

EXPLORING TRANSLATORS' IMPACT ON TRANSLATED NARRATIVES: A MODEL OF RE-FOCALIZATION¹

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Abstract

*The paper sets out to propose a model for analyzing how translators exert their impact on their translations by altering the lens from which characters and events are perceived. Built upon Rimmon-Kenan's framework (i.e. perceptual, psychological and ideological facets of focalization), an analytical model is developed to examine re-focalization as reflected between the source and target narratives—how one facet of focalization is altered into another and/or what changes are made within the same facet. The model is applied to a case analysis of the Chinese translation of Peter Hessler's China story *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. The findings from the textual analysis suggest that Li Xueshun, the translator, assumes an insider position in the sense that he aligns the focalizer's perception of the history of China since 1949 with that of the Chinese*

people and foregrounds the inner qualities of the focalized (including the peasants and other common townspeople) by adopting the Chinese socialist lens. The model provides an alternative way to interrogate translators' relationships with their own translations. While most previous research has tended to trace the translator's voice through stylistic features, the proposed model allows one to explore how the translators influence the original ways of 'seeing' by introducing into the translated narrative a different focalizer.

Introduction

Conceptual and analytical tools from narratology and narrative theories have illuminated the relationship between translators and the translated discourses they produce. Hermans (1996:23-45) and Schiavi (1996:1-18) investigate such a relationship by attempting to identify the translator's discursive presence in the translated narrative, explaining how the translator functions as "an enunciating subject other than the Narrator" (Hermans 1996:33) to retell the source language story into the target language for a new readership. Inspired by the notion of the translator's discursive presence, the application of a narratological framework in translation studies tends to focus on revealing the translator's voice hidden in the translated discourse (O'Sullivan 2003:197-205; Jiang 2012:365-379) or exploring the shifts in voices between the source and target texts (Whitfield 2000:113-125, 2015:75-90; Davies 2007: 450-461; Rose 2010:223-243). This search for 'who speaks' in the translated

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discourse marks a crucial way to reveal the influence that the translators can exert over their own translations.

While stories are told through the narrator's voice, the events concerned are "always presented from within a certain vision" (Bal 2009:145). If the narrator's voice is bound to undergo changes when it is transferred into another language as demonstrated in previous research, it remains to be explored how the perspectives through which events are originally 'seen' would be altered in the translation. Given that previous studies have devoted relatively little attention to the issue concerning 'who sees' in the translated narrative, the current study, built upon the notion of focalization, proposes a model of analysis, with a view to exploring a specific aspect of 'translatorship'—how translators insinuate their impact into their own translations.

The paper starts with a brief introduction to the concept of focalization and its previous application in translation studies. It then elaborates on how the model of re-focalization is developed based on Rimmon-Kenan's framework of the three-faceted focalization (2002:72-86). Afterwards, the model is further illustrated through a case analysis of the Chinese translation of the English narrative nonfiction book *River Town*, a China story written by the American writer Peter Hessler. The translation provides an interesting site to explore how the translator, Li Xueshun, a local resident of the town, relays the varied focalizations and exerts his influence over the translation. Based on the findings from the

case analysis, the paper moves on to discuss what implications can be drawn to further our understanding of translatorship.

Focalization can be understood as the viewpoint from which events and characters are perceived (Toolan 2001:60). In a broad sense, this viewpoint can be situated outside the story and be "felt close to be the narrating agent"³ (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:75), or it can be located inside the story and be generally attached to certain characters. These two types of focalizers are respectively called the 'narrator-focalizer' and 'character-focalizer' (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:75-76). For example, a traffic jam can be perceived through the eyes of certain characters, such as those of drivers or those of traffic officers; also, it can be perceived from the viewpoint of a journalist or other hypothetical observers who remain outside the traffic-jam story and function as narrator-focalizers. Bal (2009:145) further holds that a given focalizer's spatiotemporal position, its⁴ previous knowledge, or attitude towards the perceived object etc. can all affect the way of 'seeing', so when a particular focalizer is chosen, the story world is bound to be endowed with specific characters.

³ It has been debated if a narrator can 'see' the story world. For some narratologists (Genette 1980:205; Rimmon-Kenan 2002:73; Jahn 1996 256-258; Phelan 2001:57), the narrator can sometimes coincide with the focalizer.

⁴ Focalizer in some cases assumes an "unpersonified stance" (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:76), so the pronoun "it" is used when the focalizer is referred to.

Previous studies which employ the notion of focalization put emphasis on changes in the identity of focalizing agents or their viewing positions between source and target narratives. Li (2006:53-131) examines in what ways the original omniscient narrator-focalizers, who have perfect knowledge of the represented world but remain covert in the narrative, are transferred into the target narratives. He finds that the translator Zhou Shoujuan, under the influence of vernacular Chinese fiction, tends to lend the unpersonified omniscient narrator-focalizers an image of a Chinese storyteller. Wang (2015:146-162), on the other hand, focuses on character-focalizers, who are located inside the story world and are endowed with only limited knowledge. Illustrating through the case of Hellen Keller's autobiography, he evaluates if the character-focalizer's 'special' restricted vision is re-produced in the translation.

While Li and Wang investigate shifts in the nature of focalizing agents through a wide range of linguistic markers, other researchers (Baldo 2008:39-115; Määttä 2004:319-336; Rouhiainen 2000:109-125) have restricted their attention to the use of specific linguistic categories (e.g. codeswitching and dialect) or narratological structure (e.g. free indirect discourse). Määttä contends that the use of a non-standard literary dialect in Faulkner's novels renders the African American characters in a marked position, reflecting how this social group is focalized through the white narrators' stereotypes. She finds that the ideologically-loaded visions are not faithfully conveyed in the French

translation owing to the loss of the dialectical features. Baldo and Rouhiainen hold that the use of codeswitching and free indirect discourse can signal a distinction or a contrast between the agents-who-see and the agents-who-speak. However, both of them find that these devices are not duly reproduced in the translations, thus obscuring the extra presence of the focalizing agents.

