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ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION OF JAPANESE CLASSICAL GRAMMAR: A CASE STUDY OF JAPANESE-TO-CHINESE TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the process of translating Japanese texts with classical grammar into Chinese, focusing on two forms of Japanese literature: waka poetry and novels. By providing examples and analyses, the study explores the challenges of rendering Japanese classical grammar into Chinese under the guidance of Hans Vermeer's Skopos theory. It discusses translation strategies, stylistic choices, and the practical significance of these translations. The goal is to enhance readers' interest and engagement with Japanese literary works, thereby deepening their understanding and appreciation of Japanese classical literature.
KEYWORDS: *Japanese classical literature; Japanese translation; Skopos theory*

1. INTRODUCTION
Literature, as a vital component of human social life and spiritual culture, carries profound emotional and cultural significance. Classical literary works, in particular, are imbued with rich historical and cultural contexts and intricate emotional expressions. However, the highly historical and cultural nature of classical literary texts results in diverse and unique linguistic forms across different contexts and cultural backgrounds. In the case of Japanese texts with classical grammar, their translation poses significant challenges. Specifically, in cross-cultural contexts, the effective conveyance of the original emotional and cultural content to a target audience unfamiliar with the source culture becomes a critical issue.

For readers lacking relevant cultural or historical knowledge, even a translated text may fail to evoke emotional resonance due to linguistic differences and cultural barriers. This can render the reading experience cumbersome or unengaging, thereby diminishing interest in and attention to these classical works (Jeremy, 2007; Liu, 2019). Accordingly, this study focuses on analyzing the process of translating Japanese texts with classical grammar into Chinese. It aims to explore translation strategies that align more closely with the "horizon of expectation" of Chinese readers. The objective is to produce translations that, while faithful to the content and style of the original text, also resonate aesthetically and culturally with the target audience.

In translation practice, especially when dealing with Japanese classical literary works and their adaptations, translators must balance the cultural context of the source text with the cultural expectations of the target audience. This requires not only a deep command of the Japanese language and its cultural nuances but also sharp cross-cultural sensitivity and creative linguistic expression. By combining translation theory with practical application, this study adopts the theoretical framework of Skopos theory to analyze and translate content from Japanese classical literature with classical grammar. The goal is to investigate translation strategies and stylistic choices in detail to ensure that the translated text faithfully conveys the literary value and cultural meaning of the original work. This, in turn, seeks to inspire a deeper understanding and interest in Japanese classical literature among Chinese readers.

This audience-oriented translation approach enhances both the readability and cultural adaptability of the translated text. It also broadens the avenues for disseminating Japanese classical literature in China. Moreover, it facilitates Sino-Japanese cultural exchange and understanding while uncovering the modern relevance and contemporary significance of classical literary works. Through an in-depth analysis of the challenges and practices in translating Japanese classical grammar, this study aims to provide Chinese readers with more engaging and culturally relatable translations, thereby fostering greater attention to Japanese literature and East Asian classical culture as a whole (Jeremy, 2007; Liu, 2019).

2. RATIONALE FOR THE TOPIC
In the current wave of globalization and cultural exchange, the translation of literary works is not merely a linguistic transformation but also a crucial medium for cultural

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understanding and dissemination. This is especially true for classical literature, whose unique cultural and historical context, along with its distinct linguistic expressions, poses significant challenges for translation. Consequently, balancing fidelity to the original text with adaptation to the target culture has become a critical issue in translation studies. This paper focuses on Japanese texts with classical grammar, adopting Skopos theory as a framework and integrating translation practice to provide new perspectives and methodologies for addressing this challenge.

2.1 Background of the Topic

In recent years, as research in translation theory has deepened, the paradigms of translation studies have diversified. This evolution not only reflects the progressive refinement of the theoretical framework within the discipline but also highlights the increasing diversity of social and cultural needs. However, in the contemporary context of highly advanced information technology, interest in and attention to classical literary works have declined to a certain extent. Alongside this trend, the quantity and quality of adaptations of classical literature have significantly diminished. This phenomenon has spurred widespread academic concern regarding the effective dissemination and preservation of classical literature.

Scholars both domestically and internationally have made substantial contributions to the field of classical literature translation, exploring various aspects ranging from linguistic features to cultural interpretation. However, research that delves into the translation process itself—specifically in relation to the needs and preferences of target readers—remains relatively insufficient. In particular, the translation of Japanese classical literature with classical grammar has received limited attention. Translators in this field must address not only the complexity of the linguistic structures but also the challenge of accurately conveying the cultural connotations and emotional nuances of the original text. Simultaneously, they must consider the cultural background and reading habits of the target audience.

