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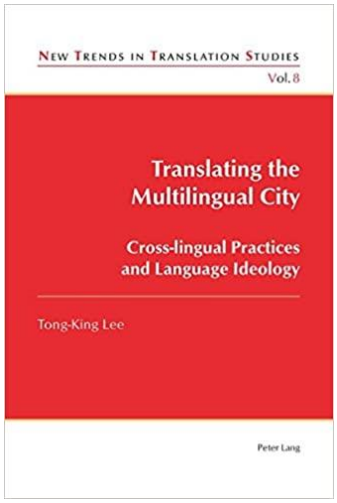

Lee, Tong-King. *Translating the Multilingual City: Cross-lingual Practices and Language Ideology.* Peter Lang AG., 2013. 166 pp.

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In *Cities in Translation*, Sherry Simon emphatically states that "all cities are multilingual". This statement reflects the attention given to cities whose multilingualism constitutes their identities and henceforth generates cultural dynamics. Since cities are defined and translated by their respective languages and cultures, some specific questions need to be answered: how is the relationship between the different languages used in a multilingual society? If translations are conducted in a multilingual environment, what is the textual and discursive relationship underlined by these languages? How are bilingual and/or multilingual texts translated? Does translation necessarily function as a "bridging gap"? These are the major questions that Tong-King Lee addresses in his book on the multilingual city of Singapore.

Based on his reflections on literary translation, Lee takes the multilingual city-state of Singapore as the place to embark on his investigation. He especially attempts to examine how translation is conducted in a society in which English is assuming a hegemonic role while other official languages, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil are marginalized. From the translational site of the competing languages, Lee offers a vantage point to closely observe how ideologies and power dynamics, as related to languages, play out in multilingual Singapore. For example, he focuses on English and Chinese literary translations to illustrate how ideology and power interact. The questions arising from his investigation help problematize some assumptions about translation and lead to a positive understanding of the role of translation in intercultural or a/cross cultural communication.

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Lee's book is divided into five chapters with a preface. In the preface, Lee briefly traces what motivates his research. Apparently, as a citizen of Singapore, Lee's position is ideal to reflect on the situation of translation in a context where Chinese language and literature are marginalized and English has gained dominance.

Chapter 1 provides background information about Singapore as a multilingual city. As noted, since its independence from Britain in 1965, Singapore has been constantly promoting multilingualism as its most important language ideology. However, despite the official policy, English has been privileged over three other official languages—Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. It has been defined as a "unitarian", "unifying" and "universal" language used commonly for communication between different ethnic groups. While the use of English is of a practical nature, the use of the Chinese language for the Chinese Singaporeans is related to cultural values and identities. Thus, English has gained more symbolic capital, while the Chinese language is considered to have less practical value and a "low degree of symbolic capital" (16). With English becoming the dominant language in the city-state, the Chinese language along with other official languages have become marginalized. This is evidenced by Chinese literary anthologies published during the 1980s, whose prevailing motif reflects the sense of "loss" among the Chinese speakers in face of the dominance of English in the multilingual society. Furthermore, the identity crisis also happens among the Chinese. The concept of "Chineseness" is no longer defined by the Chinese language, as some Chinese have used English as their first language and their knowledge of the Chinese language and culture is very limited. In this context, the author examines language ideologies and power through the "lens" of translation. He identifies several problems emerging from translation. The first is related to the bilingual text, text code switching, and translating. The second one is linked to reception and interpretation. The third one is about the asymmetric relationships between the four official languages epitomized in literary translation anthologies. The research models used for dealing with these problems are drawn from different theories relevant to the problematics of language power and ideologies, such as the conceptual tools developed by Pierre Bourdieu, Theo Hermans, Jeremy Munday, and others. The author treats these problems in the following chapters with a separate conclusion.

Chapter 2 deals with bilingual translation in relation to language power and ideology. The texts for analysis are taken mainly from the literary anthologies with the motif of "loss" (29). Based on Rainier Grutman's definition of a bilingual text, Lee considers the Chinese text as the "central axis" and the embedded text as secondary. In the selected texts, two codes exist in an asymmetrical relation—the English text is embedded in the Chinese text as its Other, a threat to the self. It is an Anglophobic text. But through translation, the linguistic otherness of the embedded English texts is likely to revert to the sameness in the target English text. However, as the author notes, if this happens, translation "creates a crisis of representation" (67). Through his case study of a bilingual text, Lee highlights the asymmetric relation between the Chinese text and the self-translation of the English text in the play, *Shizhong yinzhe* by Sy Ren Quah. While in the Chinese version, English texts are inserted into the Chinese text to show the Anglophobic tension, in the English translation, this Anglophobic

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tension between Chinese and English is largely minimized, as the playwright directly adds the English expressions without the corresponding source text forms. Thus, through translation, the Chinese text is homogenized. This shows that the Chinese text can be easily penetrated by the English text, whereas the English text maintains a monolingual autonomy. Lee concludes that in Singapore, the hegemonic English can "interfere with" the mother tongue languages, but can't be "interfered" with (63). He maintains that new strategies be deployed to address the problem. By citing the example of a Quebec writer's translation of Michèle Lalonde's poem *Speak White*, Lee considers the translation from French into English as a social semiotic translation. This example shows that using English translation against itself can be effective. But there is a limit to it. For Lee, the effective way is to "adopt a different way of reading the TT" (67).