The researchers above have discussed how the status of focalizers and the associated perspectives are transformed in the translated narratives. Although Li (2006:22) considers focalization one of the aspects for exploring the "characteristics of Zhou's fiction translation", in most of the studies the translators' influence on the general design of the translated discourse has not been established in the discussion. Considering that, the current paper sets out to propose a model for analyzing how, under the impact of the translator, events and characters as perceived by the focalizer in the source narrative are re-focalized in the translated narrative.

The Model of Re-Focalization

The proposed model draws upon Rimmon-Kenan's theory of focalization. Since perception is not purely visual, her framework (2002:72-86) broadens the narrow sense of 'seeing' and classifies focalization into three types—perceptual, psychological and ideological. She further separates the perceptual facet into space and time, and the psychological facet, into cognitive and emotive components. These three facets and the more specific components can be interpreted as the

'lens' through which a viewing agent perceives the events and characters (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:72-83; Toolan 2001:62-63). The categorization allows the current study to explore the specific ways in which things are 'seen', not only visually, but also more "implicitly"—how they are "felt, understood and evaluated" (Toolan 2001:60) and provides a tool to describe and analyze the re-focalization between the source and target narratives.

Rimmon Kenan's Notion of Focalization

Rimmon-Kenan examines the three facets of focalization in conjunction with external and internal focalizations, the former being generally associated with the narrator-focalizer outside the story, while the latter, the character-focalizer inside the story (2002:75-78). In terms of the perceptual facet, she explores how the external/internal status of focalizers entails a varied range of vision; for instance, a narrator-focalizer tends to perceive things that happen in different places or at different times, while a character-focalizer has only limited vision confined to the 'here and now' (2002:78-80). For the psychological facet, the external/internal distinction concerns mainly the focalizer's knowledge scope and its access to "the inner life of the focalized" (2002:82). In this case, an external focalizer tends to have unrestricted knowledge of the story world and it can decide whether to present the feelings or opinions of the subjects under observation; by comparison, an internal focalizer has limited knowledge and is not necessarily granted access to the subjective side of the focalized (2002:80-

82). Lastly, regarding the ideological facet, she discusses the degree to which the world views of the external/internal focalizers enjoy authority, pointing out that a narrator-focalizer enjoys greater power than a character-focalizer as the former's views are accepted as the "norms" and are more likely to influence readers' judgment of characters and events (2002:82-86).

Since monolingual narrative fiction is the object of analysis, Rimmon-Kenan examines focalization in each of the three facets separately and puts emphasis on how the focalizer's positions relative to the story affect the "power or breadth of the focalizing" (Toolan 2001:62). However, the primary concern of the current study is to explore the *changes* between source narrative and translated narrative. It, therefore, invites us to make necessary adjustments by exploring the alterations between the facets and/or changes within the same facet instead. In addition, it is observed through the pilot analysis that as shifts in the external/internal status of the focalizer are not productive in explaining the ways things are re-focalized, the external/internal distinction will not be considered a significant variable, but it will be discussed where relevant.

Re-focalization in Translation

Before elaborating on the analytical model, this section will further clarify how the three facets of focalization are understood in the current study. If focalization points towards the fundamental question of 'who sees'

(Genette 1980:186), the three facets further raise the question 'through what lens who sees'. With reference to the ways Rimmon-Kenan distinguishes the three facets, it can be interpreted that one may see through the perceptual lens according to the temporal-spatial situations; or through the psychological lens, according to the more personally-oriented dimensions, such as one's knowledge, beliefs or emotional state; or finally, through the ideological lens, according to "a general system of viewing the world

conceptually" (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:82), or it can be rephrased as the values or beliefs collectively-shared in a culture or a society. It is worth noting that the three-faceted classification does not mean that people only perceive things solely based on one of the facets each time. Rather, it means that people tend to adopt a 'prime lens' to perceive things by prioritizing one facet over another.

In order to examine how events and characters are re-focalized in the translated narrative, or what the current study calls 're-focalization', Rimmon-Kenan's model is extended, as shown in the diagram below:

