Advanced Bilingual Learners' Ability to Achieve Phenomenal Effect in Literary Translation
An Empirical Research Based on SPSS 25.0

Qingmei Huang

South China Business College, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China
macyhuang1209@163.com

ABSTRACT

The present research, which studies literary translation from the phenomenal perspective of multimodality, aims to investigate advanced bilingual learners' ability to achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation. Quantitative research method is adopted in the study. A translation test was designed and administered to 60 advanced bilingual learners via Wenjuanxing. The collected data were processed in SPSS 25.0. A descriptive statistic analysis of the collected data reveals that although there is a huge difference between advanced bilingual learners in their ability to achieve phenomenal effect, the overall translation proficiency with experiential words is slightly above average; a Pearson Correlation Analysis of the collected data shows that there is a positive correlation between advanced bilingual learners' comprehending ability of experiential words and their corresponding translation proficiency; a paired-samples t-test uncovers the evident difference between the two abilities, with comprehending ability higher than translation proficiency. Hopefully, the present research will shed new light on the pedagogy of translation in blended learning context.

Keywords: *Phenomenal effect; Literary translation, Comprehending ability; Translation proficiency*

1. INTRODUCTION

Current research on multimodality focuses on systemic functional grammar's approach to multimodal discourse [8][18][5]. Few scholars apply multimodality to the realm of translation, most of which focus on illustrated texts, such as comics and picturebook [6-7][17]. Hardly any scholars explore how to analyze the sensory experience of the source readers and how to represent the identical phenomenal experience in the target text from the perspective of multimodality. The present research, which studies literary translation from the phenomenal perspective of multimodality, aims to investigate advanced bilingual learners' ability to achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation, hopefully filling in a lacuna in translation studies and shedding new light on the pedagogy of translation in blended learning context.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

2.1. Literary translation and phenomenal effect

Literary translation, as an integral part of translation studies, has long been the subject of debate among scholars both at home and abroad. Recent years have witnessed a trend of literary translation being studied in the macro view, including culture [1][23], society [4][26] and philosophy [2][25]. And while scholars once employed linguistic approaches to literary translation, their discussions center on meaning and equivalence, rendering equivalence as "some level of sameness (in form, effect, content, etc.) between the original and its translation" (Snell-Hornby, 1988); little attention is directed to the translation of literary language in terms of shades of meaning, not to mention experiential discourse and its phenomenal meaning.

Based on the map-theoretical account of language, Liang (2008, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b)

proposes a tripartite taxonomy of meanings of experiential discourse, with an emphasis on phenomenal meaning. Since translation, to a large extent, is translating meaning, and phenomenal meaning is an integral part of experiential word meaning, it is essential to represent the phenomenal meaning in literary translation. Inspired by Nida's effect-oriented theory (1964), the present research posits that it is translators' responsibilities to reproduce the phenomenal meanings of experiential words in literary works and achieve phenomenal effect. By phenomenal effect, the author means that the translator should translate so that the phenomenal effect of the translation on the target reader is roughly the same as that of the source text on the source reader.

How exactly do we achieve phenomenal effect? Multimodality, as an indispensable property of phenomenal meaning, can be served as an effective starting point to represent phenomenal meaning. The so-called multimodality refers to the fact that we utilize various sensory systems to form a relatively integrated cognition of the object, and the phenomenal information we gain about the object is multimodal. That is to say, when a source reader reads a particular literary text that is rich in experiential words, he or she will conjure up in his or her mind a phenomenal experience that is multimodal. To achieve phenomenal effect, literary translators, when dealing with experiential words, should try to utilize various sensory experience to capture the multimodal information demonstrated by the experiential words, and represent the multimodal information in the target texts so that target readers can conjure up in their mind a phenomenal experience identical or almost identical to that of source readers.

