ideology. The translators put forth "a proposition which called for deep thought:"

> Even though Weber's analysis is made in the capitalist context, could there be a universal significance to it? In other words, capitalism, and the spirit of capitalism, which supports and promotes capitalist development, are fundamentally natural formations. Not only does it create a more robust political and economic system, but also a more complete system of science and technology that generates unprecedented levels of productivity. In that way, can we say that these are singular effects of a new cultural framework? (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 3).

This translation includes American sociologist Talcott Parsons' Preface to the new edition of Protestant Ethic, reminding readers of Weber's "rational bourgeois capitalism" (Parsons, 1986, p. 7). This, together with the comments in Translators' Note, showed that the translators and editors had a comprehensive understanding of the influences behind Weber's thought, their reflection on the present situation, and Weber's contradiction of Marxist ideology. Lefevere once claimed that translation is a form of rewriting and that rewriting is manipulation (Lefevere, 2004). In the translation process of *Xinjiao*, the editors and translators manipulated *via* deliberately selecting which works to translate, as well as translating extremely specific appraisals of these works. This allowed them to guide readers in their analysis and interpretation of the original work. Once *Xinjiao* was published, it rapidly provoked reflections on Chinese society, specifically about China's failure to achieve modernization. As Xiao put it, remembering the influence this work had,

> Isn't a lack of ascetic religious beliefs precisely the reason China had not been able to achieve modernization? [...] for a long time, China only had shame culture, but not Western guilt culture. Since capitalism (and capitalism was considered modernization then) only takes place under the protestant ethic, should China then completely part with its traditions and introduce Christian Protestantism in its entirety? (Xiao, 2010).

This reflection echoes the "proposition" in the Translators' Note.

In 1987, in Liu Dong and Xie Weihe's translation of Frank Parkin's *Max Weber*, the contrast between Marxism and Weber's thought was discussed directly. As mentioned in the original editors' Preface to the book, "(Weber) was concerned with developing a subject which would have appeared to Marx to be at best a highly partisan "science" of society and at worst a "bourgeois ideology" (Hamilton, 1987, p. 2). "Weber's sociological models [...] stress a methodological individualism opposed to both Marxian and Durkheimian constructs of social collectivities, a belief in the value of individual insight" (Hamilton, 1987, p. 2).

Since the mid-1980s, the spread of Weber's thought in Chinese academia rapidly led to a Weber Fever, to the extent that academics "could not open their mouths without citing Weber." As they were "eager to break free from ideological discourse and establish an independent space on campus for "engaging in academics as a vocation," Weber's "value neutrality" served as a robust theoretical basis for their pursuit of liberation from political influence" (Xiao, 2010).

Weber's book translation was in line with Jin and the editorial board's mission of thought enlightenment. Through empirical reasoning, Weber guided readers to face the challenging and ever-changing future with a serious attitude and encouraged them to embark on socialist modernization in "yet another great rejuvenation of the nation" [Editorial Board of 走向未来[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 1–2]. This was precisely the editorial board's fundamental objective of translating Weber's works. It is worth noting that among 25 translated works in the series, those of academics from European and American countries are the majority, with 14 by Americans, seven by British, Italians, Germans, Austrians, and Dutch combined, with only two by academics from Socialist nations such as the Soviet Union and Hungary. Some of the main themes of these works are science, philosophy, and sociology. Among these works, Weber's book translation most clearly reflects on ideology and exposes the flaws of Marxism.

The fact that Weber's thought and works were considered for translation by the editorial board strongly suggests that its organizational structure provided it with greater autonomy.

The influence of this organizational structure on translation strategy will now be analyzed. Co-translation was a customary practice among the 25 translated works: only 6 of them were completely translated, while there were eight hybrid works which included both translations as well as original content, concentrated in the first 3 years of the series. This paper focuses on the case analysis of the translation of Weber's book. *Xinjiao* was translated from Talcott Parsons' 1958 English translation, which was translated from Weber's 1920 revised edition. It is important to note that notes added to the 1920 edition by Weber were retained in Parson's translation. While pointing out the lengthiness of the notes, Parsons explained that he hoped "these notes could bring clarity to how the issues under discussion surfaced in Weber's mind. Any compromise on this for the sake of artistic perfection would be regrettable." Therefore, he reminds readers to "read the notes closely, as large masses of vital information are enclosed within" (Parsons, 1986, p. 1–2). However, these notes, crucial to a better understanding of Weber's thought, were omitted in Peng and Huang's translation. Moreover, the notes and index of the original work were also omitted.

It is observable that there was little concern about the equivalence in diction and essay structure as emphasized in conventional translation criticism, while a greater focus was put on the immediate social effect produced through rewriting. On another level, such expeditious methods of rewriting, such as team translation, editing, and abridging catered to readers' pressing need for nutritive western texts after the long cultural drought in Chinese society. The rapidly emerging phenomena of Cultural Fever and Weber Fever, together with the strategy of rewriting, fueled each other's development. Publishers frequently deleted references in scholarly books, a practice that is quite common in Chinese academia then. There was also no standardization for academic publication. For instance, although the translators required to retain the references, publishers often deleted them without seeking the author's agreement due to the consideration of cost (Wang, 2005, p. 187).

This paper has examined material selection and translation strategy to analyze how the unique organizational structure of independence from publishers and owning rights to final review influenced the editorial board's translation activities. While the editorial board's level of freedom was ground-breaking, the extent of this freedom should not be exaggerated. Its organization remains an attempt within the system, and its independence was only relative to what came before. As Gan Yang put it, "Ideological emancipation is limited by disciplinary requirements: Regardless of who, or what ideology, 'emancipation' has to take place within the existing system and dominant ideological framework." (Zha, 2006, p. 276). As the publisher of the series, SPPH had to enforce mainstream ideology and influence the editorial board to conform to the system. This explains why the editorial board advocated for Marxism in the Editors' Note, while searching for suitable "patrons" to serve as series consultants on the other. Once the political ideology changed and patrons' political statuses came under attack, this mode of operation was bound to be scrutinized and changed. In 1989, *Congshu* was ordered to cease all publications. This is exactly the outcome of a changing political ideology intervening in publishing activities.

> After putting down the rebellion [consider indicating Tiananmen Square protests in brackets], [...] investigations showed that especially after 1987, a minority of books became platforms for defying the Four Cardinal Principles and advocating bourgeois liberalization.
>
> [...] Inspections revealed that these 74 books can be classified into the following four groups: [...] (3) [...] it has been found that certain bourgeois theories or translated works were introduced without any analysis or criticism, some of which was suspected of disparaging the present by extolling the past, some involving wanted figures and long-term representatives of bourgeois liberalization. [...] (4) Serious political issues have been found, including defying the Four Cardinal Principles, advocating bourgeois liberalization, or the authors being wanted for participating in the Beijing counter-revolutionary riots and for long-term support of bourgeois liberalization (Long, 1990, p. 132–133).

4. Conclusion

The Cultural Fever of the mid-1980s was essential to the intelligentsia in the 1980s. Lively discussions of the relationship between tradition, culture, and modernity, as well as between Chinese and Western culture were abound amongst the intellectuals and the culturally inclined. *Congshu*, targeted at promoting Western texts, triggered the first large-scale reading fervor since the economic reform, through the translation of Western books. Of this, the translation of Weber's book precipitated Weber Fever, giving an ideology of modernization and encouraging reflections on Marxism in the political and cultural context of the 1980s Chinese society. Through this process, ideologies had both guided and restrained translation activities in political, economic, and social contexts. The selection, translation, and interpretation of texts by editors and translators did not take place in a vacuum but were subject to ideological influence.

It is worth noting that the "latest achievements of contemporary science" [Editorial Board of 走向未来[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 2] were not targeted for suppression. Instead, older, classical western theories were scrutinized. These included Immanuel Kant's, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche's and Martin Heidegger's philosophy, Benedetto Croce's aesthetics, Sigmund Freud's, and Carl Gustav Jung's psychology, Bronislaw Malinowski's anthropology, Ernst Cassirer's semiotics of culture, and Weber's sociology. How much farther would enlightenment in China have developed, if the knowledge map, with which the Chinese gained a renewed understanding of the world, included these classical theories from the beginning? How did these theoretical resources, introduced from the West, influence Chinese society in the post-1990? How were these classical theories perceived when synchronously translated in Chinese academia? These are vital issues for future research.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

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A validation study of a consecutive interpreting test using many-facet Rasch analysis

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Validation is the process of conducting a validity study on a test, gathering evidence to support inferences made based on test scores. Using many-facet Rasch analysis this paper validates the result of a consecutive interpreting test from four aspects: rating scale, raters, examinees and interpreting tasks. The study also identifies factors that affect the test results through bias analysis. The results of this analysis show that: (1) this analytical rating scale and task design can effectively reflect the examinees' interpreting competence, thus making it suitable for validating interpreting assessments; (2) one of the sub-scales: interpreting skills and manners, has a slightly negative effect on the overall validity of the assessment, making further revision on this sub-scale desirable.

KEYWORDS

many-facet Rasch analysis, validity, consecutive interpreting, analytic rating scale, interpreting assessment

Research background

Validity refers to the degree to which a set of tests corresponds to what is measured, that is, whether a set of tests measures what is measured (Messick, 1989; Latief, 2009), also known as "the accuracy of measurement" (Sullivan, 2011, p. 1). It indicates the dependability of the assessment mainly by examining the consistency of testing results (Carmines and Zeller, 1979; Latief, 2009; Sullivan, 2011). As a special type of language test, interpreting tests relatively lack data-based validation, either on rating scale or on the interpretation test results. This results in the fact that the test results do not necessarily reflect what is measured. After more than fifty years' development, many-facet Rasch model has its unique advantages in analyzing language use and proficiency tests (Linacre, 2010), and it is also a more direct way to assess the construct bias of rating scale (Wright and Masters, 1982). Its "many-facet" analysis is especially suitable for validating analytic rating scale.

The practice of interpreting testing and assessment

Interpreting testing and assessment (ITA) plays an essential role in screening qualified interpreters and assisting researchers to reflect on and improve the training of interpreters. Interpreting scholars continuously endeavor to develop, standardise, and streamline ITA procedures. However, it is unclear whether ITA and its major components (e.g., rating scales, test results) accurately reflect the interpreting competence of trainees. Yeh and Liu (2006) reviewed the main studies on interpretation assessment. Table 1 excerpts the operation methods and rating scales.

In the past, rating scales for interpreting tests were often holistic, taking "faithfulness" or "information integrity" as the main criteria. User expectation surveys also reflect the importance of "accuracy" and "faithfulness" (see: Bühler, 1986; Kopczyński, 1994; Moser, 1996; Kurz, 2001). However, the description of a holistic rating scale often includes too many factors to be considered at the same time, and the weighting among the factors is often not clear. These make holistic ratings relatively subjective, and it is difficult to avoid rater effects. Analytic rating scale can compensate for this deficiency by weighing rating criteria according to their relative importance and by describing each rating criterion separately, so that the raters can better understand the scale. Up until 2006, very few studies have validated the rating scale, raters, examinees and the test results of interpreting assessment. As a type of language test, the design of interpreting tests does not fully meet the basic requirements and reasonable procedure of language testing. The author further reviews ITAs and their validation studies from 2006 to 2022.

In recent years, more ITAs using analytical rating scales have been validated by using various 'psychometric approaches' such as the classical generalisability theory, and many-facet Rasch analysis (for comparison, see: Han, 2021, p. 106) to achieve valid test results. Tiselius (2009) employed Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient r to measure the inter-rater reliability by calculating the pair-wise correlation among raters as a pilot study of simultaneous interpreting. Wu (2010) used Cronbach's alpha to verify the scale reliability for a simulated examination of simultaneous interpreting. Han (2016) validated the score dependability for rater-mediated simultaneous interpreting based on generalisability theory (Brennan, 2001). Notably, the application of the many-facet Rasch measurement/model (MFRM) (Linacre, 1989) appears to be a relatively recent tendency in evaluating the validity of ITA. Validation using MFRM in interpreting studies has become more popular since the preliminary attempt by Clifford (2004), who investigated the construct validity of two interpreter certification tests using both quantitative and qualitative analytical methods based on psychometric principles. This study identified the 'low' validity of the testing practices (lower than the acceptable level) and pointed out the limitations of existing validation methodologies, providing implications for future validation studies to collect diversified evidence for assessing the reliability of different components of ITA in a more comprehensive and systematic manner.

Based on the review, this study adopted MFRM, given its unique advantages and increasing applications in validating the ITA (Linacre, 2010; Han, 2021), to validate a consecutive interpreting test from four aspects: rating scale, raters, examinees and interpreting tasks.

The analytic rating scale of this study

Investigating the most widely used analytic rating scales including the ones by the Service Commun Interprétation-Conférences (SCIC) and over ten major translation and interpreting universities, including the Ecole de traduction et d'interprétation, Université de Genève, the author found "accuracy and completeness of the content" often serves as the primary factor in evaluating the interpreting performance, followed by "target language delivery", and "interpreting skills and manners".

The National Interpretation Competition (The National Interpreting Competition Committee, 2015) initiated by the Translators Association of China (TAC) adopts a rating scale in which each assessment factor is weighted according to the ratio of accuracy and completeness of the content (50%), target language delivery (30%) and interpreting skills and manners (20%). On this basis, an adapted analytic rating scale (see Table 3) is used in the current research. The assessment items such as "posture" and "stage presence" in the rating sub-scale of "interpreting skills and manners" are deleted as appropriate because raters grade interpreters by listening to their interpretation recordings rather than assessing onsite in this study. The weighting of this sub-scale has also been reduced to 10%, giving 60% weighting to "accuracy and completeness of the content". This is because the analytical scale would mainly be used for training purposes. In addition, the "accuracy and completeness of the content" in the rating scale was mainly calculated according to the rate of correctness of critical sentences.

In this study, to assess consecutive interpreting competence, 68 interpreting stream examinees who have received more than half a year's interpreting training at a university are tested with an analytic rating scale that has been somewhat modified. After the raters have finished the first assessment, the second assessment and the final assessment, the author uses the MFRM to validate and analyse the bias of the four main aspects that affect the test results: rating scale, raters, examinees and tasks (English-Chinese interpreting, Chinese-English interpreting).

TABLE 1 Main studies on interpretation assessment before 2006 [excerpt from: Yeh and Liu (2006)].

Author/Subject	Assessment	Rating
Gerver (1969) The Influence of Speaking Speed on the Performance of Simultaneous Interpretation	1. The method is unclear, but the rating shall be done by the human (authors or reviewers) in accordance with the rating sheet; and 2. The number of words in an interpreter's pair is counted.	Picking mistakes is used, and the mistakes are classified as follows: 1. Omission of single words; 2. Omission of phrases; 3. Omission of fragments (of eight or more words); 4. Replacement of single word; 5. Replacement of phrases; 6. Revision of single word; 7. Revision of phrases.
Gerver (1974) The Influence of Noise on the Fidelity of Simultaneous Interpretation	In two stages: (1) The percentage of correct, omission, incorrect translation and correction is counted. (2) Two reviewers give marks according to Carroll's (1966) rating scale.	1. Stage I: Unknown. Gerver does not provide an explanation for each sub-scale. 2. Stage II: Carroll's "Fluency" and "Fidelity" rating scale.
Roberts (1995) Certification Mechanism for Community Interpreters	1. Tasks include sight interpretation and short step-by-step interpretation. 2. Text is selected or designed to cover general socio-cultural situations. 3. Authentic documents are used as far as possible for sight interpretation, and short step-by-step interpretation is designed by the "user organization"... 4... short step-by-step items are recorded in advance, and sufficient pauses are inserted between sentences for translation.	1. Dividing the text by its "meaning units" and numbering the "main meaning units". The importance of each meaning unit is marked in the dialogue text. 2. Marks are given based on "information completeness" and "linguistic proficiency. ..."
Gile (1995) Evaluation of Fidelity in Consecutive Interpretation	1. First-year postgraduate interpretation students act as reviewers, using a rating scale. 2. One person acts as the speaker, one as the interpreter. The reviewers give marks while listening to both the original and translated texts, and record errors. 3. Analyse the speakers and the reviewers, give marks, and single out errors.	1. Marks are given on "fidelity" according to the rating scale. ... The rater shall record the omission or distortion of information and additions made by the interpreter (s).
Lee T. (1999) Lee T. H. (1999) Lee (2002) Factors Affecting the Quality in Simultaneous Interpretation	Taking fidelity as the only criterion.	1. 1999a: A rating scale of up to seven points is used, and the method of assessment is "correspondence of words"... 2. 1999b: Two methods are used to assess fidelity: (1) the original text is divided into meaning units, and then compared with the translation; (2) "correspondence of words". 3. 2002: The method of assessment of fidelity is not specified, but it is most likely to be "correspondence of words".

Research methods

Examinees

The examinees of this study are 68 third-year English majors who have received half a year's consecutive interpreting training in a university.

Experimental materials

To keep the testing conditions as authentic as possible, the consecutive interpreting tests were designed following these steps: selecting interpretation materials and generating test audios; allocating preparation materials to interpreters; assessing the difficulty level of interpretation materials; conducting the trial test and finally the formal test.

TABLE 2 Main studies on interpretation assessment (2006–2022).

