

The Construction and Application of Translational Writing: A Statistical Review of Translational Writing Articles Published on CNKI

Yan Huang

*Department of Foreign Languages, Sichuan University of Science and Engineering,
Zigong, Sichuan, China, 643000*
Asia Europe Institute, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 50603
E-mail: violinhy@qq.com

KEYWORDS Perception. Thought Operation. Translational Writing. Translation. Writing

ABSTRACT Translational writing is an emerging translation theory proposed by a Chinese scholar early this century. The objectives of this research are to unravel the inevitability of the construction of translational writing theory, the feasibility of the application of this theory and finally its possible trajectory and its implications to translation studies and teaching. This study searches 175 articles on translational writing from 2011 to 2018 published on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) and finds that the construction of translational writing theory is building on descriptive studies, Western linguistic theories and traditional Chinese translation theories. Its core operating mechanisms are widely used in teaching, literary translation, and practical translation, which yields positive results.

INTRODUCTION

Translational writing was first proposed by Chinese translation researcher, Yang in 2006, and is later elaborated in his doctoral thesis in 2011 (Yang 2011). The proposal of translational writing, in Yang's words, starts from some humble reasons, that is, "How to translate?" and "How to translate well?" which in the eyes of Yang should be the touchstone of successful translation theories. Long before the debut of translational writing theory, there were a group of mainland scholars addressing the intrinsic link between translation (ability) and writing (ability) (Li and Ni 2005; Ren 2003; Zhou and Si 2000; Zhu 2005). But these descriptive studies do not translate into a separate translation theory. One primary cause among many was the dire situation China's domestic translation theory was in. Most, if not all, of the dominant translation theories that are current and eagerly sought-after in China are imported. Can they fit in well if no variation is made? Thus, to establish a localized translation theory in line with China's national conditions becomes paramount. The proposal

and construction of translational writing, in this sense, fills a gap in China's translation studies. Since the formal introduction of this theory, it has witnessed a research boom in the fields of descriptive studies, theoretical studies and applied studies, but lacks the summary and analysis of the current research. Given the considerable number of the existing literature on translational writing in China, to summarize and analyze the status quo of translational writing is significant to facilitate further understanding and application of the theory in question.

Objectives

This study has the following main objectives:

1. To unravel the inevitability of the construction of translational writing.
2. To summarize and analyze the application of translational writing theory.
3. To envisage the major trend of translational writing.
4. To determine the implications of the introduction and construction of translational writing on translation studies and teaching.

METHODOLOGY

With keyword search, the researcher retrieved all the articles related to translational writ-

Address for correspondence:

Yan Huang
Block 7-1-11, Lvsheng Residential Building,
Zigong, Sichuan, China
Telephone/Mobile: (86)18095043268
E-mail: violinhy@qq.com

ing published by Chinese authors from 2011 to 2018 on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure). These articles were then characterized and classified according to James Holmes's descriptive translation studies (DTS), theoretical translation studies (ThTS), and applied translation studies (ATS) through the titles, abstracts, and full-text readings. Then the total number of relevant articles were counted and analyzed respectively.

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

From 2011 to 2018, a total of 175 articles pertaining to translational writing were retrieved from CNKI. Among them, 121 DTS papers describe translational writing (study), 7 ThTS articles involve the construction of translational writing theory, and 47 ATS papers are on the application and practice of translational writing, with 13 papers pioneering the application of translational writing strategies in a translation classroom (Table 1 is the distribution of the three different publications). This topic merits closer attention because of the growing interest in this emerging theory, which has demonstrated itself by an increase to 31 publications in the last four years, that is, from a total of 72 articles in the 2011-2014 period to 103 articles in the 2015-2018 period.

