

# Study on the Translation Mode of Chinese Literature in Spain under the Perspective of Communication—Taking the Translation and Interpretation of Pioneer Literature in Spain as an Example

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**Abstract:** As Chinese culture goes out, translation becomes more and more important as an important way of "going out". This paper examines this paper analyses the dissemination of Chinese pioneering literature in Spain in terms of "main body of translation", "translation content", "translation channel", "translation audience" and "translation effect", analyses the effect of Chinese Pioneer literature in Spain, and puts forward a proposal on the dissemination of Chinese Pioneer literature in Spain.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, Chinese culture going out has been elevated to the height of national strategy, and promoting Chinese literature to the world is not a simple translation problem<sup>[1]</sup>. This means that when we discuss the translation of Chinese literature, we should not only discuss how to translate, but also pay more attention to the dissemination and acceptance of the translated works<sup>[2]</sup>.

The study of Sinology in Spain started very early, and the first Chinese work translated into Western language was “*Ming Xin Bao Jian (Precious Mirror of the Clear Heart)*”. It was translated into Spanish by Juan Cabo, a Spanish monk. After the new century, Spain began to translate and publish a large number of Chinese literary works. However, little has been said about the effect of the dissemination of these works after their entry into Spain.

Based on the 5W model of communication process, Bao Xiaoying (2014)<sup>[3]</sup> proposed translation analysis model based on the five elements: "the main body of translation ", "translation path", "translation content", "translation audience" and "translation effect". Studying translation from these five elements helps to analyze the dissemination of Chinese pioneer literature in Spain.

## 2. Overview of Chinese Pioneer Literature Translated and Published in Spain

Among the Chinese pioneer authors, Mo Yan topped the list with 26 translations, followed by Yu Hua(6). As an outstanding Chinese writer of pioneer literature, Mo Yan is China's first Nobel Laureate in Literature. Seventeen of his translations into Spanish were published after he won the Prize in 2012, and the dissemination of his works has certain specificities, so this paper will not explore them for the time being, but rather focus on the translations of other Chinese pioneer writers of the 1980s, with works translated into Spanish, who are contemporaries of Mo Yan but without the "halo" of a Nobel Prize. Until December 2023, the translations of Chinese pioneer writers of the 1980s in Spain will be as follows:

**Su Tong:** *Mi vida como emperador* , 2009;

**Yu Hua:** *China en diez palabras*, 2013, *Crónica de un vendedor de sangre*, 2014; *El passat i els càstigs*, 2013; *Brothers*, 2009; *Gritando en la llovizna* , 2016; *¡Vivir!* , 2010

**Can Xue:** *La frontera*, 2021; *Hojas rojas*, 2022; *Nubes flotantes ya envejecidas*, 2022

**Ge Fei:** *El invisible*, 2012; *Memoria del paraíso* 2023

**A Lai:** *Las amapolas del Emperador*, 2003

**Lin Bai:** *Habladoras de mujeres*, 2020

### 3. The core of the main body of translation: Spanish sinologists

The main body of translation refers to "who" does the translating. Long-term translation practice and experience have proved that translation is a kind of deep-level cross-cultural communication activity, which is affected by the most complicated factors such as history, culture and social influence, especially in the translation of serious literature, which needs to take into account a number of elements both inside and outside the text, and thus the role of the main body of the translation is particularly important.

Since the 1980s, Madrid, Barcelona and Granada have gradually formed three major centers of Sinological research. As a result, Spain has produced a large number of excellent sinologists who are able to undertake the translation of Chinese books. Of the 14 Spanish translations involved in this paper, 12 works have been directly translated from Chinese by eight translators, five of whom come from the above-mentioned Sinological Centers. Many of them have more than one work translated directly from Chinese. For example, Anne-Hélène Suárez Girard, has more than 20 translations of *The Book of Dao* and Mo Yan's *Changes*, in addition to Yu Hua's three translations.

It can be seen that Spanish sinologists have become the backbone of China's pioneer literary translation. There is a native speaker's advantage in grasping the Spanish reader's "nuanced linguistic habits, unique textual preferences, and subtle aesthetic tastes"<sup>[2]</sup>. With the development of Sinology in Spain, the Sinological Research Center in Spain provides a solid and stable platform for sinologists to research and grow, and also provides a solution to the problem of "who should translate" when Chinese literature goes to the Spanish-speaking world.