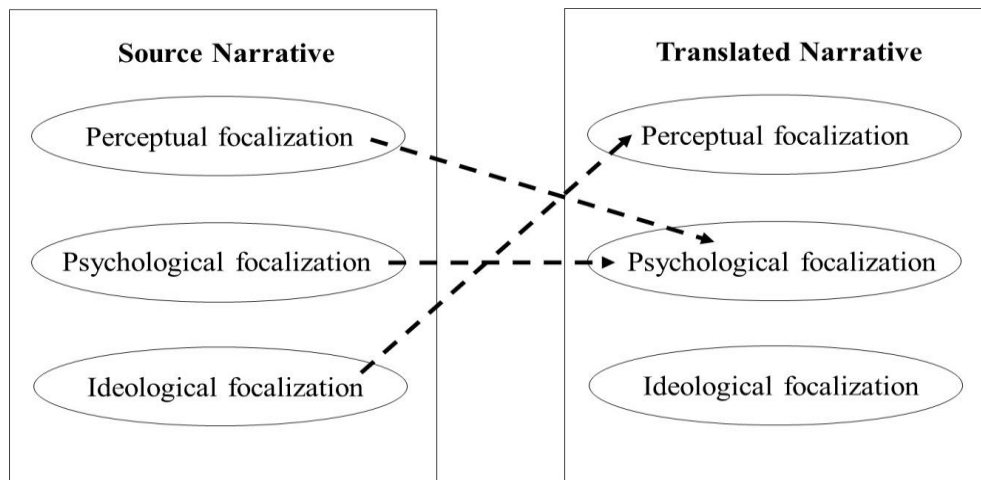


Figure 1

The possible ways of re-focalization between the source and translated narratives are marked in the dotted arrows. Instead of treating each facet independently, the proposed model focuses on the alterations among the three facets as well as changes within the same facet. As shown in the diagram, perceptual focalization in the source narrative can be altered into a psychological one in the translated narrative, where, for instance, the focalizer's personal interpretations are admitted into the original temporal focalization of a city's history. Or in another case, when the ideological lens is adopted to describe townscape, the translation somehow turns it into a perceptual one, possibly by suppressing the ideological orientations embedded in the original description. Apart from that, even though sometimes the facet of focalization remains unchanged, the specific lens the translation adopts can be different; for example, the focalization in the source narrative is conveyed through the focalizer's knowledge of an event and factual details are presented, while emotional responses may be inserted into the focalization in the translated narrative, thus changing the cognitive lens into an emotive one. What is illustrated here does not exhaust all the possibilities; in actual translation situations, there are many more ways in which focalization can be altered between the different or within the same facets. These changes in focalization, however, do not occur automatically but are subject to translators' influence, be it their conscious or unconscious decision-making.

Based on Rimmon-Kenan's concept of "verbal indicators" (2002:84), a body of linguistic markers is identified in the current

study to analyze focalization. Rimmon-Kenan holds that "in itself, focalization is non-verbal...however, it can be signaled by language" (2002:84). Although unlike narration, focalization has no clear-cut linguistic manifestations, the verbal elements can somehow reflect certain tendencies indicating the presence and status of the agent-who-sees. She further illustrates what is meant by "verbal indicator" with a few examples (2002:84-86). Naming, for instance, is one such indicator. She points out that the choice of Napoleon's different names, such as 'l'empereur Napoléon' or 'Bonaparte', can indicate through whose vision Napoleon is perceived, be it that of the French or of the Russians. Also, she demonstrates that specific words and expressions can provide linguistic clues to focalization. For example, an evaluative adjective (such as 'foolish') reveals that it is the adult-narrator who functions as the focalizer, while simple expressions (such as 'yes or no') can show it is a child's vision that is relayed instead. While Rimmon-Kenan only offers a few instances of verbal elements that may hint at the nature of focalization, especially the identity of the focalizers, the idea of verbal indicators serves as a useful basis upon which the current study develops three groups of linguistic markers to identify which facets of focalization are adopted in source and translated narratives.

The first group concerns the use of a "mental clause" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:197-210). Here Halliday's terms are borrowed to help describe the linguistic markers concerned. Specifically, the markers consist of a 'senser' which is realized through pronouns and a 'process'

through verbs. They can be further classified based on “types of sensing”, including ‘perceptive’ (e.g. she sees), ‘cognitive’ (e.g. I know; I think), ‘emotive’ (e.g. he likes) and ‘desiderative’ (e.g. I want). Most of the times these markers show to whom the source of ‘sensing’ or perception should be attributed, and they further allow one to judge which facets of focalization and/or what specific lenses are adopted. As to the second group, it consists of individual words or lexical clusters that characterize the temporal or cognitive features of an event; for example, the re-occurring use of words denoting time (e.g. “years”, “decades”, “history”) may indicate that the event is primarily perceived through a temporal dimension. Moreover, in some cases, these words can further reveal “temporal or cognitive distance” (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:85)—whether the focalizer is being proximate to or distanced from the event; for instance, the word, “heartrending” which describes a tragedy, in comparison with “severe”, betrays that the focalizer is more emotionally attached to the experience under observation. The third group, mainly includes the lexis, which indicates the worldview or ideological stance. The word ‘democratic’, for instance, can be considered a value-loaded word, while ‘uneducated’ may straddle a gray area and it depends on the co-text to judge if it indicates a psychological or ideological orientation; for instance, if the word ‘uneducated’ is situated in the sentence “from what I see in America, he is uneducated”, it signals that it is against the American situation that the person in another culture or society is evaluated, thus probably revealing an ideological orientation.

After these markers are identified, it can then be judged which facets and/or what specific lenses are adopted in the narrative throughout a given stretch of story. This further enables us to compare the variations in focalization between source and translated narratives. In the following part, the application of the model will be demonstrated with a case analysis, while the implications of ‘translatorship’, i.e. possible impact of the translator over the translation will be discussed in the section afterwards.

Re-Focalization in Application: the Case of the Chinese Translation of Peter Hessler’s *River Town*

The model has been applied to analyzing the Chinese translation of Peter Hessler’s *River Town*. Hessler is an American nonfiction writer and journalist, who lived in China from 1996 to 2007. He is best-known for his nonfiction trilogy about China, consisting of *River Town* (2001), *Oracle Bones* (2006) and *Country Driving* (2010). During his stay in China, he also contributed China reportage to such magazines as *National Geographic* and *The New Yorker*. Based on his two-year teaching experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in a local college, *River Town* portrays Hessler’s encounter with the townspeople against larger events in China since 1949, such as the construction of the Three Gorges Dam and the lingering impact of the Cultural Revolution. As an Ivy League graduate, Hessler was considered an ‘elite journalist’ who occasionally subscribed to the “enduring values” of American society, such as democracy and individualism (Song and Lee 2015: 2). Embedded with such values, *River Town* weaves a narrative about how the

townspeople are resigned to the socio-political situation in China but at the same time struggle in their own ways through the turbulence and major changes that have occurred in China. The book was translated into simplified Chinese by Li Xueshun in 2012, a professor of English literature at Fuling Teachers' College, the same university where Hessler taught English. As a local resident of the town, Li 'witnessed' some of the events and scenes that were narrated in *River Town*.