Given these challenges, this paper aims to apply Skopos theory to the study of Japanese texts with classical grammar, exploring how to better meet the needs of target readers and optimize the presentation of translated texts. Guided by Skopos theory, translation strategies can be devised more flexibly, allowing for the selection of appropriate stylistic forms and expressions. This ensures that the translated text remains faithful to the original while also resonating with the target culture to evoke interest and empathy among readers (Wang, 2012). This perspective highlights the potential of translations to inspire greater appreciation for Japanese classical literature and to facilitate its transmission and development in diverse cultural contexts.

2.2 Challenges in Translation

The translation of Japanese texts with classical grammar involves three primary challenges. These difficulties not only highlight the linguistic complexity of such texts but also demand high levels of cultural sensitivity and linguistic expertise from translators.

(a) Understanding Japanese Classical Grammar and Translating into Chinese

One of the foremost challenges in translating Japanese classical literature, particularly *waka* from *Man'yōshū* and *Shinkokin Wakashū*, is understanding its grammar. These texts, written in archaic Japanese, significantly differ from modern Japanese in terms of grammatical features, often including obscure archaic vocabulary and intricate grammatical structures. Moreover, differences in cultural contexts and historical settings between Japan and China make certain grammatical phenomena difficult to interpret accurately, even with the aid of reference dictionaries.

To address these challenges, translators must consult parallel texts and consider the creative context of the *waka*. It is also essential to grasp the overall atmosphere and meaning of the text. Additionally, to align with Chinese readers' "horizon of expectation"—that is, their reading habits and aesthetic preferences—translators often render *waka* into Chinese verse. This approach not only enhances readability and acceptability but also retains the historical depth and ambiance of the original, showcasing the profound aesthetic unique to classical literature (Guo, 2006).

(b) Understanding and Expressing Culturally Loaded Terms

Japanese classical literature frequently employs culturally loaded terms, particularly those written entirely in kanji, which pose significant challenges for translators. Although these kanji terms may appear visually similar to Chinese characters, their meanings and usage often diverge from modern Chinese and can sometimes be entirely contradictory. This phenomenon of "false friends" requires translators to possess extensive cultural knowledge and linguistic sensitivity.

In practice, translators must repeatedly consult dictionaries to confirm the meaning of such terms. Additionally, they need to analyze parallel texts to deeply understand the cultural context in which these terms are used, ultimately determining the most accurate way to express them in Chinese. This process, though time-intensive and meticulous, is critical for ensuring that the translation accurately conveys the cultural information embedded in the original text.

(c) Translating Long, Complex Sentences with Ellipses

The peculiarities of Japanese syntax are particularly pronounced in classical literature, especially in sentences with complex structures and numerous ellipses. Japanese classical texts often omit subjects, objects, or other critical components of sentences, making the intended meaning more elusive. Translators must first thoroughly understand the vocabulary and identify the sentence components before employing strategies such as merging sentences, splitting them, or adding supplementary elements to complete the translation.

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It is important to note that translation is not merely a mechanical process of converting words and grammar but a creative act of interpreting and reconstructing meaning. In this process, translators must remain faithful to the source text while flexibly applying the expressive tools of the target language. This ensures that the translation aligns with modern Chinese linguistic conventions while accurately conveying the original intent and emotional nuances. Achieving this requires not only strong linguistic skills but also a solid grasp of translation theories and meticulous practical execution (Si, 2010).

In conclusion, the translation of Japanese texts with classical grammar is a highly specialized and challenging task. It demands a high level of proficiency in language, cultural understanding, and translation techniques. By combining theoretical guidance with practical approaches, translators can gradually overcome these challenges and more effectively present the unique charm of Japanese classical literature to Chinese readers.

3. ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION EXAMPLES

To address the practical issues in translating Japanese classical literature, this study focuses not only on the reproduction of linguistic forms but also on exploring the dynamic interplay between language and culture through the analysis of specific examples. In selecting examples, particular emphasis is placed on their representativeness and inherent challenges to facilitate an in-depth investigation of the translation characteristics and methods for various texts. Additionally, by applying Skopos theory, this study examines how to balance fidelity to the source language with the readability of the translated text, thereby ensuring that the translation aligns more closely with the needs of the target audience.

