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An Eco-translatology approach to investigating the translation of comics: Case study of *The Sayings of Zhuangzi*

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Article abstract

Featuring the interplay of verbal and visual content, the translation of comics has received theorists' attention in recent decades. To shed new light, this study analysed the translation of comics from a new perspective, namely Eco-translatology. Selecting 自然的簫聲：莊子說 [*The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature*] and its English translation, *The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature*, as the research texts, this study conducted an in-depth analysis and obtained three major findings: (1) the translators have professional knowledge and expertise to process the comic book appropriately, (2) the target ecosystem shares a similar composition and creates the same effect as the source at the micro- and meso-levels and (3) the target ecosystem is constructed in a composition that attains harmony and interaction at the macro-level. Amplification, reduction/omission and literal translation are the three most-adopted coping strategies to achieve linguistic and cultural transformation, whereas the inclusion of an introduction and the use of footnotes fulfill communicative transformation. This paper argues that translators attach the utmost importance to the "comprehension of stories," followed by "space constraints," "fluency of translation," and "faithfulness to the original meaning."

An Eco-translatology approach to investigating the translation of comics: Case study of *The Sayings of Zhuangzi*

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RÉSUMÉ

Par leur particularité de faire interagir contenus verbaux et contenus visuels, la bande dessinée et sa traduction ont retenu l'attention des théoriciens au cours des dernières décennies. Afin d'apporter un nouvel éclairage sur ce domaine, cet article a pour objectif d'analyser la traduction des bandes dessinées à partir d'une nouvelle perspective — l'éco-traductologie. En choisissant 自然的簫聲: 莊子說 [*The Sayings of Zhuangzi : The Music of Nature*] et sa traduction en anglais, *The Sayings of Zhuangzi : The Music of Nature*, comme corpus, cet article analyse le sujet en profondeur et fait trois découvertes majeures : (1) les traducteurs possèdent la connaissance et l'expérience professionnelles nécessaires pour traiter les bandes dessinées de manière appropriée, (2) l'écosystème cible partage la même construction et produit le même effet que l'écosystème source au niveau micro et méso, et (3) l'écosystème cible est construit avec harmonie et interaction. De plus, l'amplification, la réduction/l'omission et la traduction littérale sont les trois stratégies les plus fréquemment adoptées pour réaliser la transformation linguistique et culturelle, tandis qu'une partie introductive et des notes de bas de page doivent remplir la fonction communicative de la transformation. En outre, dans cet article, on apprend que le traducteur attache la plus grande importance à la « compréhension des histoires », puis aux « contraintes d'espace », à la « fluidité de la traduction » et à la « fidélité au sens original ».

ABSTRACT

Featuring the interplay of verbal and visual content, the translation of comics has received theorists' attention in recent decades. To shed new light, this study analysed the translation of comics from a new perspective, namely Eco-translatology. Selecting 自然的簫聲: 莊子說 [*The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature*] and its English translation, *The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature*, as the research texts, this study conducted an in-depth analysis and obtained three major findings: (1) the translators have professional knowledge and expertise to process the comic book appropriately, (2) the target ecosystem shares a similar composition and creates the same effect as the source at the micro- and meso-levels and (3) the target ecosystem is constructed in a composition that attains harmony and interaction at the macro-level. Amplification, reduction/omission and literal translation are the three most-adopted coping strategies to achieve linguistic and cultural transformation, whereas the inclusion of an introduction and the use of footnotes fulfill communicative transformation. This paper argues that translators attach the utmost importance to the "comprehension of stories," followed by "space constraints," "fluency of translation," and "faithfulness to the original meaning."

RESUMEN

Con la interacción de contenidos verbales y visuales, los cómics y su traducción han sido objeto de análisis por parte de los expertos en las últimas décadas. A fin de profundizar en la materia, este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la traducción de cómics desde una

nueva perspectiva: la ecotraductología. Tomando como referencia 自然的簫聲: 莊子說 [*The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of NatureThe Music of Nature: The Sayings of Zhuangzi*] y su traducción al inglés, *The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature*, como corpus, este artículo lleva a cabo un análisis en profundidad y obtiene tres hallazgos principales: (1) los traductores poseen conocimientos y experiencia profesionales para procesar los cómics de manera adecuada, (2) el ecosistema meta comparte una formación similar y crea el mismo efecto con el de origen a nivel micro y meso, y (3) el ecosistema meta se construye en una formación que logra armonía e interacción a nivel macro. Asimismo, ampliación, reducción/omisión y traducción literal son las tres estrategias más adoptadas para realizar transformaciones lingüísticas y culturales, mientras que la introducción y las notas al pie sirven para realizar la transformación comunicativa. Por otro lado, este artículo deduce que los traductores otorgan mayor importancia a la "comprensión de las historias", seguida de las "restricciones de espacio", la "fluidez de la traducción" y la "fidelidad respecto al original".

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS/PALABRAS CLAVE

bande dessinée, éco-traductologie, écosystème, harmonie, interaction
comics, Eco-translatology, ecosystem, harmony, interaction
cómics, ecotraductología, ecosistema, armonía, interacción

1. The literature on the translation of comics and the aim of this study

Comics, which include comic strips, books, graphic novels and webcomics, are a type of text that first appeared in the US at the end of the nineteenth century (Zanettin 2009: 38). They portray content through the interplay of verbal and visual presentations. In earlier days, the translation of comics was a relegated theme in Translation Studies (Zanettin 2009: 39). However, recent decades have seen an increasing number of researchers take an interest in this subject with the aim of investigating the unique relationship between the verbal and the visual, challenges in translating comics, coping strategies and comparisons between the source texts (ST) and target texts (TT).

