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**Context Recognition and Reconstruction  
in Literary Translation**

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**Context Recognition and Reconstruction  
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# Context Recognition and Reconstruction in Literary Translation

## Abstract

Literary translation means not only transition from a source text to a target text, but also reconstruction of contexts in the target text as much close as to those in the source text. Although the accepted view that there is no absolute in literary translation implies and, to certain extent, encourages individual creativity, context reconstruction can still be a touchstone, which both translation critics and readers employ to decide whether a translated work is successful or not. As the only translation of Halldór Laxness' *Independent People* in mainland China, *独立的人们* (dúli de rénmen) is undoubtedly a significant debut of Icelandic literature for Chinese readers. However, unfortunately, some obvious deficiencies go along with the translation, which not only beset Chinese readers, but also, more seriously, bring depreciation to the fame of Halldór Laxness' great work. By analyzing context reconstruction in *独立的人们*, this thesis tentatively puts forwards ways to reconstruct context in literary translation. Translators are suggested to primarily recognize and reconstruct core contexts to make sure the most important meaning of the source text can be recognized and reconstructed. At the same time, it is advisable to recognize and reconstruct marginal contexts as much as they can so that subtle meaning of the source text can also be recognized and reconstructed in literary translation.

**Key words:** *Independent People*, context recognition and reconstruction, core context, marginal context.

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# Greining samhengis og enduruppbygging við þýðingar bókmennta

## Útdráttur

Bókmenntaþýðingar fela ekki einungis í sér að þýða texta á milli tungumála, heldur einnig að flytja með sér samhengi og dýpri merkingu frá frumtexta. Þó að það sjónarmið sé viðtekið að ekkert sé algilt í bókmenntaþýðingum, og að þýðing feli alltaf í sér einhverja sköpunargáfu þýðandans, getur enduruppbygging samhengis í bókmenntatexta verið sá prófsteinn sem ekki aðeins þýðingargagnrýnendur, heldur einnig lesendur, geta nýtt sér til að meta hvort þýðing bókmenntaverks hafi heppnast vel eða ekki. Þar sem 独立的人们 (dú li de rén men), er eina þýðing á verki Halldórs Laxness, Sjálfstætt fólk, á meginlandi Kína, er þessi þýðing mjög mikilvæg frumraun í þá átt að kynna íslenskar bókmenntir fyrir kínverskum lesendum. Því miður eru nokkrir augljósir annmarkar á þýðingunni, sem hrjá ekki aðeins kínverska lesendur, heldur einnig hitt, sem er alvarlegra, draga niður gæðin í þessu stórvirki Halldórs Laxness. Með því að greina samhengisuppbyggingu í 独立的人们 setur þessi ritgerð fram lausnir til enduruppbyggar texta við bókmenntaþýðingar. Þýðendum er uppálagt að þeir þekki og geti enduruppbyggt dýpri merkingu textans til að tryggja að hægt sé að skila áfram grunnhugsun frumtextans. Jafnframt er nauðsynlegt að þekkja og endurgera jaðarsamhengi textans eins og kostur er þannig að öll lög grunntextans nái að skila sér í enduruppbyggingu bókmenntaverksins í þýðingarferlinu.

Lykilorð: Sjálfstætt fólk, greining samhengis og enduruppbygging, dýpri merking, jaðarsamhengi

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#### Abbreviations in Dissertation

- S: source language text
- X: Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan's Translation (Xue and Hua's translation)
- Y: Yucheng's translation
- SL: source language
- ST: source text
- TT: target text
- SLIM: source language (writer's) intended meaning
- MCD: Modern Chinese Dictionary

## Introduction

My PhD project consists of two parts:

1. The complete translation of Halldór Kiljan Laxness' *Independent People*;
2. Theoretical part, or the dissertation, which is then subdivided into 3 parts:
  - (1) Theoretical background and foreground of context study;
  - (2) The analysis of Xue Hongshi's and Hua Xuan's translation of Halldór Kiljan Laxness'

*Independent People* in terms of context from the perspective of translation criticism. I also provide my own translation of *Independent People* as remedies in line with principles of translation criticism. The purpose of this part is to demonstrate how contexts can be recognized and properly reconstructed.

(3) My theoretical observations and conclusions on what contexts can be recognized and reconstructed in literary translation. These two problems, although often mentioned in translation studies, are actually rarely discussed.

In fact, context had long been my interest before I started my PhD program at the University of Iceland. At the very beginning, I was interested in different theories about context in subfields of linguistics: semantics, pragmatics and discourse analysis. Context receives wide attention and has been studied in fields like literary studies, anthropology, cognition, machine translation and translation studies. This fact is not surprising in light of what Eugene A. Nida says in his *Contexts in Translating*: “no single discipline or theory can possibly provide the necessary insights to deal satisfactorily with the many faceted aspects of interlingual communication” (Eugene A. Nida, 2001: 93). I then focused on context studies in Translation Studies because I realized I have to start from a “single discipline” if I really want to contribute to context studies. The initial proposal when I applied for a PhD at the University of Iceland started with a review of the literature on context in different fields, before going into my own observations on context: What contexts can be recognized and reconstructed in literary translation, and how? I chose this topic because it has not been discussed in depth within the field of literary translation. Furthermore, the topic itself is rather close to translation practice. In order to make my propositions more convincing, a case study was also involved.

I initially tried to find two English versions of one Chinese novel as a case study in my dissertation. I first chose *A Dream of Red Mansions* by David Hawks and *The Story of the Stone* by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, two translations of 红楼梦 (Hóng lóu mèng), one of the four classic Chinese novels, because it has been widely discussed from various angles, but not so much from the angle of context. Some papers and books do touch on the topic of context (Li Jian, 2006:78; Guo Na, 2010; Xiang Hong, 2014); however, few of them explore the translation of context as a whole. What I intended to do, then, was to give a thorough analysis of context recognition and reconstruction in translating 红楼梦 (Hóng lóu mèng: *A Dream of Red Mansions*) into English so that I could then summarize what contexts can be recognized and reconstructed in literary translation, how this can be done, and to what extent this can be done.

I started my PhD program at the University of Iceland in accordance with my initial proposal. I was very fortunate to have Gauti Kristmannsson, Þórhallur Eypórsson and Tu Guoyuan as my supervisors. With their instruction and encouragement, I spent the first year beginning to think more

about my dissertation while reading more literature on translation studies, with the purpose of finding more supporting cases to illustrate arguments in my dissertation. It was during this period I developed my proposal and finally made three major amendments to the framework of my dissertation after several discussions with supervisors Gauti Kristmannsson, Þórhallur Eyþórsson and Tu Guoyuan. These amendments included translating Halldór Kiljan Laxness' *Independent People* by myself and providing an analysis of the translation in terms of context recognition and reconstruction.

I first became acquainted with Icelandic literature in 2011, my first year in Iceland, and soon began reading the English version of *Independent People* by Halldór Kiljan Laxness, a twentieth-century Icelandic writer who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1955. I immediately became captivated by it and finished reading it in several weeks. Upon finishing *Independent People*, I found that the book had been translated into Chinese by Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan (《独立的人们》: 薛鸿时、华萱, 1983), and published by the Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing Group in 1983. Three years later, it was translated into Chinese again by Song Shuliang (《独立之子》: 宋树凉, 1986) and published by Yuanjing Publishing House in Taiwan. Unfortunately, I found many mistakes in Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan's translation, some of which were so obvious that even a reader without any knowledge of English could see them. I then read some chapters of Song Shuliang's translation and found even more mistakes in understanding the original cultural context. What made it worse was that some of the words or expressions and even some sentences were not translated at all for unknown reasons.