In the case of *River Town*, the angle of observation is deemed important. The Chinese events and characters are mainly focalized through the American narrator, who is sometimes present as a character in the story and sometimes, outside the story, functioning as a narrator-focalizer. Occasionally, the story is filtered through Chinese characters whose vision is embedded in the external focalization. By applying the model as introduced in the previous section, this case explores how Chinese characters and events are re-focalized in the translated narrative. Passages from the beginning, the middle and the end of the work are chosen to trace the consistent patterns of re-focalization in the translated narrative. Specifically, those at the beginning and the end mainly concern the narrator's general comments on the town and its people. The middle part involves closer portraits of individuals or specific groups of people. Based on the model, two major patterns relevant to a discussion of translatorship are identified. These textual findings, along with more detailed analytical procedures, are presented in the first two parts of the current section. Afterwards, it will be discussed how the altered

focalization in the translated narrative can reveal Li Xueshun's influence over the Chinese version of *River Town*.

Re-Focalization of the History of China since 1949⁵

One of the identified patterns concerns the re-focalization of Post-1949 China. When the focalizer perceives this specific stretch of modern Chinese history in terms of its overwhelming influence over the Chinese people, alterations among the three facets of focalization are observed, the change from ideological focalizations into psychological ones being one of the dominant patterns. Re-focalization of this kind can be seen from the ideologically-loaded lexis describing the past suffering of the town's residents that are moderated by the translator through the use of more neutral or informal expressions which create a certain cognitive distance between the focalizer and the perceived event. The following translation of the English narrator's general comments about his first impression of the Chinese students and their families is one of the examples:

Example 1

ST (source text):

⁵ The year 1949 marks the founding of the People's Republic of China; it is adopted as the marker since the book is mainly about the townspeople's lives in Communist China. Although it is understood that the marker can carry complex political associations, it is used here to indicate the general historical-political background as identified in the English nonfiction, and such a choice does not mean to bear any *priori* assumptions on the subsequent analysis of the translated narrative.

...their parents had come of age during one of **the most horrible** periods in Chinese history...I sensed a great deal depended on the people of this age group—in some ways it was like the American generation of my parents, who grew up on stories of the Depression and World War, and who built the America of today, for better or worse. There was the same sense of future glory in China, but the past was **far more brutal** than anything that had ever happened in America, which complicated things... (Hessler 2001:23)

TT (target text):

.....他們的父母成長在中國歷史上最艱難的年代.....我能感覺到，在這一代人身上承載了很多東西——有些方面，這很像我的父輩，他們是聽著大蕭條和二戰的故事成長起來的一代美國人。然而，無論好壞，又是他們那一代人創造了美國的今天。說到中國未來的繁榮，這具有同樣的意義。但她的過去比美國的過去要坎坷得多，這就常常使問題變得復雜起來.....(Li 2012:25)

BT (back-translation):

...their parents had grown up in **the most difficult** era of Chinese history...I could sense this generation had borne a great deal of stuff. This was similar to

the elder generation of America, who had grown up while hearing (the) stories of the Depression and World War. However, no matter for better or worse, it was their generation who built the America of today. Speaking of China's future prosperity, this carried the same meaning. But her past, compared to the past of America, was **far more rugged (or bumpy; of far more obstacles)**, and this made things more complicated...

As shown from the ST's underlined part, the narrator-focalizer in the English narrative looks at the Chinese students and their families in comparison with their American counterparts. This is most evident in the sentence "...but the past was far more brutal than anything that had ever happened in America". Given the co-text, the two words (marked in bold) 'brutal' and 'horrible', which highlights the cruelty of China's past against an American yardstick, can be seen as markers that indicate an ideological focalization.

However, in the TT, the translator renders the two words 'horrible' and 'brutal' into 艱難 'jiannan; difficult' and 坎坷 'kanke; rugged' respectively, suppressing the original evaluative implications and creating a cognitive distance in the sense that the past suffering is devoid of sensational impacts and perceived as a mere historical period. In this way, even though the two countries and their people are still viewed on a comparative basis in the translated narrative, the original focalizer's judgment, which is possibly formulated based on the American value of democracy, is reduced into the presentation of the focalizer's knowledge of

a certain historical period that the Chinese people have been through, thereby turning the ideological focalization into a psychological one. This re-focalization can be also detected in the middle part of the book, where individual stories are told:

Example 2

ST:

But still it seems strange that in his office he can look up and see the photograph of Mao Zedong, who made **a three-decade hole** in Father Li's life as a priest...While talking about **the trials of the past**, he glances at it repeatedly, and every time there is the sudden flash in his eyes. (Hessler 2001:225)

TT:

不過，在他的辦公室裡，抬頭就能看見毛澤東像，似乎有些奇怪，因為這個人在他的神甫生涯中曾經留下了三十年的空白.....說到過去的種種煩心事，他會反復地抬頭看這幅畫像。每看一次，他的眼神就會為之一閃.....(Li 2012:242-243)

BT:

However, in his office, (one/he) can look up and see the photograph of Mao Zedong. It seemed to be somewhat strange, because this man had left his **life career** as a priest with **a three-decade blankness**. Speaking of all

kinds of **hassles** in the past, he looks up and sees the photograph. With each look, there is a sudden flash in his eyes.

The source narrative here focuses on the life of Father Li, who had been prevented from religious practice for thirty years since the 1950s. It is the narrator-focalizer who 'sees' Father Li's life as being subjected to Mao Zedong's influence. This ideological orientation is further signaled through the expression "a three-decade hole", figuratively describing the indelible impact of China's political movements on Father Li's life. As the narrative proceeds further, the phrase "trials of the past" further highlights the past suffering that Father Li had to endure and overcome.

The Chinese translation alters the original ideological focalization through the lexical cluster (marked in bold). The figurative expression 'hole' is rendered by the translator into 空白 'kongbai; blankness', scaling down the force of the political impact; meanwhile 生涯 'shengya; life career' is substituted for 'life', leaving the impression that it is only Father Li's professional life that is under threat. Moreover, 'trial' is rendered into a less formal expression 煩心事 'fanxinshi; hassles'. The expression shows how Father Li personally relates to past experiences; however, the nature of the trouble is not clearly stated; rather, the word points towards a general and vague reaction, glossing over the intensity of past suffering. Altogether these changed linguistic markers reveal an alteration from the ideological focalization to a psychological one. However, the narrator-focalizer is observed

to cognitively distance itself from Li's personal trauma. Changes of this kind are also reflected in the translated text elsewhere, where expressions which describe past suffering such as 'terrible' and 'far worse' are repeatedly translated by Li Xueshun into the colloquial word 糟糕 'zaogao; bad', again showing a personal yet general and ambiguous response to what happened in China over the second half of the 20th century.