Scholars have explored the relationship between images and words and how it influences translation, from the perspective of "constrained translation" (Rabadán 1991; Zanettin 1998; Valero Garcés 2000; Grun and Dollerup 2003; Mikkonen 2006; Zanettin 2014; Guillaume 2015; Borodo 2016; Pischedda 2020). Several contributions have been grounded in different concepts. Kaindl (1999) conducted a comprehensive study on the translation of comic strips and discussed the position and capital of comics in the greater sociocultural system and the categorisation of translation strategies into repetition, deletion, detraction, addition, transmutation and substitution. Kaindl (2004) noted that translation studies on texts containing various signs centre on the linguistic features while non-verbal elements are often neglected (2004: 174). He introduced the multimodality approach as a new means of examination for studies on the translation of comics. Borodo (2015) examined the Polish translation of *Thorgal*, a French classic comic, through a multimodal approach and pointed out that the postures, gestures, interactions and spatial orientations of characters in every picture should be considered when we seek to determine the gain or loss in the translation of speech balloon texts. The reason why we need to examine pictures is that translators may condense their translations when pictures help

complete the information. Zanettin (2018a; 2018b) presented a historical overview of the development of comics in the US and Europe and how censorship has influenced the translation of comics because of dissimilar target readerships. Zanettin (2018b) pointed out that research on the translation of comics encompasses four major themes: (1) translation strategies, (2) translation history, (3) researching translation to investigate cultural, social and political identity and (4) intersemiotic translation/adaptation between comics and other media/art forms. Finally, based on the examination of words and images, Asimakoula (2019) emphasised a new concern, namely how humour is rendered in the target texts. Taking five comic books that are adapted from the writings of Aristophanes as research materials, he discussed the characteristics identified in these works and how the comic tone is transferred to target readers.

Given that existing theorists have examined comic creations from several perspectives, this study offers new inputs through an Eco-translatology-based examination of Chinese-English translations. It investigated *The Sayings of Zhuangzi*, which is the English translation of a Chinese comic book, titled 自然的簫聲: 莊子說 [*The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature*]. The analysis was conducted from the perspective of Eco-translatology because it (1) allows for the examination of texts in a comprehensive style (from the translator's suitability and preparation to the three-dimensional transformation in translation practice), (2) enables the identification of the characteristics of how a translator deals with a comic book of a literary nature and (3) provides an alternative approach for future research.

This paper makes a twofold contribution. First, Eco-translatology has never been applied to research on the translation of comics. This is the first study to take a step in this direction. Second, in previous Eco-translatology-based research, scholars have attempted to either define this theory (for example, Liu 2010; Wang 2011; Hu 2013; Jiang 2015; Lu and Hou 2015; Song and Hu 2016; Luo 2019; Hu 2020) or investigate various texts based on three-dimensional transformations (for example, Guo 2012; Wang 2014; Yu 2017; Zeng 2019). The selective adaptation that takes place at the pre-translation stage and the concepts of *harmony* and *interaction* remain untouched. This paper discusses how selective adaptation is carried out by publishers while choosing suitable translators as well as how the ecosystem constructed by translators achieves harmony and interaction.

2. Explaining Eco-translatology

Xie (2015: 14) divided the global history of translation practice into three periods. The first centres on the translation of religious scripts, the second focuses on the translation of literary and socio-scientific writings, and the third pays attention to texts in the fields of business, science, government, organisation and multimedia. According to Xie, the third period is the era of the professionalisation of translation, in which religious writings and literary creations do not account for the greatest proportion anymore. The nature of the world's translation practice has varied over time and translation studies have developed with the debate over the age-old dichotomy of faithful versus free translation (Snell-Hornby 1988: 36; Steiner 1975/1998: 275) to a much broader discipline that is often integrated with other domains, such as linguistics, comparative literature, cultural studies, anthropology, psychology, communication, social behaviour and global studies (Arduini and Nergaard 2011: 8).

In China, translation studies originated in the Han dynasty (206 BC—220 AD), but translation scholars only began to receive theoretical inputs from the West since the beginning of the twentieth century (Wang 1996: 43). While examining the contributions made by Chinese theorists, Wei (2019: 51-55) classified them into three categories: (1) indicating future direction based on the current circumstances, (2) upholding traditional Chinese theories by excavating the connection between Western and Chinese translation concepts, and (3) proposing innovative translation theories as unique Chinese contributions. Hu's Eco-translatology is an innovative theory that involves traditional Chinese philosophy.

Grounded in the traditional Chinese philosophy of "the unity of man and Nature" (that is, *harmony*) and the concepts of *adaptation* and *selection* in Darwinism (Hu 2020: 52-56), Eco-translatology underlines the inseparability of man and nature (Jiang 2015: 136; Lu and Hou 2015: 6), operates as a breakthrough from the linguistic and cultural turns (Luo 2019: 34) and accentuates the ST and TT as two different ecosystems comprising written texts, communities, and cultures, and other aggregations that are physical or ideational (Hu 2011: 7; Wang 2011: 11; Song and Hu 2016: 107). Based on adaptation and selection, translation practice is divided into two parts: (1) selective adaptation for the pre-translation stage, where the translator has to adapt himself/herself to the translational eco-environment, and (2) adaptive selection for the translation stage, where the chosen translator selects suitable translation strategies (Hu 2013: 245; Jiang 2015: 141; Hu and Tao 2016: 127-128; Hu 2020: 55-56). In the translation stage, the focus is not merely on linguistic conversion, but on the reconstruction of the ST ecosystem in the target ecosystem.

According to Luo (2019: 36-40), translation research trends have shifted from linguistic equivalence in the older days to the suitability of the reconstruction of the ST ecosystem in the target one. The latter is far more complex, so it is no longer feasible for the translator to simply read the ST and stick to literal or free translation strategies. The translator plays a more crucial role because s/he has to serve as a "reader, mediator, decision-maker, adapter, and sender" (Hu 2004a: 111) and makes a series of selective activities to choose appropriate translation strategies for creating the best target ecosystem (Hu 2004b: 39; Hu 2011: 7; Song and Hu 2016: 109; Hu 2020: 34-35). As the notion of *adaptive selection* indicates that the translator constantly makes decisions in the course of translation, Hu introduced the term "translator-centeredness" to highlight the translator's importance and power. Taking such a high status does not mean that the translator can be so dominant as to disregard translation principles. A responsible translator still has to translate under the doctrine of "survival of the fittest" because failing to fulfill it will cause failure in the career survival of the translator himself/herself (Hu 2020: 144-145). Therefore, the translator may not be fully faithful to the ST, but s/he will always show it respect (Wang 2011: 14). For me, "respect" implies that the ST is not a sacred cow and that the translator can bring alterations to it as long as there are legitimate reasons and proper strategies.

