A Model for English Translation of Chinese Classics

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Abstract

Halliday and Matthiessen interpret language more as a social semiotic rather than as a system of the human mind. One of the theoretical resources of their evolutionary theory of meaning is the Chinese concepts of yin & yang. This paper finds this theory useful in seeking a better solution to English translation problems for Chinese Classics. After a brief survey of its theoretical bases, the ideation base, and a comparison of English and Chinese ideational semantics, this paper proposes a model for the English translation of Chinese Classics based on the shape of yin & yang on the basis of previous translating model studies like Bell’s translation process. Four co-related and co-operated phases are explained in this model to highlight the unique features of English translation of Chinese Classics: based on the similarities of Chinese and English ideation bases; looking for the modern Chinese and English equivalences of ancient Chinese sequences, figures, and elements; making meaning in the target language with the help of grammatical metaphor; and developing the subjectivity of translators.

Keywords: translating model, Chinese classics, the evolutionary theory of meaning, yin & yang

1. Introduction

The evolutionary theory of meaning, proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (1999), is a new development of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). However, only a few Chinese scholars have done a comprehensive survey of it, let alone apply it into the study of any other disciplines. The research on translating is one of the hardest topics in translation studies, for it seems nearly impossible to give a concrete description of the operation mechanism in a translator’s brain (Ding, 2010). Despite this challenge, scholars at home and abroad have continued to work on this topic because they believe we can hardly
get the essence of translation without understanding the process of translation activity. Studies specifically on the translation of Chinese Classics are, however, rarely noticeable. On the other hand, in the context of globalization, the world is becoming eager to learn more about traditional Chinese culture.

As a theoretical base, the following part of this paper first surveys the theoretical relationship between the evolutionary theory of meaning and life science, Vygotskian psychology, and ancient China’s theory of *yin & yang*. This leads to our discovery that the evolutionary theory of meaning draws upon not only the Western cultural tradition but also the Eastern philosophical ideologies, which suggests a certain connection between this theory and our translating model research. Enlightened by the research achievements of the similarities and differences of Chinese and English in terms of sequence, figure, and element, which make up the ideation base in the evolutionary theory of meaning, these three terms can be further used to describe the specific details of our translating model.

2. The Evolutionary Theory of Meaning

2.1 The theoretical bases

The evolutionary theory of meaning was first put forward by Halliday in his *How Do You Mean?* (1992). It was further developed in *Construing Experience through Meaning: A Language-Based Approach to Cognition* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999). Even though Halliday and Matthiessen have tried to address the discourse to research in the area of general linguistics, cognitive science, and interdisciplinary formation, their theoretical base is drawn from systemic-functional linguistics and their approach, “both in theory and in method, is in contradistinction to that of cognitive science”: they “treat ‘information’ as meaning rather than as knowledge and interpret language as a semiotic system, and more specifically as a social semiotic, rather than as a system of the human mind” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 2).

Halliday’s preference for semiotic perspective to explain language can be easily found in his *Language as Social Semiotics: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, where he believes “a sociosemiotic perspective attempts to explain the semiotic of the social structure… It attempts also to explain the linguistic processes whereby the members construct the social semiotic, whereby social reality is shaped, constrained and modified” (2001, p. 126). Eugene A. Nida makes the significance of sociosemiotics clearer, especially in translation studies, by saying “this approach [sociosemiotic approach] can be helpful to the comprehension and representation of designative meaning and associative meaning… Semiotics is the most comprehensive system to analyze signs; second, sociosemiotic holds that the meaning of a sign concerns the whole process of activities in social context. In other words, texts cannot be isolated from the social situation; third, the explanation of the sign meaning is connected with the structure where the sign exists. Any word sign can only be explained through the relationship with other relevant signs” (1986, p. 126).
The term “meaning” in Halliday’s systemic-functional linguistics is equal to “semiotic” or “social semiotic” (Halliday, 2001). Applying “meaning” instead of “language” to describe the evolutionary theory Halliday expresses as a functional linguist, his focus, different from traditional structural linguists, lays on “the function of language in construing human experiences” and “the function of language as social semiotic in the process of social evolution” (Yan, 2012).

The evolutionary theory of meaning at the very beginning aims to explain how human language developed from “the three major processes of semohistory”, namely phylogenetic, ontogenetic, and logogenetic, “by which meanings are continually created, transmitted, recreated, extended, and changed” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 18). Phylogenetic is the evolution of the system in the species; ontogenetic shows the development of the system in the individual; and logogenetic suggests the instantiation of the system in the text. See Figure 1.

Yan Shiqing (2012) clarified three theoretical recourses for the evolutionary theory of meaning: biological science, Vygotsky’s social constructivism, and Chinese concepts of yin & yang, among which, “the figure yin & yang has been skillfully employed to explain how lexicogrammar helps the realization of meaning potential” (Yan, 2012, p. 50).

The development or the evolution of lexicogrammar is called “Semogenesis” in functional systemic linguistics. Halliday and Matthiessen believe the relationship of the wordings and the meanings, the two sides of the Stoic-Saussurean sign, is “best represented, perhaps, in the familiar Chinese figure yin & yang”, which is “a representation of the sign” (1999, pp. 18-19).