3.1 Translation of *Waka*

Example 1

Original Text

田子の浦にうちいでて見れば白たへの富士の高嶺に雪はふりつつ

Translation

田子浦处抬眼望 富士山巅雪纷纷

Analysis

This *waka* is drawn from *Shinkokin Wakashū*. The grammar in this *waka* entirely employs classical Japanese forms, making it inherently challenging to translate. Following the Skopos theory's principle of fidelity, the translator aimed to preserve the classical charm of the *waka* while also considering the reception of Chinese readers. To achieve this, the *waka* was translated into a seven-character parallel verse format.

"田子の浦" refers to a coastal area near the mouth of the Fuji River in Suruga Bay, Shizuoka Prefecture, a historic scenic spot for viewing Mount Fuji. This place name is retained and translated as "田子浦". The phrase "田子の浦にうちいで" (arriving at Tagonoura) depicts a static state, which is matched by the action of "抬眼望" (raising one's gaze) in the translation, resulting in "田子浦处抬眼望". The expression "ふりつつ" (snow continuously falling) is translated as "雪纷纷", vividly portraying the dynamic image of snowflakes fluttering down. This combination of motion and stillness creates a picturesque scene of gazing at snow-covered mountain peaks from the fields, capturing the subtle elegance typical of *waka* in *Shinkokin Wakashū*.

Example 2

Original Text

笹の葉はみ山もみよにみだるなり我は妹思ふ別れ来ぬれば

Translation

山间竹叶沙沙响 思妻情切随声涨

Analysis

This *waka* is also from *Shinkokin Wakashū*. "笹の葉" refers to small or slender bamboo leaves, which is directly translated as "竹叶". The adverb "みよ" here describes the sound of wind rustling through bamboo leaves, translated as "沙沙" to convey the auditory imagery. The phrase "山" is placed as the subject in the first half of the translation, resulting in "山间竹叶沙沙响".

The term "妹" in this context refers to a wife, and the sentiment of "missing one's wife due to prolonged separation" is translated as "思妻情切随声涨". The seven-character parallel verse structure maintains rhyming between "响" and "涨", enhancing the fluency and rhythmic quality of the translation. This approach, combining direct translation and paraphrase, seeks to align with the original's serene and balanced tone while adapting to the aesthetic preferences of Chinese readers.

Example 3

Original Text

よそにのみ見てややみなん葛城のたかまの山の峰の楠。

Translation

欲破葛城难攻陷，遥望高间山之楠。

Analysis

This *waka* originates from *Taiheiki*, Volume Seven, specifically the "Military Siege of Chikata Castle" section. It depicts the scene where the Hojo forces surrounded Chikata Castle but were unable to capture it due to the strategic brilliance of Kusunoki Masashige. The event was satirized in a *waka*, "よそにのみ見てややみなむ葛城や高間の山の峰の白雲" (Waka No. 990), which appears in *Shinkokin Wakashū*, Volume Eleven, under "Love Poems I." Notably, in this *waka*, the term "楠" (kusunoki) is metaphorically reinterpreted as "白雲" (white clouds) at the end.

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At first glance, “楠” might be mistaken for “camphor tree.” However, by referencing the story in *Taiheiki*, it is confirmed that “楠” here symbolizes the Japanese general Kusunoki Masashige. Consequently, while translating the *waka*, it is critical to carefully analyze grammar and format and scrutinize culturally loaded terms with specific meanings. Adhering to the fidelity principle of Skopos theory, the translator preserved the implicit beauty of the original without explicitly naming the general, opting instead to retain the poetic reference to "楠".

3.2 Translation of Sentences with Classical Grammar

Example 4

Original Text

少年の春惜しめども留らぬものなりければ、三月も半ば過ぎぬ。御前の木立、何となく青みわたれる中に、中島の藤は、松にとのみ思ひ顔に咲きかかりて、山ほととぎす待ち顔なり。

Translation

少年之春，虽惜却难留，阳春三月已过半。御前的树木青翠丛生，浮岛的紫藤在松枝上绽放，盼望杜鹃鸟的到来。

Analysis

This excerpt comes from the Japanese classical novel *The Tale of Sagoromo*. Its translation is particularly challenging due to its elaborate style and cultural nuances. Unlike *waka*, which is relatively concise and adheres to fixed formats, the style of such prose allows for greater flexibility in rendering. To enhance readability and reflect the richness of the original, the translator adopted a hybrid style combining elements of modern and classical Chinese.