Hu focused on adaptive selection to discuss how we assess a translator's product (2020: 161-164). To gain a comprehensive view, the investigation of a translator's performance is divided into the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions, which are "intertwined and can hardly be separated" (Yu 2017: 51) in the translation analysis. The linguistic dimension heeds the lingual expression of the target text. The cultural dimension involves the rendition of cultural connotations and the

elimination of cultural obstacles. The communicative dimension concerns whether or not the communicative intention is fulfilled in the target text. Drawing from Eco-translatology and its approach to selective adaptation and adaptive selection, this paper identifies the characteristics of the Chinese comic book, 自然的簫聲: 莊子說 [*The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature*] in the English translation, in order to obtain meaningful findings and provide a new perspective for examining the translation of comics.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research materials

In this study, 自然的簫聲: 莊子說 [*The Music of Nature: The Sayings of Zhuangzi*][1] and 莊子解密 [*Interpreting Zhuangzi*][2] are the two STs, published by China Times Publishing and Locus publishing, respectively.[3] Regarding the TT, it is titled *The Sayings of Zhuangzi—The Music of Nature*.[4]

Zhuangzi was a philosopher born in ancient China in the fourth century BC. He gained fame and reputation through his concepts on the ways of Nature and how humans should behave in the world, and he even became a prestigious representative of China's Taoist school of thought. As Tao philosophy is a core value in Chinese culture, Zhuangzi's writings have circulated in the Chinese world in many forms since the fourth century BC. Tsai was determined to transfer Zhuangzi's concepts in comic format in order to ensure that present-day Chinese readers would not be daunted by obscure classical Chinese and would have a chance to understand Zhuangzi's philosophy. The comic renders Zhuangzi's sayings in a tone that is "friendlier" and easier to comprehend for modern Chinese readers who speak vernacular Chinese and do not have a good command over classical Chinese. To fulfill this objective, the original writings of Zhuangzi were simplified and condensed, while still ensuring that Zhuangzi's philosophy could be delivered to the recipients. This study aims to investigate how Zhuangzi's sayings were dealt with by the translators.

3.2. Analysis method

The paratextual materials that are related to the publisher and translators were examined to understand how selective adaptation was fulfilled. This study sought to understand how the ST's characteristics influence the publisher's selection of suitable translators. A comparison of the ST with the TT was conducted on both the ST and TT to identify characteristics that are related to linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensional transformations. The words and images were analysed and the examination was based on Hu's definitions of the three dimensions. Linguistic transformation concerns "the lingual expression of the translated target text" (Hu 2020: 161). Thus, I compared the whole text and its translation to identify characteristics. Cultural transformation covers the translation of cultural terms and I searched for cultural terms according to Newmark's definition (1988: 95) and analysed how they were translated. Communicative transformation centres on "interpersonal intention of translation" (Hu 2020: 162), so I tried to see if the intentions and purposes of the ST were retained in the TT.

Finally, this study conducted a macroscopic evaluation to understand how *harmony* and *interaction* are achieved in the ecosystem. This paper endeavours to understand how components in the source ecosystem are reconstructed in the target ecosystem and maintain a harmonious and interactive relationship with each other in the target ecosystem.

4. Research findings

This paper examines the translation of a comic book, 自然的簫聲: 莊子說, based on Eco-translatology. The analysis proceeds in a twofold way. First, the investigation of the ST and TT involves two components, selective adaptation and adaptive selection, in order to gain a comprehensive overview. Second, as Guillaume summarised the interview responses of Lili Sztajn, a renowned translator, the translation of comics encompasses three translation issues, namely the limited space available in speech balloons, the interplay of words and images, and the difficulty involved in translating onomatopoeia (2015: 98). These three issues have been discussed by the theorists mentioned in Section 1, and will also be contemplated when I scrutinise the translation content in this study. The findings and implications were obtained through a close examination of the ST and TT. They are discussed in the following subsections.

4.1. Selective adaptation of the two translators for The Sayings of Zhuangzi

As elaborated in Section 2, Eco-translatologists hold that researchers should pay attention to the translation product and everything surrounding it. They propose the concept of *selective adaptation*, which takes place in the pre-translation stage. In selective adaptation, the publisher chooses a suitable translator based on the theme and characteristics of the ST. The translator then has to adapt himself/herself to the ST ecosystem to succeed in the task.

The pre-translation stage of the comic book *The Sayings of Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature* shows that this publication centres on the philosophy of ancient Chinese literati and features a plethora of China-specific cultural, philosophical, literary and poetic descriptions. Given that Asiapac Books strives to produce educational comic books to deliver Chinese classics and traditional Chinese philosophy to the entire world, it would be a fiasco if the translator could not render these special descriptions in the translation. Therefore, in addition to bilingual proficiency, knowledge of Chinese culture and philosophy is a crucial requirement for the translator.

The publisher invited two Singaporean Chinese translators, Goh Beng Choo and Koh Kok Kiang, to cooperate in translating the text. Their biographies showed that Goh and Koh grew up in a country where English is the *lingua franca* and they managed to invest much effort in learning the Chinese language, culture and philosophy ever since their earliest school years. The knowledge they had accumulated through incessant learning was of great help in their previous translation tasks, which pertained to Chinese literature and philosophy. As they had an excellent command of Chinese and English and had abundant knowledge of Chinese culture and philosophy as well as experience in translation, this study assumed that they could adapt to the current translation case easily and successfully. In the three subsections that follow, Goh and Koh's approach to translation are explained.

4.2 Linguistic transformation

Linguistic dimensional transformation concerns the transfer of the written descriptions in the ST to the TT, so emphasis is placed on the written texts in the comic book. The images were also examined so all necessary information could be extracted from them, in addition to that in the words. I compared the ST and TT based on the translation strategies proposed by former scholars, including Chesterman's (1997: 92-116) syntactic, semantic and pragmatic translation strategies, Kaindl's (1999: 275-284) comics translation procedures, Malone's (1988: 15-70) ten trajections, Nida's (1964: 226-240) five techniques of adjustment, Newmark's (1988: 81-93) V-diagram translation strategies, and Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958/2000: 84-93) seven direct and oblique translation procedures.