Example 3

ST:

I thought of the old man in Fengdu with his stack of envelopes. So often my experiences in Sichuan were like that—I brush against people just long enough to gain the slightest sense of the dizzying past that had made them what they were today. It was impossible to grasp all of the varied forces that had affected Mr. Xu's life and would continue to affect him in the future—the war, the Taiwan split, the Cultural Revolution; the dammed river and the new city; his pretty daughter in Xiamen with her cell phone and driving lesson. How could one person experience all of that, helpless from start to finish, and remain insane? (Hessler, 2001:316)

TT:

我想起了手裡拿著一大摞信封的豐都老人。我在四川的經歷總是這樣——我跟他們這樣的人擦肩而過，對於他們眼花繚亂的過往經

歷只有些許了解，但正是那些眼花繚亂的過往經歷鑄就了今天的他們。我根本無法掌握曾經影響，並將繼續影響徐先生生活道路的各種力量——比如戰爭、台灣和大陸的分離、改革開放、大江截流、新城崛起、漂亮的女兒遠在廈門用上手機、學會了駕駛。一個人怎麼可能具有如此豐富的經歷，從一開始就無依無靠，卻又保持神志清醒？(Li, 2012:342)

BT:

I thought of the old man in Fengdu who held a big stack of letters in his hands. My experiences in Sichuan always were like this—I brushed past this kind of people, and only have a little knowledge of **a dazzling array of their past experiences**, but it was **the dazzling array of past experiences** that 'moulded' them into (helped them grow into) who they were today. I could not at all grasp various forces that had influenced and would continue to influence the life path of Mr. Xu—for instance, wars, the split of Taiwan from Mainland China, the Reform and Opening-Up, the damming (project) of the big river, the rise of the new city, the pretty daughter who lived far away in Xiamen, who had a cell phone and learnt to drive. How could a person who had such **rich/abundant experiences**,

being helpless from the beginning, keep a cool mind?

Being moved by the tragic and complicated life story of Mr. Xu, the narrator reflects on his experience with the townspeople. From the ST's underlined lexical cluster, it can be seen that temporal focalization is primarily adopted. The narrator's passing, transient encounters (as shown in expressions such as 'brush against' and 'just long enough') with the Chinese people in the town are in sharp contrast with the people's life-long experience which is framed in terms of the past, the present and the future (as further seen from phrases such as 'from the start to finish'). The contrasting temporal focalizations serve to construct an immediate narrative focusing on the narrator's self-confession—he could only 'gain the slightest sense of' what had happened and what would happen to the townspeople, possibly implying that it would be beyond its capacity to make any judgement of the people it had only met briefly.

The translated narrative still portrays the townspeople's lives according to the past-future continuum; however, the translator omits the temporal marker, "just long enough", thus diluting the temporal contrast as formulated in the source narrative. Meanwhile, the phrase "gain the slightest sense of", which signals the limited perception owing to the temporal imbalance, is rendered by Li Xueshun into 有些許了解 'you xiexu liaojie; have a little knowledge of'. This rendition shifts the type of sensing from 'perceptive' to 'cognitive', orientating the temporal focalization towards a psychological one and shifting attention to

the subsequent narrator-focalizer's knowledge of past experiences. Similar to the previous examples, a cluster of words (marked in bold) that reveal a cognitive distance are used. Specifically, the word 'dizzying' is translated into the Chinese idiom 眼花繚亂 'yanhualiaoluan', which characterizes past experiences as being so intertwined in a complex pattern that they 'dazzle' people's vision. This mental picture thus generated may further invite readers to make intertextual associations with a range of historical records commonly known in the Chinese context. Along with the vague expression 豐富 'fengfu, rich/abundant', the cluster signals that the focalizer perceives the townspeople's lives through a collectively-shared understanding of past experiences, subtly distancing itself from the immediate psychological impact of modern Chinese history over a singular person.

However, there is a subtle twist as shown in the underlined expressions in the TT. A list of terms (underlined in the TT), describing China's socialist development such as 改革開放 'gaige kaifang; the Reform and Opening-Up' and 新城崛起 'xincheng jueqi; the rise of a new city', are either added or insinuated into the translation; the verb 鑄就 'zhujiu; mould' further collaborates the terms above and depicts how past experiences enable the townspeople to become who they are today, echoing the socialist discourse about the strength of the common people. At this stage, the original temporal focalization is fully subdued and the impact of the Chinese past in the translated narrative is perceived through an ideological lens instead. This alteration into

socialist focalization marks another major re-focalization pattern, which will be discussed in the section below.

Re-focalization through the Lens of the Socialist Ideology

The re-focalization is also evident in the part which involves portraits of peasants and other common laborers in or around the town. Lexis related to the socialist discourse tends to be inserted into the translated text, thus leading the social groups or phenomena under discussion to be perceived through a Chinese socialist lens. This pattern can be further illustrated through the following examples:

Example 4

ST:

The city is different from the land in that, apart from the small old district, there is no sense of the past. To travel through the Sichuan countryside is to feel the history, the years of work that have shaped the land, the sheer weight of humanity on patches of earth that have been worked in the same way for centuries...The majority of Fuling's buildings look as if they were dropped here about ten years ago, while in fact the city has existed on the same site for more than three thousand years... (Hessler 2001:29-30)

...