Here, the two sides of the sign, participant and noun, or in traditional linguistic terms, signifier and signified, are treated as a whole, in which the participant in a process “is realized as the wording (class of wording) noun” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 19).
This idea is further expressed in Figure 2:

Figure 2. Participant and noun (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 19)

We can see that from the perspective of *yin & yang*, the signifier and the signified can be shifted, and even the scale or the rank can be shifted as well, which can hardly be understood by traditional linguistics. However, such kind of shift “is not only a possibility, but a must” (Yan, 2012, p. 51). Only with the tolerance of such a shift, “the system of lexicogrammar as a realization of language potential can achieve the internal driving force of constant development” (Yan, 2012, p. 51). Thus the core value of the evolutionary theory of meaning can be revealed in Figure 3, that is the sign of language is examined dynamically in this theory.

### 2.2 The ideation base

Halliday and Matthiessen expressed meaning as phenomena of experience. Human beings understand the world through construing experience and “the ideation base is thus a resource both for construing experience and for construing its own construal of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 73). Anything that can be construed as part of human experience is called a phenomenon, the most general experiential category. “The phenomena of experience are of three orders of complexity” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 48): a single element (elementary), a figure (configurational), and a sequence (complex). “Elements are constituent parts of figures, functioning in different roles”, and “figures form sequences through interdependency relations” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 48).

A sequence is a series of related figures. The differentiation in the relations of a sequence is that “either a sequential relation expands one figure by adding another one to it”, “or the sequential relation projects one of the two figures onto the plane of second-order” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 106). Two simple sentences can be employed to illustrate the two basic types of sequence: (1) He said “I’ll leave”. (2) He spoke, then he left (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 107). The two figures in sentence (2) are equal by having the same order, and the relationship between them is expansion. That is, the
figure “he spoke” is expanded by the figure “then he left”. In sentence (1), the two figures are unequal in different orders and the relationship is projection. The figure “I’ll leave” is projected by the figure “I said”. In the relationship of projection, the figure projected is either an idea (meaning) or a locution (wording). This sequence is realized as a clause complex in lexicogrammar.

A figure is realized as a clause. It is “a representation of experience in the form of a configuration, consisting of a process, participants, taking part in this process and associated circumstances” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 52). “The principle of organization of a figure is different from that of a sequence.” A sequence “is constructed by interdependency relations of expansion and projection”. However, a figure “is constructed as an organic configuration of parts. Each part stands in a specific relation to the figure as a whole” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 53). Thus, a figure is a unit and it can be construed into four types in semantic terms: doing, sensing, saying, and being. In terms of systemic functional grammar, these four semantic types are related to different process types in the grammar of transitivity. “Doing and happening are realized as material clauses, sensing as mental ones, saying as verbal ones, and being (at, etc.) and having as relational clauses” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 134). The relationship of different figures can be projected or non-projected.

The primary types of element are process, participant, and circumstance. In addition to these three, Halliday and Matthiessen pointed out a fourth category, “the relator; this is the element which forms figures into sequences” (1999, p. 177). The congruent grammatical realizations of these types of element are: verbal group for process, nominal group for participant, adverbial group or prepositional phrase for circumstance, and conjunction group for relator (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 177).

The element of process can be phasal or non-phasal and the components of a process are themselves potential processes. The process in the English language must be distinguished by time (tense): past, present, and future. The nominal group for the participant can be a thing or quality. Comparatively, the thing is more complex in semantics with different functions in figure. Quality can be projected or expanded. Circumstances of the simple type are realized by adverbial groups, while circumstances of the “macro” type are “realized by prepositional phrases, which as we have seen are like miniaturized clauses” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 178). We have projected and expanded circumstances as well. “Relators are typically realized by conjunctions”, like because, so, and if. “In addition, there are numerous other types of relator: prepositional phrases (in addition, in the event (that), for fear that), nominal groups” like the moment, “and various expressions involving non-finite verbs (supposing (that), provided (that)) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 178). Even though “the relator construes a logico-semantic relation between the clauses . . . it is itself an element in the structure of one or other of the two clauses concerned” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 178).

We can see the relationship of these three orders in Figure 3 and their realizations in lexicogrammar are shown in Figure 4:
2.3 English and Chinese ideational semantics

Chinese grammar has been noticed in the field of translation and become a heated topic recently. Comparative studies have been carried out by a number of functional grammar linguists, among whom Eden Sum-hung Li (2007) and Halliday and Matthiessen (1999) are the main representatives. Comparative description of this kind is very important, “not only for theoretical reasons but also in relation to tasks in natural language processing such as machine translation and multilingual text generation and understanding” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 297).

According to Halliday and Matthiessen’s studies, the languages of Chinese and English share many common features in their histories. In Chinese as in English, sequences, figures, and elements “are distinguished, and related to each other . . . with the same congruent realizations in grammar” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 301), which, we believe, on the one hand makes translation between the two languages possible and on the other hand offers a new perspective for translators when they are struggling for proper solutions.

From the perspective of historical background, the common features of Chinese and English are: both of them have been associated with long periods of settlement; both have been shaped by the extended period over which their speakers were first and foremost agricultural producers; both languages were written down, and both engendered forms of verbal art and other highly valued discourses. However, there are also far-reaching
differences between the two languages. They belong to different ends of the cultural continuum, and were located within very different material environment (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 297).