For the first time, I reconsidered the case study that I had intended to include in my dissertation. I might as well choose *Independent People* as the object of my case study because I had two Chinese versions of the great novel (one of which is my own translation), and because I thought it would be significant to compare at least two Chinese versions of *Independent People* in terms of context translation in order to arrive at my own conclusions. I discussed this with my supervisor Gauti Kristmannsson and we agreed that I would choose *Independent People* as the object of my case study. Over four years of work on translating *Independent People* has brought me both headaches and great joy. Furthermore, I believe that the significant changes to my proposal and dissertation framework ultimately made my project more fruitful and I am proud of my decision. In order to research how SL contexts can be recognized and reconstructed in translation I employed several research methods.

Firstly, by reading literature, I attempted a comparative study on differences between discourse context cognition and textual context recognition, and finally decided that I would focus on textual context recognition and reconstruction. I also spent much energy on differences in context cognition by a source language reader and context recognition and reconstruction in the target language by a target language translator. I have to point out at the very beginning that a translator's native language isn't always the target language. Neither is the source language always a foreign language. A translator might have two first languages or translate from a native language to a second language or translate between two different second languages. In my dissertation, I want to specifically draw a distinction between source language and target language. Source language (SL) refers to readers' non-native-and-first language while target language (TL) refers to readers' native language. In the same way, we draw a distinction between source language text or source text (ST) and target language text or target text (TT)

Secondly, I have tried to collect sufficient data on recognition of context, which can

theoretically prepare me for making deductions on the specificity of textual context recognition. The final objective is to understand which source language (SL) contexts a (target language) TL translator can recognize, and how the translator can recognize them. By target language translator, I mean a translator who is not a native speaker of the source text language. I personally think a translator who is a native speaker is different from one who is not in ability to recognize contexts in ST and reconstruct them in TT.

Thirdly, with great effort and the encouragement of my supervisor Gauti Kristmannsson, I provide a completely new translation of *Independent People*. After translating this great work, I begin to compare and analyze Xue and Hua's translation of *Independent People* with mine, hoping to find how to avoid the mistakes that can be found in their translation.

Fourthly, a case study is involved. By conducting a comparative study of the English translation of Halldór Laxness' *Independent People* and two Chinese versions, I expected to find differences in terms of recognition of SL contexts between a TL reader (who speaks a different language from the source language) and a SL reader (who speaks the source language). This practically justifies and modifies the previous conclusions on context recognition that I obtain from the first two methods.

The project consisted of four phases, with focuses varying according to the different problems involved. The first phase was a rather long and challenging period during which I exerted my utmost to translate and proofread *Independent People* in its entirety. I was very lucky to have so many kind Icelandic colleagues to help me gain a better understanding of Icelandic culture, which was crucial to understanding *Independent People*. During the second phase, I collected around two hundred relevant sentences or short paragraphs from the *独立的人们* by Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan, and conducted an initial analysis of these cases to demonstrate errors in the translation. I then conducted a comprehensive review of textual context and recognition of context, which helped me a lot in preparing theoretically for the reconstruction of textual context in literary translation. The third phase consisted of a comparison between Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan's translations and my translation as remedies from the perspective of context recognition and reconstruction. In the fourth and final phase, I demonstrated and justified my conclusions about context recognition and reconstruction in literary translation.

## Chapter 1 Theoretical Background and Foreground

### 1.1 Background: Literature Review and Comment

The study of context does not enjoy a very long history, and the most significant contributions to this field have been made in Europe and America. In a supplementary essay to Ogden and Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), Malinowski puts forward ideas on context of situation and context of culture, which were later developed by such linguists as Halliday and Edward T. Hall (1976). In the past few decades, context has been widely studied, and more and more creative ideas have been put forward to advance the study of context. Context is now a part of translation studies, cognition, AI, translation criticism, anthropology and philosophy. However, the contribution that traditional linguistics makes in terms of context is fundamental and a reliable foundation of context studies. We will begin our work from the field of traditional linguistics.

It is now commonly accepted that context was first studied within the field of semantics. Saeed discusses the importance of context in constructing and interpreting a speaker's utterance. He also mentions some other important notions, including deixis, which are "elements of language that are so contextually bound", reference (2000:180) and knowledge (2000:181). Lyons makes a distinction between co-text (the relevant surrounding text) and context of situation, the relevant features of the situation of the utterance (2000: 271). The breakthrough in terms of context first made within semantics helps us a lot in understanding context and setting solid foundations for further discussion in many other fields.

Within pragmatics, Mey makes a significant contribution by introducing two important notions which are crucial to context recognition: dynamic context and extralinguistic context (2001: 39). Jef Verschueren explores the difference between communicative context and linguistic context (2000: 77). However, the real strength of Verschueren's theories lies in his "contextual correlate of adaptability" and his exploration into the context generation process, or "contextualization" (2000: 75). Since pragmatics involves "the study of the real-world conditions" (Stalnaker, 1972: 380), we are better able to recognize context since it is something real in the world (Stalnaker, 1972; Bell, 2001).

It is obvious that context is a common issue of semantics and pragmatics. Lyons (1987) once formulated distinctions between semantics and pragmatics in a variety of different dichotomies. One such dichotomy distinguishes between context independence and context dependence. However, before pragmatics gained wide acceptance, context had been regarded as an issue of semantics for some time.

Discourse analysis supplies much insight for context studies in that it further describes and explains the notion of context of situation (Brown & G. Yule, 2000:27-58); context is given more detailed classification (Hymes; Halliday, 1999:1-7); and context is discussed from the point of view of anthropology (Lewis, 1972) and sociology (Van Dijk, 2001; 2008). Like pragmatics, discourse analysis is utterance-oriented or speech-oriented, and therefore holds less explanatory power in the context of literary translation, where the focus is obviously on text analysis.

In their book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (2003), Sperber and Wilson regard context as a "psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumption about the world" (p.15) or "cognitive environment" (p. 38). In their observation, the crucial question for successful communication is how hearers manage to select contextual assumptions from among all of the

possible assumptions they could make from their “cognitive environment”. The co-authors introduce the notion of “contextual effect” (p. 108), which, they believe, “is essential to a description of the comprehension process” (p. 118). From a new point of view, relevance theory is of considerable benefit to the understanding of context. Ernst-August Gutt was the first to introduce general relevance theory into translation studies. He claims that “on the assumption that the audience will use the contextual information envisaged by the original communicator, it is reasonable to expect that they will be able to identify the originally intended interpretation by the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance” (2004: 174). However, there remain many reservations concerning the application of relevance theory in translation, including “the vexed questions of how and by whom the various ‘rankings of relevance’ are to be determined” (Hatim, 2004: 182).

## **1.2 Meaning and Context: A Theoretical Preparation**

A widely accepted principle in the field of literary translation says that meaning is context dependent, or, in other words, context is essential for understanding the meaning of a word, a sentence, a paragraph and even an entire literary work, whether it is prose, poetry or a novel. I believe that a more deliberate view of meaning will prepare me for further discussion of context. I will specifically attempt to provide a survey of the change of the context or the loss of meaning that results from change of context in different phases of the translation process. I believe such a survey will help us better understand context recognition and reconstruction in literary translation.