Chapter 3 discusses the issue of interpreting the other in translations. Lee first problematizes the theoretical tenets posited by Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti about the introduction of the foreign through literalism or foreignization. He argues that when the TT readers' cultural identities resist the source messages, translation can be a challenge. An interpretative reading of the TT could pose a problem, because there exists an ideological tension between the TT and its reader. To illustrate his point of view, Lee takes some examples of the literary anthologies that highlight the "loss" motif. For him, while the translator can choose a domesticating strategy to assimilate the foreign in a ST, or resist the assimilation of the TT by a corresponding translation means, the reader can interpret the TT in two distinctive ways. The first is to adopt an "ethnocentric reading stance" to reclaim the cultural other as the "recognizable and even "sameness"; the other is to read the ST within their "ideological frame", thus, reversing the original text messages. As is the case with the Anglophone Chinese who don't speak Chinese, their ideologies either allow them to situate themselves in the ST and accept it, or they can have a different reading. Will there be any road in-between? Lee does not rule out the possibility. What could this imply? For the author, it means that translation as a "bridging gap" could be problematic because what the translator conveys in a TT may be compromised because of a different reading on part of the reader. How could one solve the impasse when the self and the other are involved in negotiating the meanings of translation? Lee does not work out a solution but insists on letting the issue be a "constant reminder to the reader that every act of reading is ideological" (103).

Chapter 4 examines the problem of multilingual translation in literary anthologies from 1980 until 2008 in order to highlight the translation approaches adopted. From his case studies, Lee intends to uncover voices, visibility and significance of translation. First, he examines the paratexts of the literary journals published in Singapore. He identifies five tendencies in literary translation over 23 years in the publications of heterolingual anthologies from one to multi-directional translation. The predominant tendency involves English as the language translated into all the other languages, and in some cases all four-language texts co-exist side by side without translation. More specifically, in the 1980s, the English language was the default translating language. Sometimes the English texts would replace the original texts. However, since the beginning of the current century, more balanced translations have been adopted. For Lee, this implies that English as a sole translating language in the

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past century shows its hegemonic power over the other languages. But in the new century, the coexistence of multilingual works in an anthology without translation constitutes resistance to the very hegemonic power of English. Hence, Lee calls for a more sophisticated model for cross-cultural communication in the future so as to "truly realize the dialogue across cultures, and at the same time to preserve the identity of each individual language and culture" (141).

Chapter 5 recaptures the major themes of the book and highlights the problematics of untranslatability. Lee concludes that translation is not only to establish and create possible connections, but also serves as a reminder that a "chasm" between languages always exists. This shows that full representation of the other by the self might not be realizable. Consequently a mode of dialogue should be developed to give a voice to the other, and "allowing the others" to represent the self. By doing this, translation becomes a platform for interaction between the self and the other.

Translating the Multilingual City: Cross-lingual Practices and Language Ideology is an exceptional book for a number of reasons. First, the book is a pioneering attempt to study multilingualism and translation in the Asian context. In particular, Lee examines the issue from the perspective of how different languages are translated and what power relation and ideological elements impact translation. Second, Lee's book deals with translation issues arising within a multilingual society in a provocative way. In his compelling analysis of the source text and context, certain results from his investigation challenge some basic preconceptions about the ways in which we translate: Can the literal translation of a ST with English as the secondary text into the hegemonic English bring the foreignness into the TT? Or, does it simply confirm the hegemonic status of English that homogenizes the other? Third, through his inquiries, the interpretive reading of a foreignized TT is much emphasized. This perspective challenges the current debates on the use of the interventionist methods to resist the hegemony of the dominant languages, especially English. This emphasis from the reader's point of view questions our assumption that translation strategies determine how we perceive a text. Fourth, in his case studies, Lee asserts that translation does not only bridge gaps. This argument is powerfully supported by the fact that translation in some instances, for example in multilingual Singapore, means "chasm," which highlights the imperfect representation of the other by the self. Fifth, the author's vision in translation studies is illustrated by his call for an equal platform for dialogue between the self and the other in translation although it is somewhat utopian.

Despite Lee's contribution to scholarship in Translation Studies, several lapses impede his arguments. First, since the book is about multilingualism in Singapore, the author mostly directs his attention to the translation of some literary texts between English and Chinese as if the other two official languages did not exist, or played a less important role. By doing this, Lee appears to replace one language hegemony with another. In addition, when Lee gives a detailed analysis about the shift of unidirectional translation to non-translation (i.e. coexistence of four languages without translation) since the beginning of the new century, he does not give any convincing account as to why it is the

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case. His brief explanation about the literary organization's efforts for the change does not warrant it as strong evidence. More needs to be done to clarify it.

In all, despite its lapses, the book is a significant contribution to Translation Studies.

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