For instance, the term “ども” indicates concession, meaning "although" or "even if", and is translated as "虽惜却". “山ほととぎす” refers to both “mountain cuckoos” and “azalea flowers.” Initially, the phrase “山ほととぎす待ち顔なり” was translated as “杜鹃花也含苞待放” to correspond with “藤” (wisteria). However, upon further research and context analysis, it was found that “山ほととぎす待ち顔なり” was inspired by the *Kokin Wakashū* poem: “わが宿の池の藤波咲きにけり山ほととぎすいつか来鳴かむ” (Wisteria blooms by the pond of my house; when will the mountain cuckoo come to sing?). Thus, the translation was revised to “盼望杜鹃鸟的到来” to maintain fidelity to the original reference and its literary allusion.
This careful balancing of linguistic precision, cultural resonance, and textual fidelity demonstrates the complexity and artistry required in translating classical Japanese prose.

Example 5

Original Text

人は生て居る内は陽気盛んにして正しく清く 死ねば陰気盛んにして邪に穢れるものだ 夫ゆゑ幽霊と共に偕老同穴の契を結べば 縦令百歳の長寿を保つ命も 其為めに精血を減らし必ず死ぬるものだ

Translation

人活着的时候阳气旺、周正无邪；而死后会变得阴气重、邪气肮脏。只要和鬼魂结下“生则同衾，死亦同穴”的誓言，纵令百岁长寿的生命也会因此而减少精血，必死无疑。

Analysis

This excerpt is from the Japanese adaptation novel *Kabyo-shi*, which was itself based on the Chinese classical novel *Jian Deng Xin Hua*. The overall tone and content closely resemble Chinese literary styles, prompting the translator to prioritize the use of idiomatic expressions and maintain structural symmetry in the translation, aiming for elegance and fluency (Lu, 2015).

The term “盛る” conveys meanings such as “abundance,” “prosperity,” or even “animal in heat.” When paired with “陽気” (positive energy), it was translated as “阳气旺” (abundance of yang energy). However, translating “陰気盛んにして” as “阴气旺盛” would feel inconsistent within the context. Thus, it was extended to “阴气重” (heaviness of yin energy), which aligns with the term's essence while maintaining parallelism between the phrases.

The original text lacked punctuation, so the translator segmented the sentences according to logical structures. This ensured the translated text followed modern Chinese writing conventions, enhancing clarity and readability. This approach exemplifies the balance between linguistic accuracy and aesthetic considerations, preserving the meaning of the original while adapting it to suit the target audience.

4. RESEARCH METHODS AND SUMMARY

To effectively address the challenges of translating Japanese texts with classical grammar, this study adopts a theory-guided, practice-based approach. By systematically analyzing the translation process, the research explores optimal strategies for overcoming linguistic barriers. The findings indicate that theoretical guidance helps translators define translation objectives and strategies, while practical applications provide actionable solutions to specific problems. By integrating theory and practice, the translation process can better balance fidelity to the source text with the adaptability required for the target audience.

4.1 Research Methods

This study primarily employs case analysis and literature review methodologies to delve into the translation challenges posed by Japanese classical grammar. These methods emphasize the integration of theory and practice, focusing on identifying issues from specific translation cases and seeking appropriate solutions.

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In the translation process, this study draws on the Skopos theory proposed by Hans Vermeer as a theoretical framework, integrating translation objectives and audience characteristics (Wu, 2023; Zhang, 2004). Skopos theory posits that translation activities should be guided by clearly defined objectives, with the form and content of the translation tailored to serve these goals—particularly in terms of meeting the needs and cultural expectations of the target audience. Guided by this theory, the study analyzes specific translation examples to identify practical challenges in translating Japanese classical grammar, including difficulties in grammatical interpretation, cultural terms, and complex sentence structures. The case analysis approach clarifies the specific manifestations of these challenges and provides concrete references for their resolution.

Additionally, the study leverages literature review methods to collect and synthesize extensive research on Japanese classical grammar and translation strategies. These resources not only provide a robust theoretical foundation but also offer essential references for the analytical process. By bridging theory and practice, the study explores how Skopos theory can be applied in translation to enhance cultural adaptation and audience receptivity. Ultimately, through the detailed analysis of specific examples, the study aims to develop translation strategies that align with the aesthetic preferences and reading expectations of Chinese readers. This approach facilitates the dissemination and reception of Japanese classical literature in China and offers valuable insights for cross-cultural translation.