2.2. Significance of the present research

The realization of phenomenal effect is of significance. To start with, it fills in a lacuna in literary translation theories because the present research adopts an experiential word-as-world metaphor, instead of the text-as-world metaphor widely acknowledged. The experiential word-as-world metaphor, which emphasizes the importance of reproducing the phenomenal meaning of experiential words that are manifested in various modes of perception, broadens our understanding of literary "world", thus enriching literary translation theories. That is to say, a successful translation is not successful translation without the realization of phenomenal effect, namely, the readerly experience of the target texts is identical or almost identical to that of the source texts.

Moreover, the proposal of achieving phenomenal effect casts new light on literary translation practice as it deepens our understanding of the source text. The argument can be formulated by the example below:

Uncle Vernon strode back to the fireplace and back breathing so strongly that his great black moustache rippled his face still purple with concentration. (from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*)

Version 1: 弗农姨夫大步踱到壁炉前又返回来，呼哧呼哧地喘着粗气，浓密的黑色八字胡也跟着波动起伏，大脸膛仍然涨成紫红色。

Version 2: 威农姨丈踱到壁炉前又踱回来，他的呼吸沉重，浓密的黑胡子被吹得一跳一跳，他的脸依然因为专注而发紫。

The exmaple is excerpted from the fantasy novel *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* and the two translations are provided by People's Literature Publishing House (version 1) and Crown Publishing Company (version 2) respectively. The example portrays the moment when Uncle Vernon was pondering over whether to trust Harry's words about his family being in danger and to leave the house. The experiential word *stride* indicates the anxiety of Uncle Vernon as he could not make up his mind whether he and his family should leave or not. The experiential verb *stride* in this sentence, according to Longman English Dictionary, refers to "walk quickly with long steps". From the perspective of multimodality, knowing the phenomenal properties of *stride* requires visual perception. Therefore, when a source reader perceives that Uncle Vernon is striding, he or she is seeing Uncle Vernon walking quickly with long steps. Both versions adopt "踱" to represent the phenomenal properties of *stride*, which is inappropriate because according to Modern Chinese Dictionary, the verb "踱" denotes "to walk slowly", with the phenomenal properties in contrast with that of the experiential word *stride*. What's more, it fails to convey the anxiety of Uncle Vernon. In the first version, the adverbial "大步" that represents the phenomenal property of "long steps" is used to modify the verb "踱", yet it does not quite fully represent the whole phenomenal properties. Hence, it can be argued that a better translation of *stride* in this sentence would be "大踏步地快步走到" as it can make target readers conjure up in their mind a picture of Uncle Vernon walking quickly with long steps, a picture identical to that of the source readers.

As is discussed above, any careless handling of phenomenal meaning in the source text would lead to defective translations and it is a translator's task to represent the multimodal phenomenal properties of the experiential discourse in literary translation. This is an ideal picture drawn by the author. However, what's the reality of advanced bilingual learners' ability to achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation? This is the question to be explored in the present research.

Apart from its implications in the translation theories and practice, the present research will hopefully shed

new light on the pedagogy of translation, especially in blended learning context. Liang & Zheng (2014) believe that the multimodal teaching of English synonyms deepens English learners' understanding and usages of synonyms. Zheng (2015) has conducted an experiment to figure out the effects of multimodal acquisition on discrimination of synonyms and has come to the conclusion that acquisition of phenomenal meanings is vital to vocabulary acquisition, especially in discriminating synonyms and that students with higher English proficiency can better acquire phenomenal meanings than those with lower English proficiency. Further experiments can be carried out to explore how to improve students' ability to achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation, especially in the blended learning context where students can be exposed to abundant multimodal resources online and deepen their understandings of the phenomenal meanings of synonyms, thus improving students' translation proficiency of experiential words. It should be noted that the multimodal resources herein do not refer to the multimedia resources such as books, pictures, or audio equipment as is advocated by systemic functional linguists, but rather the micro-lectures videos featuring the multimodal teaching of English synonyms. In the blended learning context, the multimodal resources will be uploaded online, accessible by all the students. Some exercises are also posted to assess whether students have achieved the learning goals. The teacher will then test students' mastery of phenomenal meanings of experiential words in class. In the final exam, a translation test will be designed to explore students' ability to achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation.

