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The Social Situatedness of Translatorial Competence: A Framework for Chinese Indigenous Translators in the Outbound Translation of Chinese Literature

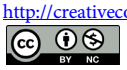
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Abstract

In the context of Chinese Culture "Going Global" strategy, the outbound translation of Chinese literature demands from translators not only textual transfer but also professional judgement across text selection, publishing, and reception. This study takes Chinese indigenous translators actively engaged in the outbound translation of Chinese literature as its research object and examines how social-contextual factors are transformed into competence requirements through concrete decision-making tasks. Distinguishing external social conditions from individual translator competence, this study proposes a framework of five competencies: 1) understanding of cultural strategy and translation policy, 2) source-cultural value assessment and text selection, 3) target-language society and reader assessment, 4) recognition of publishing and communication environments and programme planning, and 5) post-translation reception tracking and dynamic adjustment. Linked through pre-translation judgement, translation-stage implementation, and post-translation feedback, these five competencies form a socially situated analytical framework of translatorial competence. The framework broadens the analytical dimension of translation-competence research and offers a reference for the training and evaluation of Chinese indigenous translators as well as for the effective outbound translation of Chinese literature.

Keywords

Chinese Culture "Going Global", Indigenous Translators, Translatorial Competence, Social Situatedness, Outbound Literary Translation

1. Introduction

In the new era, translation practice in China has undergone a directional shift, moving from a long-standing predominance of translation into Chinese toward a pattern in which translation into and out of Chinese receives equal emphasis. Articulating Chinese experience and telling China's stories well have become core concerns shared by translation practice and translation studies. Yet the reception of Chinese literature in target markets remains markedly inadequate; even when a translation achieves linguistic accuracy, its circulation is still constrained by multiple social conditions, including text selection, publishing channels, overseas review ecosystems, and the cognitive structures of readers. Outbound literary translation therefore cannot remain at the level of linguistic transfer; it must also respond to a series of situated questions such as the determination of translation topics, the positioning of target audiences, and the implementation of dissemination. The gap between linguistic adequacy and communicative effectiveness is precisely what makes the translator's competence a problem that can no longer be reduced to bilingual proficiency alone.

The indigenous translator, as defined in this study, is a Chinese translator whose mother tongue is Chinese and who is engaged in the practice of translating Chinese texts into foreign languages, distinct from overseas sinologists and other non-Chinese translators. Rooted in the Chinese cultural context, indigenous translators possess a sound basis for understanding the historical background, regional experience, and cultural connotations of the original works. Yet outbound translation from Chinese is a practice of translating out of the translator's mother tongue, and indigenous translators continue to face limitations in polishing target-language expression, accessing overseas publishing resources, and assessing reader groups. Their advantage in source-cultural knowledge does not automatically translate into effective cross-cultural communication. It is this structural tension, which lies between a decisive advantage at the source pole and a systematic weakness at the target pole, that motivates the present study: how social conditions surrounding the translation event can be transformed into concrete, cultivable dimensions of professional competence.

Building on the research gap outlined above, this study approaches the issue from the dimension of social situatedness and explores the composition of translatorial competence required of indigenous translators in outbound translation practice. Its contribution does not lie in replacing existing models, but in offering a mechanistic analytical framework that unpacks the process logic through which external social conditions are internalized into translators' professional judgement. It thereby seeks to provide theoretical reference for the training of indigenous translators and the practice of outbound translation of Chinese literature.

2. Theoretical Origins and Analytical Framework of Social Situatedness

2.1. Theoretical Origins of Social Situatedness

Social situatedness is a theoretical perspective that took shape after the cultural

turn in translation studies in the 1980s. At its core is the idea that translation is not an isolated act of linguistic transfer, but a communicative act embedded in specific social, cultural, historical and political contexts. In this study, the term refers to the way translation activity is shaped jointly by political policy, publishing and communication mechanisms, and the reader's reception environment. It also covers how these factors shape the translator's professional decisions and the make-up of their competence. Importantly, the term is not used here as a label for an external constraint placed on the translator. Instead, it points to the process by which the translator actively takes in social and contextual conditions and turns them into professional judgement, making social context into cultivable elements of competence through active assessment.