### **1.2.1 Source Language Writer’s Intended Meaning (SLIM) and Context**

It is obvious that the SLIM is the very source of ‘meanings’ which I will discuss in this section, including SL Text Meaning, Source Language Text Reader’s Perceived Meaning, Translator’s Perceived Meaning or Translator’s Intended Meaning, Target Language Text Meaning and Target Language Reader’s Perceived Meaning. Of all these meanings, SLIM suffers no loss of meaning since it has the initial and maximum context. Due to the impossibility of any reader recognizing every possible context of the source text, it is in fact difficult for a SL reader, let alone a target language (TL) reader, to completely recognize SLIM. As a matter of fact, a writer does not expect that readers will obtain every possible meaning of the text because – and I think most will agree in this regard – the value of a piece of literature lies in some ways in possible multiple understandings (or decoding, as some scholars suggest) of the text, although readers can roughly identify the real intention or the real meaning. In most cases, reading literature is individual and personal, which means that by its nature, literature does not invite any conclusive understanding of the SLIM. A teacher of literature may ask students to understand the SLIM of a text; however, expecting an explanation that fully agrees with the author’s SLIM will prevent students from understanding SLIM in their own personal and creative way, which I do not believe helps readers cultivate their appreciation for literature.

### **1.2.2 SL Text Meaning and Context**

One common tendency in discussing SL Text Meaning is the belief that SL Text Meaning is logically identical to SLIM. As the static representation and most of the time the only direct source of SLIM, a SL text does not have any meaning until it is read. Considering that language is a far cry from being omnipotent in expressing meaning, I think that the SL text meaning is hardly an exact facsimile of SLIM. In some way, SL Text is just the source from which readers may obtain the

possible meaning of the ST. One important thing we have to consider here: the SL meaning is subject to the constant change of non-linguistic contexts. You can hardly expect a modern-day reader can be able to fully understand the social, political and economic context of the Qin Dynasty, Tang Dynasty or many other temporally or geographically distant contexts. Besides, there is also the possibility that a writer does not provide the appropriate words and expressions to demonstrate their ideas. In conclusion, SL Text Meaning is the immediate representation of SLIM, but hardly an identical one. In a certain sense, the SL text is in itself a translation.

### 1.2.3 Source Language Reader's Perceived Meaning and Context

There can be a difference between SLIM and Source Language Reader's Perceived Meaning. By source language reader, I mean a reader whose native and first language is not the language of the source text. A reader obtains SLIM by reading the source text. In some ways, what a reader actually obtains is the meaning of the source text although its source is still SLIM. As we have mentioned before, it is almost impossible for a reader to obtain the complete meaning of the source text because it is impossible for him or her to recognize all related contexts of the source text. In his book *Literary Translation and Translation Theories*, Sun Yifeng notes that there may be some cases in which readers' recognized meaning may be quite different from SL Text Meaning. He lists three cases:

1. For some reasons, the intention (intended meaning) is not expressed or represented in the text. Readers will never recognize this intention or intended meaning unless it is clarified by the writer.

2. The intention or intended meaning itself is not clear during the process of writing, but later defined by the writer.

3. For some reasons, the writer decides to change intention or intended meaning of the text, resulting in the fact that it is difficult to recognize the intention or intended meaning of the text.

(Sun Yifeng, 2004: 98-99)

Generally speaking, a SL reader, who is familiar with similar linguistic and cultural contexts as the SL writer, suffers only partial loss of the SLIM although this may increase with the passage of time. For TL readers, however, it is a different story. In other words, Source Text Reader's Perceived Meaning is different from Target Reader's Perceived Meaning, which I will clarify later in 1.2.6.

### 1.2.4 Translator's Perceived Meaning and Context

There are two possible situations with regard to the translator's perceived meaning. One possibility is the translator enjoys the same linguistic and cultural background, while the other is that they do not. Since both translators discussed in my dissertation, Xue and Hua, are Chinese, I will focus the second situation, namely TL translator's perceived meaning. The fact that a translator is in most cases also a TL reader means that a TL translator can hardly acquire the SLIM as a SL reader would, because the TL translator/reader lacks the natural advantage of being able to perceive the linguistic, cultural and social context that the SL writer shares with SL readers. Most often they suffer greater loss of the SLIM than a SL reader does. This truth may disappoint a translator, but at the same time it provides a chance for a non-native reader to explain the source text in a new and

creative way, which makes native literature not only more accessible to non-native readers, but also affords them the opportunity to appreciate this literature on a more profound level.

### **1.2.5 Target Language Text Meaning and Context**

SL text and TL text are the two static textual ends of the translation process. Both are the static representation of the SLIM. The major difference between them, when language is not considered, lies in their distance to the SLIM. SL text meaning, which is mainly represented by SL Reader's Perceived Meaning, is understandably closer to the SLIM than TL Text meaning, which is mainly represented by TL Reader's Perceived Meaning. One question worth noting here is that with the change of time, some contexts of the source language text and target language text will also change. The chances are that readers who live in the same age as the source language writer and enjoy the same social and cultural background will perceive contexts that readers who do not share these characteristics with the source language writer may not.

### **1.2.6 Target Language Reader's Perceived Meaning and Context**

It is understandable that a TL reader will not get as much SL context as an SL reader does, since an SL reader shares the same cultural background while a TL reader does not. However, this is what we actually experience in reading a piece of translated literature. The Target Reader's Perceived Meaning stands at the end of the whole translation process, and ultimately helps realize the value of a piece of translated literature.

The continuum of meaning throughout the different stages of translation process shows that context is a dynamic element which a translator must consider all through the translation process. A translator should also keep in mind that contexts continuously change with the time and space, which creates multiple possibilities for interpreting the same piece of literature.

## **1.3 Characteristics of Context**

As far as characteristics of context are concerned, I have to say it is little-charted territory. A survey of meaning at different phases of the translation process makes us aware that context, with the help of which we finally obtain the meaning of a piece of literary work, is not something at which we can arrive with certainty, like a mathematical calculation. Contexts vary, as a piece of literary work is created by an individual and, due to its high individuality, works of literature are not necessarily completely perceived even by SL readers, let alone target language readers. In this section, I try to provide an observation of the characteristics of contexts on the basis of the previous discussion.

### **1.3.1 Unrepeatability of Context**

It is widely accepted that contexts of a piece of literature are dynamic and always changing. This explains, in some sense, why it is not easy to obtain the true meaning of a piece of classic literature. On the other hand, classic texts often have a long hermeneutical tradition, whereby scholars have gone to great lengths to provide and explain contexts of a given work of literature. From my point of view, this also demonstrates that the contexts of a text, which can determine the meaning of the text, are unrepeatably, which makes it more difficult for readers to obtain the meaning of a source text.

The interpretation of classical literature in Chinese academic circle comprises a very important

part of literary criticism in its broader sense. One prominent and special example is so-called Redology, or the study of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, one of China's Four Classic Novels. The novel was once very popular in manuscript copies with different titles. 1791 saw its first print publication. *Dream of the Red Chamber* consists of 120 chapters, but unfortunately 40 of them were lost. It is believed that Gao E and Cheng Weiyuan helped complete the novel by adding the missing 40 chapters. Since the novel's completion, many books and papers have been published with aim of interpreting the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, the whole book and even its title based on different background resources. All these interpretations are in a sense a part of a process in which context is newly recognized and reconstructed. The so-called Redology clearly illustrates that some contexts of a piece of literary work can hardly be repeated and thus cannot be understood in the same way – in a sense this is the very charm of literature.