From the perspective of ideational bases, the common features of these two languages are that both of them can be construed by sequences, figures, and elements, and their realizations in lexicogrammar are the same: sequence is realized by clause complex, figure by clause, and element is realized by element of clause structure. The differences between these two languages in ideational bases, however, are distinctive as well. We’d like to compare the similarities and differences between them in detail as follows.

2.3.1 Sequence
As mentioned before, both Chinese and English have the same realization of sequence in lexicogrammar, that is, sequence in both languages is realized by clause complex. In written language, clause complex can be equaled to sentence. Colloquially, clarifying the starting point of clause complex is necessary in both languages. Semantically, the logical relationship between sequences can be classified into expansion and projection, both in English and Chinese. Thus, “in translating between Chinese and English it is possible to match the sequences syntagmatically one to one: what works as a construction of figures in one language will also work in the other (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 303). Besides, both English and Chinese tend to certain type of sequence according to different types of text (Li, 2007, p. 69).

The differences between these two languages in sequence are basically because of grammar. There is nearly no “and” to connect expanded sequences in Chinese, and it is up to Chinese readers to figure out the logical relationships between them. Another difference is that “since there is no system of tense in Chinese, there is no tense sequence, but the deixis takes place in the same way as in English, and there are minor adjustments for mood, for example between direct and projected questions” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 302). The third difference lays in the fact that “in Chinese the grammar constructs dependency relations by marking the primary rather than the dependent clause” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 303). Halliday and Matthiessen explained this idea in two points. One is that there is more indeterminacy between parataxis and hypotaxis than in English. The other is that some English figures have to be reconstructed in order to go into Chinese. For the first point, the example of Chinese two sequences “X 高, Y 低” (X is high, Y is low) can be a convincing illustration. The relationship between “X is high” and “Y is low” can be interpreted as “X is high and Y is low” or “when X is high, Y is low”, or “X is high when Y is low”, which, in translation, can be a real challenge for translators. That is, translators need to carefully think how to construe the source sequence so as to construct a proper target sequence. To illustrate the second point, Halliday and Matthiessen employed the examples of English figures “unless” and “until”: “the Chinese parallel to ‘a not until/unless x’ is ‘(if\when) x only then a’” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 303).
It is worthwhile for the translators to give enough attention to these differences when translating. The following example demonstrates how translators can offer a comparatively satisfactory translation when they are sensitive about the disparities of languages.

Source Text:
2500多年的吴文化熏陶,构筑了沧浪区浓厚的文化底蕴。区内名居旧宅、园林古迹星罗棋布。粉墙黛瓦、牌坊塔影的古城景色,“小桥流水人家”的小巷情韵,正在崛起的沧浪新城的宏大气魄,构成了充满活力的最适宜创业、人居的人间天堂。

Target Text:
The Wu Culture of over two and a half millennia has colored the cultural context of Canglang District that is dotted with ancient houses and classical gardens. The ancient atmosphere featuring white-brushed walls and dark-tile roof, old monuments and pagodas, small bridges spanning quiet canals, coupled with the booming modern Canglang New City, makes Canglang District a terrestrial heaven for business and living. (By Yin Shuyi)

The translator did his best to keep the features of the original sequences while reorganizing the relationship between the original clauses so as to make the target more idiomatic. For example, the translation for “区内名居旧宅、园林古迹星罗棋布” (that is dotted with ancient houses and classical gardens) is marked as the subordinate clause of the previous clause (The Wu Culture of over two and a half millennia has colored the cultural context of Canglang District) so as to make the expression more logically related. Besides, the translator has integrated some seemly “scattered” or “fragmented” clauses in the original text into a whole, like “粉墙黛瓦、牌坊塔影的古城景色,‘小桥流水人家’的小巷情韵” into “The ancient atmosphere featuring white-brushed walls and dark-tile roof, old monuments and pagodas, small bridges spanning quiet canals”; and “活力的最适宜创业、人居的人间天堂” into “a terrestrial heaven for business and living”.

The translation of modern Chinese calls for translators’ accurate understanding of the logical relationship between Chinese clauses and their attention to choosing proper tense in conducting the target. This will raise even more challenges for translators doing English translations of Chinese Classics. Take the paragraph from Chapter 1 of Zhong Yong as an example:

天命之谓性,率性之谓道,修道之谓教。道也者,不可须臾离也,可离非道也。是故君子戒慎乎其所不睹,恐惧乎其所不闻。莫见乎隐,莫显乎微,故君子慎其独也。喜怒哀乐之未发,谓之中;发而皆中节,谓之和。中也者,天下之大本也;和也者,天下之达道也。致中和,天地位焉,万物育焉。

Only one character can clearly indicate the logical relationship between different sequences in the original text, that is “故” (so). However, for the questions of how to understand the relationship between the others; how to properly divide the original clause
into different sense groups; which figures can be in the same sequence; and whether the relationship between the sequences is expansion or projection; answers can vary quite a lot among different translators and thus various versions are inevitable.

2.3.2 Figure

Figure 5. Process types of figures (Li, 2007, p. 46)

For the similarities of figures in both Chinese and English, both of them have four processes: sensing, saying, doing-and-happening, and being-and-having. The process type is the same in lexicogrammar, especially with the same participant, like “车子开了” (the car drives), “我开车” (I drive the car) (Li, 2007, p. 50).

