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Pellatt, Valerie, Liu, Eric T. and Chen, Yalta Ya-Yun (2014). *Translating Chinese Culture: The Process of Chinese-English Translation*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 191, £26.99. ISBN 978-0-415-69313-4.

This book is published as a follow up to *Thinking Chinese Translation: a course in translation method: Chinese to English* (1) by Valerie Pellatt and Eric T. Liu (2010), which covers a broad range of translation topics. *Translating Chinese Culture* addresses the challenges of translation from different areas (modern and contemporary art, characters and calligraphy, clothes, nursery rhyme, poetry and literature, drama and films), with an emphasis on the culture and arts of China. Driven by the idea of “understanding a text in a way that goes beyond the words” (Pellatt and Liu, 2010), this volume stresses the importance of the comprehensibility of a translated text by target readers.

This book is organised into nine chapters according to the areas of expertise. Each chapter covers a different aspect of Chinese-English translation, but all chapters share a similar structure: first, a general introduction about the subject matter is provided; secondly a discussion of translating methods and strategies used in the analysis of related examples is given and thirdly, it contains a few practical exercises at the end of each chapter, except in chapter 9, in which a case study is used to illustrate the technical and linguistic challenges of subtitling. The greatest attribute of this book lies in that it provides a broad cultural context of Chinese-English translation and adopts a large amount of sample texts to make the illustration of translation skills vivid and visualised.

The first three chapters discuss matters that represent the very roots of Chinese national and individual identity: painting, Chinese characters and calligraphy. Chapter 1 explores the traditional approach of painting through artists’ own descriptions of their motivations, ways of working and inner processes. Words from two of the best-known Chinese traditional painters: Qi Baishi and Wu Guanzhong are provided as example texts. This is followed by discussions of how these texts might best be rendered into English. At the end, the translation of the meta-discourse of contemporary art is discussed.

The second and third chapters examine the art of writing and calligraphy. Chapter 2 starts with “an exploration of the ideological debate surrounding simplified and traditional characters and the strong sense of national and cultural identity associated with the writing of Chinese characters” (10). The

focus of identity then shifts to women to look at a traditional and formerly secret handwriting system: “women’s writing” and its linguistic and aesthetic qualities. Chapter 3 explores “the mechanics of calligraphy, including manual operations and tools and the spiritual and psychological implications of calligraphic practice” (10). Two kinds of calligraphy styles: Liu Gongquan and New Wei Style are introduced, which is followed by a discussion of how to translate calligraphic texts. This chapter concludes with a case study of the Buddhist practice of copying scriptures.

Some of the previously less researched areas are also addressed in this volume. Chapter 4 looks at the intricacies involved in translating clothing and costume in ancient and modern contexts. Chapter 5 deals with the translation of nursery rhymes. While nursery rhyme plays an important role in disseminating traditional values in a modern world, it has not often been translated. The authors propose the idea of “multi-layer transfer” in order to provide an honest and accessible translation for nursery rhyme. Chapter 6 reviews some critical analyses of current poetry translation and points out the need for an adaptive or transcreational approach in translating poetry. The originality of this volume is clearly presented.

“Chinese drama, whether traditional or modern, is relatively rarely translated into any other language” (12). Chapter 8 looks at the translation of drama, using the case study of two translating projects: Cao Yu’s *Beijing Ren* and Wan Fang’s *Poison*, in which the performability and speakability of translated texts are stressed. Chapter 9 focuses on the translation of film. In addition to the linguistic differences between Chinese and English, technical constraints also pose severe challenges to the translator of film. This chapter compares the pros and cons of dubbing and subtitling. A case study is followed to illustrate how to achieve a balance among aural, visual, linguistic and cultural meaning.

To sum up, this highly accessible translating guide provides a broad and deep coverage of various aspects of Chinese-English translation and addresses the issue of translating concepts of culture. It contains rich information about the social and historical context in China. It is essential reading for both translators and readers interested in Chinese culture.

Reference

- Pellatt, Valerie and Eric T. Liu (2010). *Thinking Chinese Translation: a course in translation method: Chinese to English*. London: Routledge.

Lin Chen
University of Roehampton
chenl1@roehampton.ac.uk