Another element which makes context unrepeatable is the individuality of context, whether it is demonstrated when the author is writing a piece of literature or when it is perceived by readers of the same piece of literature. Wang Guowei, a Chinese scholar, writer, and a poet, once commented in his *The Notes and Comments on Ci Poetry* (《人间词话》):

有我之境，以我观物，故物皆着我之色彩。  
(The world, as I see it, has the colour of mine.)

(Wang Guowei: 1910:1)

When an author creates a new piece of literature, they are expressing what is in their mind, which is highly individual and cannot be expected to be perceived completely by somebody else, of course including readers of their book. The author may have the intention to make their work understood, and there are always cognition mechanisms and cultural traditions to help him or her achieve this intention. However, we still find that there is always a gap between the intention of the author and the readers' perception.

Literary context mirrors social context; in other words, social context is the immediate source of literary context. No matter what the genre, a literary text can be explained by the social context, which is unique and unrepeatable. Synchronically or diachronically, different societies and even different walks of life in the same society are characterized by their own living environment, social systems, social customs, religious beliefs and values. This again shows literary contexts are often very complicated, which makes them hard to repeat even in literary works of the same age.

One thing we must make clear is that unrepeatability of context does not mean that we can never recognize the contexts of piece of literature. As mentioned before, most contexts are indeed obvious, and can be recognized by common readers and translators. The truth is some contexts are overt while others are covert, which makes it possible for readers to lose some contexts when they read and understand a piece of literature.

### 1.3.2 Relativity in Context Dependence

Meaning is dependent on context, which has been well proved and thus commonly agreed upon and accepted. In literary translation, context is an important resource for translators to rely on to know what the source language writer wants to express, although sometimes it is not easy for us to perceive all the necessary contexts. In linguistic studies, examples of resolving ambiguity are often quoted to explain the simple truth that meaning is context dependent. In the sentence “我要热汤”，

the word “热” can refer either:

1. to an adjective meaning “having a relatively high temperature”, which is used to modify “汤” (soup), or
2. to a transitive verb meaning “to make warm or hot”, which is used with the object “汤” (soup).

Thus, in the first case, the sentence “我要热汤” means “I would like to have a hot soup”, while in the second case, the sentence means “I will warm the soup”. Without context, the meaning of the sentence is ambiguous. The related contexts will then help us decide the real meaning of the sentence. We can imagine the situational context of the sentence. If in a restaurant, a waiter or waitress asks whether you want a hot or cold soup, the situational context then tells you that the first meaning of “热” is used when you say “我要热汤”. If in a kitchen, a husband asks his wife what she plans to do with the cold soup she has just taken out of the refrigerator, then obviously the answer “我要热汤” means “I will warm the (cold) soup”.

Since we are now talking about recognition and reconstruction of context in literary translation, we of course base our discussion on the fundamental theory of context dependence. However, we should not forget the other side of the coin: the relativity of context dependence, which some linguists and scholars in translation studies have discussed. I want to discuss three elements that decide the relativity of context dependence.

First, individuality, whether it be the individuality of the source language writer or the individuality of the reader, plays a crucial role in deciding relativity of context dependence. The individuality of the writer comes from the fact that each writer has their individual style of writing. This individuality can be further defined as a writer’s unique intention, background, strategy, skills, manners of writing, and capability, some of which readers can easily perceive while others are difficult or even impossible to perceive. Furthermore, literary reading is highly individual, which means a reader lacks immediate communication and the chance to verify their context recognition. This explains why literature does not invite conclusive reading.

Secondly, the progression of time is also a very important element that we should consider in discussing context dependence. As is well known, a piece of literature is set in a certain historical background. The fact that time keeps moving while the literary work remains static in its historical context implies that the historical context itself is unchanged, which makes it difficult or even impossible for readers living in later times to appreciate the author’s historical context. What a writer depicts is usually something that is shared or perceived by their contemporaries. Readers of a piece of literature written in certain historical contexts may have to resort to paratexts, a static representation of intended meaning of a piece of literature, to reconstruct historical contexts to help them obtain the real meaning of the literature.

Finally, distance in a broad sense is an element we should never forget when explaining context dependence. By “broad sense”, I mean not only geographically, but also politically, socially and economically. Frankly speaking, distance enjoys less and less importance since today’s world is shrinking in many ways. In the past it could take months to travel around the world, while today it may take just a few days or even hours to do so. News from one side of the globe may reach the other side within seconds. Foreign language is not something regarded as exotic anymore and most of us, to some extent, have knowledge of foreign cultures. However, we must admit that

geographical distance still plays a role in many ways. We do not forget the distance between East and West, nor the distance between Africa and the other parts of the world, let alone the difference between the more and less advanced parts of China. Distance may prevent us from sharing the same social and economic background and, correspondingly, the same social and economic context when literary reading is concerned, because any literature is produced within a certain social and economic background.

When it comes to distance in world literature, Franco Moretti once coined an interesting notion of “distant reading” (2013:48), which later has become very popular. According to Franco, the study of world literature will produce a page of which an author “occupies one-third...one-quarter; maybe half; the rest are quotations” (ibid). Franco believes distant reading “is a condition of knowledge: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text” (2013:48-49). With my topic of context recognition and reconstruction as the context, the notion of distant reading, which somehow, I personally think, overlaps paratext that I will discuss in detail later in Chapter 4. Distant reading focuses on studying of world literature relying on researches conducted by other people or even maybe in other fields, while paratext focuses on any interpretations of a text. The notion of distant reading also reminds me of intertextuality, a term created by Julia Kristeva in her “Word, Dialogue and Novel” (1966:64-91). With intertextuality in our mind, we may try to understand words or even texts with other textual structures, which can be different historically, contemporarily, or even geographically. Frankly speaking, these three notions, distant reading, paratext and intertextuality, provide me with a lot of inspirations in exploration of context recognition and reconstruction because there is one commonplace among them: words or texts are not self-contained systems. They can be studied out of lines of words and even texts. In spite of this, I prefer not to further my discussions along none of them because I do hope I can follow my observations of my own so that my conclusions can be somewhat innovative.

There are of course many other elements we must consider in recognizing and reconstructing literary contexts, but the above mentioned three suffice to illustrate the relativity of context dependence. One thing I want to make clear is that we must avoid falling for two possible fallacies that result from going to any extremes: firstly, the fallacy that context can solve any problem in terms of meaning, and secondly, that the true meaning of a literary text is unrecognizable. In other words, we must strike a good balance between absoluteness of context dependence and relativity of context dependence. The former helps us enjoy literary reading when we can finally share the experience, emotion, and aesthetical beauty of the literature, while the latter also helps us enjoy literary reading in a sense when we interpret the literature in our own and unique way.

## **1.4 Context Recognition and Reconstruction as My Concern**

### **1.4.1 An Introduction**

Semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and relevance theory help us obtain a better understanding of context, but unfortunately, semantics alone do not provide a deeper or convincing description of context. The rest of these concepts are very utterance or discourse-oriented, even though they sometimes discuss textual contexts through a branch of linguistics called text linguistics (Beaugrande & Dressler, 1983; Wilss, 2001, Hatim, 2001). Without question, there is a great distinction between discourse context and textual context; hence, there should be great differences between discourse context recognition and textual context recognition. For instance, the discourse context may be corrected or improved by immediate confirmation or modification, while the same

can hardly be said for the textual context. In my observation, I find that a written or printed text exists in a static dimension, never changing, while contexts within them are dynamic and organically perceived. Nevertheless, the problem of how we can recognize the SL contexts or ‘subtext’ (Sun, 2004: VI) meaning and SLIM still remains.