Since the cultural turn, a number of research strands have deepened the idea of social situatedness. Translation is no longer regarded as a purely linguistic activity; instead, it is recognised as practice situated within broader social-cultural contexts (Bassnett, 1988). Lefevere's (1992) rewriting theory describes translation as a rewriting of the original under the domination of ideology, poetics, and patronage. Toury (2001) argues that translation is situated between two linguistic and cultural traditions and is subject to a double system of norms. Postcolonial translation theory treats translation as political practice and exposes the cultural hierarchies latent in translation activity. The systems theory perspective views translation as a complex system composed of multiple agents, including the author, source text, initiator, patron, translator, target text, and target text reader.

These theories have laid a solid foundation for studying the social dimension of translation. Yet most treat ideology and poetics as external constraints and focus on how the social environment restricts the translator, with little attention to how the translator actively identifies and uses external conditions to build professional competence. Zhou's (2014) translator behavior criticism, grounded in a social-textual two-dimensional evaluation, is concerned mainly with the ex post judgement of completed practice. This study approaches the issue from a different angle, placing the translator at the centre of the analysis. Indigenous translators are not simply passive figures who respond to external pressures. Rather, they make active decisions within a situational network of policy frameworks, publishing structures, and reader expectations. This network is what the paper refers to as social situatedness.

It operates across three levels: broader state policies at the macro level, funding institutions at the meso level, and reader habits at the micro level. These layers are not static; they shift over time. The same text carries a different meaning at the selection stage, during the translation process, and at the point of reception. What matters is that this situatedness does not only impose constraints. It can also create opportunities. A policy document, for instance, may restrict certain topic choices, but it simultaneously provides a translator with a legitimate basis for a project proposal. That form of legitimacy forms part of the professional competence this study seeks to examine. Because of this dual nature, conditions that appear re-

strictive from the outside can ultimately be drawn into a translator's practical skill set. Social conditions do not simply remain in the background; they become integrated into what a translator needs to understand and apply.

2.2. The Translation-Competence Paradigm and Its Presuppositions

The framework developed here builds on the mainstream translation-competence paradigm. Established models, including the PACTE group's work (2003) and the competence system proposed by Wang and Wang (2008), set out what a translator needs in terms of language, thinking skills, and strategy use. The PACTE group distinguishes procedural competence from five interacting subcompetences—bilingual, extralinguistic, knowledge about translation, instrumental, and strategic—and emphasizes the role of strategic competence in monitoring and orchestrating the translation process. Wang and Wang (2008) likewise approach translation competence as a construct that develops through stages and seek to identify both its constituent factors and its developmental levels. These models are well established in translator training, where they have shaped how competence is taught and assessed.

Still, they tend to treat the social and interactional dimensions of competence as secondary. Kiraly (2000, 2006) challenges this view, arguing that expertise is not a personal quality or a set of separate skills. Rather, expertise is built through real collaborative projects, in ongoing interaction with other people involved in the process. Risku (2002) takes a similar line from the perspective of distributed cognition, suggesting that translation knowledge and agency are spread across individuals, tools, and institutions. The present framework works from the same basic assumption, that professional judgement is not something a translator holds in isolation, but its focus differs in two respects. First, it looks at translation out of Chinese, a context where the target-language side lacks resources and therefore becomes a central site of competence rather than a marginal background factor. Second, and more central to this study, it sets out the specific steps through which social conditions from outside are taken up as part of a translator's professional judgement. Kiraly and Risku establish that competence is socially situated and distributed; neither, however, is designed to specify those steps for outbound translation. The five competencies below are intended to model that intermediate mechanism.

A shared presupposition of these models, however, deserves attention: they mostly take translation into the mother tongue as their default scenario and take the individual translator engaged in a self-contained textual operation as their unit of analysis. The social environment thus appears chiefly as a background variable, and competence is understood as a relatively stable possession of the individual. Such models therefore pay little attention to the policy environment, publishing ecology, and overseas reception context distinctive to translation out of Chinese. The limitation becomes clear when one moves from translating foreign literature

into Chinese to translating Chinese literature outward: the translator no longer operates within a familiar target language environment, and the decisive constraints on communicative effectiveness shift from within the text to outside it. The present study therefore retains the vocabulary of competence models but relocates the unit of analysis, asking not what the translator possesses but what the translator must be able to do within a given situational network.