Author/Subject	Assessment	Rating
Tiselius (2009) Revisiting Carroll's scales	1. Assessment: a ten-minute simultaneous interpreting task (English-to-Swedish). 2. Operation: twelve trained interpreters (half of them are professional) are asked to score the conference interpreting performance of nine interpreters with long (exceeding twenty years), short (less than two years), or no interpreting work experience. * This is a pilot study for evaluating simultaneous interpreting assessments.	The interpretation is recorded and transcribed for grading. Rating: raters (professional interpreting trainers vs. student translators without interpreting experience) are grouped into two by their professional experience and are instructed to score each interpreter respectively based on the "adapted" Carroll's (1966) machine-translation rating scale. * The adapted rating scale consists of six grades, focusing on two categories: "informativeness" and "intelligibility".
Wu (2010) Assessing simultaneous interpreting: a study on test reliability and examiners' assessment behaviour	1. Assessment: an examination simulation of a three-minute simultaneous interpreting (English-to-Chinese). 2. Operation: in the main study, thirty examiners of different levels of professional background are recruited to evaluate the performance of five postgraduate students who have received at least six months of simultaneous interpreting training. After the examination simulation, examiners are asked to give an overall mark to individual students by comparing their interpreting audio recordings in pairs (ten pairs in total). * This is a doctoral study, involving a pilot and the main study.	Qualitative data are acquired from the examiners' verbal comments on the interpreting performance of students. Quantitative data are collected from the examiners' paired comparisons and overall rankings of the interpreting performance. Rating: examiners assess the students' interpreting performance based on three Thurstone scales indicating the interpreting proficiency (from the left to the right of scales: better performance to worse performance). * Thurstone scaling is a method to measure the stimuli rather than the people (i.e., the Likert scale). In the study of Wu (2010), the stimuli are the interpreting performance judged by raters. By measuring the stimuli from the Thurstone scaling, Wu (2010) intends to monitor the consistency of raters.
Wu et al. (2013) Analytic scoring in an interpretation test: Construct validity and the halo effect	1. Assessment: long and short consecutive interpreting texts (English-to-Chinese). 2. Operation: six trained CETICE raters evaluate the performance of interpreters based on selected interpreting samples from the actual CETICE in 2010. * CETICE (the Chinese and English Translation and Interpretation Competency Examinations) is an annual interpreter certification examination in Taiwan.	The interpreting data are taken from the real interpreting recordings of the CETICE in 2010. Rating: two analytic rating scales are applied, focusing on "fidelity" or "delivery" under two scoring conditions: 1. Condition 1: raters evaluate the interpreting performance in terms of either fidelity or delivery. 2. Condition 2: raters evaluate the interpreting performance in terms of both fidelity and delivery.
Han (2015) Investigating rater severity/leniency in interpreter performance testing: A multifaceted Rasch measurement approach Han (2016) (re-analysing the 2015 assessment by G-theory) Investigating Score Dependability in English/Chinese Interpreter Certification Performance Testing: A Generalisability Theory Approach	1. Assessment: simultaneous interpreting (English-to-Chinese). 2. Operation: nine trained raters are instructed to assess the interpretations of 32 interpreters. Each rater evaluates every interpreter in each interpreting task. * Four interpreting materials are used. The rating scale comprises three criteria.	Rating: raters evaluate interpreters using a rubric-based rating scale with three eight-point sub-scales, concentrating on "information completeness", "fluency of delivery", and the "target language delivery".

(Continued)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Author/Subject	Assessment	Rating
Han (2017) Using analytic rating scales to assess English – Chinese bi-directional interpreting: A longitudinal Rasch analysis of scale utility and rater behaviour	1. Assessment: six bi-directional consecutive interpreting tasks for each assessment (Chinese-to-English and English-to-Chinese: three tasks for each direction). 2. Operation: six trained raters of different professional background are invited to assess the interpreting performance of 38 undergraduate students who major in English-Chinese Translation. * This is a longitudinal study that is conducted through three performance assessments with six tasks each time over the course period (i.e., the fourth, ninth, and tenth week).	All the interpreting performances are audio-recorded, generating 228 recordings overall. Rating: the evaluation scales are revised based on three rating criteria by Han (2015), highlighting "information", "fluency", and the "expression". Each revised scale is simplified to a four-band scale. * A fully crossed measurement design is implemented, meaning that every rater evaluates all instances of interpreting in each assessment using the three scales.
Modarresi (2019) A Rasch-based validation of the evaluation rubric for interpretation performance	1. Assessment: a five-minute consecutive interpreting task (English-to-Persian). 2. Operation: 20 interpreting experts are invited to evaluate the on-site interpreting performance of 105 undergraduate students who major in Translation with similar language proficiency based on a newly designed evaluation rubric for consecutive interpreting assessments. * The evaluation rubric is developed from the interpreting evaluation checklist that is suggested by 155 interpreting teachers through questionnaires and interviews. "Fluency" is a determining factor for the evaluation as displayed by the questionnaire.	Students are required to consecutively interpret an English monologue speech in class. Rating: each student receives a score from two raters. Grading is based on a Likert-type rating scale with four levels. The scale is generated from the validated evaluation checklist consisting of 25 valid and reliable evaluation items. * The researcher confirms a 25-item evaluation rubric based on the feedback of 155 interpreting trainers and developed a Likert-type scale with four levels of achievement, including superior (highest level of performance), advanced, fair, and poor (lowest level of performance) ranging from score 4 to 1.
Han et al. (2021) Assessing the fidelity of consecutive interpreting: The effects of using source verses target text as the reference material	1. Assessment: a 2.5 minute consecutive interpreting assessment (English-to-Chinese). 2. Operation: 20 trained student raters evaluate 33 selected audio-recorded interpretations generated from a previous consecutive interpreting assessment targeting undergraduate and postgraduate students. Raters are divided into two groups (i.e., two conditions) to assess the same interpretations either relying on the source text or using an exemplar rendition of the target text. * This is a repeated-measure design. The two groups of raters switch to assess the same batch of interpretations after a three-week interval.	Rating: raters are instructed to assess the interpreting performance under two conditions, concentrating on "fidelity" (i.e., the informational correspondence between the source text and the interpreted renditions). A four-level eight-point rating scale is adopted. * The exemplar rendition is produced, modified, and discussed by professional interpreters, trainers, and students.

Selecting assessment materials and generating the test audio

To assess the interpreting competence, the design of interpreting tasks should have substantial content and progress logically, so that the test results can accurately reflect the interpreters' competence in different test periods. The test of consecutive interpreting competence in this study includes two tasks, English-Chinese interpreting and Chinese-English interpreting. The materials are selected from real conference recordings (8 minutes for each). The speakers have clear pronunciation and speak at a moderate speed with the fundamental frequency ranging between 500 and 4000 Hz. The content of the speech does not contain jargon and the information intensity is relatively balanced. The audio is segmented by meaning units, leaving enough time for the examinees to interpret. The speeches, prompts and instructions are generated by using *TextAloud 4.0*. *Adobe Audition 23.0* is used to complete the editing and segmentation of speeches.

Allocating preparation materials to interpreters

To simulate the conference agenda and interpreting materials in real-life settings, the preparation materials that are administered to interpreters in this study include: (a) glossary (including new words, proper nouns, names of institutions and projects, etc.); (b) a conference agenda; (c) background information including conference topic and speakers. The validity of the test may be reduced if the preparation materials

TABLE 3 Analytic rating scale for interpreting test (Adapted from the rating scale of the TAC national interpreting competition).

Sub-scales for Rating	Excellent (90–100)	Good (80–89)	Medium (70–79)	Pass (60–69)	Fail (scores of 59 and below)
Accuracy and completeness of the content (50%)	The information in the source language is fully communicated, and the tone and style are completely consistent with those in the speaker's source language.	Except for a few minor omissions, the important information in the source language is fully conveyed and the tone and style are basically consistent with those in the speaker's source language.	There are a small number of omissions and errors in translation. The accuracy is general, but the main information in the source language can be basically conveyed.	There are a few major omissions and errors in translation, part of the information is ambiguous, but in its entirety the meaning can be basically conveyed.	Omissions and errors in translation are very serious, and the main information is not conveyed, or the information and meaning of the source language is misinterpreted or distorted.
Target language delivery (30%)	The language conforms to the target language specification, the wording is appropriate, the expression is fluent.	The language is more standard, there are no grammatical errors, the expression is relatively fluent.	The language has slight grammatical errors, the expression is more rigid, and there are only a few cases of non-fluent expression.	The expression in the target language is stiff, which does not conform to the expression habits of the target language, the expression is not fluent.	There are a lot of grammatical and wording errors, the expression is copied mechanically, affecting the transmission of the meaning.
Interpreting skills and manners (20%)	The interpreting skills are proficient, showing the psychological quality or the manner of a professional interpreter.	The examinee can handle interpreting skills consciously. The manner is relatively stable, with the potential to be a professional interpreter.	Using basic interpreting skills, the examinee can interpret in an unnatural but good way.	The examinee can barely complete the interpretation, with no major mistakes.	The interpretation shows little skills, poor manners, nervousness, and/or stage fright.

are given to students too early. Therefore, before the test all interpreters receive the preparation materials half an hour which is sufficient for them to finish preparing.

Assessing the difficulty level of interpretation materials

To ensure that the interpretation materials are suitable for this test and of moderate difficulty, the author develops and uses a 5-point Likert-type expert scale and an interpreter scale. Five experienced interpreting trainers from a university's advanced institute of translation filled in the expert scale. In the pilot test, 20 student interpreters randomly generated from the same cohort with the same amount of training as the examinees did completed the interpretation test and then filled in the interpreter scale. The results of the two scales show that the speech difficulty is moderate. According to the suggestions in the open-ended responses in the interpreter scale, the author further revises the pre-task preparation materials by providing two more key terminologies and the duration of the source speeches on the agenda.

Trial test

The language and interpretation proficiencies of the 20 examinees in the pilot test and the ones in the study are quite similar. Based on feedback in the pilot test, the author of this study adjusts the time intervals of speech segments and further revises the pre-task preparation materials.

Formal test

Two examiners attend the formal test and operate following "Test Instructions" step by step. The examinees use headphones to complete the interpretation task. The test time is 25 minutes for each task.

Rating

Rating of the test includes three steps: rater training, formal rating and grade transformation of the rating results.

TABLE 4 Comparison of the grade transformation of the rating results.

Grade	Accuracy and completeness of the content (50%)	Target language delivery (30%)	Interpreting skills and manners (20%)
10	55–60	28–30	10
9	49–54	25–27	9
8	43–48	22–24	8
7	37–42	19–21	7
6	31–36	16–18	6
5	25–30	13–15	5
4	19–24	10–12	4
3	13–18	7–9	3
2	7–12	4–6	2
1	0–6	0–3	1

Rater training and rating

The two main raters are both experienced interpreting trainers of a university with rich rating experience and have interpreted for more than 100 conferences. The raters and the author discuss specific sentences of the rating scale to confirm rating criteria. The two raters first grade the test recordings of five examinees, then compare and discuss the grade results to find out the reasons for big differences in individual scores and come to an appropriate rating standard. After the training, the raters formally grade the two-way interpretation of 68 examinees independently within a given period. The rating process includes preliminary evaluation, re-evaluation and final confirmation. In case of significant differences, the final scores are double-checked by a third rater who has the same qualifications as the first two raters.

Transformation of the rating results

After the formal rating, the author collects and organises the data. Prior to the verification by the MFRM analysis, the results derived from three rating sub-scales are classified into 10 grades by referring to the approach by Carroll (1966) to avoid insignificant subjective differences. Next, the grades are converted according to the data entry characteristics of the MFRM (see Table 4).

Construction of the many-facet Rasch model and conceptual interpretation

In this study, the MFRM is used to test the validity and analyse the bias of the four main aspects that affect the validity of interpretation tests: rating scale, raters, examinees and tasks (English-Chinese interpreting and Chinese-English interpreting). The model measures each aspect on a common logit scale, calculates the estimation error of each measure, determines the degree of fit to the model and the possible interaction between each aspect. To test the validity of the analytic rating scale in response to the research questions, the author establishes an analysis model:

$$Log(P_{\mathrm{nijk}}/P_{\mathrm{nijk-1}}) = B_{\mathrm{n}} - C_{\mathrm{j}} - D_{\mathrm{i}} - F_{\mathrm{k}}$$

Where P_{nijk} denotes the probability that j, a rater, will give n, an examinee, a score of level k on the scale i, P_{nijk-1} denotes the probability that j will give n a score of level k-1 on the scale i, B_n denotes the ability of n, C_j denotes the strictness of the rating by j, D_i denotes the degree of difficulty of the sub-scale i, and F_k denotes the degree of difficulty of obtaining a score of level k on the scale i.

The MFRM results include the following concepts.

Measure

The numerical value of the examinees in each aspect on a common scale. Using the FACETS, a common programme to perform the MFRM analysis, to transform the measure of each individual in all aspects into a unified measure in logit units, which allows multiple variables or facets of a test to be analysed (Li and Kong, 2010). Based on the four dimensions, the strictness of raters, the competence (score) of examinees, the difficulty of the two interpreting tasks (E–C, C–E) and the utilisation of each dimension in the rating scale can be visually represented on the general level diagram.

Fit statistics

The degree of fit between actual observations and model predictions for individuals at each level. The fitted statistics are divided into the weighted mean square fitted statistics and the unweighted mean square fitted statistics. The latter is typically used as the basis for determining whether an individual might fit a model, as it is more susceptible to large individually discrepant data (Li and Kong, 2010). A fit between 0.5 and 1.5 is within the acceptable range (Weigle, 1998; Linacre, 2010), and a fit between 0.7 and 1.3 is highly correlated (Bonk and Ockey, 2003). Fit value = 1 indicates that the data is fully consistent with model prediction; fit value > 1 indicates that there is a random deviation in the data and model and is "not a fit"; while fit value < 1 indicates that the difference between the data is smaller than what is predicted by the model and is "an overfit". Fit statistics are usually judged in combination with Z value. Z > 2 is a significant non-fit, and Z < −2 is an overfit. In Rasch model analysis, fewer non-fits support a higher validity of the rating scale (Wright and Masters, 1982). The MFRM provides two fit indices (infit and outfit mean squares) for each element of every facet. Both fit indices manifest the degree of match between observed scores and "expected" scores as indicated by the Rasch model.

Separation and reliability

The degree of significant differences between individuals. For the competence of the examinees, the larger the value of separation coefficient and reliability, the stronger the discriminative power of the test is; for raters, the larger the value of separation coefficient and reliability, the greater the difference between raters and the lower the consistency of rating. The author uses Chi-square Statistics (χ^2) to test whether the separation coefficient is significant. If $p < 0.05$, it indicates that there are statistically significant differences between individuals at that level.

Bias

The degree of deviation of the actual scores from the model predictions. The proportion of significant deviations to all sub-scales is within the acceptable range of about 5% (McNamara, 1996).

Results and discussion

The statistical software used in this study is Rasch model analysis software FACETS 3.67.1 (Linacre, 2010). Set forth below are 4 aspects of the statistical analysis results and discussions of this interpretation test.

General analysis

Figure 1 shows the general situations of the interpretation test with respect to the four levels of rating scales, raters, examinees and tasks.

The general level diagram consists of six columns, from left to right, including: (1) logit scale, (2) relative strictness of rater, (3) two-direction interpreting competence of examinees (each examinee is represented by a "*"), (4) difficulty of the task, (5) sub-scales of the rating scale and (6) grades of each segment on the rating scale. The statistical values of each level are represented by logit values (logits: the units of measurement). From the four levels of the rating scale, raters, examinees and tasks, Figure 1 illustrates: (i) Among the sub-scales of the rating scale, the result of the sub-scale "interpreting skills and manners" is 1.93 logits, indicating that the rater is more strict in evaluating this sub-scale and it is more difficult for examinees to get high scores in this sub-scale, while the rater strictness of the sub-scales "target language delivery" and "accuracy and completeness of the content" is consistent. (ii) The rater strictness is basically consistent, and the rating of rater No. 2 (0.51 logit) is slightly stricter than that of rater No. 1 (0.28 logit). But the difference between the two raters is only 0.23 logit and distributed between 0 and 1 logit, indicating that the raters' internal consistency is high. (iii) The distribution span of the competence of examinees is wide (7.6 logits), indicating that the 68 examinees have different competences, and this rating scale can effectively reflect and distinguish the examinees' interpreting competence. (iv) The difficulty of the task is basically consistent, but for the subjects, interpreting from Chinese to English (C-E) is slightly more difficult than interpreting from English to Chinese (E-C).

Multi-level analysis

Further detailed analysis is made in the following four levels: rating scale, rater, examinee and task.

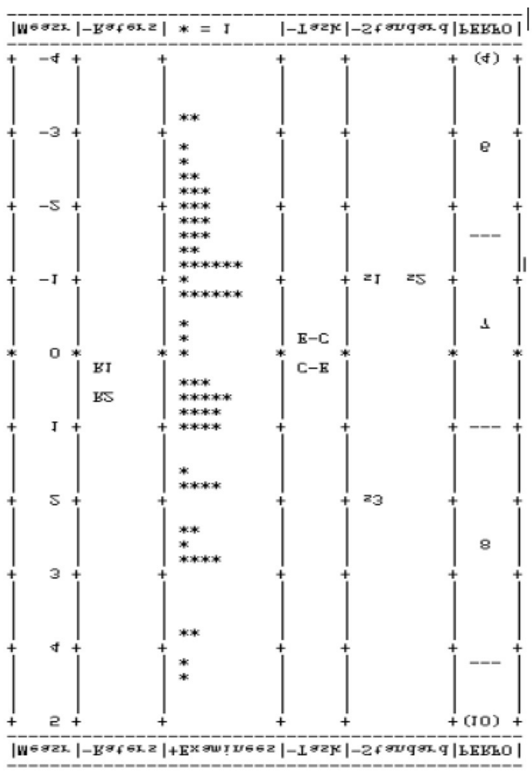

FIGURE 1
General distribution of testing results (Measure, logit scale; Raters, relative strictness of raters; *, two-direction interpretation competence of the examinees; Task, diculty of the task; Standard, sub-scales of the rating scale; PERFO, grades of each range on the rating scale).

Rating scale

The results of the rating scale level analysis show that the parting coefficient is 13.83 and the parting reliability is 0.99 $[X^2(2) = 601.9, p < 0.001]$.

The results show a significant difference between the difficulty values of the sub-scales of the analytic rating scale. The tests of fit showed that the Infit Mean Square values were 0.95, 1.00, and 1.02, respectively, which met the required range of fit. The logit value showed that raters were still strict on sub-scale 3 of the rating scale, and it was difficult for the examinees to get high scores on this sub-scale. Although the difference was not large, sub-scale 3 of the rating scale might still have an impact on the rating validity, which will be examined and analysed in detail in the part of bias analysis (Table 5).

Raters

The results of rater level analysis show that the parting coefficient is 0.98, the parting reliability is 0.49 $[X^2(1) = 3.9, p = 0.05]$ (Table 6).

The tests of fit show that the Infit Mean Square values of the two raters are 0.96 and 1.02, respectively, and no non-fitting and overfitting phenomena occur. It shows that the inter-rater consistency and inter-rater stability were good, and the rating of the rater was credible.

Examinees

The results of examinee level analysis show that the parting coefficient is 3.90 and the parting reliability is 0.94 $[X^2(67) = 1110.8, p < 0.001)$ (Table 7).