Every terrace has been shaped by human effort, by successive generations of the same clan, by decades and perhaps centuries of work. All of it consisted of the simple labor of hands

and feet and basic tools, and the terrain has been changed so gradually that the work of the peasants seems as inevitable as a force of nature—something as determined and powerful as the river itself. (Hessler 2001:359)

TT:

這座城市與她所在的土地不大相同，差別在於，除了一小片老城區，毫無歷史感。到四川的鄉下去遊玩是去感受歷史，去感受那些通過勞動改造大地的歲月，去感受人類世世代代以來和土地相互較勁的過程.....涪陵的樓房大多看上去像是十年前扔在那兒似的，而事實上，這個地方的城市已經有三千多年的歷史.....(Li 2012:31)

.....

每一塊台地都靠人力壘成，也許經過了一個家族世世代代幾十年、幾百年的艱苦勞動。這一切全都有賴於手工勞作、肩挑背扛、工具簡陋，但極其緩慢的地形變化正說明，農民們的勞動跟大自然的力量一樣早已注定——如門前那條大江，毅然決然，力量無限。(Li 2012:387-388)

BT:

The city is different from the land where she is situated. The difference is (in) that, apart from the small old district, (the city) has no sense of history. To travel in the Sichuan countryside is to feel the history, to feel the days when **labor transformed the land**, to feel the process in which (the) **generations of humans have wrestled with the land**... Most of the buildings in Fuling look like they were dropped there ten years ago; but in fact, the city here has over three thousand years of history...

...

Every terrace has been built through human effort(s), perhaps through decades or centuries of **hard labor** by generations of the same family. All of that is dependent on manual work, on (people) who carry (things) on their shoulders and backs, with crude tools, but the gradual changes in the terrain show that the **peasants' labor** has been pre-destined in the same way as the **power** of nature—just like the big river in front of the door, determined and **infinitely powerful**.

The two stretches of the source narrative about the Sichuan countryside, drawn from the beginning and the end of the book, are perceived through the narrator-focalizer. In both cases, temporal lenses are primarily adopted, as indicated through the underlined lexical cluster in the ST. In particular, words such as 'for centuries', 'successive generations', 'decades' function as temporal markers to characterize the slow changes in the rural terrain as a result of the peasants' work. This further forms a contrast with the

rapid development of the city which is seen as being devoid of 'history'.

Although the temporal markers are retained in the TT, the translator inserts into the translation a group of words and phrases (marked in bold) that indicate socialist ideology. Most notably, the word 勞動 'laodong; labor', which carries socialist connotations, is used repeatedly. This socialist orientation is further manifest in two phrases: 勞動改造大地 'laodong gaizao dadi; labor transformed the land' and 與土地較勁 'yu tudi jiaojin; wrestle with the land', both implying how people, the peasants in particular, are capable and powerful enough to transform land for their own use. This inner strength of the peasants is further laid bare through the expression 力量無限 'liliang wuxian; infinitely powerful' in the second stretch of the TT. With the inclusion of a range of socialist markers, the object of focalization is no longer the phenomenon itself, but the peasants and the power they display. The temporal markers which are carried over in the TT serve only to highlight the hardship the peasants have endured over a long period of time, contributing further to altering the original temporal focalization into a socialist one. This re-focalization pattern is also detected in other parts of the narrative, where a specific group of urban laborers is directly portrayed:

Example 5

ST:

They haul their loads on bamboo poles balanced across their shoulders, the same way freight was carried in the south of China in the 1800s, when the English referred to such laborers as “coolies”—**from the Chinese kuli or “bitter strength.”** Here in Fuling, as in all of the eastern Sichuan river towns, the porters are called Bang Bang Jun—the Stick-Stick Army. They have uniforms (the simple blue clothes of the Chinese peasantry), and the weapons of their trade (bamboo poles and loops of cheap rope), and they tend to gather in packs, in companies, in battalions. To bargain with one stick-stick soldier is to bargain with a regiment. Their jobs are difficult enough without cutthroat competition, and they look out for each other; there is no formal union but the informal bond of hard labor is much closer...(Hessler 2001:28)

TT:

他們把貨物系上竹棒，挑在肩上；19世紀的中國南方就這麼搬運貨物，當時的英國人把這種勞工稱作 coolie——它是苦力這兩個漢字的音譯，意為**辛苦的體力活**。在涪陵——在四川所有的江邊小鎮，人們把這種搬運工稱為“棒棒軍”——**手持竹棒的勞務大軍**。他們穿著統一的服裝（中國農民常穿的那種簡樸的藍色衣服），帶著謀生的家伙（一截竹棒，幾圈廉價的繩

子），喜歡成群、成隊、成營地聚在一起。和一個棒棒軍砍價就等於在和一個團的棒棒軍砍價。即使沒有你死我活的競爭，他們的活計也已經夠艱辛了，所以他們經常相互照應；他們沒有正式的聯盟，但艱苦勞動結成的非正式的聯合體使他們之間的關繫更加緊密.....(Li 2012:30)

BT:

They tie the loads to bamboo poles and carry them on the shoulders; in the 19th century (people) in southern China carried goods in this way, and the English people referred to such laborers as coolie—the transliteration of the two Chinese characters *kuli*, meaning **hard physical labor**. In Fuling—all of the river towns in Sichuan, people call this kind of porter “Bang Bang Jun”—**the labor army holding bamboo sticks**. They wear the same clothes (the blue clothes that are commonly worn by Chinese peasants), carry ‘tools for making a living’ (one bamboo pole, loops of cheap rope), and they like to gather in groups, in teams and in battalions. To bargain with one Bang Bang Jun is to bargain with a battalion of Bang Bang Jun. Even if there is no cut-throat competition, **their work is difficult enough**, so they usually look out for each other; they do not have a formal union, but the informal alliance formed through **hard labor** renders their relationship with one another even closer...

