

LITERARY TRANSLATION AND LEARNER TYPES¹

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This paper first establishes the fact that literary texts occupy a significant place in the teaching of translation. It then proceeds to trace some of the routes taken by one group of post-secondary learners in translating literature. From this two translator types emerge: the *active* learner and the *passive*. Such a distinction proves to be more than a matter of convenient labelling. As the paper will attempt to demonstrate, it has implications for both the practice and pedagogy of translation, particularly relevant to the literary variety. Among other things, it echoes the all-important contrast between two concepts: grammaticalness of sentences versus communicativeness in discourse. The vehicle for this study is a literary text translated from English into Modern Standard Chinese.

1. Studying the Translation of Literary Texts

Some, if not all, literature falls under the “form-oriented” category (House 1977: 67). It should be noted at the outset that granted there are unsettled issues regarding the definition of *literature*, for the present purposes what is considered as a literary text is, briefly, one which “creates its own immediate context of situation, and ... is structured in such a way as to make explicit its relationship to its setting” (Halliday 1978: 140). Furthermore, literary language is “more conscious in formation”, is used “as an artistic medium”, is “not spontaneous”, and is foregrounded by “special devices which heighten the effect of linguistic acts through patterning” (Chapman 1973: 13-14). That being the case, for some translation educators, any attempt at teaching literary translation requires justification, and much more so the study of such pedagogical efforts. Indeed,