Before exploring how to improve students' ability to achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation, nevertheless, the investigation of the reality of advanced bilingual learners' ability to achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation is in order.

3.   EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1.   Design of the empirical research

3.1.1. Aim of the empirical research

This empirical research aims to answer the following three research questions:

1) How well can advanced bilingual learners achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation?

2) Is there any correlation between advanced bilingual learners' comprehension ability of experiential words and their translation proficiency of experiential words? And if the answer is affirmative, is the correlation between these two variables positive or negative?

3) Is there any difference between advanced bilingual learners' comprehending ability of experiential words and their translation proficiency of experiential words?

3.1.2. Research subjects

In the present research, a total number of 60 English-majored undergraduates and graduates from Jinan University were invited to participate in the experiment, and 49 papers are deemed valid. Of the valid subjects, 20 of them are senior undergraduates from School of Translation Studies, who are preparing for the Test for English Major Band Eight, and 29 of them are graduates from School of Foreign Studies who have all passed the Test for English Major Band Eight. The subjects chosen are made up of 11 male students and 38 female students whose age ranges from 21 to 26. Given the nature of Jinan University and the English proficiency level of the subjects chosen, it is safe to say that the subjects chosen are representative of advanced bilingual learners.

3.1.3. Research instruments

The research instrument for the present research is a translation test paper designed by the author. The test consists of two parts. Part I, designed to test advanced bilingual learners' ability to comprehend experiential words, is made up of 10 multiple choices. The experiential word of each item is underlined and students are required to choose its most appropriate Chinese translation from the four choices provided. Part II, whose purpose is to examine advanced bilingual learners' translation proficiency, is composed of two short passages, each of which involves ten experiential words. And in the ten experiential words underlined in each passage, half of them are selected from part I. Students are expected to write their translations of the underlined experiential words or phrases in the corresponding blanks.

The reliability analysis of the test paper was carried out by means of calculating the item-total correlation and the Cronbach's Alpha for the test paper is 0.716, which indicates that the test paper was reliable for the present research in terms of its internal consistency.

The translation test paper is rated by only one person, the author of the present research, which, to some extent, guarantees the consistency of the scores. For the first part of the test, a participant would be awarded one score if he or she chose the correct answer; otherwise, he or she would receive a zero score. That is to say, the total score of this part is 10 points and, roughly speaking a higher score is indicative of a better comprehension of experiential words. As for part II, the score is 20 points, one point for each proper translation of experiential words. Roughly speaking, a higher score designates a higher level of translation proficiency of experiential

words while a lower one corresponds with a lower level of translation proficiency.

3.2. Research Procedure

The translation test was carried out following strictly the instructions and the test time was exactly under control. As the subjects are from different schools, the author took advantage of the affordances provided by the largest Chinese online survey platform Wenjuanxing. The translation test was sent out to the subjects who were required to independently finish Part I in 10 minutes and Part II in 30 minutes.

After collecting the papers, all of the papers are marked strictly following instructions and the calculated scores of each subject are input in Excel and processed in SPSS 25.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Science) to cope with the above-raised research questions.

3.3. Results and discussion

This section reports the results of the statistical analysis. To deal with the first question, a descriptive statistic analysis was carried out. The numeric summary shown in Table 1 uncovers the location and dispersion of the data collected.

Table 1 A numeric summary of the data

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Total	49	5.00	26.00	16.0000	4.43001

As shown above, advanced bilingual learners' total scores vary from 5 points to 26 points, with a range of 21 points and the standard deviation is 4.43001.This means that the scores, to a large extent, spread out from the average score and that there is a huge difference between subjects in their ability to achieve phenomenal effect. However, according to the mean score shown, the subjects' ability of translating experiential words is above average, as the mean score 16 points, which is the typical of the 49 participants, is slightly higher than the median 15 points.

The present study considers advanced bilingual learners' comprehension ability of experiential words as the independent variables and their translation ability as the dependent variable. To solve the second question, that is, to figure out whether there is a correlation between the two variables, a Pearson correlation analysis was employed to get the correlation between the two variables.