Tsai (2001: 12)[5] explained in the Chinese version that he deliberately converted Zhuangzi's archaic words and complicated thoughts to a comic to ensure that present-day Chinese readers would not feel daunted by the obscure classical Chinese. Tsai rendered Zhuangzi's sayings in everyday, straightforward words and expressions to attract the attention of modern readers and trigger their interest in both this publication and all Chinese classics. Thus, the written content in this comic book, at both the word- and sentence-levels, became relatively simple. This made it easy to find equivalencies in English. Nevertheless, the translators may have employed amplification to clarify the context.

Amplification involves the addition of extra information to the translation for clarification. The translators of *The Sayings of Zhuangzi* may have employed this

Figure 1

An example of amplification: The original (Tsai 2001: 14)

strategy to help readers identify who is saying the words and what the character is doing. Take Figures 1 and 2 for example. The translators amplified the text by adding "Zhuang Zi wondered" at the end of the passage. For me, it appeared as though the original text began with the introduction of Zhuang Zi's background from the narrator's perspective and ended with Zhuang Zi's personal reflections from his own point of view. This inconsistency is likely to confuse audiences, so the translators added the last three words to let the readers know who said what words.

FIGURE 2

An example of amplification: The translation (Goh and Koh 1999: 2)[6]
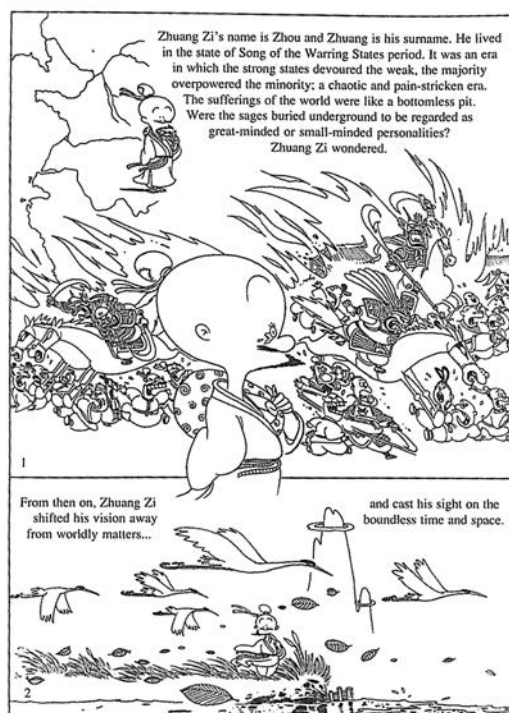
This paper also pays special attention to the translation of onomatopoeia and interjections, which has aroused some scholarly interest owing to their graphical, cultural and linguistic challenges (Noss 2003: 42-43; Guillaume 2015: 100-101; Pischedda 2020). While Kaindl thinks that such expressions should mainly remain in the original form in the TT (1999: 275), Zanettin (2014) points out that the translation method for such terms can be modified if necessary. Based on the preceding concepts, this study examined *The Sayings of Zhuangzi*. The results show that its onomatopoeia and interjections do not have cultural connotations, so they are discussed in this section and examples are provided below.

Figure 3
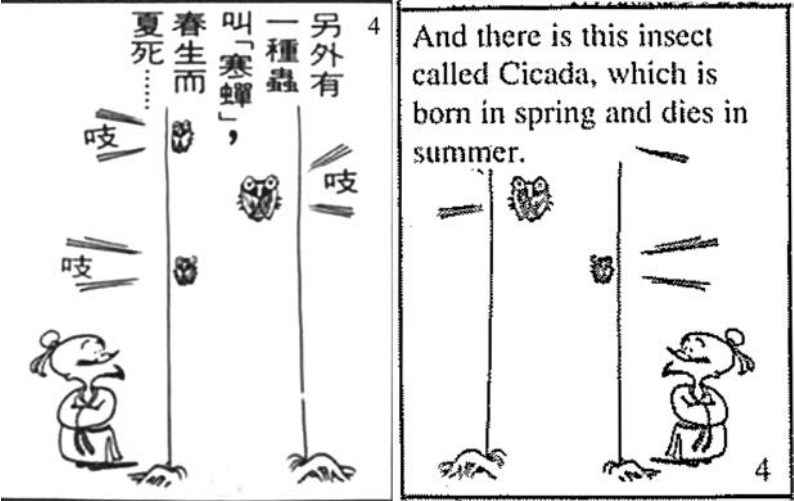**Onomatopoeia of cicadas (Tsai 2001: 20; Goh and Koh 1999: 5)**

Figure 4
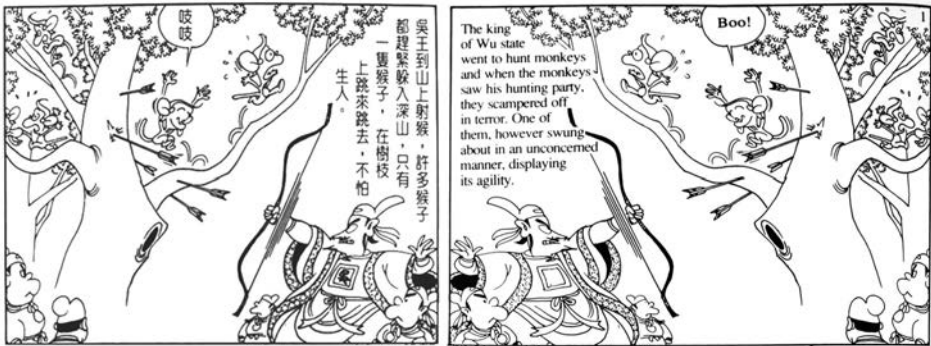**Onomatopoeia of cicadas (Tsai 2001: 183; Goh and Koh 1999: 220)**

Figure 5
Onomatopoeia of a man and tiger (Tsai 2001: 66; Goh and Koh 1999: 42)