Another problem with present context studies is that they often deal with general problems of context in a unilingual background, or that an adequate description of context in an interlingual environment is lacking. I will maintain a focus in my dissertation on this particular issue.

To provide a comprehensive view of cognition and reconstruction of SL contexts, I explore: (1) what kind of source language contexts can a TL translator recognize, and how can these contexts be recognized? (2) To what extent can a target language translator recognize and reconstruct SL contexts in literary translation?

Until now, these questions have not been fully discussed, let alone investigated deeply enough to provide satisfactory answers. I am quite aware that answering these questions is a great task for me. At first, I was very confident that I could complete my dissertation within the theoretical framework. However, I soon found that it was difficult to talk about context without any practical considerations. The obvious reason that actual translation speaks louder than theoretical statements made me eventually decide to change my direction.

#### 1.4.2 Context Recognition and Reconstruction Considering Translation Criticism

In her *Translation Criticism*, Katharina Reiss suggests some important principles of translation criticism, which can serve as guidelines for the analysis of the translations of *Independent People* in terms of recognition and reconstruction of literary context.

(1) Comparison: Reiss worries that “a work is examined for its content, style and sometimes also for its esthetic character, and both the author and his work are judged only on the basis of a translation without consulting the original work” (2000:2) and concludes that “translation criticism requires a comparison of the target text and source texts” (2000:2).

(2) Qualification: We may read rather a lot of commentary in newspapers and academic papers on translation, by readers who either know nothing about the original work, or who are intimately familiar with the original language and the original work. Obviously, sound appreciation should be based on the original work, or in Reiss’ words, “translation criticism is possible only by persons who are familiar with both the target and source language” (2000:2).

(3) Objectivity: Translation criticism, especially objective translation criticism, is hard to realize. What criteria should be employed in translation criticism? Some seem clear. For example, vocabulary and grammar should be correct. Genre and style should be in line with the original. But other criteria, for example the emotion and feeling expressed in the original (especially in poetry), seem not so clear. We may also expect that evaluation of translation is objective and relevant. What, then, is meant by objectivity? According to Reiss, objectivity means “every criticism of a translation, whether positive or negative, must be defined explicitly and be verified by examples” (2000:4).

(4) Remedy: Negative criticism is common, but qualified critics should at the same time offer suggestions for improvement or a remedy. Reiss quotes a comment by A. W. von Schlegel regarding remedies: “It seems to me a very reasonable demand that when translations are criticized there should always be proposed remedy” (1963: 99).

Obviously, it is not an easy task for a critic to propose remedies that they can ensure really are better than the original translation. In his *Translation and Criticism*, Luo Pin once quotes the

Chinese translation of a sentence in *The Scarlet Letter*:

老罗格·齐灵窝斯，整个一生是个心平气和的人，虽然没有温暖的爱，但他与世界的一切关系中，他永远是一个纯洁正直的人。

(红字: 78)

Old Roger Chillingworth, throughout life, had been calm in temperament, kindly, though not of warm affections, but ever, and in all his relations with the world, a pure and upright man.

(Luo Ping, *Translation and Criticism*:175)

He believes the translation does not correspond to the original sentence and suggests his own translation:

老罗格·齐灵窝斯尽管得不到温暖的爱，但一生仍脾性平和，温善友好。在他与人们的一切交往中，始终是个纯洁正直的人。

(Luo Ping, *Translation and Criticism*: 175)

Regardless of whether the new translation can truly work as a remedy, the fact remains that the new translation is grammatically wrong (there is no subject in the part “在他与人们的一切交往中，始终是个纯洁正直的人”，which is not acceptable in Chinese), and this immediately makes the new translation unconvincing.

Katharina Reiss' main achievement and the main contribution of her *Translation Criticism* is her formulation of “appropriate categories and objective criteria for the evaluation of all kinds of translations” (K. Reiss: xii). By recognizing that “different kinds of texts call for different kinds of standards” (K. Reiss: xii), she believes that a typology is the first step towards evaluating a particular translation. This is greatly in line with classification of texts for the purpose of proper translation. In his *Contexts in Translating*, Eugene Nida believes that “a translator needs to develop a ‘feeling’ for what is appropriate for different types of texts being translated for different kinds of audiences who will no doubt use the translation for different purposes” (2001:85). I will also utilize this correspondence for the purpose of discovering the appropriateness of some translations by Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan, and the validity of my own remedies.

The second point that Reiss emphasizes is a practical and of course at the same time a challenging issue, namely, the objectivity of translation criticism. According to Reiss, “every criticism of a translation, whether positive or negative, must be defined explicitly and be verified by examples” (K. Reiss: 4). Reiss' emphasis is naturally and understandably on negative criticism. This makes it constructive in raising “the challenges of matching any negative criticism with a suggestion for an improvement” (K. Reiss: 4). This is something I fully approve of. The status of translation criticism in China has long been awkward, either because it is mostly or even completely based on the target text, or because it focuses on linguistic inadequacies or errors and therefore lacks pragmatic or cultural considerations. Reiss also demonstrates the potentials and limitations of translation criticism, leading to the conclusion that translation criticism can be not only objective but also workable.

Following the basic principles of translation criticism put forward by Katharina Reiss, I will provide an analysis of context reconstruction in Chinese translations of *Independent People* by Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan. At the same time, I will demonstrate my own translation following the

demand of providing a better suggestion. There are obvious advantages to analyzing context translation by using my own translation. Firstly, I can find what problems arise when translating context from source language into target language. Secondly, I can figure out a better translation, which is important in preserving the original context and meaning in the target language.

## Chapter 2 Icelandic Literature in China

### 2.1 An Introduction

In his *Theory, World Literature and the Problem of Untranslatability*, Gauti Kristmannsson believes that a “peripheral literature and indeed the same literary language can only survive via translation, in both directions” (2018:135). According to him, Icelandic literature is just peripheral one. However, Icelandic literature, as “the only concrete tool of unity”, has “until now, survived and even ‘gained’” (2018:136). This seems easy to be proved by the fact that Icelandic literature has not only been widely translated into many different languages of the world, but also has taken the most well-known Nobel Laureate. I personally have great respect for Icelandic literature after I began knowing it and translating *Independent People*, one of the greatest pieces of it, some years ago. The following brief history of Chinese translations of Icelandic literature was sort out after I had decided to translate *Independent People* by myself because I had believed that this would help me a lot in understanding how Icelandic literature had been translated into Chinese and how I can do a better job when I have better chance to be close to Icelandic culture, especially literature.

Since the first Icelandic literature was published in China, about 70 writers, including Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), Halldór Kiljan Laxness (1902-1998), Steinn Steinarr (1908-1958) and Jakobína Sigurðardóttir (1918-1994) have been introduced to Chinese readers. Until fairly recently, most of these Chinese translations have had at least two things in common: firstly, most of them are translated from other languages rather than from Icelandic directly; secondly, many early translations, especially those published before the Cultural Revolution in China, are no longer available.