Table 1: Translational writing publications

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Publications</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
ThTS	7	4
ATS	47	27
DTS	121	69
Total	175	

Qualitative Results

In the wake of Yang's (2011) systematic proposal of the translational writing theory in his doctoral thesis, Guo (2012) extended his affirmation of this achievement and applauded that Yang's theory "developed the concept of 'translation is rewriting' or 're-expression' held dear by predecessor translators and translation theorists. Translation and writing thus, is more closely combined... (Yang's theory) in a sense, is a major breakthrough in translation theory and practice research, which has immeasurable sig-

nificance and effect especially for guiding translation practice and improving translation quality." The theory and principles of translational writing were subsequently applied to different practices. Among them, Zhu (2013), Zhu and Yang (2017), after applying the review (modification) mechanism of translational writing into translation classrooms, concluded positively that it can improve the quality of students' translation, ability, and then collaboratively proposed the combination of reading, writing and translating model in the translation classroom to perfect the theoretical construction of translational writing. Zhou and Yang (2015) draw on the new teaching model of translational writing, and propose a new teaching model for second language (L2) writing, that is, to lump the teaching of translation skills and L2 writing skills together to encourage students to organize L2 discourse by using first language thinking abilities to learn L2 writing more effectively.

Translational writing theory is also applied to literary translation practice. Huang (2015), Gao (2017), Yan (2017), Jiang and Zhou (2018), with the assistance of the core mechanisms of translational writing, that is; perception, thought operation, expression and examination, examined the English-Chinese translations of prose, four-character idioms and proverbs respectively, and achieved a similar conclusion that translational writing theory and its core operating mechanisms have efficacy in guiding English-Chinese prose translation practice and thus warrant the improvement of translation quality. The researcher also noted that since 2017, translational writing theory has been applied to practical and academic genres translation. Zhu (2017), by explaining the practical application of translational writing from various levels, such as lexical, grammatical and discourse, approved of the experimental application of the translational writing theory to Chinese-English academic translation theory to Chinese-English academic translation practice. Ye and Hu (2018), taking Fujian scenic spot translation as an example, demonstrated that the translational writing theory can yield better translation results.

DISCUSSION

Descriptive Translation Studies

Holmes (2012) stated that translation studies can be divided into three major branches: theoretical translation studies (ThTS), descrip-

tive translation studies (DTS) and applied translation studies (ATS). He further noted that “translation description supplies the basic data upon which translation theory is to be built...” that is to say, translation theory cannot be formulated “without the solid, specific data yielded by research in descriptive...studies” (Holmes 2012: 183). This view is confirmed by the statistical results of this study with 121 DTS papers on translational writing, which accounts for sixty-nine percent of the total. Using keywords search and abstract reading, the researcher found that most of the literature focused on the description of the relationship between translation and writing. Plus, by further search, it was observed that the first article of that kind was published in a top domestic journal in 2003, in which the author Ren (2003), by citing David Hawkes’ translation of “Dream of Red Mansions” as an example, claimed that “the essence of text translation is... the translator’s... second ‘writing’ or ‘re-creation’ of the original text”.

Yang and his followers Huang (2015), Jiang and Zhou (2018) embrace the genuine differences existing in translation and writing, such as; writing is independent, which means writers can freely choose writing materials in accordance with the needs of existing works, but for translators, they must be faithful to the content and subject matter of the source text. In regard to the relationship with the reader, the relationship between the writer and the reader tends to be more direct than that between the translator and the reader, in that the former does not need any medium, while the latter needs to use the translator as a bridge. In addition, the writer can pour into the work his direct experience, and the translator is, on top of the list, supposed to undertake the language conversion. Nonetheless, the existing discrepancies between translation and writing cannot screen the genuine similarities between the two: a long-term and continuous reading process is a source as much to a writer as to a translator before the actual writing or translating act commences. More than that, both

involves the integration of one’s subjectivity in creating or re-creating one’s work, and both will experience the same cognitive mechanisms in this creative process: perception, thought operation, and expression. In a word, the results of numerous DTS have, to some extent, strongly advanced the construction of translational writing theory.

Theoretical Translation Studies

ThTS can be subdivided into general translation theory and partial translation theories, the latter, as its name indicates “dealing with only one or few of the various aspects of translation theory as a whole” (Holmes 2012: 178), is claimed to be a prerequisite before arriving at a true general translation theory. Additionally, the building of ThTS ensures smooth processing of the other two (DTS and ATS) via extending primary theoretical hypothesis. The formal introduction of translational writing theory promotes the development of both DTS and ATS research. Table 2 summarizes the respective publications from 2011 onwards.

Translational writing theory is in a way, building on the solid support of DTS. Theoretical foundations drawing on both Western linguistic theories and Chinese traditional translational theories are meanwhile too immense to ignore. Western linguistic translation theory that originated in the 1950s benefited directly from the research results in linguistics. It not only provides a positive theoretical framework and ideas for translation studies, but also renders scientific and objective research methods. Among them, Bell’s (1991) translation process and writing theory and Delisle’s (1988) translation definition and interpretation theory have greatly enlightened the construction of translational writing.