The first difference of the figure in both languages is that in the process of sensing, English tends to apply the structure like in “it pleases me”, which is a synthetic expression; while Chinese would like to say “使我高兴”, which is an analytic expression. Besides, time in English is construed as tense. Another difference about figures is that without a tense system, Chinese depends on adverbs to express time, like “已经” (already), “将来” (will), “昨天” (yesterday), etc. Time in Chinese grammar is construed as “aspect” and “phase” (Li, 2007, p. 61), while past, present, and future are clearly expressed in the English time system. However, in Chinese, whether the time is perfective or imperfective is dependent on the context (Halliday & McDonald, 2004). Halliday and Matthiessen also point out the differences of Chinese and English in qualities and the accommodation of elements in a figure. “Qualities in Chinese include with themselves the ‘be’; hence ascriptive figures (e.g. I am busy) are construed as two elements” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 304). In such figures like “she has long hair” (她头发长) or “I have a headache” (我头疼), both Chinese and English “make person rather than the part of the body thematic . . . English achieves this by constructing the quality ‘into’ the participant and ascribing this to the person by possession”; while “Chinese does it by detaching the person as a syntactic ‘absolute’ located at the beginning of the clause and constructing the quality predicatively
... The English construction is mildly metaphorical” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 305). In English, the indirect elements in figures are “introduced circumstantially, with [a] ‘mini-process’ locating them with respect to the main process. In Chinese, such circumstantial retains more of a ‘process’ flavor ... Thus the interpolation of such circumstances as downranked figures is relatively more foregrounded in Chinese” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 305). Li (2007, p. 33) has summarized the commonly used verbs that indicate circumstantial elements in Chinese:

Table 1. Commonly used verbs that indicate circumstantial elements in Chinese

| extent; from … to | yóu ... dào; cóng ... dào |
| manner means | jīng; yī; zhào; zhàozhe; àn; píng, tōngguò, tòuguò |
| (by person) | jīng; yóu |
| comparison | bǐ, jiào; bǐjiào; jiàozhī; hè; tóng; yǔ; gēn |
| angle according to someone’s opinion | zhào; zhàozhe; jù / gen jù / àn / yī / yī ... [(lái shuō / jiăng / kànlái)] |
| according to a standard/basis | àn; ànzhe; zhào; ànzhào; yī; yīzhào; bèn; bènzhe; jù / genjù; jiànyú; zhào; suízhe; zhàozhe; jìù ... [lái shuō / jiăng / kàn] |
| cause reason | yī; wèi; yīnwèi; yóu; yóuyú; chóng; chóngzhe |
| purpose | wèi; wèile; wèizhe |
| result | jīng |
| accompaniment | tóng; yǔ; gēn; hé |
| comitative | lián; liántóng |
| additive | duì; duiyú; guānyú; jiànyú; jìù; rènpíng; zhiyú; duì ... [lái shuō / jiăng]; jìù ... [ér] |
| matter | chúle; chúqù; chúkāi; chú / chúle ... [wài / yīwài / zhīwài] |
| contingency condition | chún; chūqù; chūkāi; chū / chún ... [wài / yīwài / zhīwài] |
| role | zuòwéi |
| beneficiary | tì; gēi; wéi |

2.3.3 Element
Although the primary categories of participant and process are construed in the forms of two word classes—nouns and verbs—both in English and Chinese elements, “it is in the construction of elements that Chinese and English differ most” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 305). In Chinese, a thing, with or without an associated quality, may stand by itself while the measure words, or the unit of, Chinese has no equivalent in English (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 306). For the verb group, in English, the meaning of a process typically includes its completion; while in Chinese, the meaning of a process does not imply its completion (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 307). In English, things are
much more richly taxonomized than processes, especially in the process of the technical abstractions of a scientific theory (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 309). In Chinese, however, “the dichotomy of experience into processes and things is rather more explicitly semanticized” than in English (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 312).

“Chinese and English share many common features in the construction of the ideation base. Thus, if we consider how they construe happenings as ‘quanta of experience’, the two languages are to a large extent congruent: Chinese sequences tend to correspond to English sequences, and Chinese figures to English figures. At the same time, both languages allow a comparable degree of elasticity at this point in the system, whereby one and the same happening in the phenomenal world may be construed either as a sequence or as a figure—or as something indeterminate between the two.” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 314) Thus, by analyzing the similarities and differences of the three levels of ideation base in both languages, we can build up a feasible translating model so as to help translators properly construe the original ideation base (Chinese) and better construct the target one (English).

3. Translating Model

A cross-disciplinary perspective is a tradition in translation studies. Theories of different linguistic schools like psychological linguistics, cognitive linguistics (CL), and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) have been widely borrowed into the study of translation and translating. Among translation studies, the research on translating is one of the hardest topics, as we mentioned before. No matter how difficult it is, the endeavor on this topic has never ceased because of its great significance in understanding the real essence of translation. The research on translating, the process, is not just confined to the description of translating methods or strategies, but also tries to explore the thinking model of translators, the latter of which is more challenging. Some scholars would like to clarify the studies on translating into “static” or “dynamic” studies, like Li Zhanxi (2007).