Before performing the analysis, nevertheless, the first step is to take a graphic look at the data to examine whether there is a linear relationship between the two variables. As shown in Figure 1 below, although the points do not lie in a perfect line, there is a general upward trend in the data. In other words, we can impose a line on the scatter plot data points, sloping upwards

through the data. This means that, with deeper understanding of experiential words, students, in general, can better achieve phenomenal effect in translation practice, namely, their translation ability of experiential words improve.
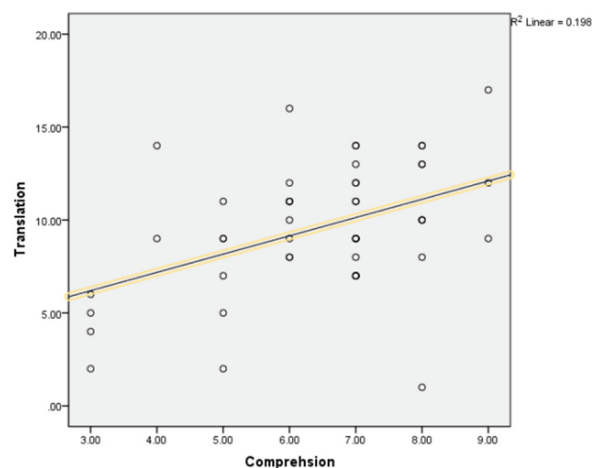

Figure 1   SPSS Scatter plot of the data

The inspection of the scatter plot of the data suggests that it is proper to examine for a linear relationship in the data by performing a correlation.

By comparing the 49 groups of data, the Pearson correlation coefficient, as is showed in Table 2, is r =. 445, and the two-tailed significance is p = .001, which indicates that the correlation between the two variables is eminent. Differently put, a Pearson correlation between the two variables found that advanced bilingual learners' comprehending ability of experiential words and their corresponding translation proficiency are positively related and the correlation is strong. Differently put, as the comprehending ability of experiential words grows, the translation proficiency improves.

Table 2 Correlation between the two variables

		Comprehension	Translation
Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	1	.445 ＊＊
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	49	49
Translation	Pearson Correlation	.445 ＊＊	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	49	49

＊＊ Correlation is significant at the 0.01level(2-tailed)

As for the third question, namely, whether there is any difference between advanced bilingual learners' comprehending ability of experiential words and their expressive ability of experiential words, a paired-samples t-test is conducted. The results are showed as in Table 3.

Table 3 Paired Samples T test

| | Paired Difference | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Comprehension-Translation	3.12916	.44702	-7.031	48	.000

A closer look at the t value and p value (t=-7.031, p=.000< .05) reveals there is a significant difference between the two variables and the subjects have a better performance in their comprehending ability than their corresponding translation proficiency.

3.4. Summary

The the present research examined 49 English majors whose English proficiency level is above TEM Band Four, on their ability of comprehending and translating experiential words. A descriptive statistic analysis reveals that although there is a huge difference between subjects in their ability to achieve phenomenal effect, the overall translation proficiency of experiential words is actually slightly above average. And by performing a correlation analysis, the result reveals that advanced bilingual learners' comprehending ability of experiential words are strongly correlated with their translation proficiency of experiential words in a positive way while a paired-samples t-test uncovers the fact that advanced bilingual learners' comprehending ability is significantly higher than their translation proficiency. That is to say, as far as advanced bilingual learners are concerned, the better comprehending ability of experiential words, the higher translation proficiency level.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The present research suggests that any careless handling of phenomenal meaning in the source texts would lead to defective translations as phenomenal meaning is an integral part of word meaning. In order to represent the phenomenal meaning in the target texts and to achieve phenomenal effect, literary translators, when coping with experiential words, should see to it that the phenomenal properties manifested in various modes of perception in the source texts be represented in the target texts. Moreover, the present research explores advanced bilingual learners' ability to achieve phenomenal effect in literary translation.