R. Bell, a British linguist and translation theorist, tried to use a “Systemic Model of Language” (Bell 1991: xviii) to describe the translation process and the translator’s knowledge structure, and proposed that “translation is to re-express what is expressed in the first language

Table 2. Translational writing DTS and ATS

Categories	<i>Publications from 2011 onwards</i>							
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
ATS	5	1	5	8	7	7	6	8
DTS	17	8	14	12	17	20	19	14

(source language) text in the second language (the target language), and try to maintain the equivalent of semantics and stylistics" (Bell 1991: 5). Faced with the dilemma of finding "formal equivalents" or "functional equivalents" of a translation, Bell suggests that the translator keeps "six honest serving men" (Bell 1991: 7) by asking "What?", "Why?", "When?", "How?", "Where?", and "Who?" to define the parameters of variation. He crystallized his ideas by proposing the simplest model of the translation process, that is, first to analyze the source language discourse; then to interpret the discourse, accumulating all the semantic representations; and finally to synthesize the new target discourse. The proposed model is equivalent to two requirements for the translator, namely; the translator is at first required to have the ability to write text; secondly, the translator should garner ideal bilingual competence (Bell 1991: 44-45). Bell's keen observation and pioneering ideas are argued by many to provide the theoretical basis and foundation for the formation of translational writing theory.

Delisle (1988), placing his priority on translating pragmatic texts, lent the most powerful theoretical support for the construction of translational writing. He stated that the translation of pragmatic texts is an art of re-expression based on writing techniques and a knowledge of two languages. The commonality between the translator and the writer, in the eyes of Delisle, is that both need to transform abstract thought into tangible and visible text, and effectively convey it to the reader in an accurate and unmistakable way. Thus, the best translation, in this sense, is the one that reads the least like a translation or a fake. He further divided the translation process into three stages; interpretation, to understand what the writer wants to express; re-expression, to re-encode the source text with the target language; and examination, to review the three stages, which is endorsed by Delisle of having the capacity to enhance the translator's thinking ability and writing ability.

It is worth noting that there exist considerable similarities in Bell's and Delisle's translation theories. For example, the focus has shifted from translation theory research to underpinning translators and the translation process. In Bell's view, what is interesting is to study the translator's "little black box" and externalize the translator's personal and private procedural

knowledge through modeling. Delisle, in a more straight-forward manner, wanted the translator to be the center of translating operations, so that translators can understand the dynamics of translation. Both views are therefore inevitably conducive to the construction of translational writing.

Translation, to a great extent, is "science" in Western translation studies, in that, it explains succinctly the problem of "How to translate?" in the translation process. But translation is an "art" in Chinese traditional translation theory. In the following arguments, the researcher will explore how Chinese traditional translation theory contributes to the construction of translational writing.

Chinese traditional translation theory, in the words of Wang (2006: 223-224), "(It) is a translation theory building on Chinese traditional literature, aesthetics, essays, literary studies and linguistics.... On the translation subject, the research method, the way of expression, the theoretical feature and the spiritual interest all show a strong translation of traditional Chinese culture, which is different from the translation theory of other countries." Lin, an influential translator and writer in China, set three standards for translation: standards of loyalty, fluency and elegance. He further stated that "translation is an art", which relies firstly on the translator's thorough understanding of the original text and content; followed by the translator's expertise in his/her first language (source language), that is, whether the translator "can write clearly and smoothly in Chinese" (Lin 1984: 417), which was ranked high by Lin; and the last one is the translator's practical translation ability, which means the translator needs a correct understanding and knowledge of translation standards and techniques. Lin added that writing and translation are the same at the conceptualization level.

Fu (1984), another founding figure in establishing Chinese traditional translation theory, also an advocate of "translation is an art" philosophy, proposed the once famous "Theory of Spirit Likeness" (558). Based on his long-term translation experience, he stated directly that translation requires "vividness and expressiveness" (Luo 1984: 987). The so-called "vividness" means to understand the original work, and to internalize well the characters, features, plots, thoughts and feelings of the original work. Such a translation can be life-like, imposing, and "viv-

id". "Expressiveness" refers to the translator's expressive skills, which requires the translator to have a complete mastery of Chinese and Western languages (source language and target language). Regarding "the ideal translation", Fu once made it clear that it seems to be the original writer's Chinese writing (Luo 1984: 988).