The results showed that there were significant differences in the interpreting competence of the 68 examinees. As shown in row three of Figure 1, the examinee level is in a relatively neat normal distribution. This means that the interpreting test can distinguish the interpreting competence of the cohort. The tests of fit showed that among the 68 examinees, there were 3 cases with $Z > 2$ (significant non-fitting) and 3 cases with $Z < -2$ (significant over-fitting), but the average value of fit was 1.00, which was in full accordance with the model prediction.

Tasks

The results of task level analysis show that the logit values of the two tasks were -0.11 and 0.11 and the parting coefficient was 0.86, the parting reliability was 0.43 $[X^2(1) = 3.5, p > 0.05]$ (Table 8).

The results show that, for the examinees, there was no significant difference in the difficulty of the two tasks. The logit value of C-E was 0.22 higher than that of E-C, which showed that for the examinees, the task of C-E was slightly more difficult than E-C. After interviewing the teachers of interpreting courses, the author found that the examinees practise E-C interpreting more than C-E interpreting. Therefore, the reason for the difference in task difficulty may be that the students' E-C interpreting competence is better than C-E interpreting competence, or it may be affected by the limitation of the examinees' ability of L2 production. The fitted values of the two tasks were 1.03 and 0.95, which were still highly fitted. The Z values were 0.4 and -0.6, respectively, which showed no non-fitting phenomenon.

Bias

Although *t*-test and ANOVA can indicate differences in rating strictness among raters, they cannot show the interactions among raters, examinees and the rating scale, while the MFRM can provide information of interactions and locate specific problems (Liu, 2005). In this study, the author conducted the bias analysis among rating scales, raters, examinees and tasks was analysed using the MFRM model to investigate the interactions among them and find out the specific factors that affect the validity of the test results.

Among a total of 816 interaction combinations generated by 68 examinees (interpreters), two raters, two interpreting tasks, and three rating criteria, only 17 contained significant biases, accounting for 2% of the total. Among them, there were three significant biases for the interaction between raters and examinees and two significant biases for the interaction between raters and the rating scale. It is generally considered that any combination with a significant bias within 5% is acceptable (McNamara, 1996). In the rating scale, the bias mainly existed in the third sub-scale (interpreting skills and manners) of the analytic rating scale. After interviewing the raters, the author found that there were still differences in the understanding of the third sub-scale among the raters who had been trained. In fact, no matter how rigorous the rater training was, there were always differences, but to different extents. Raters' professional background (e.g., rater training) is found to affect the rater consistency (Bonk and Ockey, 2003). The goal of rater training is to minimise the differences to an acceptable range and ensure the validity of the test. In view of this, the description of the third sub-scale (i.e., interpreting skills and manners) should be further defined and explained in future studies, so that raters can better understand and judge it.

Summary

The author analysed the validity and bias of four aspects of an interpreting assessment: rating scale, raters, examinees and tasks using the MFRM and found that the consecutive interpretation test was valid. First, the inter-rater consistency and inter-rater stability were good, and the rating of the rater was credible. Second, there were significant differences in the interpreting ability of the 68 examinees, meaning that the test can reflect and reasonably distinguish the examinees'

TABLE 5 Results of rating scale level analysis.

Standard	Measure	Model S.E.	Infit MnSq	ZStd	Estim. Discrm
s3	1.93	0.09	1.02	2	0.99
s1	−0.93	0.10	0.95	−0.5	1.05
s2	−1.00	0.10	1.00	0.0	1.00
Mean	0.00	0.10	0.99	−0.1	
S.D.	1.37	0.00	0.03	0.3	

Separation: 13.83; Reliability: 0.99; Fixed chi-square: 601.9; d.f.: 2; Significance: 0.00.

TABLE 6 Results of rater level analysis.

Rater	Measure	Model S.E.	Infit MnSq	ZStd	Estim. Discrm
R2	0.51	0.08	1.02	0.3	0.97
R1	0.28	0.08	0.96	−0.5	1.05
Mean	0.40	0.08	0.99	−0.1	
S.D.	0.11	0.00	0.03	0.4	

Separation: 0.98; Reliability: 0.49; Fixed chi-square: 3.9; d.f.: 1; Significance: 0.05.

TABLE 7 Results of examinee level analysis.

Obsvd Score	Obsvd Coun	Obsvd Avge	Fair-M Avge	Measure	Model S.E.	Infit MnSq	ZStd	
83.0	12.0	6.9	6.93	0.00	0.47	1.00	−0.1	Mean
8.4	0.0	0.7	0.70	1.90	0.03	0.67	1.3	S.D.

Separation: 3.90; Reliability: 0.94; Fixed chi-square: 1110.8; d.f.: 67; Significance: 0.00.

TABLE 8 Results of task level analysis.

Task	Measure	Model S.E.	Infit MnSq	ZStd	Estim.Discrm
C-E	0.11	0.08	0.95	−0.6	1.04
E-C	−0.11	0.08	1.03	0.4	0.99
Mean	0.00	0.08	0.99	−0.1	
S.D.	0.11	0.00	0.04	0.6	

Separation: 0.86; Reliability: 0.43; Fixed chi-square: 3.5; d.f.: 1; Significance: 0.06.

interpreting competence. Third, there was no significant difference in the difficulty of the two tasks. The logit value of C-E was higher than that of E-C, meaning that for the examinees, the task of C-E was more difficult than E-C. Trainer interview showed that the examinees received more training on E-C than C-E interpreting. Therefore, future training could be more balanced by increasing the input of C-E interpreting skills and amount of practice. Further improvements can be made to improve the third sub-scale of rating. The logit value showed that raters were strict on sub-scale 3 “interpreting skills and manners” of the rating scale, and it was difficult for the examinees to get high scores on this sub-scale. This means this sub-scale still has problems that impact the validity of the test. Trainers may continue to improve this sub-scale by providing clearer definition (e.g., on “manner”) and more specific details for raters to distinguish the different levels of competence on “interpreting skills and manners”.

In previous validation studies, Messick (1995, 1996) divided validity (constructional validity) into 6 main aspects: content validity, authenticity validity, construct validity, summary validity, external validity and result validity. Based on previous studies, Weir (2005) divided validity into five classes: theory-based validity, contextual validity, rating validity (reliability), criterion-related validity and result validity. Thus, it can be seen that the validation of ITA has many aspects, which is an ongoing process that is related to the degree of validity.

How to determine and control the main factors that affect the validity in interpreting test design to ensure that the test can reflect and distinguish the competence of examinees effectively? First, in terms of content, the interpreting assessment materials could be revised based on the real-life interpreting settings. Selected materials should match the learning progress of student interpreters and can accurately manifest their interpreting competence in different learning stages. Han (2022) systematically classified the leading ITA practices into three domains according to different practical purposes: education and training, accreditation and certification, and empirical research. Second, in terms of the rating scale and rating process, this study used the MFRM to verify the applicability and validity of the criteria in a consecutive interpreting test. In addition, rater training can help different raters unify their understanding of the rules of the rating scale, improve rater consistency and minimise rater effect, so as to improve the validity of the test results. Third, in terms of test results analysis, the MFRM effectively separates the various factors that affect the test validity, such as the four facets in this study: the rating scale, raters, examinees and interpreting tasks, as well as parameterises the degree of these facets to show the valid range of the test and discover the specific factors that affect the validity.

In summary, verifying the validity and reliability of the major facets of ITA ensures the utility/effectiveness of the interpreting test, regardless of its purposes or application domains. The MFRM allows researchers to collate multiple variables (i.e., aspects/facets) of the assessment in a common equal-interval metric (i.e., logit) for overall analysis. The MFRM calibrates all variables on the same scale so that researchers can compare different facets involved in an assessment directly. Facets can influence the performance of the stakeholders of ITA, such as test takers, examiners and raters (Bond and Fox, 2012). As per the ITA studies over the past two decades, as profiled in Table 2, the MFRM is commonly applied to estimate the rater reliability and other aspects either in the educational setting or within the credential context. Therefore, the MFRM may be considered for validating test results and rating scales in future interpretation tests. Results and findings identified in this paper may be conducive to improving the rating scale of the ITA and to improving the overall validity of the test and the quality of interpreting teaching.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Ethical approval was not provided for this study on human participants because student interpreters from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies signed an agreement in participating this research. All data is treated as anonymous and for research purpose only. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2022.1047389/full#supplementary-material

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A pilot study on the availability and reception of audio description in the Chinese mainland

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Introduction: Audio description (AD) is in its infancy in the Chinese mainland, both in terms of the provision of the service and as an academic object of study. In order to learn about the availability of AD and target audiences' reception of existing AD services in the Chinese mainland, we designed and carried out this study.

Methods: This paper first provides a brief overview of the availability of AD in the Chinese mainland and analyses difficulties encountered in its development. Then, it conducts a face-to-face questionnaire-based study on the reception of AD through a survey of 26 visually impaired persons.

Results and discussion: AD service in the Chinese mainland is only limited to movies and there is a big gap between supply and demand. AD practice is facing many difficulties such as copyright constraints, low quality of AD services, lack of professionals and insufficient theoretical research. Our empirical research shows that the participants are quite satisfied with the quality of existing AD services, although they do not have a high level of comprehension of movies. Over interpretation, revealing the plot, subjective speculations are common practices in AD services in the Chinese mainland but are applauded by the participants for which helps them to understand the film.

KEYWORDS

audio description, availability, reception, visually impaired, the Chinese mainland

1. Introduction

China is the country with the highest number of citizens with disabilities in the world. According to the data released by the China Disabled Persons' Federation, the total number of persons with disabilities in China was 85.02 million at the end of 2010, of which 12.63 million were people with visual impairments (CDPF, 2012). Currently, there is no official update on the data of persons with disabilities, but it is safe to conclude that with the natural population growth and the increase of the elderly in Chinese mainland, the number of the visually impaired is increasing, for sight loss is closely related to old age. "Vision impairment in the elderly has increasingly become a global public health and social problem. With the full arrival of China's aging population, the number and proportion of the elderly population with blindness or low vision problems will continue to increase" (Lu and Wang, 2018). "In the past 20 years (from 2000 to 2020), the elderly population has increased by 103.15% in the Chinese mainland" (Zhang and Yang, 2023).

It is quite inconvenient for people with visual disabilities to go out in the Chinese mainland, therefore television, mobile phones and computers have become the most important means for them to obtain information and participate in cultural activities. It is reported that "among the surveyed visually impaired, 30% of the visually impaired people stayed at home because of their vision limitations; 46% needed to be accompanied by family member or friends when they went out, and only 24% were able to go out without being accompanied" (CAPA, 2016).

Although China has achieved certain achievements in the construction of information accessibility for the visually impaired groups, the fact remains that the blind and partially sighted are not anywhere near their sighted counterparts when it comes to the access to information, especially to the audio-visual media. The government has not made specific regulations on the AD in the film and television industry (Yan and Luo, 2019). The needs of the visually impaired for TV are still ignored and there is not any AD service in TV programs. The public has low awareness of the visually impaired people and AD services. Wu and Xie (2015) conducted a questionnaire survey on the public awareness of the visually impaired people and the awareness of AD services in China. Only 20.62% of the respondents said they had concerns about the visually impaired, while 88.75% of the respondents said they did not have any idea about AD services.

In order to provide an overview picture of AD services in the Chinese mainland and to survey the audience's reception of AD services, this paper first gives a brief overview of the practice of AD in the Chinese mainland and analyses difficulties encountered in its development. Then, it conducts a face-to-face questionnaire-based study on the reception of AD. It should be noted that the AD services in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau are different, and the AD services described in this article do not include that in the above regions.

2. Audio description in the Chinese mainland

The practice of AD in the Chinese mainland started in the early 21st century and has made some achievements, but at the same time the development is facing many difficulties. This section reviews the history and current state of AD practice in the Chinese mainland and analyzes difficulties encountered in its development.

2.1. Practice of audio description in the Chinese mainland

The practice of AD has a long history worldwide. The first appearance of AD can be traced to the early decades of the last century. As Fryer (2016) reported, recent research in the RNIB archives unveiled that in 1917, British soldiers blinded during World War One were offered a verbal account of a documentary film about Scott's expedition to the Antarctic region and that experiments with descriptions of theater performances had already been done. Orero (2007) stated that the first audio-described films in Spain had appeared in the mid-1940s, even before Spanish public television began its broadcast. In the USA, the broadcasting station WGBH in Boston started its descriptive video service in 1987 (Fryer, 2016). Di Giovanni (2018) introduced that audio-described TV programs began to flourish worldwide in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The origin of AD practice in the Chinese mainland can be traced to the "self-entertainment" of some blinds in 2003. They tried to give a simple description of films in the online classroom run by the Chinese Braille Press, which was applauded by other blind persons (Duanmu, 2013). Scaled and organized AD services were initially provided by Beijing Hongdandan Education and Cultural Exchange Center (Fu, 2014). In May 2005, Wang Weili, the founder of Beijing Hongdandan Education and Cultural Exchange Center, established the Chinese mainland's first cinema for the blind in Gulou West Street, Beijing. It was named "Mind Cinema" and was dedicated to providing AD services for the visually impaired. "In the past 14 years, 'Mind Cinema' has provided nearly 800 films for the blind in Beijing, more than 20,000 blind persons benefited and more than 7,000 volunteers participated (Qianlong News, 2018)."

On April 23, 2009, the first DVD version of the AD film *Turning Point 1977* premiered at the Shanghai Library. On the same day, Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation, Shanghai Library, and Shanghai Film Critics Association jointly established the nation's first accessible film studio. Marked by the premiere of the accessible film *Turning Point 1977* and the establishment of the accessible film studio, China's accessible film industry started officially (Pan and Li, 2013).

Up to now, AD services in the Chinese mainland are still only limited to films and there are mainly three types of projects of AD practice: (1) government projects; (2) non-profit organization projects; and (3) training projects;

1) Government projects are supported by the government and carried out by relevant professional institutions. The participating government agencies are Disabled Persons Federation, Radio and Television Administration, Administration of Press and Publication, Department of Culture and Copyright Administration. The participating professional organizations are radio and television stations, audiovisual publishers and public libraries. The China Accessible Film Project is a typical government project. The project, funded by the National Publishing Fund and undertaken by China Braille Press and Shanghai Audio-Visual Publishing House, aims to provide AD for the visually impaired, as well as subtitles and sign language interpretation for the hearing impaired. By the end of 2019, the project had published 440 accessible movies, which were donated or sold to public libraries, disabled federations and special schools. The relevant institutions then provide borrowing or viewing services to the visually impaired for free.
2) Non-profit organization project. There are some projects run by non-profit organizations, such as "Mind Cinema Project." As mentioned above, the project, run by the non-profit organization Beijing Hongdandan Education and Cultural Exchange Center, provides live AD services as well as recorded AD products services. The live AD service has been extended to more than 20 cities across the country, and the AD products have covered 101 blind schools nationwide, allowing blind students at school to watch AD movies regularly. Its AD products are also distributed to the visually impaired nationwide by DVD, radio, and internet.
3) Training projects. Audio describers are crucial to providing this accessibility service, but the Chinese mainland lacks unified training and standards that ensure the quality of their work. But some institutions also offer in-house training whiling providing AD services. For example, for teaching and research purpose, the Communication University of China runs the "Bright Cinema project." In 2018 the Communication University of China and Beijing Gehua CATV Network Limited Company jointly launched the Bright Cinema Project, which attempts to establish a "communication system from the theater to the community and families, from off-line to online, from traditional radio broadcasting to modern networks" (Gao and Chen, 2019). In 2019, the Bright Cinema Project team produced 104 AD movies and donated them to the blind associations in 10 provinces and 19 blind schools nationwide (Niu, 2019). The Bright Cinema Project plans to produce 104 AD films each year, which will give the visually

impaired the opportunity to enjoy two films a week. "In the process of barrier-free film production and dissemination, the training received by students is comprehensive, including text interpretation, audiovisual language training, and interview research practice" (Niu and Liu, 2021). Some Companies and NGOs such as Zhongshan Library, China Braille Press and Beijing Hongdandan Education and Cultural Exchange Center also conduct in-house AD training projects. Some "cities such as Guangzhou have already consulted foreign guidelines and AD books and have shown interest in learning how AD issues have been tackled in the West" (Tor-Carroggio and Rovira-Esteva, 2019).

At present, the visually impaired in the Chinese mainland can enjoy barre-free movies in three modes. The first is the "live mode," which is mainly provided in accessible cinemas, public libraries, special education schools and some communities in big cities. The second is the "recorded mode," which means to enjoy movies by recorded AD movies. The third is the "accessible channel mode," which first appeared in Shanghai in 2020. In accessible channel mode, the visually impaired use the wireless headphones with AD channels to enjoy movies with sighted audience. The first "Accessible Channel" was put into use in Shanghai on January 6, 2020, in 50 barrier-free cinemas (CNS, 2020).

2.2. Main problems of the practice of audio description in the Chinese mainland

The AD practice has made some achievements in the Chinese mainland, but at the same time the development is facing many difficulties, which are mainly in the following four aspects:

1) **Due to copyright restrictions, it is difficult to get the source movies to make AD.**

The Marrakesh Treaty was adopted on June 27, 2013 in Marrakesh and it forms part of the body of international copyright treaties administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization. China signed treaty as a contracting party in 2013. Compared with the requirements of the Treaty and the legislation and practices of other countries, China lags behind in its implementation. For example, the works that can be provided without the permission of the copyright owner are limited to literary works, excluding film and television dramas and other works; the beneficiary is only limited to "blind people," excluding other visually impaired groups; the format of the accessible version is limited to braille, excluding audio description or other forms, etc. Movies and TV series released in the Chinese mainland have no accessible versions; therefore, making AD and playing them online or off-line without the permission of the copyright owner will infringe the copyright owner's rights. The good news is that "the Marrakesh Treaty officially entered into force in China on May 5, 2022. Combined with the requirements of the Marrakesh Treaty and the actual needs of China, the Copyright Law of the People's Republic of China and the Regulations for the Implementation of the Copyright Law of the People's Republic of China need to add corresponding provisions to achieve a balance between the rights of the visually impaired and the rights of copyright owners" (Jiang, 2022). It will still take some time. Most of the organizations that provide AD services in the Chinese mainland are non-profit organizations or volunteers. Some projects have received financial support from the government or some funds; however, compared with the cost of buying the copyright, the support funds obtained are still quite small. The copyright of most of the published AD movies in the Chinese mainland is donated by copyright parties for free; others are old movies that exceed copyright restrictions.