This point can be further clarified by directionality studies. Campbell's (1998) study was the first to examine translation into a non-native language in a systematic way. The findings show that translation quality and style shift noticeably depending on direction, and that working into a second language produces a different textual outcome compared with translating into a first language. Pokorn (2005) questions the long-standing assumption that translation must always be done into the mother tongue. The argument is that the difference between the two directions is one of degree, not an absolute rule. Pavlović (2013) pushes for directionality to be recognised as a proper analytical category in its own right, rather than being treated as a minor methodological detail. Taken together, these studies make it clear that translation direction is not a neutral technical setting. It actively shifts the balance of advantages and disadvantages across the entire process. For the present argument, this means that the indigenous translator's competence cannot be assessed against a model built on translation into the mother tongue alone; the target language pole must be addressed as a positive field of competence, not merely as a source of errors to be corrected.

2.3. Research on Translating-Out Competence

In recent years, Chinese scholars have begun to attend specifically to the competence of translators who translate out of Chinese. Wu (2015) analysed the problems and principles in the training of such translators from the perspective of a multi-factor model of translation competence, and was among the first to point out that Chinese Culture "Going Global" strategy requires the cultivation of indigenous translating talents equipped with multi-factor competence, thereby opening up the problem domain for outbound-translation competence research. Complementing this macro-level diagnosis, Bao's (2013) interview with Huang Youyi examined translation and communication models, arguing that effective outbound translation depends as much on the coordination of translation, publishing, and promotion as on the quality of the translated text itself.

The study by Ren and Zhao (2023) represents a major methodological advance. The survey collected 637 responses and identified 28 separate competence elements. Cluster analysis and structural equation modelling were then used to group these elements into seven categories across three levels. At the first level, strategic and semiotic competence form the core. At the second, intercultural competence, translation technology competence, and extralinguistic knowledge serve as key components. At the third, professional ethics and international communication competence provide supporting functions. The study is methodologically rigorous and sys-

tematically complete and thus of significant reference value. Nevertheless, its analytical path focuses on the identification, clustering, and hierarchical division of competence elements, and has not yet adequately addressed the mechanistic question of how social-contextual factors are transformed into competence requirements through the translator's daily decision-making.

These existing studies centre on identifying competence components and their relative weight, producing structured inventories of competence elements yet leaving underexplored the mechanism through which social-contextual factors translate into translatorial competence. Though Ren Wen and Zhao Tianyuan's notion of international communication competence partially corresponds to this study's understanding of cultural strategy and translation policy, they frame it as a static attribute. By contrast, the present work examines how translators interpret policy signals, evaluate communication contexts, and convert external information into practical judgements for text selection and programme design. Existing models specify required competencies for translating-out practice; this study further investigates how social context shapes and activates such competencies. The two approaches are complementary instead of mutually exclusive.

2.4. Derivation of the Proposed Framework

The five competencies set out below draw on published research and on decision-making situations that come up repeatedly in literary outbound translation. They are not derived from one single theory, and they do not come from first-hand data gathered from translators either. Instead, the approach taken here is to bring together findings from existing studies and real translation cases within a single analytical framework. This process follows three practical criteria.

The first criterion is about whether a competency relates to a meaningful decision point that recurs in practice. A competency is only included if social and contextual factors enter the translation process at that point and shape how the translator judges what to do. Outbound translation from Chinese creates several such moments. A translator may need to decide whether a manuscript fits the priorities of a funding programme, whether its cultural content is worth translating at that particular time, which overseas readers it might reach, which publishing channel would be appropriate, and whether feedback from earlier reception suggests changes for later projects. A capacity is treated as a separate competency only when it centres on one of these decision points.

The second criterion is that each competency should be shaped by social factors but still remain clearly distinct from the others.