The focalized object here is the Stick-Stick Army, a group of porters commonly seen in Sichuanese towns. In the TT, the word “coolie” which introduces the identity of the porters evokes a stereotype of cheap Chinese laborers prevalent in the West of the 19th century. This stereotype is reinforced by the conceptual metaphors related to ‘army’ as manifest in the lexical collocation (underlined in the ST), including weapons, battalions, regiment etc.. The lexis echoes the characteristics of coolies, who tend to be seen working in “gangs” in deplorable conditions (Tsai 1986:3-7). In this way, the Stick-Stick Army is cast in a stereotypical light as well and is likely to be perceived through an ideological focalization of a similar nature.

In the translated text, one of the most observable changes is that ‘the Stick-Stick Army’, a literal translation into English of the original Chinese phrase ‘Bang Bang Jun’, is back-translated into 手持竹棒的勞務大軍 ‘shouchi zhubang de laowu dajun; the Labor Army holding bamboo sticks’. Particularly, the expression ‘Labor Army’ conveys connotations associated with socialist discourse, usually referring to the alliance of workers or the working class who are committed to China’s social and economic development. This term further collocates with other expressions which describe the porters’ work as ‘difficult’ or ‘hard’ (marked in bold). Different from the English counterparts in the ST, these expressions, when situated in the socialist discourse, no longer emphasize the ‘bitter’ situations that the laborers find themselves in (as shown through the ‘bitter’ strength in the ST), but rather foreground the efforts

that the workers have made through toil and sweat. By the same token, some of the lexicalized conceptual metaphors that are retained in the translated text develop a different collocative meaning as well. Instead of showing Bang Bang Jun as mere passive disciplined gangs, the army-related expressions portray these groups of workers as empowered by the hard work. As a result, the stereotypical focalization in the original is counteracted, while the lens of the socialist culture is adopted by the narrator-focalizer in the Chinese narrative to view this group of workers and to re-assimilate them into the social system in mainland China.

By applying the model to the case of the Chinese translation of *River Town*, the study keeps track of how the history of China since 1949 and its impact on townspeople’s lives are re-focalized across the translated narrative. Also, it identifies another trend in which village life and common Chinese laborers are viewed through the Chinese socialist lens. The re-focalization is not free from the impact of the translator, Li Xueshun—his conscious and unconscious choices of linguistic markers contribute to the changes in focalization.

An Insider Perspective in the Translation

It can be observed from one of the major re-focalization patterns that when Post-1949 China is evaluated against the American values in the English narrative, Li Xueshun tends to include into the translation a range of linguistic markers which indicate cognitive distance. These markers point towards more general and abstract

understanding of the designated Chinese history and its impact on the townspeople. As shown in the first three examples, the Chinese past under discussion is perceived as an understandably 'difficult' historical period (see Example 1), involving a 'complex' array of 'abundant' incidents (see Example 3), while specific individual suffering is characterized as 'hassles' (see Example 2), or something that merely bothers a person.

When these words or lexical clusters, which are vague and ambiguous in meaning, are used as markers, they serve to conceal the value judgement embedded in the original focalization. One may argue that these changes likely indicate that the translator is working under censorial constraints which prompt him to tone down the political content, especially given censorship in mainland China (Tan 2014: 1-13, 2015: 313-339, 2017: 45-68). However, in the author's view, the ideologically-motivated gate-keeping function cannot fully explain the translator's impact, if the variations between source and target texts are interpreted in terms of a change in viewing position.

Originally, the focalizer in the source narrative perceives Post-1949 China as 'horrible' and 'brutal' etc., by adhering to the American value of democracy. It can be said that the focalizer in this case assumes an *outsider* viewing position. However, by de-selecting the ideologically-loaded markers, the translation filters out this American vision and positions the focalizer to perceive past experiences according to the Chinese people's mindset instead. This change in perspective is further realized through the cognitive distance as illustrated

above. Specifically, the words and lexical clusters, which convey abstract and ambiguous meaning, somehow evoke common associations in the Chinese context about the history of China since 1949, appealing to the collective understanding of past experiences shared in the Chinese community. As a result, the focalizer can be seen as being mobilized to align its vision with that of the Chinese people as if it shares the same social space with its object of focalization. In light of that, it can be contended that Li Xueshun's translational choices cannot be simply interpreted as the result of his self-censorship but may be better understood as a way in which he exerts his influence over the translated narrative by projecting *insider* perspectives into the translation.

Such an *insider* perspective is also manifest in his mediation of the Chinese socialist ideology into the original focalizations. As shown in Examples 3, 4 and 5, Li squeezes in messages related to socialist discourse into the translated text. It is not invalid to hold that such insertions and the resulting shifts towards the ideological focalization to some extent reveal that there is a political aspect concerning Li's insider status—he stays in line with socialist doctrines which are welcomed by the Party and are accepted as the norms against which the common people, including farmers and other laborers, are viewed in mainland China.

However, the assertion may be a partial representation of the picture. With the linguistic markers in socialist discourse, the townspeople are no longer seen from without through a westerner's eyes as mere survivors or even victims who are subjected

to uncontrollable socio-political forces; instead, they are seen from within as agents who show self-motivation. Apart from what is illustrated in Example 3, it is observed that the word ‘struggle’, describing the way the townspeople cope with the past, is consistently rendered by the translator as 奮鬥 ‘fendou; work hard to achieve one’s ends’, highlighting the townspeople’s proactive responses to difficult situations. Moreover, when the peasants and the porters are under observation, they are perceived as either powerful to ‘transform the land’ through their hard work (Example 4) or as able to endure hardships (Example 5). Admittedly, this way of ‘seeing’ appeals to the clichés of socialism; however, it, at the same time, counteracts the stereotype that may otherwise dictate readers’ perceptions and serves to focalize the *imperceptible* from within, that is, to showcase the inner qualities of the Chinese laborers. In this sense, it can be further argued that the re-focalization may not necessarily reveal Li’s passive subscription to socialist doctrine but may indicate his active mediation—by borrowing the socialist ideology to empower the common Chinese people, especially the laborers under observation.