Onomatopoeic expressions identified in *The Sayings of Zhuangzi* comprise sounds of animals and nature and those created by human movement. The outcome of the analysis indicates that the translators tended to omit the sounds that have no connotations. For example, the onomatopoeic expression "zhi zhi" [吱吱] appears twice in the original text to refer to the sound of cicadas (Figure 3) and that of a monkey (Figure 4). The cicadas' sound is omitted, but the monkey's sound is translated as "Boo." Given that comics involve an interplay of verbal and visual content, we may be able to deduce that the sound of cicadas is omitted because (1) it does not have any hidden meaning and (2) readers can reason out that the insects make sounds from linear symbols nearby. In contrast, the monkey's sound bears no connotation and the use of "Boo" may be because the translators interpreted the monkey's pose as its intention to laugh at the human's inability to hit him. To deliver the message to the target readers, the editor and translators added a hand gesture to the monkey in the English version and the word "Boo" to explicitly present the monkey's attitude. Here, this paper presumes that "Boo" was added not because it is the translation of the monkey's sound, but an exclamation to show contempt. A difference in the mode of dealing with connotative onomatopoeia is also identified in this comic. The panels in Figure 5 show a man trying to imitate the tiger's sound, but the Chinese panel manifests both the man and the tiger saying "妙" (pronounced as "meow," meaning "marvellous"). This is a play on words because 妙 is a homophone with 喵 (also pronounced as "meow," referring to "the sound of feline"). Both Chinese words share the same pronunciation to let the readers comprehend that the man is imitating the tiger's sound. Nonetheless, the deliberate use of 妙 delivers the idea that the man marvels at the concept that an innately fierce tiger can be tamed as long as one cares about its feelings. Unlike the previous case, the translators translated the onomatopoeia here because readers cannot know from the image that the man and the tiger are making sounds. The image shows the man seemingly happy without a perspicuous reason. The space is not sufficient for clarification, so the translators determined to skip the message about the man being marvelled. This study identified an interesting example (see Figure 6) that shows how space constraints override other concerns. In the English version, because there is not sufficient space, the translators had no choice but to remove "啦啦" (pronounced as "La La," indicating that the person is pleasant) and retain the musical note alone, which takes up little space and can also indicate the man's mood.

FIGURE 6

Interjection of a person (Tsai 2001: 50; Goh and Koh 1999: 29)
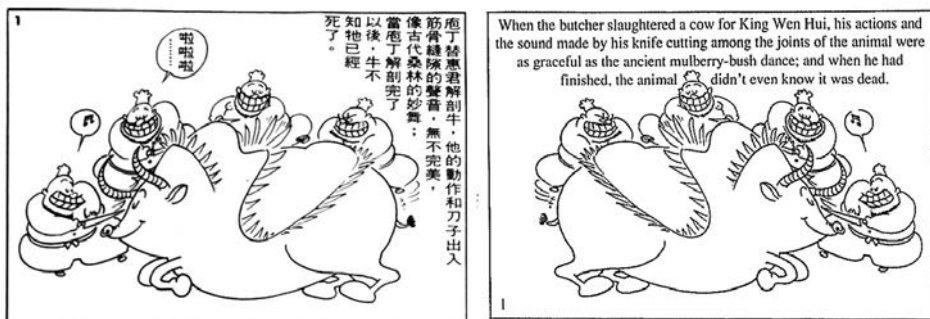
4.3. *Cultural transformation*

Apart from the examination in the linguistic rendition of the original text, the transfer of culture is accentuated by Eco-translatologists. As Newmark (1988: 95) defined it, *culture* encompasses ecology, material and social culture, organisations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, gestures and habits. As culture covers several fields, the translators should try their best to render it in the TT so that the target audience has the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the source society. Examining *The Sayings of Zhuangzi* from this perspective, we understand that this comic centres on an ancient Chinese philosopher and the stories are heavily loaded with cultural terms. As Tsai (2001: 12) explained, his major objective is to deliver Zhuangzi's philosophy to modern-day Chinese recipients, so he has deliberately simplified the content; all the terms and sentences are easy to comprehend for Chinese readers and most cultural terms are presented in a simple and straightforward way. While analysing cultural transformation in the TT, the translators could process most of the content fairly easily as most of them were simple descriptions and readers can easily grasp cultural or philosophical ideas after reading the complete stories. Below are two examples extracted from the ST and the TT:

1) ST: 人認為最好的音樂、食物並不是絕對的，以鳥養鳥而不要以己養鳥，「己之所欲，施之於人」這往往是行不通的。[Gloss translation: There is no uanimous answer for humans when it comes to the best music and food. We should raise birds according to the preferences of birds, not according to ours. "Imposing our preferences on others" often does not work.]

(Tsai 2001: 138)

TT: That music and food regarded by men as best are not absolute qualities. We should feed birds with what birds desire and not what we desire. *"Imposing our favourite on others"* often does not work.

(Goh and Koh 1999: 75)

2) ST: 無為自然的本性，若被加上智巧、機巧等小聰明，本性將遭到破壞而死亡。[Gloss translation: The original nature is laissez-faire. If the nature is added with petty wisdom or cleverness, it will be broken and terminated.]

(Tsai 2001: 83)

TT: The original nature of *non-seeking* is perfect in itself. If one tries to be too clever and supplement it with unnecessary qualities, then it will be contaminated and destroyed.

(Goh and Koh 1999: 155)

According to Newmark's definition of *culture* (1988: 95), the cultural terms in the two examples are identified and underlined and the major ideas of the stories are further italicised. The two stories convey two of Zhuangzi's concepts: (1) do not impose our likings or throw our dislikes on others and (2) humans should pursue the state of non-seeking. In addition, the "original nature" of human beings is a topic that was widely discussed by scholars and philosophers in Zhuangzi's time. It can be noted in the two examples that the Chinese texts are presented in everyday, straightforward wording and the translated texts also show the same style. Regarding comprehension, the translated texts are perspicuous. Moreover, the major ideas in both examples appear after well-developed stories and the context is also of great help in enhancing English readers' comprehension level.

Nevertheless, this paper also identifies three cultural terms which appear repeatedly in the comic book and pose translation difficulties. The first one is 道 [Tao], which is the core of this comic and also of Zhuangzi's philosophy. Among 155 stories in this comic, 道 and its similar form 大道 [Tao or the great Tao] appear in 25. Two examples are provided below:

3) ST: 有道的人不刻意而自然高尚；不依賴仁義而自然修身；不依賴功名而自然治天下；不依賴江海而自然悠閒；不依賴修練而自然長壽。[Gloss translation: Men who carry out <u>Tao</u> do not have lofty personality deliberately, but they have it naturally; they do not rely on benevolence and righteousness, but they can naturally rectify themselves; they do not rely on rivers and seas, but they can naturally be at ease; they do not rely on training, but they can naturally live a long life.]