2) **The quality of AD services is far from satisfactory.**

Partly due to the lack of professional staff and unified AD guidelines, the quality of AD services is far from satisfactory.

"Audio description is an extremely valuable tool that allows for the restoration of agency in the enjoyment of films and audiovisual texts by the blind and partially sighted: translating iconic signs into verbal sequences and combining them with the film's soundtrack aims to provide the sensory impaired with the elements they need to form their own interpretation and reception of a film" (Di Giovanni, 2014). The creation of AD entails the collaboration of several professionals: audio describers, voice talents or voice actors, sound technicians and, ideally, blind consultants. In the Chinese mainland, although some professionals participated, most of the people engaged in AD services are part-time, amateur volunteers. Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost (2020) provided a profile of audio describers in China: "An overwhelming majority of those audio describing are volunteers aged 20–50, and most have a university education background which is not related to Audiovisual Translation. They come from a varied professional background, most have only been audio describing for a few years, they lack formal training in audio description and mainly audio describe films in Standard Chinese."

Over the years, some countries have developed their AD standards or guidelines. Such as United Kingdom, ITC Guidance on Standards for Audio Description, published by the Independent Television Commission in May 2000; USA, Audio Description Standards, published by the American Council of the Blind in 2009; Australia, Audio Description Background Paper, published by Media Access Australia in September 2010–all these guidelines discuss the same categories of information, namely "what to describe," "how to describe," "when to describe" and more or less individual specific issues. In the Chinese mainland, there is no official, unified comprehensive guideline for AD so far, but there are unpublished in-house AD guidelines that mainly serve for training purposes among different AD providers. Among the published literature on AD, there is only one paper by Luo (2019) that urges public libraries to establish AD guidelines based on the principles of "accurate, objective, and interpreting appropriately."

Partly due to the lack of unified AD guidelines, the AD services in the Chinese mainland show great differences in "what to describe" and "how to describe." In the practice of AD in the Chinese mainland, telling the storyline, revealing the plot in advance, interpreting the characters subjectively, evaluating the movies, over describing and subjective explanations are common phenomena.

3) **The available AD resources are insufficient and the distribution is uneven.**

Although great progress has been made in recent years, the available AD resources are quite insufficient. The two largest scale production projects are the China Accessible Film Project and the

Bright Cinema Project. By the end of 2019, only about 700 films in total had been produced by these projects, which are incomparable with the films or TV programs produced every year in China: in 2018 alone, China produced 1,082 films, imported 109 films and produced 3,577,444 hours of TV programs (data source, National Bureau of Statistics).

Due to the imbalance of socio-economic development, the distribution of AD resources is uneven. AD services are mainly in the eastern region, while the number of the visually impaired in the western region is three times that of in the eastern region (CDPF, 2007); AD services are mainly provided in large cities, while the number of visually impaired in urban areas is only one-third of that in rural areas (CDPF, 2007).

4) **Theoretical research is quite poor.**

In the Chinese mainland, theoretical research on AD is quite poor and the practice of AD is lack of theoretical research and guidance. Since AD research is in its infancy and the AD service in the Chinese mainland is only limited to film, different terms are used to refer to AD: "accessible films (无障碍电影)," in which theoretically subtitles for deaf and hard of hearing and sign language interpretation are also added, "film description (口述电影)" and "image description (口述影像)." Some documents even equated AD with accessible films. For example, Pan and Li (2013) believe that "films are the most important component of audio description, so in the narrow sense, accessible films can be equated with audio description." Luo (2019) argues that "accessible film is a branch of audio description. From the perspective of the scope of application, the concept of the accessible film is in the category of audio description." Jiang Hongyuan, the founder and initiator of accessible films in the Chinese mainland, believes that "the so-called accessible film is to fit the descriptions of a film's visual elements, characters, and plot into natural pauses in the film's dialogue so that the visually impaired can understand movies with the help of descriptions" (Zeng, 2012).

Since many documents equate accessible films with AD in the Chinese mainland, the authors searched CNKI with "accessible film" and "AD" as keywords, excluding policy reports, there have been only 30 relevant papers since 2010. Papers before 2015 focused on the terminology and current situation of AD, and since 2019, scholars have focused on diversified issues, mainly reflected in the research of practice process, text analysis, accessibility, policies and regulations. While in developed countries in Europe and the United States, since the 1940s, scholars have conducted extensive and in-depth research on AD from multidisciplinary perspectives, namely translation studies, linguistics and semiotics, film studies, media studies, cultural studies, psychology, technology and etc.

3. A questionnaire-based research on reception of existing AD in the Chinese mainland

Szymańska and Zabrocka (2015) state that "Audio describers strive to objectively describe the picture, rather than provide their interpretation of it." Łukasz (2016) states that "Common errors in the audio description include over interpretation, revealing the plot and using complex structures or compound sentences." In the Chinese mainland's existing AD services, these standards are not strictly adhered to. Over interpretation, revealing the plot, subjective speculations are common practice. In order to learn about the target audiences' reception of existing AD services in the Chinese mainland, we designed and carried out a reception study. This section focuses on the design and results of the study.

3.1. Previous research

What to describe, how to describe and when to describe are the focus of AD reception studies. The question when to describe is easily answered: between lines of dialogue and "never talk over dialogue or commentary" (ITC, 2000). What-to-describe strand gathers studies mainly focusing on linguistico-semantic priorities and characters' descriptions. The quest for objectivity (Salway, 2007), the description of facial expressions (Di Giovanni, 2014) and AD guidelines (Orero, 2005; Vercauteren, 2007; RNIB, 2010; Mazur and Chmiel, 2012; Bittner, 2015) have been widely discussed by scholars. As regards the amount of what AD should cover, many guidelines are in line with Snyder's (2008) phrase "the visual made verbal" and "describers must use as few words as possible to convey that visual image for the benefit of people" and Clark's (2007) catchy reminder: "describe when necessary, but do not necessarily describe." Guidelines instruct the audio describer to "describe what is there" (ITC, 2000) or to "describe what you see" (ACB, 2009). As regards how to describe, in general, the AD narrator is supposed to be neutral, objective, and self-effacing. The style of AD should be factual, not interpretive; describing what can actually be seen without inferring any moods or attitudes (Bittner, 2015). The language used for AD should be clear and precise. "Clear and precise language is crucial to any good description. The description should be vivid and particularized" (ACB, 2009).

The reception study of AD in the Chinese mainland is still in its infancy and the literature mentioning it is very limited. Xiao and Dong (2020) compared artificial-voice AD with human-voice AD through an experiment and survey on visually impaired people in Shanghai, and found that Chinese visually impaired people preferred human over artificial voices. Shen and Lei (2021) illustrated some AD interpreting skills based on practical operation of the Hangzhou barrier-free film project. Zhang et al. (2000) used case studies, questionnaire surveys and interviews to understand how AD movies help the visually impaired audience have an equal experience as people without visual impairments. Wang and Wang (2020) discussed issues like the transformation between rhetoric of videos and texts, the preservation of forms and styles of the original films. There have been also some recent efforts to take a comprehensive snapshot of AD in China by scholars outside china. Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost (2020) have drawn the profile of Chinese audio describers. Tor-Carroggio and Vercauteren (2020) has investigated Chinese users' satisfaction and experience with AD. Tor-Carroggio and Vercauteren (2020) have compared the Chinese situation in terms of guidelines to that of Europe.

3.2. Research questions

In order to learn about the reception of existing AD by the visually impaired in the Chinese mainland, we designed this research focusing on the following five questions:

1) What the participants' general viewing habits and preferences as well as their experience with audio description are;
2) What the participants' opinions on the common practice at the beginning of Chinese barrier-free movies are;
3) What the participants' opinions on the subjective interpretations are;
4) How satisfied the participants toward the AD currently delivered are;
5) What their needs of AD are.

3.3. Participants

In order to facilitate the face-to-face questionnaire-based interview, we only recruited participants from Lanzhou City, where the authors of this article work. Participants were recruited *via* Lanzhou Special Education School, Lanzhou Association of the Blind, Lanzhou Disabled persons Federation and Lanzhou Public Library. Although we only recruited 26 volunteers, the heterogeneity of the blind population was represented in our experimental groups.

The participants aged 13–68 (mean age = 30 years, SD = 19.90; male = 16). Fifteen participants (57.69%) were blind (10 congenital, five acquired) with little or no light perception. Eleven participants (42.31%) had low vision and, although they had some residual vision, were not able to make out detailed images on screen. Fifteen were school student (12 junior high school students, three vocational high school students). Among the 11 non-students, seven had elementary school education and four had university education. The participants were informed about confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. All participants gave written consent.

3.4. Research design

This reception study was in the form of a face-to-face questionnaire-based interview. Each participant had a volunteer to assist in completing the questionnaire and interview. The volunteers read questionnaires to the participants and gathered their responses by mobile phone recorder. In order to prevent participants from learning from each other's answers and compare the impact of different versions of AD (subjective vs. objective) on understanding, participants were randomly divided into 4 groups. Each group participated in the experiment separately in an audio-visual classroom. Their seats were far enough away that they wouldn't hear each other's answers.

The study consisted of five parts and lasted ∼150 min. After completing the first four parts, we had a 20-min tea break.

The first part questionnaire was aimed at eliciting general information about the respondents, such as age, gender, education, type of visual impairment, general viewing habits and preferences and prior experience with AD.

In the second part, we aimed at gathering the participants' opinions on the common practice of AD at the beginning of the barrier-free movies in the Chinese mainland. An AD clip from the very beginning of *Wolf Totem* (2015) was showed to the participants. The AD clip includes introducing cast information and production background, evaluating the movie, telling the storyline, etc. After watching the clip, all participants were asked whether the content described in the clip was necessary. They were also asked to explain the reasons behind their choice and to rate in a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat satisfied and 5 = very satisfied).

In the third part, we aimed at gathering participants' opinions on subjective interpretation and testing whether subjective interpretations improve the audience's comprehension of the movie. We showed participants two different AD versions of the same clip from *Waterloo Bridge* (1940). One is the original AD version produced by China Accessible Film Project, relatively subjective, and the other is the test version made by our research team, relatively objective. In this study, we only examined subjectivity and objectivity at the word level. During the production process of the test version, we imitated the original oral delivery styles. In the first step, we showed the subjective version to the first and second groups and the objective version to the third and fourth groups. Then all the participants were asked five multiple-choice comprehension questions to test their understanding. In the second step, we showed the other version clip they didn't watch to each group. After watching the two clips, they were asked to choose whether they preferred the subjective version or the objective version and to explain the reasons behind their choice. They were also asked to rate each version in a 5-point Likert scale.

In the fourth part, participants were told to enjoy a full movie as usual, but there would be 10 comprehension questions afterwards. After the participants watched the whole movie *Son of the Stars* (2012), which all participants reported they had not watched, we used a 5-point Likert scale to survey their satisfaction with AD of *Son of the Stars* and designed 10 multiple choice questions concerning the plot and character image (characteristics, appearance, etc.) of the movie to test their comprehension.

Finally open-ended questions were asked to collect their needs for AD in a free and relaxing environment.

3.5. Research results and discussion

1) **Participants' general viewing habits and preferences**

Regarding the most commonly used medium for watching audiovisual programmes or films, 11 chose smart phone, 10 chose TV, five chose computer, no one chose DVD or cinema, which showed that smart phone and TV played a very important role in their lives. When asked about how they watched audiovisual programmes or films without AD, all of them reported they just tried to pick up as much as they could from the sound of the film or programme, and if possible, they asked someone to assist them by explaining what happened on the screen. When asked how much time they spent daily on watching audiovisual programme or films, four reported less than an hour, 13 reported 1–3 hours and nine reported more than 3 hours. When asked what kind of movies they liked the most (they were able to choose three of the eight types presented), the top three they chose were romantic films (80.77%), comedies (73.08%), and action films (65.38%), followed by sci-fi, suspense, war, history and terror. 80.77% of the respondents said they preferred to watch domestic movies and 88.46% preferred to watch the latest movies or movies within 5 years.

This survey results showed there was a big gap between the existing AD service and participants' general viewing habits and preferences. They often watch TV, but there is no AD service on TV. The existing AD services do not meet their viewing habits and preferences well in terms of film genre and release year. This study did an analysis of the release date and film genre of 440 films released by China Accessible Film Project. The comedy films only occupy 15.2%, and romantic films and action films occupy 21.4 and 16.5%, respectively. The latest films and the films within 5 years only occupy 8.4%. As mentioned above, due to copyright restrictions, it is difficult to get the source movies to make AD. The publishers of AD admit that many films involve several copyright owners, and it takes a lot of trouble to find and communicate one by one (Li, 2020). They wish to publish and distribute movies that are popular with audiences, but they often fail to obtain the copyright.

2) **Participants' experience with AD**

Regarding whether participants were aware of the existence of audio described movies or barrier-free movies, 88.46% of the respondents claimed to know about it and have used it, whereas three participants (11.54%) admitted they did not know. Those who answered "no" in this question were asked to stop answering the questions in this part. When asked about how they came to know about this service, 16 revealed that they had learned about it through school, three through blind associations, two through public library, and two through family or friends. When asked about how often they watch barrier-free movies, 15 (all of them were school students) reported that they watched more than once a week, because the school showed barrier-free movies once a week or more. Six reported 1–3 times a month and two reported once more than a month.

3) **Participants' opinion on the common practice of AD at the beginning of the movie**

After watching the AD clip from the very beginning of *Wolf Totem*, participants first rated the degree of their satisfaction with this description in a 5-point Likert scale. It was observed that the participants were quite satisfied with the quality of the audio description (mean = 3.79, SD = 0.95).

Regarding whether it is necessary to provide cast information, 80.77% of the participants thought it was necessary. We summarized and sorted out their reasons, they are: (1) we just want to know the cast and crew information; (2) when talking with friends with normal vision about movies and movie actors, we will have something in common; (3) if there are directors or actors that we like or are familiar with, it will increase our interest in watching. Two participants who thought it was unnecessary to provide cast information said that what was important was the plot of the movie and it didn't matter who played it.

Regarding whether it is necessary to introduce the production background (money and time spent on shooting, main shooting locations, whether it is a literary adaptation/true story or not, etc.), 76.92% of the participants thought it was necessary. The reasons given by them are: (1) it gives us more additional necessary information; (2) it helps us comprehend the movie. The reasons given by participants who thought it was unnecessary are: (1) the information has nothing to do with understanding the movie; (2) I am not interested in this information; (3) I feel overwhelmed by that information.

Regarding whether it is necessary to evaluate the movie at the beginning of the movie, most (69.23%) thought it was necessary. The reasons given by them are: (1) high rating of the movie can increase our viewing interest; (2) I just want to know whether other people's opinions of the movie are the same as mine. Participants who thought it was unnecessary said: (1) I wanted to evaluate the movie myself; (2) It would be better to evaluate the movie at the end of the movie.

One of the main points of this test was to gather their opinions on telling the storyline at the beginning of the movie. 73.08% of participants thought it was necessary. The reasons they gave were surprisingly consistent: it made the film easier to follow and made them more eager to watch the film.

Participants opposed to telling the story in advance thought that it gave away too much information and weakened the appeal of the movie. It is worth noting that four of the seven participants who opposed to telling the storyline in advance are non-congenital blind. They believed that based on AD and the original movie's dialogue, it's not difficult to understand the movie's story. One participant said that even without AD, he could understand the main plot of a movie, although he couldn't get a lot of details.

4) **Participants' opinions on subjective and objective descriptions**

We showed participants 2 different AD versions of the same clip from *Waterloo Bridge* (Table 1) to gather their preferences and test the impact of different versions on comprehension.

In the first step, the first two groups watched the subjective version and the second two groups watched the objective version. After watching the clips, the participants were asked to answer five multiple-choice comprehension questions. The comprehension questions are: (1) why does Roy keep looking around on the platform? (2) How does Roy feel when looking around on the platform? (3) Why did Roy lean out the window after getting on the train? (4) How does Mara feel when staring at the departing train? (5) Did they meet at the station? The results showed that the scores of the two groups were similar (total five points, subjective version: mean = 3.21, SD = 1.19; objective version: mean = 3.17, SD = 1.03). We did not find strong relevance that subjective description was more effective than objective description in improving participants' comprehension of the movie.

In the second step, each group watched the other unwatched version. After watching the clips, participants were asked to choose whether they preferred the subjective or objective version, and give reasons for their choice. Then they were asked to rate the degree of their satisfaction with each AD version in a 5-point Likert scale. Although the rating scores varied slightly (subjective version: mean = 4.17, SD = 0.66; objective version: mean = 4.08, SD = 0.78), most participants (69.23%) reported they preferred the subjective version and said that subjective description: (1) made the film easier to follow; (2) provided much more additional information and helped me comprehend the movie better; (3) confirmed my understanding of the movie; (4) helped bring the film to life; (5) made me feel I watch movies like people with normal eyesight. The participants who preferred objective descriptions said that subjective descriptions: (1)

TABLE 1 Subjective vs. objective description clips from *Waterloo Bridge*.

Context: On the night before the wedding of Mara and Roy, when Mara was preparing to go to the theater to perform, she received a call from Roy saying that the army order had been changed and he had to go to Waterloo station to set off immediately.	
Original version (subjective)	**Test version (objective)**
Mara hangs up the phone anxiously and walks out the door. **In order to bid farewell to his beloved, Mara gives up the performance** and rushes to the station **regardless of the consequences.** The clock at London Waterloo Station shows 9:28. Roy is looking around on the platform, **anxiously waiting for Mara's arrival**. The departure whistle keeps ringing, and **helpless** Roy has no choice but to board the departure train. After getting on the train, Roy still leans out the window and looks anxiously toward the entrance, **looking forward to the appearance of Mara**. The train starts. Mara rushes through the gate of the station and runs toward the train. She squeezes away from the crowd. At this moment, Roy saw Mara, but the train runs farther and farther away from the station. **The two young people in love separated before they could say goodbye to each other.** Mara stares at the beloved far away, sadness filling her eyes. **In the morning they were still sweet, affectionate, and romantic, but at this moment their hearts are filled with sadness of parting**	With a sad face, Mara hangs up the phone anxiously and walks out the door. Mara rushes to the station. The clock at London Waterloo Station shows 9:28. Roy is looking around on the platform anxiously. The departure whistle keeps ringing. Roy boards the departure train. After getting on the train, Roy still leans out the window and looks anxiously toward the entrance. The train starts. Mara rushes through the gate of the station and runs toward the train. She squeezes away from the crowd. At this moment, Roy saw Mara, but the train runs farther and farther away from the station. Mara stares at running train, sadness filling her eyes

The above AD is originally in Chinese, and the authors have translated it into English when writing this article.

gave away too much information; (2) told me things I could find out for myself; (3) weakened the charm of the movie.