Wrapping up the foregoing, the researcher argues that the construction of translational writing theory has its descriptive and theoretical bases, and is also the inevitable result of the development of DTS and ThTS.

Applied Translation Studies

Applied translation studies is a branch that puts the findings of the other two branches (DTS and ThTS) into use, while in reverse, as Holmes argues, produces first-hand data to help consolidate ThTS. Translational writing theory has been experimentally used by some scholars in translation or writing practice classroom and received favorable feedback and results, which, more than anything else, confirms the close connection between translation and writing argued repeatedly in descriptive studies, and also confirms Yang's core concept in translational writing that "translation is rewriting".

The core operating mechanisms of translational writing, namely, perception, thought operation, expression and examination, are also applied to literary, practical and academic styles in translation practice. The experimental results underscore the effectiveness of translational writing theory in improving translation quality. The proposal of the core operating mechanisms of translational writing is the natural corollary of the blend of core writing systems and the writing model designed by Flower and Hayes (1981). Given their importance and extensive application, it is of significance to have a brief understanding of these mechanisms.

Perception, or interpretation, is a combination of receiving passive information and active selection on the part of the recipient. What links translation and writing from the aspect of perception is the actual operating process. Both need constant accumulation of writing materials/source texts, followed by making rational choices hedging on these materials; in other words, perception comes before proceeding to a smooth writing or a translating stage. One conspicuous difference between translation percep-

tion and writing perception is that translation perception is more targeted. Translators need to have a full perception of the original writer's writing thoughts, writing intentions and writing style as well as a full understanding of the surface structure and deep structure of the language. Contrarily, writing perception is in a sense relatively more casual, flexible, and subjective.

The second phase is thought operation, which is the intermediary and bridge between perception and expression. It is a process in which the writer or the translator strategizes before the actual practice of writing or translating commences. Both the writer and the translator would undergo an alternating process from affirmation to negation, which runs throughout the entire stage of writing or translating. It is of interest to note that thought operation is concretized in both the writing and translating process via global thought operation and local thought operation. The former happens at a macro level, such as how the writer or the translator sets the tone, the theme, the style for the whole text, etc. Local thought operation is more relevant to the details of the article, including the writer's or the translator's delicate refinement of the text in the wake of careful contemplation. A subtle difference exists, in that, the translator's thought operation is confined and subject to the original text, while that of the writer is comparatively free from those constraints.

Expression is the output stage, which transforms the previous two abstract stages into concrete words. But expression is in no sense a passive activity or a mechanical transcription of the language. It is a highly active psychological activity on the part of the participant. Therefore, the stage of expression does not automatically terminate the stages of perception and thought operation; these three, on the contrary, are intrinsically intertwined. The efficacy of expression in both writing and translation is determined by the combination of the rightful choice of perspectives, the appropriateness, consistency, acceptability and flexibility of language and the coherence of the text.

Examination is theoretically the final stage of both writing and translation, with its primary purpose of refining the work by re-examining the written or the translated works in line with certain standards. It bears resemblance to Delisle's verification phase and review, and the monitor processes designed by Flower and

Hayes (1981). The process of examination in translational writing consists of two general stages, evaluation and correction. Evaluation refers to the re-reading and re-judging of the completed works according to standards, such as language expression, sentence formation, text style, etc.; the latter refers to the revision and correction of the problems arising in the evaluation stage. Examination does not only occur in the final stage, but instead occurs at any time of writing and translation.

In general, the researcher argues that the similarities between translation and writing, in terms of the cognitive mechanism, confirm that the above four core operating mechanisms can be applied to both the translation and writing practice. The strong operability displayed by these mechanisms will positively guide translation and writing practices.