Nida (1969), with Chomsky’s transformational generative grammar, believes the translation process consists of analysis, transfer, restructuring, and testing. In Steiner’s (1975) description of translating, he also divided the process into four phases, but under the direction of the theory of hermeneutics, the process is described as trust, aggression, incorporation, and restitution. Gutt (1991) regarded translating as a communicative process, an interlingual quoting, in his words. To him, translation is as a secondary communication situation similar to quoting in direct/indirect speech. Research done by Nida and Steiner is comparatively static, while that of Gutt is dynamic. To explore the thinking model of translators, Wolfgang Lorscher (1991), the German scholar, has set a good example. Borrowing the achievements from psycholinguistics, he put forward an experimental method called “thinking-aloud” to survey how and why translators prefer certain solutions when translating.

According to the studies of Li Zhanxi (2007), he himself together with Zhang Jin and
Ke Ping are the representatives of translating studies in China. Zhang Jin (1987) focused on understanding and expression in literary translation, and Ke Ping (1998) focused on revision as well besides understanding and expression with the support of semiotics. Li Zhanxi (2007) stepped even further to build up a relevance-adaptation translating model with Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory and Verschueren’s Adaptation.

No matter the studies are static or dynamic, we believe that all these previous studies have a great push for the translating studies and help us have a closer look at this mysterious “black box” in translation studies. Among the attempts on building up a translating model, Bell’s model (2001) is noticeable for its clarity and feasibility.

3.1 Bell’s translating model

Halliday once remarked that “it might be of interest to set up a linguistic model of the translation process, starting not from any preconceived notions from outside the field of language study, but on the basis of linguistic concepts such as are relevant to the description of languages as modes of activity in their own right” (Bell, 2001, p. F36).

Before proposing the translating model, Bell first made the concept of “translation” clear. He agreed with this definition: “Translation is the replacement of a representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language” (2001, p. 6). About translation theory, Bell believed “a theory is an explanation of a phenomenon, the perception of system and order in something observed . . . It exists in the mind. It has no tangible manifestation. It is an idea (which might well be unique to the individual who ‘has’ it) which constitutes the internal representation of a phenomenon . . . A model is, in contrast, an external rather than an internal representation of the explanation; a realization of the theory. It exists as a tangible object (a diagram, a formula, a text) which ‘stand for’ the idea embodied in the theory” (2001, pp. 24-25). Thus, Bell preferred to explain the abstract translation process into a concrete model.

Bell, in a simplified form, made the model show “the transformation of a source language text into a target language text by means of processes which take place within memory: (1) the analysis of one language-specific text (the source language text, the SLT) into a universal (non-language-specific) semantic representation and (2) the synthesis of that semantic representation into a second language-specific text (the target language text, the TLT)” (Bell, 2001, p. 20).
Bell further explained his model was based on the following assumptions that he assumed. That the process of translating (2001, pp. 44-45):

(1) is a special case of the more general phenomenon of human information processing;
(2) should be modeled in a way which reflects its position within the psychological domain of information processing;
(3) takes place in both short-term and long-term memory through devices for decoding text in the source language (SL) and encoding text into the target language (TL), via a non-language-specific semantic representation;
(4) operates at the linguistic level of clause, irrespective of whether the process is the analysis of incoming signals or the synthesis of outgoing ones (monolingual, reading and/or writing, or bilingual, i.e. translation);
(5) proceeds in both a bottom-up and a top-down manner in processing text and integrates both approaches by means of a style of operation which is both cascaded and interactive, i.e. analysis or synthesis at one stage need not be completed before the next stage is activated and revision is expected and permitted;
(6) requires there to be, for both languages
   (i) a visual word-recognition system and a writing system
   (ii) a syntactic processor which handles the options of the MOOD system and contains a frequent lexis store (FLS), a lexical search mechanism (LSM), a frequent structure store (FSS) and a parser, through which information passes to (or from) a semantic processor which handles the options available in the TRANSITIVITY system and exchanges information with a pragmatic processor which handles the options available in the THEME system and exchanges information with a
(vi) idea organizer which follows and organizes the progression of the speech acts in the text (and, if the text-type is not known, makes inferences on the basis of the information available) as part of the strategy for carrying out plans for attaining goals, devised and stored in the

(vii) planner which is concerned with creating plans for reaching goals of all kinds. Some of these plans may involve uses of language such as text-processing. This might include translating a text and this decision might well have been made even before its first clause had been processed.

On these assumptions, Bell offered a detailed translation model (Bell, 2001, p. 59):

Figure 7. Bell’s translating model
Bell pointed out “the process is not a linear one in which stage follows stage in a strict order. It is an integrated process in which, although every stage must be passed through, the order is not fixed and back-tracking, revision and cancellation of previous decisions are the norm rather than the exception” (2001, p. 45). Bell divided the translation process into analysis and synthesis and within them, three distinguished areas of operation: syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic (2001, p. 45).

Without doubt Bell’s translating model has a great contribution to further discussions about translation process and has been widely quoted and applied to explain translation difficulties in certain translation tasks; however, more work can be done to improve its limitations, especially in dealing with the English translation of Chinese Classics.

As a general translating model, Bell’s model does not apply to all the translating texts and it can hardly reveal the specific features of certain texts. However, the translating model for Chinese Classics is expected to foreground the unique feature of translating such text type, that is, the phase of transferring the text from ancient Chinese to modern Chinese is necessary. The terminology used in Bell’s model is basically from systemic functional grammar, like TRANSITIVITY, MOOD, etc., and psycholinguistics, especially during the period of semantic representation. We would like to employ the terms with a single base from the evolutionary theory of meaning to describe texts as phenomena consisting of sequence, figure, and element.