(Tsai 2001: 107)

TT: Then men of <u>Tao</u> have lofty character without any ingrained ideas; rectify themselves without benevolence and righteousness; succeed in ruling without great services or fame; enjoy their ease without resorting to the rivers and seas, and attain longevity without breathing techniques.

(Goh and Koh 1999: 167)

4) ST: 明白大道，就懂得隨機應變沒有危險。[Gloss translation: One who understands <u>the Great Tao</u> can adapt himself to all types of circumstances and encounter no danger.]

(Tsai 2001: 116)

TT: One who understands the <u>Tao</u> can adapt himself to all situations and be free from danger.

(Goh and Koh 1999: 177)

Tao refers to the principle of the universe and how matters of the world operate, indicating that human beings should try to harmonise themselves with the natural order to pursue a laissez-faire yet savoir-faire state. In the Chinese version, Tsai repeatedly mentions this without elaborating on its definition—perhaps because Tao is still seen and discussed in today's Chinese communities, so the Chinese readers understand the concept (roughly or deeply). Nevertheless, it is a thorny task in translation because English readers are unfamiliar with the notion. This paper presents the preceding extracts as corroboration. The two extracts deliver the benefits of knowing and practicing Tao, but the definition of Tao is not offered in the two stories, so English readers may only be able to know the benefits without understanding how to pursue and carry out Tao. Therefore, this paper argues that simply translating "道" and "大道" to "Tao" and "the great Tao" does not deliver the meaning to English readers so another translation strategy should be employed.

The second cultural term that is difficult to deal with is 君子 [jun zi], which refers to a man of culture, intelligence, virtue and honour. Confucius, another renowned ancient Chinese philosopher, enhanced the status of 君子 to be the ideal traits that a man should possess. This term appears in three stories and the translators provided dissimilar translations:

5) ST: 認為有自我形體的是三代以下的<u>君子</u>。[Gloss translation: *Those who recognise the existence of the self are the <u>gentlemen</u> who live from the Three Dynasties onwards.*]

(Tsai 2001: 96)

TT: Those who believe in the existence of the self are <u>gentlemen</u> who live from the Three Dynasties onwards.

(Goh and Koh 1999: 54)

6) ST: <u>君子</u>恬淡致遠，有所為，也有所不為。[Gloss translation: *<u>The true person</u> does not pursue fame and wealth and is able to achieve high; he knows what to do and what not to do.*]

(Tsai 2001: 223)

<u>TT: The true person</u> is a man of wisdom and dignity who knows when to act and when not to act.

(Goh and Koh 1999: 232)

Comparing the two translations (gentlemen and the true person) with the above-mentioned definition of 君子, it can be noted that the translations do not fully convey the original concept, and so we should use another strategy to enable English readers to grasp the concept.

The last cultural term is a suffix that comes after a scholar's surname to indicate that the person being referred to is knowledgeable, respectable, cultured and virtuous. The suffix, 子 [zi], was a common form in Zhuangzi's time and scholars/philosophers with such names appear in 44 stories in *The Sayings of Zhuangzi*, such as Zhuang Zi [莊子], Lie Zi [列子], Hui Zi [惠子], Yi Er Zi [意而子], Chang Wu Zi [長梧子], Lao Zi [老子] and Confucius [孔子], being the only translation exception. Although the concept of <u>zi</u> is widely understood by modern Chinese, this custom does not exist in the English context and translating it with English honorific/noble titles (for example, *Mr.*, *Sir*, and *Lord*) constitutes an irrelevant image. In the end, the translators determined to employ a phonetic transcription without rendering the connotation.

Culture is multifarious and covers words, ideologies, customs, human behaviours, dietary habits and clothing styles, among other things. During the examination of cultural transformation, images are of great help in enhancing English readers' comprehension level and this paper identifies cases where words and images complement each other to provide a perspicuous picture in nine stories. Take Figure 7 and Figure 8 for example. In Figure 7, the original panel communicates that the ancient Chinese would send three inauspicious types of creatures as offerings to the River God and the image contains a speech box, several speech balloons and two Chinese words are shown on the podium that the wizard stands on (the two words mean "chief wizard"). In the translation, all the smaller balloons and the words on the podium are either omitted or reduced possibly because of space constraints. The faithful translation of 不祥之物 [bu xiang zhi wu] should be "inauspicious items," and we can find that the word "items" is omitted in the English translation. The other three balloons contain 白額牛 [bai e niu, meaning "ox with white forehead"], 高鼻豬 [gao bi zhu, meaning "pig with a curved-up nose"] and 痔瘡人 [zhi chuang ren, meaning "man with haemorrhoids"]. Although there is enough space in the English version to contain the translations of the pig and the man, there may not be enough space for that of the ox on the left hand side. If the translators only provide the translations of the pig and the man, the readers may be confused by the name of the ox. Based on

this, this paper presumes that the translators decided to not translate the three names altogether to prevent confusion.

The omission does not hinder readers' comprehension as they can gain a complete idea by connecting the written description and visual content. The image helps the audience gain a concrete idea on what an ancient Chinese wizard wears and what the inauspicious creatures look like, the appearances of which would be harder for the audience to figure out from linguistic descriptions.

Regarding Figure 8, the story mentions the dress of Confucian scholars in Zhuangzi's time and Tsai wrote several sentences to depict the dress. Nevertheless, this paper holds that a lexical description may not be sufficient for English readers to imagine the scholar's dress so the image in Figure 8 manages to remedy the drawback and gives the readers a concrete picture.