No study is without limitations and the same holds true for the present research. The proposal of effect inevitably entails subjective judgment from the translators and the present research restricts only to the study of advanced bilingual learners in Jinan University. A more wide-spread investigation might be needed in order to get a more comprehensive picture. It should also be admitted that the theoretical framework adopted in the present research is rather novel and in itself needs improvement.

REFERENCES

[1] Bassnett, S & A. Lefevere (1990). Translation, history and culture, London and New York: Pinter.

[2] Derrida, J. (1985). Des tours de Babel. In Graham, J. F. (ed.), Difference in Translation. Ithaca: Cornell University Press,165-207.

[3] Dreyfus, S., et al. (eds.) (2011). Semiotic margins: meaning in multimodalities, London : Continuum.

[4] Gouanvic, J.M. (2005). A bourdieusian theory of translation, or the coincidence of practical instances: field, "habitus", capital and illusion. J. The Translator, 11(2): 147-166.

[5] Jewitt, C. J. Bezemer. J., & O'Halloran. K. (2016). Introducing multimodality. London/New York: Routledge.

[6] Kaindl, K. (2004). Multimodality in the translation of humor in comics. In *Perspectives on multimodality*, edited by Eija Ventola, Charles Cassidy, and Martin Kaltenbacher, 173-192. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

[7] Ketola, A. (2016). Towards a multimodally oriented theory of translation: A cognitive framework for the translation of illustrated technical texts. J. Translation Studies, 9(1), 67-81.

[8] Kress, G & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). Reading images: the grammar of visual design, Burwood: Brown Prior Anderson.

[9] Liang, R. Q. (2008). A tripartite taxonomy of ES meanings and the limits of translation. J. Journal of Jinan University. (2), 104-109.

[10] Liang, R. Q. (2010). An MT-based tripartite taxonomy of ES meanings. J. Journal of Foreign Languages. 33 (6), 7-13.

[11] Liang, R. Q. (2012a). The aroma of coffee: language, experience and meaning, Xi'an: World Publishing Corporation.

[12] Liang, R. Q. (2012b). Experiential words and phenomenal meaning re-examined. J. Modern Foreign Language. (3), 254-260.

[13] Liang, R. Q.(2013a). On the multimodal acquisition of phenomenal meaning. J. Foreign Languages and Their Teaching.(5), 22-25.

[14] Liang, R. Q. (2013b). Phenomenal meaning and vocabulary learning. J. Jinan Journal (Philosophy and Social Science). (10),120-125.

[15] Liang, R. Q. & Zheng, Z.X. (2014). Multimodal teaching of English synonyms. J. Journal of Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University. (5): 133-140.

[16] Nida, E. A. (1964). Towards a science of translating, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2005,159.

[17] Oittinen, R. (2000). Translating for children. New York: Garland.

[18] O'Toole, M. (1994). The language of displayed art, London: Leceister University Press.

[19] Painter, C, Martin, J. R., & Unsworth, L. (2013). Reading visual narratives: image analysis of children's picture books, London: Equinox.

[20] Rowling, J.K. (2007). Harry potter and the deathly hallows, London: Bloombury.

[21] Rowling, J.K. (2007). Harry potter and the deathly hallows, Ma, A. R. & Ma, A.X., trans. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House.

[22] Rowling, J.K. (2007). Harry potter and the deathly hallows, Zhao, P.H., Peng, Q. W., Zhang, D. Q. & Lin, J. H., trans. Taiwan: Crown Publishing Company.

[23] Simon, S. (1996). Gender in translation: cultural identity and the politics of transmission, London and New York: Routledge.

[24] Snell-Hornby, M. (1988).Translation studies: an integrated approach, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

[25] Steiner, G. (1998). After Babel: aspects of language and translation (3rd edition), London and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[26] Venuti, L. (1995). The translator's invisibility: A history of translation, London and New York: Routledge.

[27] Zheng, Z.X. (2015). A multimodal perspective of synonym discrimination in the English language, Guangzhou: Jinan University.