In 1929, Mao Dun, a well-known Chinese writer, published his *A Survey of Modern Literature*, a nine-chapter book introducing literature from Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Holland, Germany, Austria, Portugal and Yugoslavia. Jewish literature is also included. In chapter three, “Four Modern Icelandic Writers”, Mao introduces Jónas Guðlaugsson, Jóhann Sigurjónsson, Gunnar Gunnarsson and Guðmundur Kamban. Mao believed that there two reasons why these four Icelandic writers deserve world attention: firstly, they are from Iceland, a place little known to the world. Secondly, they talk about the world from different points of view.

According to Shi Qin’e (2014), two Icelandic books were published in Shanghai, China in the 1930s. One of them, the Chinese version of *Nonni and Manni* (诺尼和玛尼) by Jón Sveinsson (1857-1944), was published in 1931, while the other, the Chinese version of *The Bridal Gown* (新娘的礼服) by Kristmann Guðmundsson, was published in 1936. Nowadays it is difficult to find Chinese versions of these two novels.

After the People’s Republic of China was founded, more Icelandic literature was introduced to Chinese readers. The Chinese version of *The Atom Station* (原子站) was published by the Writers’ Publishing House in 1955 and republished by the People’s Literature Publishing House in 1959. The same year witnessed the publication of *Short Stories of Scandinavian Writers* (斯堪的那维亚作家短篇小说集), which includes eight stories by four Icelandic writers. Immediately after that, *Short Stories by Ólafur Jóhann Sigurðsson* (西古德逊短篇小说集) was translated by Guo Shuke and Guo Kailan (郭恕可, 郭开兰) and published by the Writers’ Publishing House in 1962. *Time and Water*, a collection of Icelandic poems by thirty-seven poets since the Second World War was published in 1998. *Edda* (埃达) and *Saga* (萨迦), which are considered pearls of Nordic literature,

were published in 2001 and 2003, respectively.

Particularly noteworthy is publication of *海寇诗经* (*Hávamál*, ‘*The Words of Odin the High One*’) by Oddi Ltd. Printing Press in Iceland; this is a rare case of Icelandic literature in Chinese translation published in Iceland. The translator is Vigdís Wang Chao Bóasson (王超). *海寇诗经* is a collection of the most famous and well-written poems from *Edda*. Zheng Chouyu (1996: preface), a renowned Chinese poet, once commented that *Hávamál* has a lot in common with *诗经* (*Shi Jing*) the oldest collection of ancient Chinese poems, which has been translated variously as the *Book of Songs* or *Book of Odes*. This book contains 305 works dating from the 11th to 7th centuries BC and is now widely believed to be one of Five Classics compiled by Confucius. It has enjoyed great admiration and respect from scholars in China and around the world world for over two thousand years. In the preface to *Hávamál*, the writer and poet Zheng Chouyu, who achieved widespread popularity with works like “*Mistake*” and “*Farewell*” (two poems by Zheng), listed four aspects which *Hávamál* and *Shi Jing* (*诗经*) have in common:

- (1) Both of them employ such literary techniques as exposition, comparison and affective images;
- (2) Both of them involve moral instructions;
- (3) Both of them achieve the effect of modulation or inflection of sound by exhibiting special syntactic structure;
- (4) Each of them is regarded as national classic which enjoys an irreplaceable position in literary circles.

*Hávamál* (*海寇诗经*): 9

One thing we must mention is that most Chinese translations have been based on English versions of Icelandic works. Wang Shuhui is one of few who translated Icelandic literature from Icelandic into Chinese. Wang translated Icelandic writer Sjón’s novel *Skuggabaldur* into Chinese *蓝狐* (Blue Fox) in 2014. *Skuggabaldur* was first published in 2003 and earned the author Sjón the Nordic Council Literature Prize in 2005. *Skuggabaldur* tells the story of Baldur Skuggason, a pastor-turned-huntsman, who desires the fur of a mysterious blue fox. The reason most Icelandic literature is translated from English instead of Icelandic is rather understandable. Iceland was an unknown name to most Chinese people in the past and few Chinese people knew Icelandic, let alone translated Icelandic literature into Chinese. It was obviously the uniqueness of Icelandic literature that inspired early translators to translate the English versions into Chinese.

## 2.2 Laxness and *Independent People* in China

The great Icelandic writer Halldór Kiljan Laxness was born on 23 April 1902 in Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, and lived through almost the entire twentieth century, until 8 February 1998. Laxness wrote not only poetry, newspaper articles, plays and travelogues throughout his life, but also short stories and novels. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1955 and so far, he has been the only Icelander to receive the Nobel Prize. Among his novels, those which have been translated into Chinese include *Independent People* (*独立的人们* by Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan: 1983; *独立之子* by Song Shuliang: 1992), *The Atom Station* (*原子站* by Guo Shuke: 1957; *被出卖的摇篮曲* by Guo Shuke and Li Xing: 1959) and *Salka Valka* (*莎尔卡·瓦尔卡* by Fu Shiqiu and Gu Shenggen: 1989; Zhang Fusheng: 2002).

As mentioned before, most Icelandic works are translated into Chinese from their English versions. This applies to most of Halldór Kiljan Laxness' works. Among the translators who have brought Laxness' works to the English-speaking world, three deserve special mention: J. A. Thompson, who translated *Independent People*; Magnús Magnússon, who translated *The Fish Can Sing*, *World Light*, *Under the Glacier*, *The Atom Station* and *Paradise Reclaimed*; Philip Roughton, who translated *Iceland's Bell* and *The Great Weaver from Kashmir*. Undoubtedly, without these translators, Chinese readers would not have had the chance to appreciate the great works of Halldór Kiljan Laxness.

Laxness visited China in 1957 and was received by Xia Yan and Zheng Zhenduo, two Chinese writers well-known in their native country. Liu illustrated Laxness' *The Atom Station* as "a book which emits a brilliant light of Icelandic literature ... It is not only a book depicting real life of contradiction and fierce fight but also a book retaining the tradition of Icelandic literature. It contains euphemism, humor, poetic emotion and philosophy" (translated from "*Icelandic Literature in China*" by Shi Qin'e). Liu also writes, "I feel he is a novelist with a kind heart and literary sensitivity."

Laxness is undoubtedly the best-known Icelandic author and his novel *Independent People*, translated by Xue Hongshi and Hua Xuan from the English translation by J. A. Thompson, was published in 1983, a year after the so-called reform and opening to the outside world after the long and destructive Cultural Revolution. Unfortunately, the book has not gained a wide readership in China and nowadays it is only known by the few who study it for academic purposes. Several factors may have caused this. Among others, its small circulation must be mentioned. When *独立的人们* (*Dú lì de rén men*) was published by Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House in 1983, the number of copies totaled a mere 28,000. For a country with a population of at least one billion at the time, this number is extremely small and, as far as I know, it has not been republished since then. The second factor is the low readability of the translation, which is my main concern and will be explained in detail in the following chapters of this dissertation. At any rate, *独立的人们* (*Dú lì de rén men*) undoubtedly shows Chinese readers a quite exotic and therefore very attractive world; for this I wish to express my sincere respect for the translators.

### 2.3 *Independent People*: From the Icelandic Version to the English Version

The source version, or the Icelandic version of *Independent People*, *Sjálfstætt fólk*, is widely regarded as the masterpiece of Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness. *Sjálfstætt fólk*, which literally means "self-standing folk", was originally published in two volumes under the titles *Landnámsmaður Íslands (Iceland's Settler)* in 1934 and *Erfiðir tímar (Hard Times)* in 1935. It tells the story of poor Icelandic farmers, with Guðbjartur Jónsson, or Bjartur of Summerhouses, as the hero (or anti-hero, as some might say). Throughout the story, Bjartur struggles to achieve and maintain independence at the cost of living a harsh life and losing his family members, one by one.