5) **Participants' comprehension of the whole movie and satisfaction with the AD**

After the participants watched the whole movie *Son of the Stars*, they were asked to rate the degree of their satisfaction with the AD in a 5-point Likert scale and to answer 10 multiple-choice comprehension questions related to the plot and character image (characteristics, appearance, etc.). The test results showed that the level of understanding and appreciation of the film *Son of the Stars* was relatively low (total score = 10 points, Mean = 4.76, SD = 1.77). However, they rated a high score for the quality of AD (mean = 4.40, SD = 0.65).

We did further interviews on why they were satisfied with the AD service. We classified and summarized the main responses: (1) the AD added so much more and let me know that previously I hadn't really understood what was happening; (2) the AD saved having to ask questions about what is happening. (3) AD did help me understand more; (4) this was the first time I watched it, so I liked it.

We specially compiled the answers of the three participants who watched AD for the first time and found that they were very satisfied with AD. One of them said "I didn't know blind people could watch movies like this. It's amazing. I'm very, very excited." The findings are in line with Zhao's previous findings. "Respondents who have not been in contact with AD of movies are more likely to experience the spiritual and cultural satisfaction that the AD film brings" (Zhao, 2019).

This research shows that the participants are highly satisfied with the quality of current AD service, which is consistent with the previous research done by other scholars. In 2018, Tor-Carroggio and Rovira-Esteva (2019) did a research on how satisfied are users toward the AD that is currently delivered in China. They concluded that "elderly persons with little or no education and who are already retired seem to be the users that most attend AD sessions in Shanghai and Beijing and users are satisfied with the service provided so far." In 2019, Zhao Xijing surveyed 187 students from the 19 blind schools nationwide and conducted a quantitative analysis. The results show that "Most of the interviewees who have enjoyed AD of movies rate it highly; 56.6% of these respondents report they have a basic understanding of the content of accessible movies, 32.9% of the respondents believe with the help of AD, they can fully understand the content of the film" (Zhao, 2019).

6) **Participants' needs and expectations for AD**

In the last part, open-ended questions were asked to allow participants to make any remarks they thought were appropriate. First, their suggestions mainly focused on quantity rather than quality. Many participants said that more AD movies or TV programs should be provided. Second, they wanted to be able to enjoy the latest and most popular movies. Third, some respondents thought that AD movies needed to be screened more often and better publicized so that more users could benefit from them. Fourth, some participants thought that if possible, TV stations should provide AD services.

7) **Why the current practice of AD in the Chinese mainland is quite different from the norms widely accepted by developed countries?**

Over interpretation, revealing the plot, subjective speculations are common practices in AD services in the Chinese mainland, which is quite different from the norms widely accepted by developed countries.

The audience's low level of education and poor cultural life may explain why the current practice of AD in the Chinese mainland is quite different. According to the statistics from China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF, 2014), in 2013, 27.3% of school-age disabled children did not receive compulsory education; 74.3 % of disabled persons aged 18 and above had never attended school or only attended primary school. While in USA in 2019, "of Americans who have vision loss and are 25 years of age and over, 4.7 million have less than a high school diploma, 8.1 million have a high school diploma or a GED (but no further), 9.2 million have some college education but not a bachelor's degree, and 7.5 million have a bachelor's degree or higher" (AFB, 2020). In EU Member States in 2016, of people who are 25 and over with disabilities, 36% have lower secondary or below education, 43% have upper secondary or post-secondary education, 21% have tertiary education (EQLS, 2016).

Due to poor education and cultural life, their demand for the films is often only "understanding the storyline," which is in line with the current goals of the Chinese mainland's AD service, namely letting the visually impaired understand the movie instead of appreciating it.

4. Conclusions

The AD practice in the Chinese mainland has made some achievements, but at the same time its development is facing many difficulties. There is a big gap between supply and demand and the existing AD resources are unevenly distributed. Due to copyright restrictions, it is difficult to get the source movies to make AD. Partly due to the lack of professional staff and unified AD guidelines, the quality of AD services is far from satisfactory. Our empirical research shows that the participants are satisfied with the quality of existing AD services, although they do not have a high level of understanding of movies. Over interpretation, revealing the plot, subjective speculations are common practices in AD services but are applauded by the participants for which help them to understand the film.

In this reception study, the number of participants is relatively small, and they only come from Lanzhou city. The study can give a glimpse but cannot reflect the overall picture of AD reception in the Chinese mainland. Further research needs to be carried out in more regions and in more diverse and heterogeneous groups.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/Supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Lanzhou Jiaotong University. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

Author contributions

HY determines the topic of the article, writes and revises the article, and controls the direction of the article. WS, BL, and YW collects data, participates in research design and writes the article, and revises the format. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2023.1114853/full#supplementary-material

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Reception study: The omission of narrative text in the English translation of Mo Yan's *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*

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This paper examines the omission of narrative texts in the English translation of Mo Yan's *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. A textual comparison revealed that the translation contains the radical omission of around 50,000 Chinese characters, comprising nearly 13% of the original text. Since the English version reshapes the original work for an English context and a Western audience, it is worthwhile to examine the consequences of the omissions. In particular, are there any patterns among the omitted sections? Is the version with omissions received more favorably by a Western audience? Omissions of narrative texts and their effects were the focus of this study. The adopted methodology comprises textual analysis, narrative analysis, questionnaire, and interviews. The omissions are explored from six categories: narrative text, descriptive text, embedded text, narrator's comments, characters' monologs and lengthy passages containing multiple omission types. The omission of narrative text and its consequences are the focus of this paper. Through textual and narrative analysis, the discussion identifies discrepancies between the source text and the target text, including mitigation of political criticism, stereotyping of Chinese culture, simplification of narrative structure, and plot reorganization. Through questionnaires and interviews, this paper investigates how the omissions may have influenced the reception of the novel by the target audience. Interestingly, significant omissions of political criticism did not impede Western readers' perceptions of the book's political criticisms. Instead, they facilitate and augment the entertainment aspect of the reading. Therefore, this paper argues that the novel has been rewritten to accommodate a Western audience's reading habits and Western poetological systems and to attract a mass audience.

KEYWORDS

readers' response, omission, *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, Mo Yan, reception study

1. Research context

Translation enables individuals to read text from languages and cultures that they do not know or with which they are unfamiliar. Many factors influence the production of a translated work. Venuti (1998, p. 124) observes that the publisher's choice is a "primarily commercial, even imperialistic, exploitation governed by an estimate of the market at home". This argument is supported by Woods (2019, p. 518), who coins the term "market censorship" to describe American and English publishing companies' emphasis on the market share when publishing translated works. Thus, the target readership is likely to exert influence on the production of translated works.

Sang (2011) observes that English translators of Chinese literature tend to rewrite and shorten the source text (ST) to a greater extent than translators of other languages. Knight discussed this issue with American sinologist and translator Howard Goldblatt, who is considered the "midwife of American translation of contemporary Chinese fiction" (Updike, 2005) and the "foremost translator of Chinese literature" (Xia, 2004, p. 64). Goldblatt (Sang, 2011, p. 122) claims that Chinese novels have not always sold well in the United States and that the English translations that rewrite some of the ST's contents can be more easily promoted to major American publishers. As early as 2004, Goldblatt (2004, p. 26–27) professes that literary translation is difficult to sell, with the exception of the work of Nobel Prize winners and selected Japanese authors (such as Murakami Haruki); American publishers, therefore, recommend deletions and reorganizations in order to appeal to a wider market. Balcom (2006, p. 119) explains that to make a work of literature in Chinese come to life in English is a complex process that calls upon a scholar's knowledge of the Chinese language and culture, as well as a profound knowledge and creative flair in English, since translations of literary works are generally evaluated solely on their merits of readability, or the extent to which the text reads as if it were originally written in English.

The English translations of Mo Yan's works exemplify the effort required to reshape, rewrite or manipulate a work in a target culture, as well as the complicated interactions and power struggles involved in text production. Mo Yan is the pen name of Guan Moye (管谟业). Although writers are usually denoted by surname only, customarily a Chinese writer's pen name should not be reduced, so the full identifier of Mo Yan is used to refer to the author throughout this thesis. Meanwhile, other Chinese names are provided following the order of surname and given name. Mo Yan's works provide reflections and satirical criticism on Chinese political movements and policies in the twentieth century by describing the suffering of characters living in the fictional town of Northeast Gaomi Township. Mo Yan combines sources from traditional Chinese literary works and folk adages with avant-garde methods of modern Western literature. Thus, his works are described as "hallucinatory realism merging fantasy and reality, history and contemporary" (Nobel Prize, 2012).

Mo Yan first entered the English-speaking markets with Yan and Goldblatt (1993), translated by Goldblatt. As of 2022, Mo Yan has published 11 novels, 8 of which have been translated into English by Goldblatt. Mo Yan is the Chinese writer whose work has been most widely translated into English over the past 20 years (Zhang and Mo, 2013, p. 225). Goldblatt considers it his mission to translate for his English-language readers, rather than for the original writer (Lingenfelter, 2007; Sparks, 2013; Stalling, 2014) and places emphasis on the fluency of the English as a priority when translating. Goldblatt himself says "anyone who is reading Mo Yan in English is reading Goldblatt" (Goldblatt and Efthimiatou, 2012), emphasizing the extent to which he feels ownership over the work once he begins the translation process.

In 2012, Mo Yan was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, which brought him and his works further international recognition. It has been suggested that, in addition to Mo Yan's own literary merit, the skill of his translators (and Goldblatt in particular) has played a vital role in introducing him onto the world's literary stage (Sun, 2012, 2014; China News, 2013; Liu and Xu, 2014; Bao, 2015). Chinese translation studies Professor Wang (2013, p. 7) propounds that if it had not been for the hard work of Mo Yan's English translator, Goldblatt, and his Swedish translator, Anna Chen, his award may have been postponed by a further 10 years at least or perhaps not even awarded at all. German sinologist Wolfgang (2012) and China News (2013) suggests that Goldblatt translates Mo Yan's works by summarizing what he believes Mo Yan intended to say in his own English; Goldblatt edits the original text, sometimes eliminating entire paragraphs or deleting culturally specific references to make the text more accessible to Western readers. As a result, the end product differs significantly from the original.

Sheng Si Pi Lao (《生死疲劳》) (Mo, 2006) and its English translation *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (*L&D*) (Mo and Goldblatt, 2008) is a representative example of omission. The original text is rich in Chinese cultural references and political messages, and its structure builds on the metaphorical framework of the Buddhist belief in the six paths of reincarnation. Historical and political events of the second half of the twentieth century are unveiled from the perspective of folklore as the reader follows the protagonist Ximen Nao through a series of reincarnations, and the ownership of land emerges as a core theme. Ximen Nao's final reincarnation is as a big-headed boy named Lan Qiansui, who is also the primary narrator of the novel. The second narrator is Lan Jiefang, Lan Qiansui's grandfather and the son of Lan Lian, Ximen Nao's previous farmhand. The two narrators also serve as each other's narrates, creating a dialogue. The storyline is written in the past tense, but the two narrators make comments throughout the storytelling, which occur in the present tense. Consequently, the narrative tenses switch continuously back and forth, forming a "most complicated narrative structure" (Knight, 2014, p. 101).

A textual comparison of the English translation and the ST reveals that the translation contains the radical omission of around 50,000 Chinese characters, totaling nearly 13% of the original text. At the macro level, the researchers identified 128 omissions, ranging in length from around seven to eight lines to then around three to four pages. The omissions are concentrated in the second half of the novel and the contents of these erased passages include political critique, cultural references, erotic descriptions, minor and animal characters, amongst other themes. As a result of these translation choices, the Anglophone audience is presented with a radically edited version of the original story.

The omissions have attracted the attention of scholars throughout translation studies. Existing studies on the topic focus on messages related to Chinese culture and politics and provide the following explanations for the omissions: Western ideological manipulation, Western disinterest in Chinese political and cultural messages (Wang, 2012; Huang, 2014; Jia, 2016) and potential barriers to the Western readership (Huang, 2014). However, most English-speaking readers only have access to the English version of the text and may even be unaware that they are reading a specially edited version, which makes it difficult to determine whether the omissions facilitate their reading. Reviews of *L&D* in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* both explain that the novel focuses on the official Chinese communist ideology (Moore, 2008; Spence, 2008). Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that the political messages are still evident to Western readers, even after the omissions, and that Western readers may not reject these messages, as suggested in previous studies.

Goldblatt (Wangyi Net, 2013) praises Mo Yan as a natural storyteller, however, Goldblatt considers Mo Yan's novels (400,000–500,000 Chinese characters) to be too long for English readers. In an interview with Efthimiatou, Goldblatt regarded Mo Yan as a very Dickensian writer with long sentences and asides; things that most editors would cut (Goldblatt and Efthimiatou, 2012). Goldblatt has clarified that most of the omissions were requested by the English editors with the approval of Mo Yan (Ge, 2011; Sparks, 2013; Goldblatt, 2014; Stalling, 2014). The English editors had minimal knowledge of Chinese language and culture, so their only point of reference for editing the novel was that it should read fluently in English (Ge, 2011). Therefore, this paper hypotheses that although the political criticism has been significantly reduced, the omissions are made on account of poetological rather than ideological concerns, and that the rewriting aims to align the translation more closely with Western reading habits and poetological systems. To establish the veracity of this claim, it is necessary to identify the key features of the omitted text, to explore the discrepancies between the ST and the TT, and to consider the effects of these omissions on Anglophone readers.

2. Methods and materials

The adopted methodology of the complete study comprises textual analysis, narrative analysis, questionnaire, and interviews. The overall objective of these methods is to examine the consequences of omissions from the reception perspective. The questionnaire and interview design is constructed on the pattern of the omissions, as identified through textual and narrative analysis.

The textual and narrative analysis comprises the selection and categorization of the examples, as well as content analysis. Narratives can comprise multiple layers and levels. Any event recounted by a narrative is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed (Genette, 1983, p. 228). The extreme narrative level is termed the "extradiegetic" (extra-story) level. It is at this level that the extradiegetic narrator recounts the entire narrative. Narrative acts depicted within the narrative are intradiegetic; narrating acts embedded within those are metadiegetic, and then the tetradiegetic and pentadiegetic levels follow (Genette, 1983, p. 229–230). According to Bal (2017, p. 57), the majority of embedded texts are non-narrative.

Our research focuses on omissions at the macro level, so the examples in the paragraph units were selected from a comparison of the ST and the TT, which revealed 128 omissions. These omissions were then grouped into six categories, organized by the functions and type of each text example: narrative text, descriptive text, the embedding of other literary forms, narrators' commentary, characters' monologs, plots and lengthy passages containing multiple omission types.

Patterns have been identified in relation to the omitted passages and the types of discrepancies between the original text and the English translation (refer to Appendix 1). The most evident discrepancies include the mitigation of political criticism, cutting of minor and animal characters, and the streamlining of plots.

As Hatim (2001, p. 63–64) suggested, the intended audience forms a controlling factor that affects the translation. To explore the translation and rewriting of *L&D* intended for the English-speaking market, feedback from English readers of translations of a representative chapter of *L&D*, is obtained *via* a questionnaire and interviews. Based on the patterns identified, the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview are adopted to investigate English native speakers' response on the omission of political criticism. In the questionnaire, the researchers determined both the questions and the range of available answers, with the intention that the interviewees answered the same questions. As a result, the responses could be meaningfully compared and any resultant variability was reduced, making analysis of the answers easier. However, a questionnaire provides only a snapshot of a research subject, not a rich, in-depth picture. Babbie (2013, p. 353–355) suggests, prolonged, intensive and direct engagement with a research subject can further a researcher's understanding more than research based on secondary resources alone. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was also adopted to further investigate respondents' attitudes toward omissions.

In this research, each of the semi-structured interviews followed a common set of topics or questions, the methods and orders in which topics were introduced varied as appropriate for each interviewee. The specific questions for each interviewee were based on responses to the questionnaire, and the aim of the interviews was to further explore readers' attitudes toward the different aspects of omission. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodology allows the consequences of the omission to be explored more comprehensively.

The standard of the call-out for the interviewees was native English speakers brought up and educated in the West. The interviewees are asked to read two texts: Text A is from the published English translation (Mo and Goldblatt, 2008), while Text B is from a full translation of the original text provided by the researchers (proofread and polished by a qualified English native speaker to minimize the influence of translation quality on the research). Two English native-speakers are invited to take the pilot study to determine if the questionnaire questions are precise; the length of the questionnaire is acceptable; if there are any redundant questions, and if the tone of the questions is suitable. The two pilot study respondents are also requested to repeat the questions in their own words. This strategy establishes whether the questions have been interpreted as intended. Adjustments are made according to their responses. Since the omitted messages are supplemented by the researcher and proofread by an English native-speaker, the pilot study respondents are further asked whether Text B reads clearly, fluently and consistently. It ensures the language quality does not influence their approach to the text.

Both the questionnaire and the interview utilized in this project involve participants' sharing their opinions and experiences. Therefore, researchers are obliged to ensure the participants' anonymity and confidentiality at all stages of the project, and particularly during interview interactions with the participants (Heggen and Guillemin, 2012; Kaiser, 2012). Hence, Privacy Notices and Debriefing Sheets, covering the protection, use and storage of personal data, and explaining the project objective, its purpose and participants' rights during the whole process are distributed. The project participants are informed of their right to withdraw from the project at any stage, and informed consent is received *via* signed consent forms. Further, personal data collected through the questionnaire and interviews include age, gender, native language, and data obtained from the audio-recorded transcripts. Once each completed questionnaire is received, an unspecified number is allocated to it for data collection and analysis purposes. Information that identifies the participant (in this case, the consent form) is kept separate from the anonymized data. All personal data in electronic form is stored on One Drive, and will not be available to anyone outside the research team. For further validation, the anonymized data is archived in the Durham Research DATA base.