This distinction can be made through three dimensions: main decision focus, working stage and operational field. Focus provides one distinction. Policy interpretation and source-text selection deal with policy and source-culture questions; reader profiling and publishing planning concern overseas audiences and publication arrangements; reception tracking concerns post-translation feedback. Stage provides another: the first two belong to pre-translation work, the next two occur

during translation, and reception tracking takes place after publication. Field provides a third dimension. The first two are domestic-oriented, the next two look outwards, and reception tracking connects the two through feedback. These dimensions do not always line up. Reader profiling, for instance, is carried out during translation but still faces the overseas context. This cross-cutting quality stops the framework from becoming a flat list. Adjacent competencies can also be told apart by what they focus on. Policy interpretation works with rules, publishing planning deals with placement, reader profiling looks at target readers, and reception tracking makes sense of their responses.

The third criterion is that boundaries should follow tasks rather than fixed institutional roles. Text selection shows how this works. Translators may make such choices on their own, discuss them with a publisher, or work within limits set by a funder. What the framework treats as competence is the translator's ability to form and justify a reasoned judgement, whoever happens to have the final say. Publishing planning may also be a shared activity, but the translator's assessment of text-channel fit still stands as a separate capacity. The framework therefore sets out three situations: judgements that translators can form and act on alone; judgements they can form but not carry out by themselves; and external conditions that constrain both.

These criteria draw on four areas of research: patronage and norms, translation directionality, translating-out competence, and reception and cultural-image construction. These areas do not determine the five competencies directly. Instead, they point to the recurring decision points from which the framework is built.

3. Contextual Change in the Outbound Translation of Chinese Literature and the Reconstruction of Competence

Translation is not a purely linguistic transfer divorced from time and space, but a practical act situated in a specific socio-cultural context. When the socio-cultural context changes, the value orientation, practical goals, and professional norms of translation are adjusted accordingly, and the composition of the translator's competence is redefined. The competence of the indigenous translator must therefore be examined in the historical changes of Chinese socio-cultural context.

From the founding of the People's Republic of China to the period before the early 1960s, which may be characterized as the period of revolutionary construction, the outbound translation of literature was largely state-led. Translators were charged with the task of shaping the national identity, and the selection of texts for translation favored literary works representing the heroes of workers, peasants, and soldiers and the achievements of socialist construction. During the period of reform and opening up, translation practice served the narrative of the era of reform and opening up: translators were required not only to convey the information of the literary text, but also to participate in the national narrative and to present to the world a China that was in transition, open, and continuously developing. With the advent of the twenty-first century and the introduction of the

culture "Going Global" strategy, translation was incorporated into the national strategy of disseminating fine traditional Chinese culture and conveying Chinese ideas. Indigenous translators engaged in outbound translation were no longer merely linguistic transfer agents, but became practitioners of the national cultural strategy.

It can be seen that micro-level translational behavior is always constrained by the macro-level political framework. From revolutionary construction to reform and opening up, and then to the culture "Going Global" initiative, each shift in the socio-cultural context has redefined the function of translation and the responsibilities of the translator. The competence of the indigenous translator must therefore be redefined: it must be grounded in linguistic transfer while oriented toward the national strategy, the policy network, image construction, and the target language reception context. It should be emphasized that emphasizing the reconstruction of the translator's competence by the social context does not mean treating the translator as a passive executor. On the contrary, it is precisely in the concrete policy resources, publishing mechanisms, and reader environment that the translator needs to make active identifications, assessments, and professional decisions, so that social situatedness is transformed from an external constraint into the soil in which competence grows.

See Table 1 for these historical shifts and corresponding translator roles.

Table 1. Historical periods of Chinese literary outbound translation and the changing role of the translator.