*Independent People* "has been translated into twenty-nine languages" (Icelander: 223) and was the second of Laxness' novels to be published in English, but the first novel to be translated directly from the Icelandic into English. *Independent People*, the English translation of *Sjálfstætt fólk*, was first published by Allen & Unwin in London in 1945 and a year later by Alfred A. Knopf in New York. It has since been republished by several publishers, including the People's Publishing House, 1957, New Delhi; Greenwood Press, 1976, Westport, CT; Vintage International, New York, 1997, (with an introduction by Brad Leithauser); Harvill Press, London, 1999 and Vintage Classics, New York, 2010.

The novel received wide acclaim when it was published. Many newspapers including The New York Times, Atlantic Monthly, The Observer and The Spectator in London expressed their satisfaction with Laxness's *Independent People*. Brad Leithauser, who writes the introduction to the book, comments:

“There are good books and there are great books and there may be a book that is something still more: it is the book of your life ... My favorite book by a living novelist is *Independent People*.”  
(*Independent People*: Introduction)

Jane Smiley, an American novelist who spent one year studying in Iceland as a Fulbright scholar and won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1992 for her novel *A Thousand Acres* (1991), also gives the book high praise:

“I love this book. It is an unfolding wonder of artistic vision and skill – one of the best books of the twentieth century. I can't imagine any greater delight than coming to *Independent People* for the first time.”

(*Independent People*: cover)

Abigail Charlotte Cooper echoes the praise in her master's thesis “*The Creative Translator: Creativity and Originality in J. A. Thompson's Translation of Halldór Laxness' Sjúlfstætt Fólki*”. She believes that “there is much in *Independent People* that comes from Thompson rather than Laxness”, but “this is not a failure on the part of the translator.” On the contrary, “it is the very reason for the success of the novel as a work of literature.” (2014: 58)

Without any question, it is this *Independent People*, the English version of *Sjúlfstætt fólk*, that has greatly helped not only the novel but also its writer, Halldór Laxness, win international fame, despite it being the second of Laxness' works to be translated into English. J. A. Thompson, the translator of the novel, worked as a teacher in a grammar school in Akureyri, the second largest town in Iceland, from 1931 to 1932, before moving back to Berwick-upon-Tweed, England. He worked on the translation of the novel for many years, and it is his only translation. Many consider *Independent People* to be best translation of *Sjúlfstætt fólk* in any language. Thompson takes advantage of the rich English vocabulary to naturally illustrate a small world close to the North Pole that enjoys its own amazing cultural and literary tradition. Annie Dillard once commented highly on J. A. Thompson's translation, saying that he “deserves credit for rendering the spectrum of Mr. Laxness' subtle and distinctive tones” (1997). By demonstrating “creativity and originality” (A. C. Cooper: 2014: Abstract), Thompson delivers not only a great translation of Laxness' *Sjúlfstætt fólk*, but also a magnificent piece of world literature and culture.

#### 2.4 Chinese Version of *Independent People* by Xue and Hua

The translation *独立的人们* is based on J. A. Thompson's English version, published by Alfred A. Knopf in New York in 1946 (1983: 12). This is of utmost importance to my case study since I must guarantee that I use the same English version for the retranslation, and ultimately make the comparison between Xue and Hua's translation and my own convincing.

*独立的人们* undoubtedly enjoys a very special and significant role in familiarising Chinese readers with Icelandic literature, due to the fact that it is the first of Laxness' great novels to be translated after the so-called Cultural Revolution in China. Despite its small circulation, the book

gives Chinese readers a great opportunity to enjoy this masterpiece.

In many respects, however, 独立的人们 is not a good translation. Contexts of the source text are not appropriately reconstructed and some of them do not even appear in the target text, which results in inappropriate reconstruction of meaning of the source language text. The final consequence is low readability for those Chinese readers who intend to read it with great interest in the novel and great respect for the author. I will give further and detailed explanations on this point in following chapters.

Context recognition and reconstruction in 独立的人们 is discussed further in the next chapter. I will also demonstrate my own translation as remedy, in order to prove that contexts in the source language text can be not only better recognised, but also reconstructed.

## 2.5 Retranslation of *Independent People*

In order to obtain the first-hand material for an investigation on how to recognize and reconstruct context in literary translation, I began reading the English version of *Independent People* by J. A. Thompson and the Chinese version by Xue Hongshi and Huaxuan. The English version, which "was the first to have been translated directly from the Icelandic" (A. C. Cooper, 2014:1), is widely regarded as one the best translations of any of Halldór Laxness' novels. However, when I read Xue Hongshi and Huaxuan's Chinese version, I found many mistakes in their understanding of the original context and meaning. My analysis focuses on why these mistakes were made and how they are related to context recognition. The ultimate purpose for doing this was to attempt to determine what contexts should be recognized and reconstructed in literary translation.

It is widely accepted in Chinese translation circles that some translations have been and are still being done by people considered unqualified to translate, hence the poor quality of a lot of the translations. Those who are believed to be qualified for translating are not so willing to do the job because of the apparently unimaginably low pay. They are, of course, much happier to write several academic papers about the latest progress in an academic field, or to illustrate an argument with a lot of supporting details from the translations by so-called unqualified translators. It is odd that so many teachers of translation, scholars, experts or pundits discuss translation but rarely translate themselves.

In her great work *Translation Criticism: The Potentials and Limitations*, Katharina Reiss quoted from Lessing "it seems to me a very reasonable demand that when translations are criticized there should always be a proposed remedy" (1963) and she later added "to avoid any suspicion of mere quibbling, this principle should always be observed" (2000:5). The idea of retranslating *Independent People*, then, was almost an immediate response to Katharina Reiss' ideas in the first year of my PhD program. I spent almost three years translating Book I and had planned to stop there in order to fully concentrate on my thesis. However, I don't know why but I could not help thinking about translating the rest of *Independent People*. I decided to do it, even though that meant I had to delay my dissertation.

It took me almost another year and a half to finish translating Book II of *Independent People*. After finishing the first draft, I spent several months proofreading it and then invited two friends to read it. They offered many valuable suggestions, which I have taken into consideration in improving my translation. I am deeply convinced that, through my own efforts and the constructive input from my Icelandic supervisors and colleagues, this new translation will not only be a better translation of J. A. Thompson's *Independent People*, but also a more valuable one.

## Chapter 3 Context Recognition and Reconstruction in *独立的人们*

In her work *Translation Criticism: The Potentials and Limitations*, Katharina Reiss argues that “the sheer bulk and undeniable significance of translations in today’s world require that the quality of translations be a matter of special attention and adds this is not the only motivation for being concerned with principles for evaluating translations. She states that “undeniably many poor translations have been made and even published” (Katharina Reiss, 2000: x). She insists that “in a negative criticism the critics should try to ascertain what led the translator to make the (alleged) error” (Katharina Reiss, 2000: 4). Considering Katharina Reiss’ suggestion, I began collecting translation cases from co-translators Xue and Hua’s Chinese version of *独立的人们* with the aim of analyzing errors in recognizing context in the source language text.

Context recognition is no easy task in literary translation, and mistakes in context recognition seem unavoidable when we consider the fact that literary recognition and reconstruction is highly individual work. In this chapter, I will first introduce how and by what principles I collected data. Next, I will give a detailed analysis of mistakes in context recognition and reconstruction in Xue and Hua’s translation.