The reading is estimated to take 25–35 min. The interviewees are requested to complete a questionnaire (20 questions) related to the texts immediately after reading them, and they are asked to return the questionnaire and take the interview within 2 weeks. Each interview was expected to take 20–30 min, while the actual interview time ranges from 45 to 120 min. The interviews comprise detailed questions about the interviewees' reading experiences and perceptions of the two texts. Thus, a substantial amount of "raw" data is produced, and the transcribing also demands a substantial amount of work and time; hence, the participant sample is kept small.

Chapter 33 of *L&D* was selected as the sample chapter to investigate the reader responses for three reasons. First, the use of a complete chapter presented the respondents with a relatively complete story, which may have helped them understand the omissions within a specific context. Second, chapter 33 contains the most obvious omissions in the novel, as 41% of the original text is lost. Third, the chapter's omissions include all the primary omission categories in this study.

The historical background of this chapter is set from 1978 to 1982 and follows the end of the 10-year period of the Cultural Revolution. The chapter is narrated by a big-headed boy, Lan Qiansui, based on his memory of his reincarnation as a pig. In the form of a pig, Ximen returned to Ximen village. During the journey, the pig saw significant changes in people's lives, including in the land policy, the vindication of victims in the Cultural Revolution and the development of the individual economy. The main storyline is interspersed with several less relevant vignettes, the main narrative is often interrupted by the narrator's memories, comments or flights of imagination, and a substantial number of minor characters are introduced for the first time. A second narrator, Lan Jiefang, also contributes to the telling of the story and a conversation is formed between the two narrators.

3. Results

In the analyses, patterns were identified in relation to the omitted passages and the types of discrepancies between the original text and the English translation (see Appendix 1). The most evident discrepancies included the mitigation of political criticism, the deletion of minor and animal characters and the streamlining of plots. One example was selected, which was extensively referred to by the interviewees to explain how the omission reconstructed the ST in the TT culture. The results revealed the reconstruction of the ST through the textual omissions and the reception of the English version by the interviewees.

3.1. Omission, distortion, and reconstruction

Please see Appendix 2 for the excerpt discussed in this section. The focaliser of this excerpt is Ximen Pig, who travels back to Ximen Village after several years away. The changes in the village are reviewed through Ximen Pig's observations. The contextual background is that the Cultural Revolution has ended, and society is being transformed from a planned economy to a market economy. The individualistic economy that was banned during the Cultural Revolution is recovering gradually. Class and political status are no longer as important as they were and people who were marginalized, discriminated against or overthrown due to their political status have been vindicated. Most of the characters involved in this excerpt, with the exceptions of Qiuxiang and Huzhu, are minor characters who only appear in the novel to a limited degree. The changes in the political environment and the improvement of the economic conditions are reflected in these minor characters' conversations.

The consequences of omission will be explored in relation to the soften of political criticism, its enhancement of the diegetic storyline, the alteration of the events, the acceleration of the narrative tempo.

As a result of this omission, the presentation of the changes in the political and social environment is not as evident as in the ST. It is through the minor characters' conversation that the significant changes and emerging issue due to the economic transform are revealed. However, the TT places little emphasis on this aspect.

The omission alters the events that are being narrated. The plots that describe the situations of different villagers in the tavern are changed to Ximen Pig seeing Yang Qi go to the tavern. However, from another perspective, this omission filters out a substantial number of political terms that cannot be understood without knowledge of the cultural and historical background, probably not known to most English-speaking readers. Moreover, the omission of minor characters also reduces the number of Chinese names: the sudden presentation of several minor characters could be difficult for non-Chinese speakers. From this perspective, this omission could facilitate understanding of the novel.

The narration of ST is carried out on the extradiegetic, diegetic and intradiegetic levels. The extradiegetic stories focus on the two narrators' dialogue, the diegetic level concentrates on Ximen Pig's return to Ximen Village, and the intradiegetic stories concern the minor characters' conversations and activities in the tavern that Ximen Pig passes. The crowds in the tavern form the story at the intradiegetic level, which details and supplements the diegetic story. Through the radical omission of the story at the intradiegetic level, the diegetic narrative has been given greater clarity.

In the ST, Qiansui tries to reconstruct every detail in the tavern and presents the scene in a rich and detailed manner, which results in the story's pace slowing. However, the English translation presents an abridged version, with various characters and details omitted. The narrative time in the TT has been significantly reduced, and the pace is much faster. This multiplicity of perspectives gives depth and dimension to Mo Yan's narrative. In the English version, the roles of minor characters are considerably reduced. As much as possible, the translation favors a single narrative point of view. The linear narrative of the main storyline is strengthened.

3.2. Reception study: Perspectives from English-speaking readers

Through textual analysis, it can be observed that the ST's political criticism has been mitigated but not completely erased. The reception study reviews how the political messages and the omission are perceived by the interviewees. The results will be presented from the following perspectives: is the political criticism evident in the omitted version; how is political criticism detected and accepted; can the omission be noticed, and the justification for the omissions, and which version is preferred.

3.2.1. Interviewees' background

The standard of call-out volunteers was native English-speaking readers, brought up and educated in the West. The request for interviewees was distributed through the academic officer and secretary of one researcher's postgraduate university. It can be reasonably estimated that at least 700 individuals received the request and only 12 responded. From those who eventually completed the interview, eight of them were undergraduate students or held a bachelor's degree from either a UK or a US university and two of them held a master's degree from a UK university. It is interesting to note that all the interviewees had connections with China or Chinese culture; they were either taking courses in Chinese literature or Chinese history, had lived in or visited China in the past, or had Chinese relatives and friends. Nine of the interviewees could read Pinyin and seven could speak some Mandarin. The main significance of the response rate and the interviewees' backgrounds is that the sample represents an approximate percentage of English-speaking readers who may have an interest in reading Chinese novels. It is reasonable to suggest that the readership of the novel is most likely to be composed of people who are already interested in Chinese culture or who have investigated Chinese culture and politics in other ways.

3.2.2. Enhancing reading coherence: The reception of omitting political messages

The interview results reflect that the political text was not resisted by the interviewees. Even though the political criticism has been mitigated compared to the ST, it is evident for English-speaking readers. They could not understand all the critiques, but they could sense and did not resist the political messages.

As indicated by Figure 1, half of the interviewees believed that the political criticism is self-evident in Text A, 30% that it is somewhat clear, and 20% that the political criticism is only a little clear. The interviewees may not have understood which political movements are being referred to in the text or what is being criticized, but they could sense that political criticism is being presented. This confirms that political criticism in Text A is evident and can be detected by English-speaking readers.

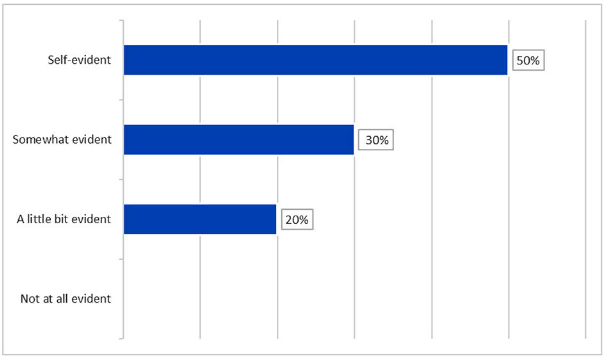

FIGURE 1
Is the political criticism evident in the omitted version (Text A)?

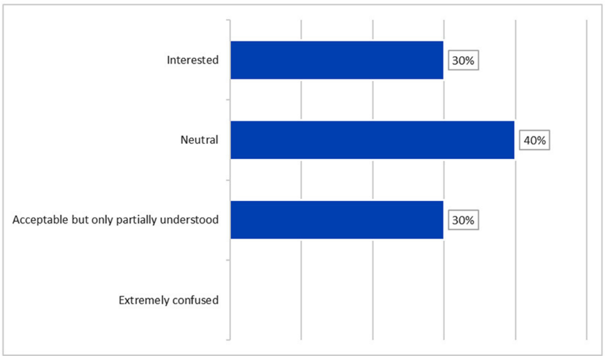

FIGURE 2
Responses to the political messages.

Even though the political criticism was detected by all the interviewees, their understandings may vary and the following question sought to further investigate whether the political terms are confusing.

Figure 2 indicates that the political messages are understandable, but to varying degrees for different interviewees. The political messages in Text B include the change of land policy, the vindication of the Cultural Revolution, and the emerging of market economy. In Text B, these two aspects of politics include references to expressions such as "revolution," "revisionism," and "people's commune", and the indirect presentations from the characters' casual conversations. The interviewees were asked from which information they were able to identify the criticism and if the political criticism in Text B is enhanced or diluted compared with Text A.

All the interviewees' responses reflect the idea that, compared with Text A, the political criticism in Text B is enhanced. The 70% interviewees without much Chinese historical background thought that the political criticism is enhanced, but it is through the characters' conversations which contain terms such as "revolution,"

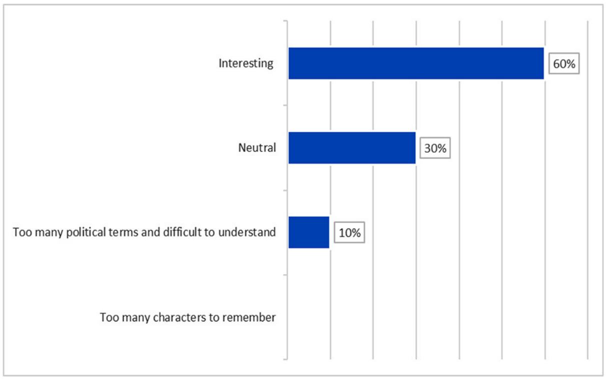

FIGURE 3
Interviewees' response to the description of minor characters.

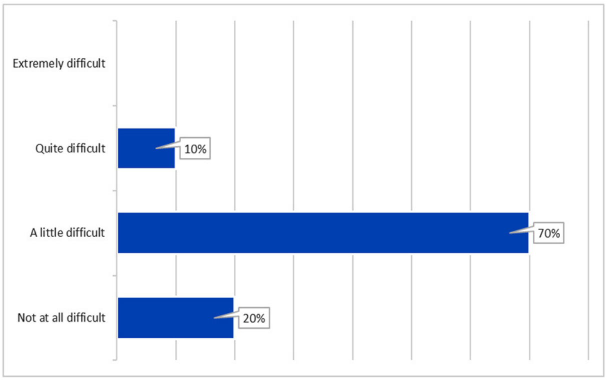

FIGURE 4
Does the number of Chinese names increase the difficulties of reading?

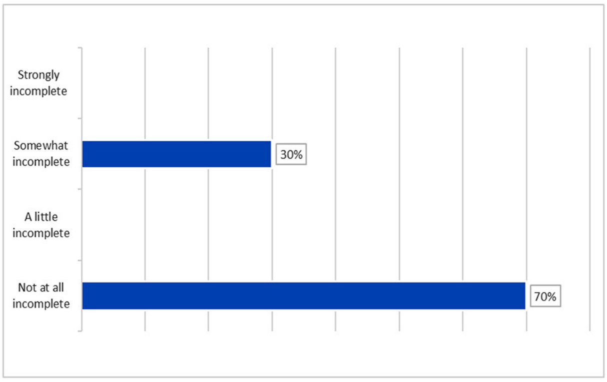

FIGURE 5
Did Text A feel incomplete at first reading?

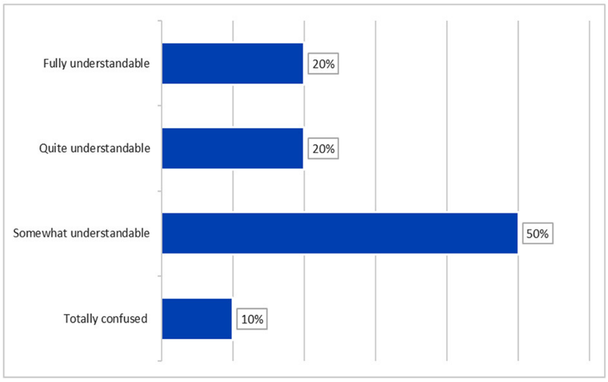

FIGURE 6
Are the omissions justified?

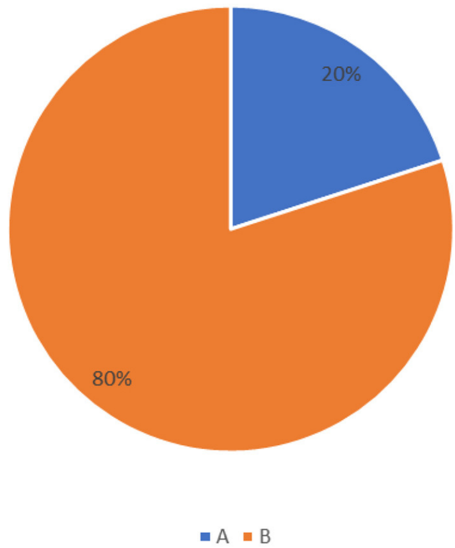

FIGURE 7
Which text do interviewees prefer?

"revisionism," and "Communist" that the direct presentations of Chinese political messages are to be found. In other words, they think the political criticism is enhanced because the text contains more political terms, rather than they understand the criticism. The 30% interviewees who had some knowledge of Chinese culture and history can understand the minor characters' conversation are related to historical background of China's economic transformation and reveals the emerging issues.

Even though all the interviewees agreed that the political criticism is more obvious in Text B than in Text A, they thought that cutting out some of the political messages would appeal to a broader audience that does not have prior knowledge of the historical context. The interviewees felt that for the average reader without a full understanding of the Chinese cultural and political messages, the political criticism in Text A is rich enough and that readers would likely be bored by too many political messages. Their responses also suggest that the ways in which the political messages are expressed in Text B will probably not be understood by the average English-speaking reader since, in English literature, criticism is usually more direct or sharp.

Therefore, from the perspective of native English-speaking interviewees, the omission of the political messages would facilitate their reading by removing potentially confusing text, and it seems that the text has been edited according to the norms of English poetics. The English version retains the political messages that are most clear to English-speaking readers and maintains a balance between political criticism and the readers' comprehension. The storyline is also streamlined through the omission of minor characters.

However, the negative side of these omissions is also evident. Those interviewees who had some knowledge of Chinese culture and history, or who were learning about the Chinese language, literature and culture, thought that the political messages in Text B are interesting, especially when these political criticisms are connected with their learning. These interviewees took a special kind of interest in these messages, as they regard the novel as a supplement for their textbooks and as presenting history from a different perspective showing stereotypes and representing people from different changing social classes. Apparently, for interviewees in this category, these omissions inevitably result in a loss of subtlety.

Substantial political criticism is expressed through these minor characters, who only appear once or twice in the entire novel. More than 10 such minor characters are introduced abruptly in this example and, through their conversations, the emergence of the market economy and the changes in people's lives after the Cultural Revolution are reflected. Therefore, the following question is designed to investigate all the interviewees' response to the minor characters.

As suggested by Figure 3, three interviewees (I7, I8, and I9) held a neutral attitude toward the minor characters; for them, while there is a lot of information presented in quick succession, they believe that it is difficult but not impossible to follow. Interviewee I7 found the dialogue of the minor characters interesting, but also that the omitted text is too long and that placing it in the chapter could be distracting. Six interviewees thought the description of the minor characters is interesting and adds to the story. The minor characters give them more of an insight into how the village functions, how people are being rehabilitated and how the Communist Party has changed. However, two interviewees (I1 and I3) emphasized that although the reading experience of minor characters is interesting, it is confusing that substantial minor characters are introduced. Even with a background in Chinese history, these two say that firstly, the detailed narrations of a huge number of minor characters are not common in English literature. I1 regarded that the minor characters in Text B provide a bundle of information, however, this will never be good literature by the standards of English literature. The second issue pointed out by I1 and I3 is that the number of Chinese names is a significant challenge and makes the text difficult to follow. In Jiang's studies of the reception of *Hong Lou Meng* in the English market, one anonymous reader comments "the translated novel is difficult to read because of the complexity of Chinese names to Western readers" (Jiang, 2007, p. 100). Inspired by Jiang's studies, there was a question designed to investigate the respondents' perception of Chinese names in the reading and the results are presented below.

Figure 4 indicates twenty per cent of the interviewees (I6 and I10) did not think that the Chinese names are a problem at all which could be attributed to their backgrounds facilitating their reading: one spoke fluent Mandarin and had studied Chinese history in China for a year and the other was raised in the US in a state with an Asian-influenced culture.

One out of the 10 interviewees (I5) felt that the large number of Chinese names rendered the text quite difficult to follow and that repeated reading is required to remember the relationships between the characters, even though this interviewee could read Pinyin. Interviewee I5 suggested if they were to read more of the book, they would be introduced to the characters more naturally and it may be easier to follow. However, it is worth noting that most of the minor characters in this novel appear only once or twice, with the function of supplementing the background information. Therefore, even if the interviewees were given the whole novel, some of the minor characters still only appear in this chapter, which makes this suggestion by the interviewee less tenable.

Most of the interviewees were of the opinion that the number of Chinese names makes it a little difficult to follow the text and to keep track of each character. The main difficulty being that all the Chinese names in the form of Pinyin looked similar to them because they are not familiar with Chinese names. One interviewee (I7) mentioned an interesting issue that, when reading English literature, even if I7 skims over names, the interviewee can still understand a lot of the story because the names are more familiar and, therefore, I7 can easily tell them apart without much effort. However, with the translated Chinese names since they are less familiar to English-speaking readers and look similar to each other, it is difficult to distinguish between them and remember each character and their relationships, which makes reading challenging. I7 mentioned having to go back and forth, which significantly influences the flow of the plotlines and the entertainment value of the novel. Even though 90% of the interviewees could read Pinyin, seven of them mentioned having to read the text several times to distinguish the characters and understand the relationships between them. Of the six interviewees who thought that the stories of minor acceptable are interesting, four of them thought it would be acceptable, or even better, to cut out some minor characters as it would help them to focus on the storyline.

Considering that the implicit political messages expressed through the minor characters were only perceived by three interviewees (I3, I6, I10), the omission seems to remove potential reading barriers and streamline the stories. Where the political criticism has been significantly reduced, the minor characters' storyline has become a series of separate stories of different minor characters. For 40% of the interviewees, this is not seen as a standard approach in English literature since too many characters are introduced abruptly. Thus, the omissions reflect an adaptation to the poetics of the target culture and facilitate the reading experience for the English-speaking audience.

Since 41% of the original chapter has been omitted, what the interviewees are actually reading in Text A is an extract from the original text. Therefore, it is worth investigating whether the incompleteness of Text A is detectable.

