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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Challenges and Strategies in Translating Healing Narratives**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study selects excerpts from Chapters 10 – 14 of the English novel *The Little Bookshop by the Sea* as the research corpus, focusing on translation strategies for healing narratives. Guided primarily by Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory and supplemented by Newmark's Communicative Translation Theory, the study identifies three core challenges: the nuanced rendering of emotional euphemisms, the cross-cultural transfer of idioms and metaphors, and the adaptation of culture-specific expressions. By comparing literal and free translation examples, the paper proposes targeted translation methods, including domestication-oriented adaptation for the target language culture, imagery reconstruction, pragmatic logic adjustment, and contextual restoration, and attempts to examine the feasibility of these strategies in conveying the emotional resonance of healing narratives.

**| KEYWORDS**

Healing narratives; literary translation; functional equivalence; communicative translation; metaphor transfer

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### **1. Introduction**

This study utilizes Eliza J. Scott's novel *The Little Bookshop by the Sea* as a corpus, focusing specifically on Chapters 10-14. Although the text is relatively niche, its narrative structure is imbued with a rich tapestry of emotional euphemisms, vivid cultural metaphors, and quintessential British small-town depictions, thereby exemplifying the distinctive allure of "healing narratives." The term "healing narratives," a burgeoning field of inquiry in recent years, refers to literary works that convey emotional solace, foster psychological well-being, and promote a positive life outlook through storytelling. Such narratives are particularly characterized by nuanced character portrayals and a warm, comforting atmosphere. In light of the prevailing gap in empirical investigations concerning the translation challenges of these texts, this paper adopts Functional Equivalence Theory and Communicative Translation Theory as its theoretical framework. By integrating translation practice, it identifies three core translation challenges and proposes targeted strategies based on detailed case analysis. This study aims to provide a micro-level empirical perspective for the cross-cultural dissemination of healing narratives and to serve as a reference for the translation of similar literary works that prioritize emotional transmission and cultural adaptation.

### **2. Statement of the Problem**

Healing narratives have attracted extensive attention from both readers and scholars due to its unique emotional value and social function. However, as an emerging literary genre, the translation of this field remains in an exploratory stage. Current scholarship primarily focuses on the translation of Japanese healing novels, while research on English healing narratives is relatively scarce, particularly regarding the identification of translation challenges and the development of targeted solutions. Moreover, existing studies tend to be dominated by macro-level theoretical analyses, lacking micro-level case studies that integrate specific translation practice, thereby limiting their practical guidance for the translation of English healing narratives.

### **3. Analysis of Translation Strategies in Healing Narratives**

The translation of healing narratives presents a distinctive set of challenges that require a balance between preserving the source text's nuanced emotional resonance and adapting it to the target language's cultural and rhetorical expectations. The

following case studies illustrate how creative translation strategies, grounded in Functional Equivalence Theory and Communicative Translation Theory, can achieve this balance.

### **3.1 Analysis of "The week and a half following the dreadful Monday morning when Florrie had found Mr. H passed in a blur."**

The translation focus of this text excerpt is on the grief Florrie endures after Mr. H's death and her psychological state of avoiding this reality. This is also a key focus in the translation of healing texts: the emotions expressed in the original text must be conveyed through the target text as well, rather than merely achieving a literal word-for-word conversion. There are instances of euphemism and idiom adoption in the target text of this excerpt. For source language readers, "passed" serves as a euphemism for "death"—"she still couldn't bring herself to use the word "died," it sounded too cold. Too harsh. Too final"—as explicitly stated in Chapter Eleven of the book: "she still couldn't bring herself to use the word "died," it sounded too cold, too harsh, too final." The choice of the word "离开" (leave) in the target text aligns with the character's psychology of deliberately avoiding words related to death and achieves the equivalent transfer of emotion. When English readers encounter "passed," their reaction is complex: on one hand, they understand that it refers to "death"; on the other hand, guided by the context, they more deeply perceive Florrie's psychological state of being unwilling to confront and deliberately avoiding the issue.