FIGURE 7

Interplay of words and images to enhance the readers' comprehension of cultural concepts (Tsai 2015: 123; Goh and Koh 1999: 39)[7]
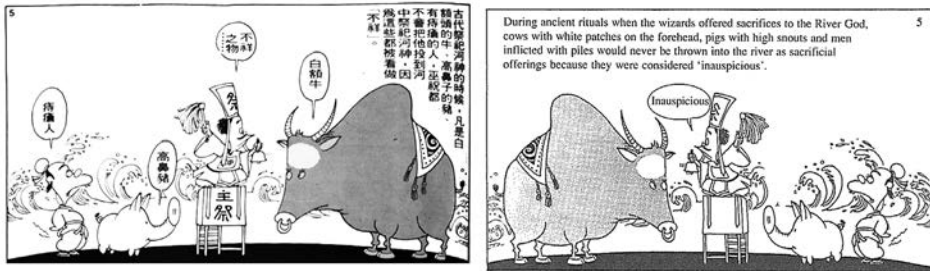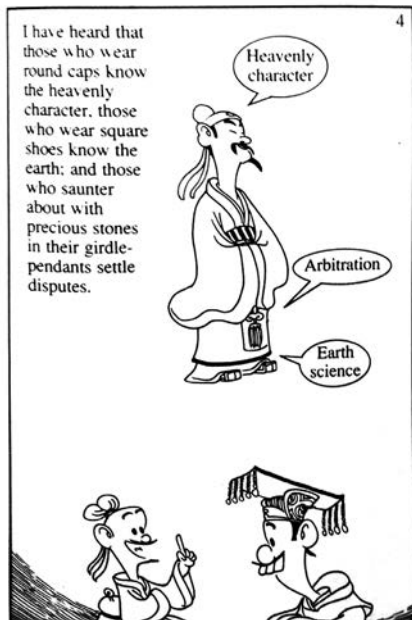

FIGURE 8

Interplay of words and image to enhance the readers' comprehension of the Confucian scholar's dress (Goh and Koh 1999: 199)

4.4. Communicative transformation

Bearing relation to Halliday's interpersonal theory, Hu's communicative transformation concerns "the interpersonal intention of translation" (2020: 162) and its retention in the TT. For Halliday, language is a tool for delivering meaning, and grammar is how we organise words to make meaning. Halliday claimed that when we employ language to convey meaning, we simultaneously enact our complex interpersonal relationships and the interpersonal function entails that the clause of grammar acts as "a proposition, or a proposal, whereby we inform or question, give an order or make an offer, and express our appraisal of or attitude of whoever we are addressing and what we are talking about" (2013: 29). Halliday's interpersonal theory covers words and the entire context of the conversation, namely the modality, polarity and mood, because some interpersonal messages are not rendered by words.

What is intention? The term reminds me of communicative intention in pragmatics, which concerns the production of a message or an effect by the speaker and the comprehension and corresponding response from the recipient (Grice 1957: 377-388; Haugh 2008: 99; Haugh and Jaszczolt 2012: 94-99) and leads me to Newmark's communicative translation, which "attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original" (1981: 39). For me, the two communicative concepts accentuate the need to retain the effect in the target society and diminish the importance of word-for-word faithfulness; this corresponds to the aforementioned comment that the translator does not stay loyal, but shows respect to the ST (Wang 2011: 14).

Integrating the preceding notions, we may say that communicative transformation concerns whether or not the expected effect (that is, the publication objective) is transferred to the TT and the same effect occurs among the recipients. Using this to analyse *The Sayings of Zhuangzi*, we understand that Tsai's objective is to deliver Zhuangzi's philosophy to the readers and trigger their interest in Chinese classics. To create the same effect in English, a culture that is remote from Chinese culture, it is necessary to enable the English audience to grasp the context of all stories. In this section, this paper introduces the materials that the publisher and/or the translators use to facilitate the realisation of the expected effect.

Through this, the translators provided an introduction and in-text footnotes to achieve the goal. The two-page introduction summarises Zhuangzi's life, background, publications, doctrine and philosophical influences. The introduction presents the fundamental concepts of Zhuangzi's philosophy. Knowing these concepts helps the readers deduce the philosophical messages that every story aims to deliver and thus facilitates the occurrence of the expected effect in the target community. If a reader is interested in Chinese classics, s/he can start by reading other writings by Zhuangzi that are listed in the introduction.

The translators also relied on footnoting. Footnotes are provided to clarify cultural terms, such as the characteristics of a legendary creature (for example, Peng: the footnote reads "a legendary bird"), the conversion of the ancient Chinese weights and measures system (for example, 90,000 li: the footnote states: "equivalent to 28,000 miles"), the provision of personal background (for example, a story mentions "Bo Le" and the footnote reads "Sun Yang (658-619 BC), a famous horse trainer"), the explanation of ancient Chinese activities (for example, physiognomy: the footnote reads "the

art of judging character from appearance, especially the face"), and the explanation of a rare illness (for example, chilblain: the footnote reads: "an inflammation sore especially on the feet or hands, caused by exposure to cold").

In addition, the 232-page comic book only contains ten footnotes, and all of them are very short and brief as shown in the previous paragraph. In my opinion, the translators may not have wanted to hamper the reading flow, which may have been why they provided footnoted explanations only when words and images within a given context could not clear up any confusion.

4.5. A macroscopic look at the translation ecosystem

While theorising Eco-translatology, Hu sought to investigate translations on the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. The micro- and meso-level examinations focus on the mentality of the translator, his/her attitude to the ST and the translation practice in general, how s/he prepares for the translation task and how s/he selects the fittest strategy for each part of the text in the translation task. The discussions in the preceding sections (4.1 to 4.4) fall within the two levels. As for the macro-level, Hu called for attention to the examination of the translation ecosystem as a whole to ensure that "the entire translational ecosystem will eventually lead to the formation of an interactive, balanced, stable, dynamic, and harmonious whole" (2020: 258).

Interpreting Hu's notions based on his major publications (Hu 2013; 2020), this paper infers that harmony and interaction are the elements we should go over while probing an ecosystem at the macro-level. Harmony means that the target ecosystem maintains harmonious relations with the source ecosystem, the source context and the target context. To achieve harmony, the target ecosystem must strike a balance in all aspects and the balance has to be dynamic so that adjustments are possible when differences and variations emerge. Under such a dynamic balance, the ecosystem becomes sustainable. As for the second element, interaction indicates that all ecosystems are correlated and the interactive nature makes them so. Interaction is like a string that connects all ecosystems and integrates them into a whole ecological world.