Historical period	Positioning of the translational function	Role of the translator	Preference in text selection
Revolutionary construction period (from the founding of the PRC to the early 1960s)	Serving the shaping of national identity; aligning with the narrative of revolution and socialist construction	Executor of the state will	Literary works representing the heroes of workers, peasants, and soldiers and the achievements of socialist construction
Reform and opening-up period	Serving the narrative of reform and opening up; presenting to the world a China in transition, open, and continuously developing	Participant in the national narrative	Diversified works balancing literary aesthetics with the themes of the era
Culture "Going Global" strategy period (since the 21st century)	A national-strategic practice of disseminating fine traditional Chinese culture and conveying Chinese ideas	Practitioner of the national cultural strategy	Works combining literary value, cultural-information content, and international communicative potential

4. Social Situatedness in the Practice of Outbound Literary Translation

Social situatedness runs through every stage of a translation: how it is produced, how it is oriented, and how it is received. Translation is never a purely linguistic act, separate from the society in which it takes place. To understand how the two are connected, it helps to look at three levels in turn.

At the level of production, what gets translated and how it is translated are both shaped by social norms. Translation does not happen in isolation; it takes place

inside a social network, and the translator needs to keep asking whether a given project will actually work in that context. Law, morality, religion and aesthetic standards all set boundaries on what can be translated and how. When a translator is cautious about a sensitive topic, or decides against translating it altogether, or adjusts a culturally taboo element during the translation process, they are in effect recognising those boundaries and negotiating with them. At this level, then, social situatedness works as a structural constraint. It asks the translator to keep their professional judgement in a kind of dynamic balance with what society will accept.

At the level of directionality, the social situations behind different translation modes vary a great deal. Western translation theory has largely grown out of the practice of translating into the mother tongue. Its default scenario is the introduction of foreign literature into a target-language society, where the translator already has a natural grasp of the readership and of how publishing works (Campbell, 1998; Pokorn, 2005; Toury, 2001). Translation out of Chinese by Chinese indigenous translators, by contrast, works within a very different set of circumstances. The English translation of Jia Pingwa's Tu Men (*The Earthen Gate*, 2017), produced by Hu Zongfeng together with Robin Gilbank and He Longping, makes the point clearly. The selection, translation and placing of the work all began within a Chinese academic and publishing context. Getting it placed with a UK-based press, however, meant negotiating audience and channel all over again. Cases like this show that translating out of one's mother tongue is not simply a matter of linguistic direction. It reorganises the whole situational network within which the translator works. In this outward mode, indigenous translators tend to be weaker when it comes to target-language expression, access to publishing resources and knowledge of the audience. Theories built on translation into the mother tongue therefore cannot be carried across to translation-out practice without first being tested. Taking Chinese-English literary translation as an example, the overseas library holdings and course adoptions of English translations by Chinese indigenous translators may be lower than those of translations produced by indigenous English-speaking translators. Systematic comparative evidence for this remains limited, however, so the observation should be treated as an untested proposition rather than an established finding. Any such comparison is inevitably complicated by publisher reach, promotion budgets, distribution networks and collaborative translation arrangements. Lower holdings or adoptions therefore cannot be directly attributed to individual translator competence without controlling for these institutional and market factors. The potential gap in reception nevertheless highlights a critical issue: factors such as publishing access and reader-assessment capacity, beyond linguistic transfer proficiency, deserve serious consideration when evaluating cross-cultural communicative effectiveness.

At the level of reception, the socio-cultural environment of the target language directly affects readers' choices and value judgements in reading. For a long time, the translation of Chinese literature in the Anglophone world appears to have favored, in a number of documented cases, particular types of subject matter, thereby

tending to construct a China image consonant with preexisting cognitions abroad. Even when the translator strives for textual fidelity, the translated work may still be selectively interpreted through an existing interpretive framework once it enters the target cultural field; it should be emphasized, however, that the available evidence is largely descriptive rather than comparative, and the proposition that indigenous translators face a systematic reception disadvantage remains a hypothesis to be tested rather than a settled conclusion. Indigenous translators can reduce the risk of one-sided interpretation through their choice of text, the use of paratextual devices and cultural exegesis, but they cannot avoid it entirely. They should therefore develop a stronger awareness of how cultural images are constructed, carrying out cultural exegesis in their choice of text and in their translational expression, and helping to build a truthful and multi-faceted Chinese narrative.