Figure 5 suggests seven of the interviewees' responses (70%) show that, when reading Text A, they believed it is a complete text.

Two interviewees (I1 and I5) thought that generally speaking, there are not many differences between Texts A and B; they see them as essentially the same story. These two interviewees regarded Text A as basic and passive, as it simply tells the readers what is happening and the descriptions are not as vivid as in Text B, which they thought was due to the writing style. The five other interviewees stated that Text B shows more detail, a more in-depth writing style and more fully developed characters. However, they viewed Text A as a complete story in its own right, not realizing that anything is missing until they read Text B.

Three interviewee responses indicated a view that Text A is incomplete. Among them, one (I2) stated, without giving specific examples, that the stories in Text A are too superficial. The other two interviewees (I3 and I8) specified places where they believe some of the text is missing—I3 mentioned the section about villagers watching TV, while I8 highlighted a conversation between the character Yang Qi and two villagers in a tavern. From reading Text A, they expressed surprise that the story stops suddenly and thus they assume that something must be missing, but they also stated that the other parts of the chapter seem to flow fluently and coherently.

These responses indicate that the effects of the omissions are technical; most of them appear to go unnoticed. Even though the full translation is more engaging and compelling and provides more details, Text A reads as a complete story according to most of the interviewees.

Translation is the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting and it projects the image of a work in another culture. To investigate the new image created by the omissions in the sample text (chapter 33), the following question for the interviewees concerned how they would introduce the novel to the English-speaking market based on their reading of Text A. It is assumed that the aspects the interviewees would choose to promote or emphasize are likely to be those that they find most appealing and view as characteristic of the novel.

All the interviewees' responses refer to this novel as showing the influence of Chinese political turmoil on Chinese individuals in the twentieth century as presented by a writer from China. However, they believe it necessary to highlight that, although it has a political theme, this novel is not a biography or a factual work about the time period, but a work of fiction set against the historical background of Chinese political movements. They consider that native English readers will be interested in Chinese politics, and especially in the criticism of communism by a Chinese author. Native English speakers who are interested in what happens in China tend to question the authenticity of works about Chinese politics and history by western authors, who may be biased or anti-communist. Six of the interviewees' responses suggested introducing this novel as a Chinese parallel to *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1945), which is more familiar to western readers, as this could provide readers with a context for understanding the novel.

These responses reveal two key points. Firstly, even though Mo Yan's political criticism has been mitigated significantly in Text A, it is still apparent to the English-speaking interviewees. Secondly, English-speaking readers are conscious of the remaining political messages and they are even regarded as an appealing feature. Therefore, the omission of political messages may not be due to ideological manipulation.

3.2.3. The justification of the omissions from the readers' perspective

This section will analyze the interviewees responses to the overall pattern of omissions in the text.

As indicated by Figure 6, only one interviewee (I2) indicated feeling totally confused by the omissions. This interviewee believes that Text B is much more representative and coherent and allows for more complete character development, which makes it much more interesting to read; and that Text B captures more of Mo Yan's story, allowing the reader to have as close an experience as possible to understanding the original Chinese text. This interviewee recognized that some of the cultural and political messages might be difficult for the average English-speaking reader to follow. However, the interviewee also believes that neither the translator nor the editor has the right to decide to edit these messages for the reader, but that the reader should be presented with a text that is as close to the ST as possible. If there are too many omissions and the text is changed too much, the readers will lose the fundamental meaning of the ST. Even if the full translation might not be as popular as the rewritten version, it would at least provide the readers with the essence of the ST. Moreover, this interviewee suggested that, if translators or western publishing companies continue to edit Chinese literature according to western cultural norms, the target readers will never really learn about Chinese culture or what Chinese authors are actually trying to convey to their audience and therefore, a false image of Chinese culture and literature will be reinforced.

Two of the interviewees (I3 and I5) are in agreement with the omissions. Furthermore, 20 and 50% of the interviewees think that the omissions are "quite" and "somewhat" understandable, respectively. In the interview responses, the reasons for these views are explained from two perspectives. Two interviewees (I6 and I7) understand why the omissions have been made, but they do not agree with the motivations for the rewriting. They argue that a translated work will be unreliable if the reader is actually being presented with an interpretation of the original text. The interviewees' justification of the omission is mainly from the following two aspects: reducing contingent difficulties through omission and adjusting to English language poetic standards through omission.

3.2.3.1. Reducing contingent difficulties through omission

The interviewees' responses indicate that the issue of contingent difficulties proposed by George Steiner (cited in Davis-Undiano, 2011, p. 22) plays an important role in the omissions. A contingent difficulty is referred to by Davis-Undiano (2011, p. 22) as the efforts to unpack and gloss the Chinese cultural and historical contexts of Mo Yan's work. As mentioned by most of the interviewees, the text is challenging to read and the novel will not be a popular book that everyone will read. The publisher of the English version, Arcade Publishing, is a commercial publisher specializing in world literature, hence, market share and the book's acceptability to a general readership are of great importance.

The omissions of the political messages are viewed as justified by 90% of the interviewees. For all the interviewees, the theme of political criticism is still evident in the omitted text. Although the interviewees are interested in reading about Chinese politics, some of the political messages are still too in-depth for most who lack the relevant background knowledge. The responses underscore the cultural gap in the process of literary translation and not all the information in the ST can be appreciated or accepted in another culture. When faced with too much information that they do not understand or are not familiar with the interviewees felt that the entertainment value of the novel is reduced. The most important features of an original novel may not be appreciated or even accepted by the target audience due to cultural differences.

In the case of *L&D*, certain background information is required for an understanding of many of the cultural and political messages as they both fall into the category of the "universe of discourse" (Lefevere, 1992, p. 87). The features of the "universe of discourse" are particular to a given culture—they can include specific objects that exist or have special symbolic meanings in the relevant culture and unique expressions, values or conventions shared by groups with common cultural identities. They are important components of the ST; however, not all such features can necessarily be accepted or understood by TT readers in the same way as ST readers view them. Based on the results of the questionnaire and interviews, the appreciation of political messages in *L&D* is based on the reader's pre-existing knowledge. Therefore, these types of omission are justified from the perspective of contingent difficulty.

3.2.3.2. Adjusting to English-language poetic standards through omission

One view that was frequently mentioned in the interview responses was that "this [Text B] is not the way that English literature is supposed to be" (I1), referring to features including the tone of social criticism and the minor characters. In other words, the differences in terms of poetics were deemed as noticeable by all the interviewees. Thus, their different attitudes toward these omissions are related to their openness to the ST and whether they are willing to read a novel differently from works they habitually read.

Goldblatt has defended himself with the proviso that some of the rewriting decisions in this translation were not made by him, but by the book's editors after the completion of his work (Goldblatt, 2004; Ge, 2011; Goldblatt and Efthimiatou, 2012). The editors were native English speakers with little or no knowledge of the Chinese language and no access to the original Chinese novels and they evaluated the translated work against English-language standards rather than those used by the translator. Therefore, the only standard that they could have applied for their editorial work was to ensure that Mo Yan's stories read fluently in English to increase their market share.

Based on the interviewees' responses, the omissions help the flow of the text and make it easier to read. This strongly reflects Venuti's argument that "Anglo–American cultures are aggressively monolingual, unreceptive to the foreign and accustomed to fluent translations that invisibly inscribe foreign texts with English-language values and provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in other cultures" (1995, p. 15). There is no doubt that these omissions have tailored the original text to something closer to what a novel is expected to be like in English, which might attract more English-speaking readers. As suggested by Venuti (1995, p. 17), the cultural capital of the foreign values has been diminished in the English version of the novel, thus presenting English-speaking readers with a false perception of a Chinese novel. The omissions undoubtedly facilitate reading; however, it is worth considering whether the original text has to be rewritten radically in the tradition of western literature in order to promote Chinese literature for the target audience of the translated novel and whether the readers appreciate such omissions.

3.2.4. Interviewees' preferences between the sample texts

As suggested by Figure 7, seventy per cent of interviewees believed that Text A reads as a complete text and the omissions were justified by 90% of the interviewees. However, when asked which version they prefer, surprisingly 80% of the interviewees state a preference for reading Text B.

Only two interviewees (I1 and I5) stated a preference for Text A. In their responses to the previous questions, both of these interviewees thought that Text A read as complete and viewed the omissions as either quite or fully understandable. Their other responses indicate that they also view almost every omission as justified. They think that Text A is a lot more passive, but they perceive this writing approach as more reflective of a work of social criticism within English literature because the writing style is more formal and less colloquial with less use of informal dialect. They viewed some of the original passages included in Text B as enjoyable and entertaining, but they do not see them as representing the style of a work of social criticism in English literature. Additionally, they stated that the storyline in Text A is clearer, while Text B seems less well organized and the characters' names also cause difficulties in terms of their understanding of the text. Most importantly, these two interviewees are more concerned with the storylines, especially the social criticism aspect; they do not object to the translator or editor rewriting the text to facilitate the reading process. While they acknowledged that the more faithful translation retains more of the Chinese cultural elements in the novel, they think these contents are unlikely to be understood by the average English-speaking reader and may become obstacles to the reading experience. In other words, these interviewees would not object if they missed out on some details from the original work as long as they could read the main stories about Chinese culture in the English text. Moreover, in response to the previous questions about their attitudes toward political messages, they also shared the view that they are not specifically interested in political themes, but that they find reading stories set against the backdrop of political movements acceptable. From these responses, it is reasonable to speculate that, for native English speakers who are more interested in the main plotlines, the omissions provide them with an easy-to-read and linear story.

Among the eight interviewees who preferred Text B, only one of them was completely confused by the omissions, while the other seven understood their necessity to varying degrees. It is interesting to investigate why the interviewees who justify the omissions prefer reading Text B.

Three interviewees' preferences for reading Text B is more related to their attitude toward the translated work. Interviewee I3 thought the description of minor characters was not thorough at first reading, I6 felt that the social critique in Text A is superficial, while interviewee I7 regarded Text A as complete at first reading and would be happy to read Text A if they did not know there was a Text B. None of these interviewees viewed all the ST information as being of value, as it makes the text harder to read and they even find some of the elements omitted from Text A to be boring and irrelevant. However, they still preferred Text B because it contains information that they do not think should be omitted. They hold the view that, if they are reading a book, they want to read it as the original author intended. They do not think that the translator or editor should sacrifice the information in the original text just to facilitate the reading experience; readers should have the right to decide what information they want to read.

The other five interviewees preferred Text B, considering it more informative due to the presentation of minor characters. With these features, the text provides a more detailed description of Chinese society in the 1980s and the language is more vivid. In Text B, the tone of the story is more frantic and comedic, which fits in well with the narrators and the characters being described. Even though there is more dialogue, and it may feel less like traditional literature, the interviewees who preferred Text B thought of it as more skillfully written because the language better suits the characters. The text convincingly reveals the author's build-up of the story and these interviewees were intrigued by the multiple layers of the storyline. For these interviewees, there was also great appeal in the supplementary Chinese politics and history information which adds depth to the story.

It is notable that, although 90% of interviewees maintained the omissions are justified, at least 50% of them preferred Text B for literary reasons. It is therefore worth reconsidering the potential readership and their expectations for this novel. As Jiang (2007) observed, from the 1830s to the 1960s there have been 11 versions of the English translation of *Hong Lou Meng* (Cao and Gao, 1982). The original novel has been adapted to meet a different group of readers for a different purpose, such as learning Chinese culture, entertainment and academic studies. McDougall (2007, p. 22) suggested the hypothetical readership of translated Chinese literature comprise three types: the committed reader, the interested reader, and the disinterested reader. The committed reader refers to the English-language readers with an existing commitment to learning about China, especially those with general cultural interest in China; the interested readers are those Chinese-language readers learning written English; Chinese-language or English-language academics in literary and translation studies; literary critics; the disinterested readers are English-language readers with universalistic expectations of literary values. According to McDougall (2007, p. 23), the disinterested readers are representative of the English-language readers of Chinese works in general. They have their own norms, conventions and preferences as regards what they are willing to read, not so much in term of content but in terms of readability and they seek understanding rather than information.

Based on their interview responses, the interviewees can be divided into three categories. The first, (I1 and I5), focused only on the story itself; they do not have a particular interest in politics, either in China or their own home countries, but they are interested in the stories about the main characters—or, to use one interviewee's own (I5) words, they "rushed to the ending of the characters and stories". The first category is like the disinterested readers in McDougall's classification. The interviewees in the second category (I3, I6, I7, and I9) have all studied or read Chinese history and politics intensively, especially the periods of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. They are curious as to how these historical periods are perceived by ordinary people in China and thus, while they enjoy the story, they are more interested in the novel's political themes. The interviewees in the third category (I2, I8, and I10) also have some background knowledge of Chinese history and politics, and they are interested in Chinese culture and the structure of Chinese novels. They regard the sample chapter as an excerpt from a larger literary work and wish to immerse themselves in the stories. They are not familiar with all the political and cultural messages in Text B, but they are willing to learn more and they believe that filtering out these cultural and political messages creates a false image of Chinese culture. Their preference between the texts is thus closely related to their background knowledge and their main interests in reading a novel.

Apparently, the omissions satisfy the expectations of those in category one, with the streamlining of the main plots, the removal of minor characters, the chronology of the storylines and the filtering of political that would require additional background knowledge. For the interviewees in the second and third categories, even though they can understand why omissions have been made and most of them even thought that Text A was complete until they read Text B, their interest lies more in the original text for varying reasons, including wanting to know more about Chinese culture and literature. Goldblatt assumes that his target readership consists primarily of English-speaking readers with an interest in China or Chinese culture but who know little about China (Ji, 2009). In this regard, the published version should be received as more acceptable by the potential readership.

The purpose of these omissions might be to appeal to more English readers who are interested in stories that take place in China. From this perspective, the omissions do facilitate the reading of the novel, however, based on the interviewees of this study, this kind of reader would represent a relatively small proportion of the audience. Most of the novel's English-speaking readers are likely to already have an interest in Chinese culture and politics rather than to know little or nothing about it. Sixty percent of our interviewees suggested that the discussion of politics by the ordinary characters should be retained even though they feel that the number of Chinese names impedes their understanding. Moreover, the potential readers of this translated novel are also likely to take an interest in other elements of Chinese culture. For example, interviewee I8 searched online for the classical novels as well as the political movements mentioned in Text B. Even though this interviewee was not already familiar with the cultural and political messages, the interviewee was interested to learn more through reading about them. Interviewees I2, I3, I6, and I10 have some background knowledge in Chinese history and stated that, compared to factual textbooks, the discussion of politics in Text B has supplemented their understanding of the movements that form the chapter's setting. Interviewee I2 thought that Text A is superficial and more than 50% of the interviewees regarded the language in Text A as passive and less engaging. The omitted text might read as complete and be more appealing to general readers without relevant background knowledge; however, for those readers who want to learn more about Chinese culture through reading the novel, the omitted version deprives them of the opportunity to appreciate some of the subtlety and the in-depth reflections within the ST.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The omissions clearly indicate that the published English version reconstructs the ST according to the English poetic conventions of a novel with political critique. The omissions also reflect the conflict and compromise between the poetics of the ST and the TT.

For most general readers of the text, as Goldblatt assumes that general American readers are curious but have little or no knowledge of Chinese culture (Shu, 2005; Ji, 2009), the translation strikes an artful balance between maintaining the characteristics of the ST and considering the receptive acceptance of the target readership. The justifications given for the omissions emphasize their role in facilitating reading from the perspectives of both content and poetics. The content of *L&D* requires a certain amount of cultural and historical background knowledge to comprehend, especially with respect to political criticism. This justification reflects the effect that the universe of discourse has on the appreciation and understanding of work integrated from another culture. In accordance with this, due to the omissions, the selected chapter reads more like a novel of political criticism than it should, according to English standards.

An interesting discovery is that despite the omissions mitigate the political criticism, the English-speaking interviewees observed that there is substantial political criticism, and they would like to introduce the novel to other English-speaking readers as a novel reflecting and criticizing Chinese politics. Even though the interviewees may have little or no knowledge about the related political movements and critiques, they regarded the political critiques as evident. On the contrary, the political criticism expressed through euphemism and the indirect mimicking of political slogans and rhetoric inherent to the specific period was only understood by the 20% of the interviewees who had previously studied Chinese history and politics. Most interviewees without this cultural and historical background knowledge were unaware of or uncertain about the parody and therefore regarded the satire expressed through the minor characters as irrelevant stories appearing out of nowhere. This confused them and led them to question the author's competence. From the perspective of the ST, the omission of political critique is ultimately a distortion and loss. However, from the perspective of TT readers, the omission of political messages smooths the reading and strikes a balance between the political criticism in the ST and the receptive acceptance of the target readership. It is through the omission that the original text approaches the target readership by a more acceptable and accommodative route. On the one hand, the critical function of the literary text does not necessarily come from the content alone; on the other hand, the detailed translation of the political content distracts the target readership.

Besides simplification of content, the omissions also accommodate the works within the parameters of what an English political criticism novel is supposed to be according to the opinion of English-speaking readers. The narrative structure of the original novel has often been viewed as highly complex (Goldblatt, 2014; Knight, 2014). The narration by the protagonists and the development of the main storyline are often interrupted by substantial interpolation of minor characters and animal characters. Overall, the contents of these aspects of the novel were not difficult to follow, but the way in which the content was organized differed from the interviewees' expectations based on their reading habits, which added reading difficulty, leading to them feel distracted.

Based on the results of the questionnaire and interviews, it has been found that 70% of the interviewees could not tell that the published English version was incomplete, even though 40% of the original text was omitted. In other words, even though a substantial amount of text was omitted, the story was viewed as complete, clear and concise to these native English-speaking readers. Therefore, the omitted version is more suitable for the general English readership. The life of the ST has thus been prolonged within the target culture by its being made more accessible through distortion to the general readership. The omissions have resulted in a reconstruction of the ST, creating a more reader-friendly text by anticipating the target readers' reading habits and overall understanding of another culture.

However, it should be noted that Chinese novels and literature may be misunderstood and lose their uniqueness in the long term in western markets. For the readers who have a strong interest in Chinese culture, history, political critique and the structure of the novel, the omissions lead to the loss of original characteristics. Sang (2011) warns that, in the long-term, this method of translation would lead to the loss of characteristics of Chinese literature. Furthermore, the dissemination of translated Chinese works might create a vicious circle in which a false impression of Chinese literature is reinforced. Those who want to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and society through reading will thus be deprived of the opportunity to do so here.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/Supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

JG contributed to the original idea, the manuscript, the collection, and analysis of the data. DZ contributed to the final approval of the version to be published and ensured the accuracy and completeness of the thesis.

