

## An Interdisciplinary Approach to Investigating Style: A Case Study of a Chinese Translation of Gilbert's (2006) Eat Pray Love

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**Abstract :** Elizabeth Gilbert's (2006) biography Eat, Pray, Love describes her travels to Italy, India, and Indonesia after a painful divorce. The author's experiences with love, loss, search for happiness, and meaning have resonated with a huge readership. As regards the translation of Gilbert's (2006) Eat, Pray, Love into Chinese, it was first translated by a Taiwanese translator He Pei-Hua and published in Taiwan in 2007 by Make Boluo Wenhua Chubanshe with the fairly catching title "Enjoy! Traveling Alone." The same translation was translocated to China, republished in simplified Chinese characters by Shanxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe in 2008 and renamed in China, entitled "To Be a Girl for the Whole Life." Later on, the same translation in simplified Chinese characters was reprinted by Hunan Wenyi Chubanshe in 2013. This study employs Munday's (2002) systemic model for descriptive translation studies to investigate the translation of Gilbert's (2006) Eat, Pray, Love into Chinese by the Taiwanese translator Hu Pei-Hua. It employs an interdisciplinary approach, combining systemic functional linguistics and corpus stylistics with sociohistorical research within a descriptive framework to study the translator's discursive presence in the text. The research consists of three phases. The first phase is to locate the target text within its socio-cultural context. The target-text context concerning the para-texts, readers' responses, and the publishers' orientation will be explored. The second phase is to compare the source text and the target text for the categorization of translation shifts by using the methodological tools of systemic functional linguistics and corpus stylistics. The investigation concerns the rendering of mental clauses and speech and thought presentation. The final phase is an explanation of the causes of translation shifts. The linguistic findings are related to the extra-textual information collected in an effort to ascertain the motivations behind the translator's choices. There exist sets of possible factors that may have contributed to shaping the textual features of the given translation within a specific socio-cultural context. The study finds that the translator generally reproduces the mental clauses and speech and thought presentation closely according to the original. Nevertheless, the language of the translation has been widely criticized to be unidiomatic and stiff, losing the elegance of the original. In addition, the several Chinese translations of the given text produced by one Taiwanese and two Chinese publishers are basically the same. They are repackaged slightly differently, mainly with the change of the book cover and its captions for each version. By relating the textual findings to the extra-textual data of the study, it is argued that the popularity of the Chinese translation of Gilbert's (2006) Eat, Pray, Love may not be attributed to the quality of the translation. Instead, it may have to do with the way the work is promoted strategically by the social media manipulated by the four e-bookstores promoting and selling the book online in China.

**Keywords :** chinese translation of eat pray love, corpus stylistics, motivations for translation shifts, systemic approach to translation studies

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