3.2 Translating model for English translation of Chinese classics
Studies on the translating of Chinese Classics have a great significance in promoting Chinese traditional culture. However, current Chinese Classics translation studies have not just made due academic contributions but also created problems for themselves: first, the impossibility is still a curse; second, there are abundant borrowed theories but few creative ones; third, there is an apparent gap between theoritcal studies and translation practices; and last but not least, there is an indifference to relative teaching methods.

3.2.1 Features of this translating model
To solve these problems, our study should be confined to a mid-scale theory instead of a macro or a micro theory so as to fill the gap between theory and practice, which is proposed by Fang Mengzhi (2014). In Fang’s pyramid of translation, the three levels of translation theory—macro, mid-scale, and micro—are built on the basis of translation practice, which indicates the importance of translation practice in proposing a convincing theory. Studies on micro-theory focus on research about translation skills and methods so as to improve translation quality. Not a few theorists may doubt whether such studies can be called theoretical research in a strict sense. On the top of the pyramid is macro-theory, which covers studies about principles of translation, relationships of subject and object during translating, the essence of translation, etc. This is an impartible part for translation as a discipline and thus it must be on the top. The major contribution by Fang is that he
proposed the idea of mid-scale theory which aims to offer strategies, models, frames or schemes for translation activities. It is a bridge to fill the gap between the macro theory and translation practice. Obviously, our studies belong to this level.

English translation for Chinese classics has its own features, among which a transfer from ancient Chinese to modern Chinese is a striking one. The notice for this feature is quite necessary to make the translation process more smooth, as we have tried to do in the practice of translating Ziye’s Seasonal Song of Wu Ballard:

Other scholars, like Huang Guowen, Fang Mengzhi, and Yang Zijian, also noticed this feature and further summarized it from a theoretical perspective by putting forward the remarks: “Translation for Chinese classics usually involves intralingual translation and interlingual translation” (Huang, 2012, p. 64); “it is a second round translation with intralingual translation and interlingual translation” (Fang, 2011, p. 122); and “in the translation of Chinese Classics, one more phase has been added, that is the source text is ancient or contemporary Chinese, the target text is modern English, and the middle one is modern Chinese” (Yang, 2005, p. 62). The terms of “intralingual translation” and “interlingual translation” are from Jacobson (1959/2000, pp. 113-118), who divided translation into three types: the first is intralingual translation, meaning translation between the same language, translating or interpreting one symbol to another symbol of the same language, like from ancient Chinese to modern Chinese; the second is interlingual translation, the translation between different languages, translating or interpreting from one language symbol to another language symbol, like from Chinese to English; the third is intersemiotic translation, translating or interpreting language symbols with some non-language symbols, such as explaining language with images.

Without any doubt, intralingual translation is quite necessary to English Chinese Classics translation and thus the translating model we are going to build must involve this phase.

Halliday and Matthiessen (1999) analyzed the relationship between signifier and signified from a completely different perspective, that is the yin & yang perspective, which better explained the everlasting possibility of meaning potential and the essence of the evolutionary theory of meaning in regarding language symbols dynamically. Enlightened from Halliday and Matthiessen’s (1999) research, our study believes that the yin & yang shape can offer a better solution for English translation of Chinese

Table 2. Ancient and modern Chinese of Ziye’s Seasonal Song

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Text (Ancient Chinese)</th>
<th>Modern Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>昔别春草绿，</td>
<td>你离开时还是春光一片，绿草葱葱，</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>今还墀雪盈。</td>
<td>现在回来时，却已是白雪满台阶。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>谁知相思老，</td>
<td>相思之苦催人老啊，</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>玄鬓白发生。</td>
<td>原本乌黑的两鬓已长出了白发。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classics. First, the very Chinese style *yin & yang* shape can indicate the co-existence and co-effected relationship between all the phases in translating Chinese Classics. The dark *yin* part represents the original text and the bright *yang* part target text, which indicates that translating Chinese Classics is a process from the dark to the bright. Second, it highlights the concept enlightened by *yin & yang* theory that the signifier and the signified can shift under certain circumstances, like in the translation process of Chinese Classics, which contains a process of intralingual translation and a process of interlingual translation. During intralingual translation, the original language is the ancient Chinese and the target language is modern Chinese, which serves as the original language in the interlingual translation. This special characteristic of Chinese Classics translation can be achieved in a better way while applying the concept of *yin & yang* (see Figure 8 and Table 3):

**Figure 8. Sketch of English translation process of Chinese classics**

![Sketch of English translation process of Chinese classics](image)

**Table 3. Terms in Figure 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL: (Source Language)</th>
<th>= sl1: Ancient Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tl1: (Modern Chinese)</td>
<td>= sl2: (Modern Chinese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL: (Target Language)</td>
<td>= tl2: English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third, it emphasizes the approach of back-translation to improve the translated text. The circle-shaped model suggests the importance of back-translation. Fourth, the theoretical base of this model, especially its meaning potential, can reasonably explain the common phenomenon of different translated versions of the same original text in translation studies and further encourage translators of Chinese Classics to work out more flexible and authentic English versions, thus improving the acceptance of the translated works among the target readers. Besides, by applying the terms from the evolutionary theory of meaning, we can keep a consistent description in explaining our translating model. To be specific, our translating model would like to present the process of interlingual translation from sequence 1, figure 1 and element 1 of phenomenon 1 (original text of ancient Chinese) to sequence 2, figure 2 and element 2 of phenomenon 2 (modern Chinese), and
the process of intralingual translation from phenomenon 2 to phenomenon 3 (modern English, the target text) with sequence 3, figure 3 and element 3.

