A CRITICAL STUDY OF LIN YUTANG AS A TRANSLATION THEORIST, TRANSLATION CRITIC AND TRANSLATOR

LI PING

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
JULY 2012
A Critical Study of Lin Yutang as a Translation Theorist, Translation Critic and Translator
對林語堂作為譯論者、譯評者、譯者之批判研究

Submitted to
Department of Chinese, Translation and Linguistics
中文、翻譯及語言學系
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
哲學博士學位

by

Li Ping
李平

July 2012
二零一二年七月
Abstract

While Lin Yutang (1895–1976) is widely recognized as a prominent figure in translation studies in modern China, his works on translation have so far been under-studied. There has been no systematic and in-depth study of his works on translation. This study is the first attempt to give a comprehensive and critical account of Lin as a translation theorist, translation critic and translator.

This study explores Lin’s works on translation from the perspectives of Skopos Theory (ST) and Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS). It will first give a comprehensive descriptive account of Lin’s theoretical views on translation, his translation criticisms and his translated works. It will then proceed to examine each of these three aspects in the light of ST and DTS, setting out in relief the multifaceted problems involved both in the translating process and in the historical and socio-cultural contexts where Lin carried out his translation works. It will show how specific translation purposes have informed and underpinned Lin’s translation criticism and practice, and to what extent the literary systems, ideologies and patronage in China and the United States have influenced his choice of source texts and translation strategies. The approach this study employs is a contrastive linguistic one, supported by a corpus-based method for displaying and analysing various linguistic elements in Lin’s translation on the one hand and how Lin employed various translation strategies to achieve specific skopoi at different times of his translation career.

This study concludes by noting that Lin was first and foremost a translator, a mediator between two languages and two cultures, wrestling with the inherent tension between foreignization and domestication, between accurate translation and artistic representation, and between form and function. As a theorist, he succeeds in discarding the futile dichotomy between literal translation and free translation. As a critic, he succeeds in establishing a purpose-driven, constructive critique for translation. And as a translator, he succeeds in expanding the unmapped world between Chinese and English in both the linguistic and cultural dimensions.
# Table of Contents

Abstract............................................................................................................................i  
Acknowledgements..........................................................................................................ii  
Table of Contents.............................................................................................................iv  
List of Figures..................................................................................................................ix  
List of Tables ...................................................................................................................x  
Abbreviations...................................................................................................................xi  

**Chapter One  Introduction**..........................................................................................1  
1.1 Why is Lin Yutang worth studying? .......................................................................1  
  1.1.1 Lin’s place in China’s intellectual history ....................................................1  
  1.1.2 Lin’s place in translation studies in modern China.......................................2  
  1.1.3 The ‘Lin Yutang Heat’ in contemporary translation research in China...........4  
1.2 Research questions..................................................................................................4  
1.3 Theoretical framework............................................................................................5  
  1.3.1 Vermeer’s ‘skopos theory’............................................................................5  
  1.3.2 Descriptive translation studies (DTS)...........................................................9  
  1.3.3 Summary remarks .........................................................................................12  
1.4 Data collection and methodology ...........................................................................13  
  1.4.1 A contrastive linguistic method ....................................................................13  
  1.4.2 A corpus-based method in translation studies ..............................................15  
  1.4.3 Summary remarks .........................................................................................17  
1.5 A synopsis of the structure of the thesis .................................................................18  
1.6 Clarification of some terms and presentations........................................................19  

**Chapter Two  Previous Studies on Lin Yutang in Translation Studies**.................................20  
2.1 A descriptive account of previous studies ..............................................................20  
2.2 A critical evaluation of the studies in question.......................................................25
Chapter Three  Lin Yutang as a Translation Theorist ...........................................30

3.1 Lin’s pre-1932 views on translation .................................................................30
  3.1.1 On transliteration ............................................................................................30
  3.1.2 Occasional comments on translation ............................................................35
3.2 Lin’s 1932 views in ‘On Translation’.................................................................35
  3.2.1 On literal translation and free translation......................................................36
  3.2.2 On translation criteria ...................................................................................41
  3.2.3 Translation as an art......................................................................................43
  3.2.4 A critical assessment of Lin’s theory in the essay ‘On Translation’ ..................45
3.3 Lin’s post-1932 views.........................................................................................47
  3.3.1 More discussions on literal translation and free translation............................47
  3.3.2 Translation and dictionary: a modern linguistic treatment..............................51
  3.3.3 Translation and art: poetry translation ..........................................................54
  3.3.4 On readership..................................................................................................56
3.4 Differences between translating into Chinese and into English .........................58
3.5 Summary remarks ..............................................................................................60

Chapter Four  Lin Yutang as a Translation Critic..................................................67

4.1 Translation criticism: a link between theory and practice .................................67
4.2 Fidelity in translation .........................................................................................69
  4.2.1 Fidelity in literary translation........................................................................70
  4.2.2 Fidelity in political translation.......................................................................73
4.3 Expressiveness in translation ............................................................................76
  4.3.1 Europeanization in Chinese .........................................................................76
  4.3.2 Economy and elegant variation....................................................................80
4.4 Summary remarks ..............................................................................................85

Chapter Five  Lin Yutang as a Translator ..........................................................90