### 4. Translation content that lacks "self"

The content of translation answers the question of "what to translate". It includes the selection of authors and works. Hu Anjiang<sup>[4]</sup> put forward the principle of "selection is more important than translation", and Ge Haowen also said that selection is more important than translation. Successful selection of translation content can make the translation more popular among readers, thus achieving better cross-cultural communication.

There is a great distance between China and Spain in terms of geography and culture, so Chinese books have always been in a marginal position and not the focus of Spanish readers and academics. If we search the Spanish academic journal database Dialnet with the keywords "Chinese/French/British contemporary literature" and "Chinese/French/British pioneer literature", we find that the number of articles on Chinese modern literature (63) and Chinese avant-garde literature (8) lags far behind that of British/French contemporary literature. Literature (8) lag far behind the number of articles on British/French contemporary literature (127/151) and British/French pioneer literature (15/19).

From the above data, we can see that nor contemporary Chinese literature nor pioneer literature is a hot topic in the Spanish-speaking academic world. The absence of academics also indirectly affects the attitude of the publishing industry towards Chinese literature, which is manifested by the fact that the Spanish publishing industry tends to recognize Chinese literature through the Anglo-French literary circle and decides on the translation and introduction of books.

Belén Cuadra pointed out in an interview<sup>[5]</sup> that in terms of the introduction of Chinese literature, the Spanish publishing industry is deeply influenced by the British, American and French publishing industries, and is more willing to publish books that have been published in these three countries. According to Maialen's(2012)<sup>[6]</sup> statistics, in the 60 years from 1949 to 2009, of the 37 works of modern and contemporary literature published in Spain in direct translation from Chinese, only 9 were not published without English and French translations. Of these 14 works of pioneer literature translated into Spanish, nine were first published in England, the United States or France for a number of years before entering Spain.

It has to be pointed out that because the Spanish publishing industry does not have a direct dialogue with Chinese literature, the Spanish publishers' choice of translation content is based on the Anglo-American and French literary circles, which makes them lack of "self" in the process of

choosing translation content, that is to say, they seldom analyze and select Chinese literature from the perspective of the country's own culture, social characteristics and its unique literary traditions as well as from the readers' preferences. The readers' preferences are rarely taken into account in analyzing and selecting Chinese literary works.

## **5. The Spanish publishing house-led translation channel**

Translation channel is the communication channel of the translated text, and the process of international communication can only be completed under the condition of smooth communication channel. If there is no effective translation channel, the translated text will only fall into the fate of self-production and self-marketing<sup>[7]</sup>.

From the perspective of publishers, the 14 published works of pioneer literature come from nine Spanish publishers. Most of these publishers are located in Madrid and Barcelona, where Sinology is flourishing in Spain, and seven of them have published more than one work of Chinese literature. In terms of quantity, Editorial Seix Barral has published the largest number of pioneer Chinese literature. It published four of Yu Hua's six works.

From the perspective of publishing mode, for many years, the main ways of translating Chinese literature "going out" are local publishing houses and foreign book fairs. However, the publication and dissemination of Chinese literature in Spain mostly adopts the direct mode of being handled by publishers, i.e. publishers organize and coordinate translation activities, and are responsible for publicity and market development after publication.

At the same time, we also find that Spanish publishers have begun to establish closer and long-term cooperation with Chinese writers and Spanish translators. That is to say, the same publisher invites the same translator to translate the works of the same author. This kind of cooperation makes the translator know more about the original author's writing style and linguistic characteristics, which is conducive to the translator's choice of more suitable translation strategies based on repeated translation practices and feedback from academics and readers, thus improving the quality of the translated text. For example, among Yu Hua's four translated works published by Luba Publishing House, three of the direct translations from Chinese were done by Anne-Hélène Suárez Girard.

It can be found that in the process of Chinese pioneer literature entering Spain, Spanish publishing houses have played a leading role in the selection of books to be introduced, the organization of translation activities, and the publicity at a later stage. Through the smooth publicity and distribution channels of these publishers, Spanish readers have been able to get to know Chinese avant-garde literature more closely. Due to the close connection between Spain and Latin America, it is easier for Chinese pioneer literature to enter the Latin American world once it enters Spain. It can be seen that Spanish publishing houses are an important bridge for Chinese pioneer literature to enter the Spanish-speaking world.