By analysing the research materials (the Chinese comic book and its English translation), this paper identifies harmony in several respects: (1) harmony between the components within the TT—the written and visual contents in the TT are presented in a harmonious way because the images are enlarged to contain more words and the texts are processed in a way that they do not obstruct the images, (2) harmony between the TT and ST—faithfulness being the most adopted strategy, while amplification and reduction are employed only when needed, and (3) harmony between the TT and target audience and community—contextualisation and footnotes are adopted if certain cultural terms and images are unfamiliar to the target audience or do not even exist in the target community. As for interactions, the results shed light on the interaction between the ST and TT from the linguistic, cultural and communicative aspects. The editor and translators show their presence by interacting with the target audience in the introduction and the footnotes—they endeavour to tell what is not usually told in comics in such places so that readers can grasp the theme and motif of this publication.

5. Research implications on comics translation factors and their hierarchical order

Scholars have discussed reading comprehension (for example, Kaindl 1999: 278; Grun and Dollerup 2003: 201-202; Zanettin 2014; Borodo 2015: 29-39), the influence of space constraints on translation (for example, Zanettin 2014; Borodo 2015: 25-29; Guillaume 2015: 98) and the complementation between words and images (for example, Kaindl 1999: 277-278; Grun and Dollerup 2003: 200-211; Zanettin 2014; Borodo 2015: 29-39; Guillaume 2015: 98-100). They have examined how these issues have affected translators' decision-making mechanisms and translation products. This study assessed the findings to understand whether or not these issues have different degrees of importance to translators. From this examination, a hierarchical list was compiled:

1) Comprehension of stories (considering both written and visual content) for the realisation of the publication objective
2) Space constraints
3) Fluency of written texts
4) Faithfulness to the original meaning

First, the realisation of the publication objective is not expendable and depends on whether or not the readers comprehend the themes of the stories. As comics concern the interplay of words and images, reduction/omission of the written content is acceptable as long as readers can obtain information with the help of images—like the omission of 哈哈 ["Ha Ha"] because the character in the image shows a laughing face and pose. This aligns with Vermeer's Skopos Theory, which suggests that translation is a purposeful action that focuses on audience of the TT (Vermeer 1989/2004: 221-223). According to Munday's interpretation of Vermeer's concept (2010: 80), the realisation of skopos overrides all other concerns. The findings in this paper shed dissimilar light because the status of the ST differs. Vermeer believed that skopos-based translation is to tailor the ST for suiting the target audience and context, and this reveals how much emphasis he placed on the TT. However, Eco-translatology pursues the reconstruction of the ST ecosystem in the TT ecosystem, so the ST still plays an important role (you cannot destroy the original composition toward fulfilling the objective). I think this is why Wang (2011: 14) pointed out that the translator should still be respectful of the ST.

Second, space constraints are a concern that has not been seen in conventional written translation activities, such as fiction and news translation. For me, as images occupy a great proportion of a comic book, the space for each panel cannot be entirely allocated to the presentation of words. Thus, translators have to sacrifice the third and fourth elements on the hierarchical list to maintain a balanced layout.

The remaining elements are related to the linguistic content and translators are seen to have cared more about whether or not the texts read fluently rather than whether or not all of the original meaning is retained. In my opinion, this is caused by a major and minor reason. The former pertains to space limitation, that is, English needs a particularly larger horizontal space compared to Chinese, so it is a thorny task if the original panels contain long passages. The latter is related to the style of this comic book. As the original comic book adopted a straightforward and simple wording, translators followed the style and decided to focus more on fluency in case the wording becomes inauthentic or complicated for English readers.

Some publishers may change the colouring or drawing of the images when they release the translated version. However, this element has not been included in the hierarchical list as the research materials in this study were in black and white and the drawings were all the same, just enlarged.

Finally, providing new insight on the three-dimensional transformations according to the hierarchical list, I consider communicative transformation to lie at the core of the three because it explores whether or not communicative intention (that is, the publication objective/expected effect) is fulfilled. My personal observation is that the other two transformations, although posing as two meaningful investigation aspects, are more of auxiliary roles in helping form a suitable context for the realisation of the purpose/effect.

6. Concluding remarks

This study examined *The Sayings of Zhuangzi* based on Eco-translatology to undertake a multi-faceted investigation of the translation of comics, without limiting it to linguistic features. Efforts have been made to discuss the suitability of translators, to understand the three-dimensional transformation of translations and to analyse how the target ecosystem achieves harmony and interaction. It is hoped that this paper can motivate researchers to further examine the translation of comics from an Eco-translatological perspective.

NOTES

1. The ST was created by Tsai Chih Chung, a prestigious cartoonist from Taiwan. This ST version comprised 230 pages and was published in 2001 by China Times Publishing.
2. Tsai transferred his copyright to Locus Publishing, and the publisher released this ST version in 2015. This 216-page version comprised text analyses and only selected stories from the China Times version.
3. Two STs were chosen out of copyright concerns. The copyright of the ST was transferred from China Times Publishing to Locus Publishing, and stories collected in the Locus version are reprints from the China Times version. I obtained approval for use from Locus Publishing, but the only ST version that they produced does not contain all the stories that are present in the English translation. As a solution, I took the version released by Locus Publishing as the major ST and the one released by China Times Publishing as the complementary one. I referred to the complementary version only when a story could not be found in the Locus version.
4. The 232-page TT was produced by Goh Beng Choo and Koh Kok Kiang and was published in 1999 by Asiapac Books, a Singapore-based publisher that aims to promote China's classics to the world.
5. TSAI, Chih Chung (2001): *自然的箫声:庄子说* [*The Music of Nature: The Sayings of Zhuangzi*]. Taipei: China Times Publishing.
6. GOH, Beng Choo and KOH, Kok Kiang (1999): *The Sayings of Zhuangzi - The Music of Nature*. (Translated from [*庄子说:自然的箫声*] by Chih Chung TSAI). Singapore: Asiapac Books.
7. TSAI, Chih Chung (2015): *莊子解密* [*Interpreting Zhuangzi: The Music of Nature*]. Taipei: Locus Publishing.

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