Beyond production, directionality and reception, the changes taking place within state-supported translation programmes offer a further practical illustration of how social situatedness works in practice. Since the culture "Going Global" strategy was introduced, the role of state translation agencies has shifted away from directly leading translation and dissemination and towards project funding. Individual narratives have gained more room to survive as a result. At the same time, the translation work carried out by large numbers of indigenous translators remains private and fragmented, and the texts they choose and the ways they choose to express themselves do not necessarily match the national cultural strategy. In practice, this means translators need to link what is happening in the wider context to their own work, so that individual translation activity fits with national goals for external communication. When a translator can read policy accurately, assess the communication environment, and track how a translated work is received, the social context is no longer just a constraint from outside. It becomes the practical basis on which professional competence develops.

A useful example of this shift can be seen in state-sponsored translation programmes. In the earlier period, the state mainly started projects, provided funding, and distributed the finished works. Translators worked largely as executors within a fixed pipeline. Under the "Going Global" strategy, however, more support now comes through project-based funding. Translators and publishers are expected to write their own proposals, find appropriate target-language partners, and show in advance that the work can actually reach readers. This change does not make policy less important. It changes how policy enters the translation process. Translators are no longer given a ready-made brief. They now have to put a brief together from various policy signals, funding criteria, and market indicators. At the centre of the framework proposed here is precisely this process of turning external signals into a workable plan.

5. The Composition of the Indigenous Translator's Competence from the Perspective of Social Situatedness

Social situatedness is not only an analytical perspective, but also poses real de-

mands on the composition of the indigenous translator's competence. In the context of Chinese Culture "Going Global" initiative, indigenous translators are situated within the national political context, the translation policy network, the goals of national image construction, and the socio-cultural environment of the target language. Translatorial competence can no longer be simply equated with bilingual competence plus translation techniques. Proceeding from the macro to the micro, from the domestic field to the overseas field, and from translation production to translation reception, the following five interrelated competencies are elucidated.

A short example may help to show how this works in practice. Take a funding body that lists "rural revitalisation in contemporary China" as a priority. A translator facing this call could begin by working out which parts are strict requirements and which are more like suggestions. On that basis, a piece of reportage on village-level governance might be judged a suitable choice. Looking at two manuscripts side by side—one for cultural value, the other for how difficult it would be to translate—the translator goes for the one that has less existing English coverage. To reach both academic and general readers, the translator gets in touch with a university press and puts together a preface, a chronology, and a glossary. If later reviews suggest the preface comes across as too politically rigid, the next project can take a different tone, and the funder can be informed of what was learned. This loop of assessment, action, feedback, and revision gives a sense of the mechanism at work, even if further empirical testing would still be needed to confirm it.

Table 2 summarises the five competencies, their core tasks, operational fields and mutual feedback relationships.

Table 2. The five competencies and their interrelationships.

Competence	Core task	Main field	Feeds back to
Understanding of cultural strategy and translation policy	Identifying communication objectives and funding rules; aligning them with the project	Domestic policy field	Text selection; communication planning
Source-cultural value assessment and text selection	Assessing literary and cultural value; arguing for why translate now	Domestic culture field	Policy interpretation; reception tracking
Target-language society and reader assessment	Clarifying readers' knowledge base, needs, and potential obstacles	Overseas reception field	Paratext design; translation strategy
Recognition of publishing environment and programme planning	Matching text and channel; designing paratexts	Overseas communication field	Reader assessment; policy orientation
Post-translation reception tracking and dynamic adjustment	Tracking holdings, reviews, adoptions, and feedback; proposing revisions	Overseas reception field	All four preceding competencies

The five competencies are linked in the following way. Policy understanding provides a directional constraint for text selection, whose judgements in turn test

the accuracy of policy interpretation. Reader assessment and publishing planning form a two-way adaptation between content and channel at the translation stage. Post-translation feedback flows back to all four preceding competencies, driving the dynamic adjustment of the next round of translation practice. Together, the five form a spiraling structure of "assessment-implementation-feedback-reassessment," rather than a set of mutually isolated fixed procedures. This is what distinguishes the present framework from a mere list of competence items: the items are inseparable from the relations among them, and the relations are what carry the mechanism.