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The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

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Understanding the multi-sign communication system: A study on Peking Opera stage translation

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Peking Opera is an artist-centered art rather than a director-centered one, and its true significance lies in its stage performance. However, the realization of the meaning of the "Performance Text" is the result of the joint action of different sign systems. Therefore, translators engaged in the stage translation of Peking Opera must understand the meaning and operation mechanism of this multi-sign system. From the perspective of semiotics of theater and drama, this paper deconstructs the Peking Opera sign system and divides them into several subsystems, describes in detail the characteristics of each secondary system, especially their semiotization process, their manners of meaning transmission, the rules of interaction among them, and finally presents the meaning generation and communication mechanism of this "Performance Text". On this basis, the paper clarifies that the main tasks and challenges faced by translators engaged in Peking Opera stage translation which are they should not only translate the language but also need to find time and space to realize the transformation of the meaning of the non-verbal sign system.

KEYWORDS

stage translation, multi-sign communication system, Peking Opera, semiotization, foregrounding

1. Introduction

Theater contains two aspects: script and stage performance, which greatly increases the difficulty of its translation. After a failed attempt to deconstruct the underlying "action text" of the script, Bassnett (2001, p. 92) points out that the ideal theatrical translator should be not only a language expert, but also a theatrical expert, as well as a director and an actor. Translating the performance is a job that she believes is completely beyond the translator's abilities and that "only a "Superman" can do it". Therefore, she advocates theater translation researchers to return to script translation and do the linguistic work that translators are good at, instead of interfering in the subsequent performance issues.

Such advocacy has been echoed by many scholars. In China, famous translators usually choose to translate classical plays with high literary value, such as the Chinese translation of Shakespeare's plays (Lv and Tang, 2002; Gu, 2019) and the English translation of the *Peony Pavilion* (Zhang, 2014; Pan and Yang, 2017), etc. These translators focus on dealing with various language phenomena in the dramatic text, and strive to fully show the literary nature of the original works to please the readers. There are also translators who provide language services for stage productions. These translators usually finish their works in a very short period of time (mainly providing the framework of the story and the cultural context of the script), and then hand the translation to the theater, where the director and actors adapt the translation to the actual demands of the stage performance, in which the translator's identity is barely visible (Brodie, 2018). However, we might be alert to this mode of translation that ignores stage performance, especially when the translation of stage performance takes place in different countries and faces a theater with a completely different tradition. Pan and Zhang (2009) pointed out that the first step of stage translation study is to clarify the concept of the it and its particularity. If the value of a theater is more reflected in its stage performance, the translator should not shirk his or her responsibility and only translate the written text of little value, but should challenge the job that only "superman" can be qualified for.

2. The significance of Peking Opera lies in its stage performance

Peking Opera is a unique theatrical form in China, combining music, dance, poetry, martial arts, painting and other art forms. It was born in the era of transition from literati-led drama creation to actor-led stage performance. As actors play the leading role in creation, Peking Opera has three typical characteristics: (1) The scrips are hard to be considered as literary works. Peking Opera stories, most of which are popular among their audiences, are mostly loose frameworks with no fixed author, and actors can change the scripts at will according to the actual needs of their performances. When the same play has different lead actors, the scripts used are also very different. In fact the script is ultimately formed at the end of the stage performance as its appendage. Liao and Liu (2006, p. 296) believes that "it is no longer of great significance to discuss Peking Opera scripts solely from the literary perspective". (2) Peking Opera is an artist-centered art rather than director-centered art. The most attractive part is the superb performance skills of those famous actors on the stage. (3) Peking Opera is a kind of nonrealistic theatrical form with a highly abstract stage performance. The music, actions, props, costumes, etc. on the stage have gone through a complex process of semiotization, forming their own unique ways of expression. Those who are not familiar with these rules cannot enjoy the performance well. Take a very important hand property- the "horse whip" as an example, it is only a baton with tufts of fringe indicating that the actor carrying it was riding a horse. However it is very hard for foreign audiences to understand this without knowing this specific performance tradition. So translators need to explain the function of this baton for audiences to help them to get a better understanding of the performance text. As Zhang (2021) pointed out, the object of Peking Opera translation is the performance rather than the script. Translators must face the challenges of intersemiotic translation.

3. The meaning and operation mechanism of the performance text

In order to translate a stage performance, the translator should first understand the generation mechanism of meaning and its final realization process, which should begin with the perspective of theater composition in semiotics of theater and drama. Mukarovsky (1976) used the terms "signifier" and "signified" by Saussure, regarding sign as a two-faced entity linking a material vehicle or signifier with a mental concept or signified. He pointed out that all the sign systems in the theater constitute a whole, namely "signifier" (ensemble of material elements), and "signified" (aesthetic object) exists in the public collective consciousness for aesthetic purposes. Performance Text is actually a "Macro sign" whose significance lies in its overall effect and acceptance depends on the audience's aesthetic knowledge. This point of view emphasizes the necessity of all components for the formation of the overall meaning. At the same time, it also regards the audience as the decisive factor for the ultimate realization of meaning, that is, the meaning of theater is equal to the meaning constructed by all of the sign systems as well as the audience's response. According to this, we can try to give the meaning- generation process of the performance text of Peking Opera:

Like Figure 1 shows, all the sign systems on the stage have their own meanings and functions. They sometimes express meanings separately on the stage, and sometimes combine with others to form a text with very complicated meanings. In any case, these sign systems must follow specific aesthetic rules to generate a complete stage meaning. Audiences can finally complete the communication process by understanding the stage meaning conveyed by the sign systems under the predetermined aesthetic rules, and then the meaning of the performance text is finally realized. Ideally the meaning of the performance text should be equal to the actual meaning of the stage. However,due to the different perception abilities of the audience (they are not all theater experts), the meaning of the performance text is usually less than the meaning generated by the actual performance of the stage. So in order to realize the meaning of the performance text, the translator needs to help audiences of the target language to understand the meaning of each sub-sign system on the stage and the conventional rules (Zhang, 2020).

4. Classification of the sign system of Peking Opera

Karel (1976) first divided Chinese theater signs into two categories from the perspective of semiotics: one is visual signs related to dramatic space, specifically including props, costumes and makeup, as well as actions, gestures and expressions belonging to the performance space; The other is the auditory signs connected with dialogue, music and sound, including dramatic speeches, singing and music. Unfortunately, this division did not clearly explain which sign systems are more important than others, and his analysis ignored the correlation between various systems. For example, the relationship between lyrics and music in the dialogue or singing was hardly mentioned. This classification is a physical division, which ignores the organic relationship between the primary system and the secondary system, and limits the translator's ability to deconstruct the meaning of the performance text.

In fact, the stage performance of Peking Opera has its own traditional classification: sing, speech, dance-acting, and combat. It not only reflects the four most essential aspects of the Peking Opera art, but also reflects the most important sign systems of it and their relationships, namely, the language system, the action sign system and the musical sign system. The language system is not in the dominant position in the whole system. However, this ancient classification deriving from actors' experience makes it easy for translators to ignore the secondary but highly significant sign

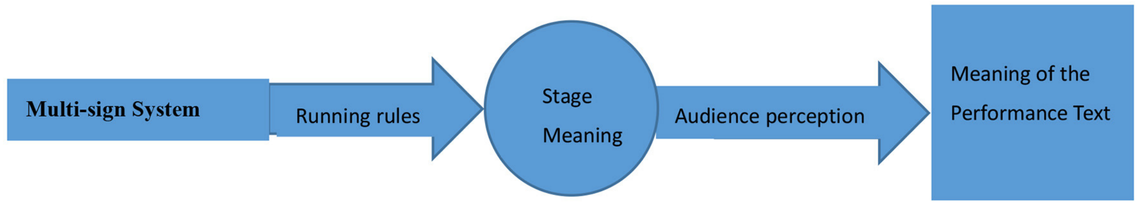

FIGURE 1
The meaning generating process of the performance text.

systems, like props, clothing and makeup, and then ignore some translation tasks.

Zhang's classification was finally selected in the article. It includes the dynamic semiotic group, like language, music, and action, and the static sign group like clothing, props and makeup (Zhang, 1988). This classification not only highlights the dominant position of language, action and music of the whole system, but also emphasizes the interaction between the two sign groups, that is, the static sign group can only play a role if it is attached to the dynamic semiotic group. At the same time, it also allows the translators to pay their attention to the meaning generation process of the sign systems such as clothing, props and makeup, and is very helpful to clarify the translator's tasks. On the one hand, translators will pay attention to the influence of the actors' movements and music rhythm on the lyrics translation. For example, instead of simply giving the sentence meaning like Arlington's translation "But I am too poor and can think of no other means of supporting myself in old age" (Arlington, 1973). Yao (1936) converted the lyrics from a declarative sentence into a rhetorical question according to the actual performance of the stage actors—"But I am poor and wretched, and I have a family to feed. What shall I do? (1. He hears a deep sigh and moves toward the (invisible)door).", the purpose of which is to echo the actors' actions such as the soaring pitch, shaking beard (also considered as a prop on the stage), rotating his head and sighing when they sing this sentence. The translated lyrics show a consistent state with the expressive force of music and actor's movement. On the other hand, translators will pay attention to the semantic confusion caused by the conventionality of static symbols, and will find appropriate time and space to explain the meaning of the conventionality of them. For example, when Mei Lanfang performed in the United States, his team drew and translated pictures of Peking Opera costumes and put them on display in the hall before the performance in order to help American audiences understand in advance the specific meaning of the static costume symbols in the Peking Opera stage.

5. Semiotization of the non-linguistic sign systems

In addition to convoluted language, other sign systems are not easy to understand. This is because Peking Opera is different from those realistic theatrical forms in that its stage performance is highly abstract. The non-linguistic sign systems have all gone through the process of semiotization with fixed operating rules. Many movements in Peking Opera tend to be purely choreographic. They are highly semioticalized after a complicated processing by the actors. There is no trace of imitation between the signifier and the signified, which causes a lot of difficulties to understand theirs meaning. For example, the movement of Qiba (起霸) is composed of three leg raising, cloud hand, leg kicking, leg crossing, horse crouching, sleeve adjusting, armor tightening and other basic movements. This not only gives the audience the visual beauty, but also represents the exact meaning of the plot, which shows the scene of ancient military officers putting on the whole armor, being ready to go to battlefield, and also highlights the fighting atmosphere on the stage.

The singing section in Peking Opera is called the Banqiang (板腔)-form musical structure. "It is a kind of singing based on a kind of tone, considering different lyrics and performance requirements, and then develops from various aspects such as plank, tune, singing method, accompaniment, etc." (Liu, 1981, p. 415). Tunes with different rhythms are called different names.The names only work for those who are familiar with them.

Peking Opera does not use language to shape characters, but uses color to convey meaning. Audiences acquire this meaning through the visual system. Color is the standard "language" of the performance text. The facial makeup makes full use of the value of the color. The expression of different levels of meaning through the combination of different colors is particularly prominent in the facial makeup of Peking Opera. The meaning of color is established by convention. Red represents loyalty, yellow represents scheming but not revealing, black represents loyalty, bravery and simplicity, and white represents complete moral negation. The use of different colors can reflect the characters' temperament, physique, loyalty or treachery. For example, the Peking Opera actor who plays Cao Cao (a character in the *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*) only uses white all over his face, showing his treacherous and suspicious character. Actors often use color combinations to paint faces to represent a person with multiple personalities. In addition, the color of the face will also change with the changes of the same character's experience.

The props of Peking Opera are also different from real life appliances. Like the costumes, they are stage appliances that have been beautified by artistic exaggeration and decoration. Zhang (1988) believes that Beijing Opera props can hardly show their stage significance independently. If no actors appear, the props may be meaningless. That is to say, the independent ideographic function of the props is not strong. For example, a table may express the physical meaning of the table, but its meaning will be constantly deformed with the development of the plot, extending to the stage meaning of mountains, earth platforms, gorgeous palaces, etc. Another example goes to horsewhip. Only after the appearance of the actors, it can refer to the horses, and the color of horses can be judged according to the decorative color of the whip. In the specific performance, the number of stage props can convey multiple meanings, mainly because the props sign system is ingeniously combined with other sign systems to build a constantly changing space-time framework. At the same time, the high degree of semiotizaion of props is precisely reflected in the phenomenon of "polysemy" of props that changes with the context.

6. Foregrounding of the sign system

Foregrounding, as opposed to automation, refers to the non-automation of behavior. If a behavior occurs naturally, audience's awareness of this is relatively weak. However, if a behavior is foregrounded, audience will have more awareness of it. "When dramatic signs change and produce a sense of strangeness instead of automation, the audience will be prompted to pay attention to this sign carrier and its operation" (Elam, 2002, p. 17–18). In the process of semiotization of the nonverbal sign systems, sound, action, color and clothing are very different from daily life, which is the manifestation of the foregrounding of a single sign.

However, the stage performance is more about the joint transmission of meaning by multi-sign system, especially in its vocal performance. This is because the most wonderful part of the performance is the singing of the actors, and the vocal text contains almost all sign systems. When multi-sign systems express meanings together, there will be a foreground-background structure by Mukarovsky. The components in the foreground structure are aesthetic signs, which are also the meanings that the performance wants to convey the most, while the components in the background structure becomes the secondary part that doesn't get the attention of the audience. In the singing segment, the musical sign system and the rhythm spectrum of linguistic system are foregrounded, while other signs like the actors' movement, the customs they are wearing or prop they are using become secondary. This is because the development of the story is usually driven by the use of dialogue. When the dialogue was changed into the singing performance, the audience will start to focus on the aesthetic aspects of the music and rhythm of the lyrics and their attention will move on to the actor himself or herself instead of the plot of the story. That is why many Peking Opera singers will try their best to expand the limited stage space and time in order to fully foreground the music and the rhythm of the lyrics. When singing adagio, they can even last the sound of seven Chinese character lyrics for a minute. The translator must seize this time expansion to convey to the audience the aesthetic significance of the musical sign system or the characteristics of the lyrics, or both, instead of just following the so-called drama translation principle—"Performability" making the lines more speakable or be understood by audience in shorter time. Take the translation of a lyric from *Farewell my Concubine* (William, 1978) as an example.

TABLE 1 Two different translated versions of Farewell my Concubine.

Chinese	Version 1 (translated by William Dolby)	Version 2 (an online translator)
看大王在帐中合衣睡稳	I see the Great King, fully clothed, soundly sleeping there,	In the tent, my lord is asleep with his armor on
我这里出帐外且散愁情	I leave the tent to try and dispel my sorrows in the open air.	I'll take a walk and try to dispel my worries
轻移步走向前荒郊站定	Tiptoeing forward, until I halt in the wild, empty land, I stand there, still	Gentle are my steps in this wilderness
猛抬头见碧落月色清明	and suddenly looking up, I see in its cerulean dwelling the bright moon shining clear.	I look up and see the moon, cold, and bright

As can be seen from Table 1, translators adopt completely different ways to deal with the same lyrics. To determine which treatment is more appropriate for stage performance, we need to consider the relationship of the lyrics to other sign systems on the stage. Beijing Opera lyrics should be sung in a certain musical structure, and the performers should make corresponding actions according to the meaning of the words. The characters in the lyrics should also be arranged according to the rhythmic requirements of Chinese poetry, and time and space restrictions should also be considered. The style of the music usually determines how long the words are presented on stage. If the presentation time is short, the translation of the lyrics must be popularized to facilitate the audience's quick understanding. However, this verse is performed in the style of Nanbangzi (a relatively slow rhythm), and the verse has enough time to be seen by the audience, so the rhythm of the verse should be preserved in the translation process. In addition, the actor's movements and words should be highly matched. Translating the Chinese lyrics, we will find the beginning of the first sentence means "I see", the second "I see", the third "walk gently", and the fourth "look up suddenly". When actors sing them, they will make the corresponding beautifying actions according to the stylized performance requirements. Therefore, it is very easy for us to say that version 1 is more suitable, while in reality version 2 is used as the subtitle translation of this performance, which is really a pity.

7. Conclusion

As mentioned above, translators engaged in Peking Opera translation should deal with the performance text, and the final performance text is formed in the process of its stage performance. Therefore, the most meaningful translation of Peking Opera is to translate its theater, that is, to provide subtitle translation for the Beijing Opera digital products or do surtitle translation in the real performance. Knowing the features and meanings of signs on the stage and the meaning generation process of the multi-sign performance text is very important for translators who are doing these. They will not just translate the lyrics and the dialogues between the characters, nor will they simply deal with the lyrics colloquially following the principle of "performability" derived from drama translation practices. In fact, a new principle should be generated for this group of translators:

At the first stage, translators could read professional books talking about specific terms of Beijing Opera in order to help themselves to have a deep understanding of each sign system in the performance text. On this basis they could then eliminate those signs with lower semiotization degree, which can be easily understood by the audiences without paying too much cognitive cost. Then their attention will focus on identifying signs that cannot be understood by foreign audience and explain them in a reasonable way. Of course, although the actions with low semiotizaion degree are easy to be understood, the aesthetic principles they are following still need to be explained to the audience in advance.

Secondly, when translators deal with the most frequently appeared part—the singing section which includes several different sign systems, they can make full use of the "foregrounding" theory to decompose the multi-layered meanings finding their translation priorities in order to convey the most important meanings to the audiences within the limited time and space on the stage. For example if a singing section lasts about 8 min but with only eight words, it is obvious that the translators cannot just translate the words but they can and should make good use of the time to add information related with the music style, the actor's performance style and the rhythm of the poetic language.

Thirdly, it is impossible for translators to explain every details of those signs which are conventionalized in Chinese culture in such a limited performing time even though their meanings are very important for audience to fully enjoy the show. So to expand the audience's knowledge of Peking Opera, mainly including the basic knowledge required to watch a play, such as the principles of Peking Opera stage performance, scene characteristics, and stylized rules, they may need to search different channels to distribute the translated knowledge of Peking Opera to the audience usually before the real performance, so that they can understand and appreciate the basic meaning and aesthetic significance of the performance text as much as possible in the process of watching the show restricted by time and space.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

JZ: design the structure of the paper and write it. DZ: provide suggestions and give instructions on writing it. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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