5.1 Special features of Lin as a translator..................................................................90
  5.1.1 Translation both into and from Chinese..........................................................90
    5.1.1.1 Translation from foreign languages into Chinese......................................91
    5.1.1.2 Translation from Chinese into foreign languages..................................93
5.1.2 Translation of both others’ and his own works ............................................. 94
5.1.3 His non-translated works permeated with translations ................................. 97
  5.1.3.1 Translation within creative writing ....................................................... 97
  5.1.3.2 Translating as writers’ apprenticeship or inspiration ............................ 100
5.2 Different strategies in the two directions of translation ........................................ 104
5.3 A detailed account of Lin’s translation strategies .................................................. 104
  5.3.1 What to translate .......................................................................................... 105
    5.3.1.1 Generic choices ................................................................................. 105
    5.3.1.2 Thematic choices ............................................................................... 106
  5.3.2 How to translate .......................................................................................... 109
    5.3.2.1 Literal translation ............................................................................... 111
    5.3.2.2 Free translation .................................................................................. 113
    5.3.2.3 Adjustments between Chinese and English ....................................... 115
    5.3.2.4 The function of parentheses in translation .......................................... 128
  5.3.3 Bilingualism and hybridity ........................................................................... 132
5.4 A critical discussion on whether he translated in accordance
  with what he advocated in his theory ................................................................... 135
  5.4.1 Dimensions of fidelity in translation .......................................................... 137
  5.4.2 One into many: translations with different interpretations ......................... 141
  5.4.3 Merits and shortcomings of self-translation .............................................. 147
5.5 Summary remarks .............................................................................................. 151

**Chapter Six  Concluding Remarks** ..................................................................... 154
6.1 Problems inherent in translation as cultural transfer .......................................... 154
  6.1.1 Loss and gain in cultural translation: the end justifies the means ............... 155
  6.1.2 Freedom and manipulation in Lin’s case ................................................... 159
6.2 Lin’s legacy in translation studies ...................................................................... 164
  6.2.1 Lin’s legacy in translation theory .............................................................. 165
  6.2.2 Lin’s legacy in translation criticism ......................................................... 168
  6.2.3 Lin’s legacy in translation practice ........................................................... 170
6.3 Conclusions ...................................................................................................... 175
Bibliography
Works by Lin Yutang.......................................................................................................177
Other references...............................................................................................................182

Appendices..........................................................................................................................203
Appendix 1 Works by Lin Yutang........................................................................................204
Appendix 2 Theories or Approaches Applied to the Study of Six
Chapters of a Floating Life in MA Thesis in the Mainland ..............................................206
Appendix 3 Previous Research on Lin’s Translations.......................................................209
Appendix 4 Previous Research on Lin Yutang................................................................213
Appendix 5 A Selected List of Lin’s Views on Translation...............................................214
Appendix 6 Lin’s Translations in Book Form ..................................................................215
Appendix 7 A Selected List of Lin’s Translations in Paper Form......................................217
Appendix 8 A Corpus of Lin’s Self-translations ...............................................................219
Appendix 9 A Parallel Corpus of Between Tears and Laughter .........................................226
Appendix 10 A Parallel Corpus of Confucius Saw Nancy................................................227
Appendix 11 ‘Contents’ in Between Tears and Laughter ..................................................228
Appendix 12 The English Renditions of Xin, Da and Ya ..................................................230
Appendix 13 The Decalogue of the Analects Fortnightly 謀語社同
人戒條..................................................................................................................................230
Appendix 14 林語堂大師怎麼不自行翻譯自己的作品？(Why didn’t
the master Lin Yutang translate his own works?)............................................................232
Appendix 15 Essays in With Love and Irony and Their
Corresponding Original English and Chinese Versions by Lin........................................232
Appendix 16 A Case of Bilingual Titles............................................................................235
Appendix 17 Series of Lin Yutang Chinese-English Bilingual
Editions (林語堂中英對照系列) ....................................................................................236
Appendix 18 A Chronological List of Lin’s “Sa tianshi yulu” 賽天
師語錄 (Thus Spake Zarathustra): ................................................................................236
Appendix 19 Lin’s Essays on Bernard Shaw.................................................................237
Appendix 20 Holmes’ Map of Translation Studies .........................................................237
Appendix 21 Lin’s translation of Li Yi-an’s (also Li Qingzhao 李
清照) poem Sheng sheng man 聲聲慢.................................................................238
Appendix 22  Similarities and Differences in ‘Months’ between 1939 and 1942 Versions in *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* .........................239
List of Figures

Figure 2.1  Research papers on Lin Yutang in China from 1994 to 2004 23
Figure 5.1  Pictures of yueqin and guitar 116
Figure 5.2  The result of search ‘an’ 按 (note) in the Chinese version of Between Tears and Laughter 131
List of Tables

Table 5.1  Paragraph to paragraph comparison in ‘The Spirit of Chinese Culture’ and its Chinese translation -----------------------------------------------114
Table 6.1  Modes of literary translations from Chinese into English ---------------171
Abbreviations:

C = Chinese
CNKI = China National Knowledge Infrastructure
DTS = Descriptive Translation Studies
E = English
Lin = Lin Yutang
Lin’s Dictionary = Lin Yutang’s Chinese-English Dictionary of Modern Usage
林語堂當代漢英詞典
Six Chapters = Six Chapters of a Floating Life 浮生六記
SC = Source Culture
SL = Source Language
ST = Source Text
TC = Target Culture
TL = Target Language
TT = Target Text