The five competencies affect one another. A mistake in reader assessment, for instance, can undermine an otherwise sound choice of text. An inaccurate reading of policy may mean the translated work does not match the funding channel available. And feedback after publication may show that the original policy interpretation was too narrow. The spiral is therefore not a matter of returning to the same starting point. It moves upwards, with each round building the translator's situational awareness.

Because outbound translation is often collaborative, the five competencies need to be understood in terms of how much decision-making power the translator actually has. There are certain things a translator can usually judge on their own: evaluating the source text, deciding on translation strategy, drafting paratexts, analysing readers, and recording reception evidence. Other matters, however, tend to involve other people. Contractual decisions, final cover copy, pricing, distribution, marketing budgets, and access to sales or library data normally require working with authors, editors, publishers, or funders. When assessing competence, it helps to separate what the translator can decide alone from what can only be negotiated, recommended, or documented. Limited institutional authority or lack of access should not be seen as a gap in individual competence. The competence that matters here is the ability to work out where the decision space lies, to negotiate within it, and to make reasoned recommendations.

5.1. Understanding of Cultural Strategy and Translation Policy

This refers to the translator's ability to identify the objectives of cultural dissemination, the rules of translation funding, and relevant institutional requirements, and to assess their adaptive relationship to a specific translation project. National translation policy is the embodiment of institutional will in the field of translation: it provides institutional rules as well as financial and discursive support for translation practice, and covers industry orientation, topic planning, language norms, project evaluation, fund awards, and industry prizes. The translator needs to be able to distinguish the institutional environment in which the translation practice is situated, to grasp the communication orientation while safeguarding national cultural interests, and to break down macro-level policy objectives into operational topic descriptions, translation proposals, and communication plans. In practical terms, this competence comes into play when a translator needs to decide

whether a particular work matches the priority areas of a funding programme, or how to frame a translation proposal so that its cultural value is clear to a selection committee.

Working with policy does not mean simply following orders. Translation projects often involve competing pressures. Funding criteria may pull in one direction, but literary quality, authorial intent, or what target readers need may pull in another. When these tensions come up, the idea of bounded professional judgement provides a way through. Translators should start by identifying legal and ethical limits that cannot be moved. Broad policy goals then need to be turned into standards at the project level, rather than treated as fixed instructions. It also helps to keep a record of trade-offs between literary merit, cultural content, and cross-cultural readability. If a conflict cannot be worked out, translators may rewrite the proposal, look for a different publication channel, or turn down the commission. Competence in this area shows in how translators read policy, build a defensible plan, and handle competing demands. Doing exactly what a policy says is not what professional competence means. In assessment, policy literacy should therefore be judged separately from policy obedience.

5.2. Source-Cultural Value Assessment and Text Selection

This refers to the translator's ability to evaluate the literary value and cultural value of a work in light of given translation objectives, and to form a well-founded judgement of text selection. Text selection is the first point at which socially situated competence lands in practice. Given the rich genres and marked regional differences of Chinese literature, the translator needs to synthesize literary quality, cultural information content, translation difficulty, existing translation achievements, and potential audience, and to argue for why a work deserves to be translated and why it is suitable for outbound dissemination at the present moment. At the same time, the translator should sort out the hierarchical structure of cultural information within the text, distinguishing core information, auxiliary information, and adjustable forms of expression, so as to provide a basis for the selection of translation strategies and the design of paratexts. A mature exercise of this competence also means knowing when not to translate: a work may be literarily excellent yet poorly timed for the target market, and the ability to abstain is as much a professional judgement as the ability to select.

5.3. Target Language Society and Reader Assessment

This refers to the translator's ability to clarify, on the basis of various kinds of materials, the knowledge base, reading needs, and potential comprehension obstacles of target language readers, and thereby to adjust translational judgements. Target language readers cannot be generally subsumed under the label of overseas readers; they must be specified by language, region, publishing channel, and sub group. The requirements for cultural exegesis differ markedly between translations intended for general reading, classroom teaching, and academic research.