In brief, the re-focalization pattern reveals Li Xueshun’s insider position. He is found to mobilize the focalizer to perceive *from within*—either to adopt the same viewing position as the Chinese townspeople or to foreground “the inner life of the focalized” in Rimmon-Kenan’s words (2002:82). In what follows, the paper will move beyond this specific case and interrogate in what sense the proposed model of re-focalization can contribute to general understanding of

the translator’s impact over the translation produced.

Re-focalization and Translatorship

Previous translation studies (Bosseaux 2007:9-24; Munday 2008:11-41; Lee 2010:22-100) which discuss the translator’s impact on the translated discourse have tended to investigate the translator’s discursive presence. Specifically, this presence is assumed to be chiefly reflected in the style of a particular translator. By examining the patterned linguistic choices of the translated discourse, researchers can delineate the translator’s voice which has been subtly mingled with that of the original author, thereby uncovering the translator’s ‘fingerprint’ on the translation produced.

In comparison to those studies, the proposed model of re-focalization does not give prime attention to the stylistic features as displayed by either source or target texts. Instead, the linguistic choices are analyzed as markers that signal the nature of focalization. If the style is seen as a relatively clear-cut index of the translator’s voice, the relationship between linguistic markers and focalization is more subtle and slippery: the markers are sometimes not strictly differentiable from the linguistic features that are deemed as part of the narrator’s voice, and therefore they can only be seen as extra ‘signals’ which hint at possible viewing angles or positions. This tenuous relationship between focalization and the verbal elements concerned could thus distinguish the translator’s presence as identified through the focalization markers from the one through the stylistic features, enabling the researcher to explore the more delicate

aspects of the translator's influence over the translated narrative and to interpret the translator's impact from a possibly alternative way.

Specifically, the narrator in the translated narrative is usually assumed to have a coherent persona. The persona is the image of the narrator as projected through the narrative text, and this image tends to carry consistent features, indicating that the narrator is a singular entity, even though it is likely that its voice is a mixture of that of the author's and the translator's. However, from the analysis of the Chinese translation of *River Town*, a different picture emerges: the focalizer in this case coincides with the English narrator; however, it is found that although the narrator remains the same person in the source and target narratives, the focalizers that are associated with the narrator are different—in the source narrative the focalizer perceives the Chinese town and its people primarily based on its personal knowledge or American values, while the one in the target narrative adopts the same viewing position as the Chinese people. It thus can be argued that the focalizer in this case seems to split into two viewing agents—there is an *outsider* focalizer in the source narrative and an *insider* focalizer in the target narrative.

This separation of focalizer into different entities has been discussed in narratology as well. Rimmon-Kenan (2001:85-86) illustrates this phenomenon through the case in which an adult-narrator tells a story about its childhood. Her analysis shows that the narrative contains 'double visions'—sometimes the story world is filtered through the eyes of the narrator's younger self and

sometimes through those of the narrator's older self. As a result, one can feel that there is the presence of two focalizers and they stand apart from each other in terms of the temporal distance involved.

The phenomenon above is also observable in translation. However, unlike monolingual narratives, this distinction in the focalizers in the translation scenario is not primarily marked by temporal distance but rather, spatial or more precisely, cultural distance. This distance can carry a cognitive dimension—the narrator in the source or target narrative may have a varying amount of previous knowledge of the perceived culture or feel relatively attached to or detached from the community under observation. The differences in cognitive proximity to the object of focalization can thus prompt the narrator to adopt varied viewing positions in the source and target narratives, thus giving rise to two distinct agents-who-see—the insider/outsider divergence as demonstrated above being one such possibility.

By examining how the focalizers vary between the source and target narratives, for instance, how an *outsider* focalizer is altered into an *insider* one, or the other way around, researchers can further uncover the viewing positions taken up by the translators. This viewing position may not necessarily reflect the translators' conscious adherence to a certain ideological stance but could orient more towards the translators' psychological status—how their previous knowledge, the attachment towards the object of perception etc. serve as subconscious cognitive factors that lead them to exert influence over the translated discourses. As shown in the case

of *River Town*, it could be Li Xueshun's close affinity with the town specifically and the Chinese community in general that encourages him to re-design the linguistic markers and re-create the focalizer in the translated narrative. A re-focalization analysis of this kind can thus reflect the complex dimensions of translatorship, allowing one to perceive translators not merely as political entities but as agents whose visions are subject to the influence of human feelings and other psychosomatic factors.

Conclusion

This paper proposes a model of re-focalization for exploring translators' impact on translated narratives. By extending Rimmon-Kenan's three facets of focalization, the analytical model focuses on examining alterations between three facets (i.e. the perceptual, the psychological and the ideological) and/or within the same facet. These changes can be identified through the shifts in linguistic markers between the source and target texts, and three groups of such focalization markers are tentatively proposed. The model is then illustrated through a case analysis of the Chinese translation of Peter Hessler's *River Town*. The textual findings show that Li Xueshun tends to alter the ideological focalization, which is originally loaded with American values, to a psychological one, and in some cases, they are further blended into ideological focalization, rendering the focalizer's perceptions in convergence with the Chinese people's collective understanding of their life experiences in the past and what is commonly known as the 'Chinese character'. Also, they bring into

focus the inner motivations and strength of the townspeople, especially the Chinese peasants and other common laborers.

The re-focalization patterns suggest that Li's impact on the translated narrative cannot be merely interpreted as related to the political function that he may assume in the Chinese context. The same social space that he and other Chinese occupy, and the empathy thus developed between him and the townspeople under observation seem to lead him to interfere in the original ways of 'seeing' and to introduce into the translated narrative an *insider* focalizer as opposed to the *outsider* focalizer in the source narrative. However, the insider/outsider status of translators is only one of the possible ways that one may construe through the re-focalization model to explain the translators' impact over the translation they produce. The model can be also applied to an exploration of how translators project their perspectives, the ways they see themselves or the world around them, into the translated narratives.

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