Figure 9. English translation process of Chinese Classics

![Diagram of translation process]

Table 4. Terms in Figure 9

| p1: phenomenon 1 (original ancient Chinese) | s1: sequence 1 |
|                                           | f1: figure 1   |
|                                           | e1: element 1  |
| p2: phenomenon 2 (modern Chinese)         | s2: sequence 2 |
|                                           | f2: figure 2   |
|                                           | e2: element 2  |
| p3: phenomenon 3 (target modern English)  | s3: sequence 3 |
|                                           | f3: figure 3   |
|                                           | e3: element 3  |

3.2.2 Phases of the translating model

To further explain this translating, four phases will be explained in detail: based on the similarities of Chinese and English ideation bases; looking for the modern Chinese and English equivalences of ancient Chinese sequences, figures, and elements; making meaning in the target language with the help of GM; and developing the subjectivity of translators by linguistic approaches like thematic procession patterns and dynamic projection. These four phases are not operated one by one or in isolation. They are correlated and can go back and forth from time to time as needed.

As for the ideational base, we mean the whole *yin & yang* shape for the fact that the
Translation process may call for proper solution for anything about everything instead of. However, the similarities of Chinese and English ideation bases ensure the fulfillment of mutual transfer between these two languages. The round shape in our translating model intends to emphasize the similarities between both languages in certain idioms or proverbs like “a snow year, a rich year” (瑞雪兆丰年); “time is money, but money is not time” (一寸光阴一寸金, 寸金难买寸光阴); “既已跪下, 何惜一拜” (When you bow, bow low); etc. It is also pointed out that the similarities between these two languages are highlighted in the development of neologisms (W.-P. Wang, 2010).

As discussed in 2.3, both Chinese and English can be construed by sequences, figures, and elements, and their realizations in lexicogrammar are the same. The default language of “Chinese” in previous studies, however, is modern Chinese. Since we are researching English translation of classic Chinese, it is worthwhile to have a trial comparison of ideational bases between modern Chinese and ancient Chinese. One of the features of ancient Chinese sequences is that sometimes they can be represented by phrases or elements, if speaking strictly. For example, the following three poem lines cannot be called sentences: “枯藤老树昏鸦, 小桥流水人家, 古道西风瘦马”. Instead, they are 9 nouns. Here, sequence 1 in phenomenon 1 (P1, ancient Chinese) is invisible and foregrounded as figure 1. Figure 1 in phenomenon 2 (P2, modern Chinese) however, is equal to sequence 2, including three completing sequences (s2a, s2b, s2c) as follows (Table 5):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1</th>
<th>Sequence 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>枯藤老树昏鸦</td>
<td>s2a: 天色黄昏，一群乌鸦落在枯藤缠绕的老树上，发出凄厉的哀鸣。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>小桥流水人家</td>
<td>s2b: 小桥下流水哗哗作响，小桥边庄户人家炊烟袅袅。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>古道西风瘦马</td>
<td>s2c: 古道上一匹瘦马，顶着西风艰难地前行。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitatively speaking, sequence 1 cannot be equal to sequence 2 under such circumstances, which is not rare in the translation of Chinese Classics. At the same time, the figures in ancient Chinese are often up-ranked as sequences in their function. Thus, the relationships between the figures of ancient Chinese and modern Chinese can be described as f1≈f2 or f1< f2. Most elements in ancient Chinese can easily find their equivalents in modern Chinese, like “宵－夜”, “邦－国”, “宅－居”, “殷－正”, “钦若－敬顺”, “历象－数法”, etc, and thus e1≈e2. But in other cases, there can be great disparity, as e1≠ e2, or certain elements in ancient Chinese only can be explained or translated into a figure in modern Chinese so that e1< e2.

Grammatical metaphor (GM) can be a great help in the phase of constructing meanings, for on the one hand language itself is metaphorical and on the other hand the definition of GM in systemic functional linguistics reveals the nature of translation. Grammatical metaphor is widely found in the use of language. “Like lexical metaphor, it is not something odd or exceptional; it is part of the inherent nature of language as a
social-semiotic system, a natural process by which the meaning potential is expanded and enriched. Even in the language of small children there is some grammatical metaphor present almost from the start. The phenomenon of transcategorizing elements would seem to be a feature of the grammar of every language” (Halliday & Mathiessen, 1999, p. 242). Traditionally, metaphor is a kind of transfer on the lexical level, emphasizing the same expression with different meanings. Grammatical metaphor, however, emphasizes the same meaning with different expressions, as Halliday explained in Figure 10 (1994, p. 34):

![Figure 10. Grammatical metaphor](image)

GM definition exactly echoes the nature of translation, because translation, in essence, is “expressing the same meaning with different languages” (Liu, 2006, p. i). The evolutionary theory of meaning has further defined GM as a major strategy in developing meaning potential, which weighs a lot in translating Chinese Classics both intralingually and interlingually. In intralingual translation from the ancient Chinese to English, because of their different features, metaphorical expressions are seen more frequently than the congruent ones. As for the refinement, succinctness, and conciseness of ancient Chinese, its sequence, figure, and element often equal to a higher rank in modern Chinese. In intralingual translation, it is summarized that it is a process of explicit rendering or unpacking metaphorical expressions when it is English-Chinese translation, while coming to Chinese-English translation, it is a process of implicit rendering or packing congruent expressions.