CONCLUSION

This research, by retrieving, summarizing and analyzing the publications on translational writing from 2011 to 2018 on CNKI, concludes that the construction of translational writing theory is building on descriptive studies, Western linguistic theory and Chinese traditional translation theory. Its construction, in reverse, guides and promotes the further development of descriptive research, expands the scope of applied research, and above all, fundamentally promotes the improvement of translation quality. But its inherent defects, such as the lack of specific implementation methods, and the prevalence of Western translation theories are barring its widespread implementation albeit it's perceived strengths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, the research intends to give the following recommendations: first, the construction of a localized translation theory with its high adaptability and resilience to local needs, should be given priority and prudent consideration. Second, the construction of a theoretical system is to provide a theoretical basis for empirical research. If a theoretical system is repeatedly confirmed by empirical research, such a theoretical system is reliable and should assume more power in pragmatic application and theory building.

LIMITATIONS

The research does not give full explanation of DTS and ATS on translational writing. Thus, the argument for the necessity of the construction of translational writing theory is to some extent compromised. In addition, the scope of this study is confined to CNKI, with no further statistics from other domestic academic databases, which renders the conclusions obtained not comprehensive enough.

NOTES

This paper is dedicated to a general project of Sichuan Smart Tourism Research Site. The project number is ZHY15-06.

REFERENCES

- Bell RT 1991. *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*. London, New York: Longman.
- Delisle J 1988. *Translation: An Interpretive Approach*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Flower L, Hayes JR 1981. A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32(4): 365-387.
- Fu L 1984. The Preface of "Le Père Goriot" Retranslated Version. In: X Luo (Ed.): *Translation Theories (Fan Yi Lun Ji)*. Volume 1. Beijing: The Commercial Press, pp. 558-559.
- Gao L 2017. A study on writing skills for rewriting in translation. *Education Teaching Forum*, 44: 234-236.
- Guo J 2012. A brief comment on translational writing. *Shanghai Journal of Translation*, 3(3): 79-81.
- Holmes JS 2012. The name and nature of translation studies. In: L Venuti (Ed.): *The Translation Studies Reader*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 172-185.
- Huang P 2015. On E-C translation of prose from the perspective of translational writing: Exemplified with Cao Minglun's translation of Francis Bacon's essays. *Journal of Lanzhou Institute of Technology*, 22(6): 88-93.
- Jiang C, Zhou X 2018. An analysis of proverb translation from the perspective of translation writing: A case study of Li Lanqing's interview on education. *Journal of Lanzhou Institute of Education*, 34(4): 149-151.
- Li C, Ni L 2005. Teaching writing through translation. *CELEA Journal*, 28(2): 44-49.
- Lin Y 1984. On translation. In: X Luo (Ed.): *Translation Theories (Fan Yi Lun Ji)*. Volume 1. Beijing: The Commercial Press, pp. 417-432.
- Luo X 1984. *Translation Theory*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Ren D 2003. Discourse translation and translator's writing — Taking Hawkes' translation of the author's word as an example. *Foreign Language Education (Waiyu Jiaoxue)*, 24(4): 33-36.
- Wang H 2006. *Review of Literary Translations*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

- Yan W 2017. *The Translation of Four-Character Words in the Translation of Literary Texts from the Perspective of Translational Writing*. Xiamen, China: Xiamen University Press.
- Yang S 2011. *On the Construction of English-Chinese Translational Writing*. PhD. Shanghai: Shanghai International Studies University.
- Ye Y, Hu M 2018. Translation studies of fujian's scenic spots against the background of belt and road — from the perspective of translational writing. *Overseas English*, (5): 105-106.
- Zhou W, Si X 2000. On the status, current situation of translation and its relationship with writing in college english teaching. *Journal of Anhui Agricultural University (Social Science Edition)*, 1(21): 85-86.
- Zhou X, Yang S 2015. A new mode of L2 writing teaching from the perspective of translational writing. *Foreign Language Education (Waiyu Jiaoxue)*, 36(6): 53-57.
- Zhu F 2005. Zero degree writing: The key to translation. *Journal of Lanzhou Jiaotong University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 24(5): 144-147.
- Zhu W 2017. An inquiry of academic C-E translation from the perspective of translational writing — Take the Chinese translation of section 3.1 of chapter 3 of the introduction to translation as an example. *English Square*, 77(5): 5-7.
- Zhu Y 2013. Corpus-based C — E contrastive review in translational writing class. *Journal of Xiamen University of Technology*, 21(4): 107-111.
- Zhu Y, Yang S 2017. The combination of reading, writing and translation extended translational writing classroom model. *Journal of Qiqihar University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, (7): 185-188.

Paper received for publication on August 2018
Paper accepted for publication on September 2018