## **6. Ambiguous translation audience**

The audience of translation answers the question of "to whom the translation is made", that is, the readers who will face the translated work after it is officially put on sale, which is the object and the end point of translation activities. Whether a literary translation is accepted and favored by readers determines the final dissemination effect. The problem that usually exists in China's pioneer literary translation is the lack of attention to the needs of overseas readers.

Anne-Hélène Suárez Girard, in an interview to publicize her translation of *Alive*, said that she did not know who the readers of her translation were, and that the publisher was unable to provide her with a portrait of the readers. In other words, when Spanish publishers introduce Chinese pioneer literature, they do not know in which reader groups these works will be popular.

Huang Youyi(2013)<sup>[8]</sup> points out that academic research and market feedback can be used as a guide when studying the audience of overseas Chinese literature. Since the Spanish academia lacks attention to Chinese pioneer literature, audience research relies more on market feedback. However,

Spanish publishers, who dominate the whole translation and dissemination process, have not established a corresponding effective feedback mechanism, which makes the translated audience of Chinese pioneer literature in Spain still in a state of blurring.

## 7. Translation effects to be improved

The effect of translation is mainly reflected in the audience's acceptance and feedback of the translated content. Although there are more and more translations of Chinese pioneer literature into Spanish, "translating out" does not mean "going in"<sup>[9]</sup>. The examination of the effect of translation has always been one of the difficulties in the study of translation, and the effectiveness of communication activities is usually tested from the reading experience of the readers<sup>[10]</sup>.

We crawled the evaluation information of the above 14 Spanish translations of pioneer Chinese literature on mainstream Spanish book-buying platforms (Amazon, Casa de libros, Fnac), book-sharing websites (Goodreads (Spanish), Lectoralia, Quelibroleo), and social media (Twitter) and sorted out book by book. In terms of ratings, the overall ratings of these 14 works are relatively high. On the Goodreads platform, 3-star (out of 5 stars) scoring accounted for more than 80%, such as "*¡Vivir!*" with more than 4-star ratings reached 77%, of which 43% of readers scored 5-star ratings. From the readers' comments, we can see that Spanish readers, in their reading of Chinese pioneer literature, on the one hand, are seeking the resonance of common human emotions such as love, courage, loyalty, etc.; on the other hand, they also seek China, a country geographically and culturally far away, as the "Other" brings a different sense of beauty and freshness to it. It is worth mentioning that Spanish readers mostly regard these pioneer literary works as a window to China, hoping to recognize the real China and understand Chinese society, culture and history through literature. In the Twitter and Goodreads comments of the 14 translated works, "China", "history" and "society" are all high-frequency words.

At the same time, it should be noted that although the scores of these works are high, the number of readers who participated in the scoring of the comments is small. Of the 14 works on the various platforms we examined, the work with the highest number of review scorers is Yu Hua's *¡Vivir!* (Alive), which has 55 entries on Goodreads, in comparison to a literary work published in the same time period, *The Pins and Needles of Time*, which has 1,145 reviews on the platform; and published in 2016, Chinese sci-fi writer Liu Cixin's *Three Bodies - Once Upon a Time on Earth* in its Spanish translation, published in 2016, has 1,237 comments on the platform. This shows that these pioneer literary works are not the main focus of Spanish readers.

From this, we can find that the translation effect of these 14 translated works of Chinese pioneer literature in Spain is generally mixed, with the happy part being that these works have received high evaluations in the academic circles and readers who are concerned about Chinese literature, showing a better translation effect; the worrying part is that Chinese pioneer literature has not gained the attention of the Spanish book industry, and its influence on the general audience is not large enough, and it has not yet changed its "marginalization". "The worry is that Chinese pioneer literature has not received much attention from the Spanish book industry, and its influence on the general audience is not large enough, so it has not changed the situation of "marginalization".

## 8. Conclusion

With the increasing number of Chinese literary works translated and published in Spain, there is no doubt that Chinese literature has already entered Spain. However, "going in" is not the same as "staying in". How to make Spanish readers pay attention to and love Chinese literature is a big challenge for us. Through analyzing the dissemination of Chinese pioneer literature in Spain, we find that we can only make in-depth analyses of the main body of translation, the content of translation, the channels of translation, and the audience in the process of dissemination, expand the channels of dissemination, strengthen the cooperation with the local publishers, reasonably select the ideal main body, grasp the preferences of the audience, and select the content of the translation according to their needs. It is only by establishing a feedback mechanism to effectively evaluate the

communication effect that a scientific communication strategy can be drawn up to achieve better communication effect.

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