The subjectivity of translators must be taken into account when the translating model is discussed, for translators are the direct builders of the target language and only with the participation of translators can various versions for the same translating texts be possible. To realize the subjectivity of translators in a proper way, linguistic approaches like thematic processing patterns and dynamic projection are helpful. Retaining the same thematic processing patterns in intralingual translation can be a hard job, let alone in intralingual translation. Take the translation for the following text as an
example:

Original Text:

醉翁之意不在酒，在乎山水之间也。山水之乐，得之心而寓之酒也。

Intralingual translation from ancient Chinese to modern Chinese:

醉翁的情趣不在于喝酒，而在欣赏山水的美景。欣赏山水美景的乐趣，领会在心里，寄托在酒上。

English version 1 (By Yang Xianyi):

He delights less in drinking than in the hills and streams, taking pleasure in them and expressing the feeling in his heart through drinking.

English version 2 (By Herbert A. Giles):

But it was not wine that attracted him to this spot. It was the charming scenery which wine enabled him to enjoy.

Table 6. The thematic procession patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient Chinese</th>
<th>Modern Chinese</th>
<th>English Version 1</th>
<th>English Version 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1: 醉翁之意</td>
<td>R1': 不在酒</td>
<td>R1': 不在于喝酒</td>
<td>T1: But it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R1’’：在乎山水之间也</td>
<td>R1’’：而在欣赏山水的美景</td>
<td>T1: He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2: 山水之乐</td>
<td>R2'：得之心</td>
<td>R1’’：领会在心里</td>
<td>T1: 醒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R2’’：而寓之酒也</td>
<td>R2’’：寄托在酒上</td>
<td>T2 (= T1): it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, we can see the modern Chinese keeps almost the same thematic procession pattern with the original ancient Chinese, which is a happy ending in translation. However, during the interlingual process, it is hard to keep the same pattern and obviously the two translators, Yang Xianyi and Herbert A. Giles, offer quite different patterns dealing with the rendering, both of which have their highlights. Translators here can realize their subjectivity by choosing proper thematic procession patterns to faithfully convey the original meaning as well as smoothly express it in the target language. Besides, dynamic projection is another perspective to help translators realize their subjectivity. When searching translations for the book title Zhong Yong, we can find three different versions: The Doctrine of the Mean (Legge James), The Universal Order or Conduct of Life (Ku Hungming), and Focusing the Familiar (Ames Roger and Hall David). The reasons for their choices are thoroughly surveyed by scholars like Wang
Hui (2008). Dynamic projection helps translators realize their translation purposes when actively choosing the perspective and focus during the translation process.

From the above discussion, we would present the English translation process of Chinese classics in the following detailed figure:

**Figure 11. Translating model for English translation of Chinese Classics in yin & yang shape**

**Table 7. Terms in Figure 11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p1: ancient Chinese</th>
<th>s1: sequence of ancient Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f1: figure of ancient Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e1: element of ancient Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p2: modern Chinese</th>
<th>s2: sequence of modern Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f2: figure of modern Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e2: element of modern Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p3: English version</th>
<th>s3: sequence of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f3: figure of English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e3: Element of English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM: grammatical metaphor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS: translator’s subjectivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here we changed the previous Figure 9 into a round shape to emphasize the interdependence and integrity of each phase in translating. Another improvement is the presence of the relationship between p1 and p2 from the detailed comparison of their sequences, figures, and elements (s1&s2; f1&f2; e1&e2), though this is far from enough. With the consideration of grammatical metaphor and translator subjectivity, we would like to highlight the importance of these two factors in constructing a better target text.

4. Conclusion

The English translation of Chinese Classics is inevitable in today’s globalized context. Related research on translating models can accelerate the process of spreading traditional Chinese culture to the world and the evolutionary theory of meaning serves as a great help in this study. However, as we mentioned in 3.2, current Chinese classics translation studies have not just made due academic contributions but also created problems for themselves. Besides, the existing research results regarding translating models still leave some room for improvement in their pertinence, specialty, and term consistency. Our study thus first confines the translating model survey as a mid-scale theory instead of a macro or a micro theory and then discusses four features of the proposed translating model and the description of its different phases in detail.

For further studies, application of an empirical approach to the effectiveness and feasibility of this translating model can be a major challenge. Classic works like Zhong Yong can be a case study in collecting different translated versions from students majoring in translation and native speakers or professors so as to reveal the common difficulties and problems in Chinese classics translation. Together with a questionnaire on pre-translating and after-translating questions, feedback by the subjects toward the proposed translating model for its effectiveness during translation can be analyzed and some suggestions can be drawn to improve the teaching methods of Chinese Classics translation.

Note
1 Theme (T); Ryme (R)

References


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