4.2 Translation Summary and Significance

The translations in this study aim to align with the "horizon of expectation" of Chinese readers, employing forms such as seven-character parallel verse or idiomatic symmetry to enhance the rhythmic beauty and cultural affinity of the translated text. However, the essence of translation lies not merely in achieving formal equivalence. Insisting on word-for-word correspondence at the expense of textual coherence and the linguistic and cultural background of the target audience may undermine the translation's effectiveness. Such an approach risks failing to faithfully convey the original's intent and diminishes the readability of the translated text.

Therefore, the form of the translation must be handled flexibly, focusing on conveying the meaning and spirit of the original rather than rigidly adhering to literal equivalence. In translation practice, the translator must remain highly faithful to the content and essence of the source text. The translation should accurately transmit the original information while adhering to the linguistic habits of the target language, ensuring the text flows naturally and aligns with the grammar and style of the target language. Additionally, specialized terms and cultural concepts in the text must be consistent throughout, avoiding arbitrary modifications to ensure the translation's professionalism and logical coherence.

Achieving these objectives requires the translator to accurately comprehend the source text and precisely grasp the cultural information and emotional expression embedded within it. Translation is not merely a linguistic conversion but a deep understanding and recreation of foreign cultures. To faithfully convey the source text, the translator must possess profound cultural insight and respect for the source culture while mastering the expressive norms and cultural nuances of the target language. This bidirectional understanding of cultures and skillful language control forms the foundation of high-quality translation.

When dealing with Japanese texts featuring classical grammar, the translator must not only be faithful to the information conveyed in the original but also apply appropriate translation theories and strategies to flexibly choose suitable forms of translation. For instance, when translating highly metaphorical sentences or culturally loaded terms, the translator should fully leverage the guidance of Skopos theory, considering the target audience and cultural context to maximally recreate the original's imagery and cultural depth.

Through such cultural adaptation and artistic recreation, translations can more effectively broaden their audience, increasing readers' interest in Japanese classical literature. This not only expands readers' literary horizons but also deepens their understanding of Japanese literature and its cultural connotations, injecting new vitality and meaning into cross-cultural exchanges.

5. Conclusion

This study systematically analyzed the translation of Japanese texts with classical grammar from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Using Skopos theory as the framework, the research explored translation strategy choices and operational challenges, particularly in the translation of *waka* and classical literary sentences. Special attention was given to addressing key difficulties, such as the translation of culturally loaded terms and the handling of complex sentence structures. The findings reveal that achieving a balance between fidelity to the original text and adaptation to the target culture is essential for conveying both cultural connotations and linguistic forms. This balance significantly affects the cultural adaptability and audience receptivity of the translated text.

The translation of Japanese texts with classical grammar is not a simple linguistic transformation but a process of reproducing the emotional and cultural information of the source text. Through the analysis of translation examples, the study demonstrated that translation must respect the literary value and artistic features of the original while creatively adapting to the expressive characteristics of the target language. For instance, the use of seven-character parallel verse in *waka* translation not only preserves the rhythmic beauty of the original but also enhances the artistic appeal of the translation, providing the target audience with a culturally relatable reading experience. This innovation

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underscores the critical role of translation as a tool for cross-cultural communication.

The guidance of Skopos theory is of great importance in selecting translation strategies. The ultimate goal of translation should focus on the dissemination effect of the translated text and its acceptance by the target audience. This requires flexible adjustments in language form and content expression. In practice, when translating culturally loaded terms, translators need to rely on parallel texts and contextual knowledge to find expressions that accurately convey the original meaning while remaining comprehensible to the target audience. For the complex sentence structures in classical Japanese, strategies such as sentence division, combination, or paraphrasing are employed to clarify obscure sentences and ensure the readability and coherence of the translated text.

The findings of this study enrich both the theoretical and practical aspects of Japanese classical literature translation and provide a reference model for literary translation in cross-cultural contexts. By applying Skopos theory and analyzing specific translation examples, the research further highlights the importance of a translator's cross-cultural competence and creative linguistic skills. Only by deeply understanding the cultural connotations and literary value of the original text can translators fully recreate its essence in practice.

The translation of Japanese texts with classical grammar is a complex yet meaningful endeavor. Guided by theory and informed by practice, translators can act as cultural bridges in cross-cultural exchanges, effectively presenting the unique charm of Japanese classical literature to target readers. This effort not only facilitates deeper Sino-Japanese cultural exchange but also provides new approaches for uncovering the modern relevance of classical literature, laying a foundation for future research in this field.

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