Looking back at the core tenet of the Functional Equivalence Theory, it is to ensure that the reading response of the target audience is fundamentally consistent with that of the source audience; therefore, the goal of "functional equivalence" here is not merely to make Chinese readers feel grief equivalent to that of "death," but to allow them to similarly experience a buffered, indirect, and evasive emotional message. In addition, the phrase "passed in a blur," in the source text is not translated literally; instead, it is replaced with the Chinese idiom "恍如隔世" (as if in a different world) to enhance the effect of emotional expression and cultural resonance.

### **3.2 Analysis of "With the luxury of hindsight, she could see there'd been no burning passion drawing them together; what they'd had was more like a half-hearted fizzle."**

"Half-hearted fizzle" is a highly visual metaphor, depicting a state of "having the intention but lacking the strength, failing to ignite before extinguishing," which actually refers to an emotional experience of "being fleeting and lacking genuine passion." A literal translation such as "半心半意的火焰" (a half-hearted flame) might prevent Chinese readers from grasping its underlying meaning of a "brief relationship," thus causing a deviation in reader response. In contrast, the translator's choice of the Chinese idiom "昙花一现" (a flash in the pan), a widely accepted image in Chinese culture, can instantly activate readers' collective memory of things that are "beautiful yet brief." This approach is also consistent with the principles of the Communicative Translation Theory: prioritizing the transmission of the core metaphor over the literal form to ensure the information is clear and in line with the target language's cultural cognition. It successfully allows Chinese readers to experience the regret and understanding towards a "fleeting and ephemeral, unsustainable" relationship, perfectly replicating the core emotional function of the original text.

### **3.3. Analysis of "Her mind was a swirling mass of emotions and she was struggling to pin even a single thought down, never mind process it."**

The original phrase "a swirling mass of emotions," is a highly abstract description; a literal translation such as "一团混乱的情绪" (a chaotic mass of emotions), while accurate, lacks emotional impact. The translator deconstructed and transformed it into two highly visual Chinese idioms, "五味杂陈" (a jumble of emotions) and "千丝万绪乱作一团" (a mess of countless thoughts), which not only avoids the stiffness of a literal translation but also concretizes the abstract emotions, allowing readers to "see" and "feel" the protagonist's inner turmoil. At the same time, "pin...down" and "process" are rendered as "抓住" (grasp) and "梳理" (sort out) respectively, creating a sense of progression that accurately conveys the escalating difficulty implied by "never mind," greatly enhancing the fluency and appeal of the text. This is also the reader-response equivalence pursued by the Functional Equivalence Theory: when English readers encounter "a swirling mass of emotions," they feel a strong, out-of-control inner chaos; when target language readers read "五味杂陈, 千丝万绪乱作一团" (a jumble of emotions and a mess of countless thoughts), they achieve a similarly intense emotional impact about a complex and chaotic inner state through the superimposed effect of the two idioms. Readers from both linguistic backgrounds can develop profound empathy for the character's predicament.

## **4. Conclusion**

The translation of healing narratives highlights the fundamental differences between English and Chinese in terms of lexical density and linguistic structure. As translators, we should constantly remind ourselves to carefully consider the meaning conveyed within dialogues, while taking context into account. The differences in expression stemming from distinct cultural

backgrounds deserve special emphasis. Moreover, the original text primarily advances the plot through dialogues and scene descriptions. Its colloquial characteristics must be reflected in the translation. Translators should consider the era in which the story is set to refine the characters' speech patterns, striving for a balance between "domestication" and "foreignization."

In the translation process, a multitude of issues must be addressed, including euphemistic expressions, cultural metaphors, dialogue logic, and emotional transmission. Literary translation is essentially a cross-cultural reconstruction of meaning rather than a mere literal conversion. It needs continuous revision and a careful balance between fidelity and readability. In short, the core logic of translating healing narratives can be summarized as follows: based on a thorough understanding of the text's characteristics, guided by selected translation theories, and through systematic analysis and methodological adaptation, the form and linguistic expression of the translation are continuously refined to produce a more effective translation.

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