Reader assessment may draw on publishing catalogues, university course syllabi, professional book reviews, reader reviews, and trial translations of excerpts. When analyzing such materials, the translator should indicate the source, time range, and sample limitations, and cross check information from different sources, so as to avoid equating the comments on a few platforms with the general preferences of overseas audiences.

5.4. Publishing Awareness and Translation Programme Planning

This refers to the translator's ability to get to know how publishing works, including processes, institutional positioning, and communication resources, and to design a translation programme that fits the text's particular features. Whether a literary work reaches readers effectively in another language depends on more than just translation quality. It also rests on where the publisher positions the book, how editorial mechanisms operate, how copyright is handled, which media channels are used, and what review resources are available. Commercial presses, academic publishers, independent houses, and mass-market outlets each serve different audiences and have different promotional capacities. The translator needs to understand how different institutions choose what to publish and to find an appropriate publishing channel for the translated work. Simply handing in the manuscript should not be treated as the end of the job. This competence shows up in two specific tasks. The first is channel matching: working out whether the translation suits a full-length book, an anthology, a journal article, or a digital platform, and getting to grips with the copyright cycle, editorial process, and marketing schedule. The second is paratext planning: deciding what cultural information in the title, cover copy, author biography, translator's preface, annotations, and promotional materials needs to be added beyond the main text.

5.5. Post-Translation Reception Tracking and Dynamic Adjustment

This refers to the translator's ability to track the reception of the translated work and to analyse audience feedback and propose revisions, to the extent permitted by the available materials and the division of labor within the project. Traditional evaluation of translatorial competence often ends with the finalization of the translation. Yet the effect of cultural communication is fully revealed only in the circulation and reading stages. Book sales and professional awards, each taken alone, cannot represent the effectiveness of cultural understanding. The translator needs to synthesize library holding data, book reviews, course adoptions, media discussion, academic citation, and feedback from ordinary readers, so as to examine the exposure, readability, and cultural understanding effect of the translated work. The purpose of reception tracking is not to demonstrate the success of the project after the fact, but to test the pre-translation assessment. If the translation fails to reach the intended audience, it is necessary to distinguish whether the problem lies in channel coverage, promotional positioning, or textual threshold.

If the same kind of misreading recurs, the completeness of the introduction and annotations should be re-examined. If the audience recognises the cultural connotations but criticizes the style as stiff, then native-speaker proofreading should be strengthened in the reprint or in subsequent projects.

6. Conclusion

In the context of Chinese Culture "Going Global" strategy, the professional competence of indigenous literary translators has gone beyond the scope of bilingual transfer and literary interpretation. External factors such as policy institutions, publishing mechanisms, and reader reception are transformed, through concrete practical tasks such as positioning, channel matching, and feedback adjustment, into the translator's professional judgement. The five competencies of understanding cultural strategy and translation policy, assessing source cultural value and selecting texts, assessing the target language society and its readers, recognizing the publishing and communication environment and planning the translation programme, and tracking post translation reception and dynamically adjusting, are interrelated and run through the whole process of pre-translation assessment, translation stage implementation, and post-translation feedback, forming an organically integrated whole of cyclical interaction rather than a set of mutually isolated fixed procedures.

Compared with previous competence models, the contribution of the proposed framework lies not in providing yet another inventory of competencies, but in revealing the mechanistic path through which social-contextual factors are transformed into the translator's professional judgement. Whereas existing models identify what competence is required, the present framework asks how competence is generated, how it is exercised, and how it is iterated in feedback. This mechanistic perspective broadens the analytical dimension of translation competence research, helps to reconceptualize the action role of indigenous translators in translation-out practice, and can also provide a reference for the training of translators for literary outbound translation and the evaluation of translation projects.

This study constructs a theoretical framework, which remains to be empirically validated via translator interviews and case analyses of translated literary works. In subsequent research, interviews with indigenous translators may be conducted and combined with specific translation cases to further revise and refine the indicators of competence composition; it is also possible to develop, on the basis of this framework, practical tools for translator training and the evaluation of translation projects.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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