### 3.1 Data Collection

While I was reading *独立的人们*, the Chinese version of *Independent People*, I tried to collect all the sentences that I believed to be wrongly or poorly translated, in order to explore why and how they were translated the way they were. One thing I must make clear is that it was impossible for me to list every single mistake in the translation because there are, according to my professional judgment, too many mistakes of various kinds. I collected a total of around 200 translation cases, some of which are short sentences while others are longer or even entire paragraphs. Additionally, I collected 10 translated poems. I sorted all these cases into different categories, hoping to identify reasons why mistakes of the same kind appear again and again in Xue and Hua’s translation. I know that it is impossible to evaluate every single mistake in the entire translation, so I set the following principles for evaluating the cases, in order to conduct a practical analysis from which to draw appropriate conclusions.

#### 3.1.1 Intentionality

The fact that I collected a total of around 200 translation cases does not mean that I will analyze all of them in my dissertation. I instead use instances of specific types of poor-quality or erroneous translations that satisfy the purposes of my analysis. I try to use those cases that can help me explain why mistakes of the same kind recur in Xue and Hua’s translation. In this analysis, as mentioned in the first chapter, I will determine what contexts a TL translator can recognize in SL, and how. With the comparative study of *Independent People* and the two Chinese versions, I expect at the same time to find differences between a TL and SL reader in terms of recognition of SL contexts. The overarching purpose is to determine and identify what kind of contexts can be reconstructed in literary translation, and to what extent.

#### 3.1.2 Frequency

Some mistakes in Xue and Hua’s translation occur only once or twice, while others occur

repeatedly. This makes it easier to sort out the mistakes that can be used for analysis because, in the end, the objective is to find out what kinds of mistakes recur in the translation and why. Obviously, it is more revealing to analyze mistakes that occur with greater frequency because they reflect common problems, while mistakes that occur once or twice may result from carelessness or the translator's individual limitations.

### 3.1.3 Classification

Taking recurring errors into consideration, I assigned the translation mistakes into the following categories: first language incompetence, lexical fault, irrelevant collocation, ungrammaticality, misplacement in register, violation of common sense, and lack of poetic quality.

These kinds of mistakes may have been discussed in terms of one aspect or another, but what I wish to do here is to analyze these mistakes that originate within a single text, namely the translation of *Independent People* by Xue and Hua, which, I believe, is not only manageable, but also reliable.

## 3.2 Mistakes in Xue and Hua's Translation and My Remedies

It is understandable that errors will occur in most translations. Firstly, individual translators have varying levels of competence in their first language and the source language. A translator has, as a rule, greater competence in their first language than the foreign language, although there are cases in which the opposite is true. The former situation may result in a translator's inadequate recognition of all necessary contexts and the meaning of the source language text, while the latter may result in an inadequate expression in the target language, which ultimately results in the incomprehensibility of the target language text. Unfortunately, there are many mistakes in Xue and Hua's translation that not only make it difficult to understand and read, but also devalue the greatness of the original work. In the following, I will list some typical mistakes to illustrate the kind of contexts I am referring to and the extent to which they can be recognized and reconstructed in literary translation.

To their credit, Xue and Hua indeed make an effort to reflect the spirit of the English source language text in their Chinese version of Halldór Laxness' *Independent People*. Reading their translation, I felt that some parts of it are at least acceptable, and my academic foundation in translation studies informs my opinion that the translation of the first book of *Independent People* is somewhat better than that of the second. Generally speaking, however, the translation is not a successful one. One reason for the poor translation is their incompetence in their first language, which has nothing to do with their understanding of a foreign language and the culture related to it. It is now widely accepted that first language competence – to a great extent – plays a more important role in translating a source language text into a target language than competence in the foreign language. First language competence includes the ability to express ideas or thoughts in the source language text in the translator's own language, and, more importantly, the ability to express these ideas and thoughts in literary language. This again reminds us of the issue of who is qualified to translate a poem into a foreign language. It is true that a translator without any previous experience in writing poetry can hardly be expected to translate a poem into a foreign language in a poetic way that foreign language readers can understand and accept. It is in any event my personal belief that poets know best how to translate poetry; at the very least, a translator with a profound knowledge of poetry can try, though this is hardly any guarantee of the quality of the translated work. In short,

literary translation as a serious business demands good knowledge of the translator's first language and an ability to express their ideas and thoughts in a reasonable and literary way.

In the following section, I will list the most serious mistakes among those that I have collected from Xue and Hua's translation. In response to the main principles of Katharina Reiss' translation criticism, I will also provide my own translation of the same sentences from *Independent People*. The purpose of this is of course to show not only why contexts in *Independent People* are not properly recognized and reconstructed, but also how a translator can do so properly.

### 3.2.1 First language Incompetence

Generally speaking, Xue and Hua's translation reveals they are not competent enough in understanding source context and meaning, and reconstructing it in the target language. Even without consulting the source language text, it is nevertheless possible to identify rather many expressions that are difficult to understand, some of which are even fully unacceptable from the point of view of the target language. As a matter of fact, mistakes are hard to avoid in a book of 500 pages, but the repeating occurrence of certain mistakes is not only unacceptable, but also affects readers' enjoyment and interest.

One type of mistake that occurs throughout Xue and Hua's translation from beginning to end is inappropriate collocation. Collocation refers to the way that some words occur regularly whenever another word is used. Collocations deserve serious consideration in literary translation. It is common in some languages that some words have the same general meaning but are used in different combinations of words or occur in a certain context. Let us consider the following example:

S: They were fine beasts, probably just in their prime, so it was no wonder that it occurred to Bjartur that he was in luck's way tonight, for it would be no mean catch if he could trap only one of them even. The bull especially looked as if it would make an excellent carcass, judging by its size... (*Independent People*: 89)

X: 他们是优秀的牲畜，正处在青春时期，无疑地，比亚图尔认为今晚他交了好运气，即使只能诱捕其中一只，也将是一次非同寻常的收获。特别是那只公鹿，个子很大，可以成为一堆出色的肉食。(《独立的人们》: 112)

“出色的肉食” is an expression that Chinese readers would never expect. Grammatically, there is no problem with the expression; in other words, it is correct in some sense, but we never use “出色” to describe “肉食” which means “meat” (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, hereafter MCD: 971). In Chinese, “出色” means “extremely good, extremely well, much better than” (MCD: 157). It can be used either as an adjective or as an adverb. We can say “出色的工作” (extremely good job), “出色的电影” (very good film), “出色的小说作曲” (extremely good novel), and “出色的作品” (excellent work). The problem is that when used as an adjective, it is never used to modify such a formal word concerning food as “肉食”. Furthermore, “出色的肉食” is a case of overtranslation. Xue and Hua seemingly use “出色”, a commendatory term, to describe “肉食” (meat), but actually the context (or co-text, to be specific) tells us that the meaning of “excellent” is defined by “its size”. Thus, “excellent” in the source language text in fact means “to a large degree or to an extreme degree”. Based on this judgment, I translate it as “不少”, which means “quite many, quite much” in Chinese.

Y: 它们真是长得不错，也许正值壮年。白亚德不由地想，今晚他或许要走运了，只要

抓住它们当中的一头，那都将是不小的收获。尤其是那头雄鹿，从外形上看，一定能宰不少的肉。

Another example of the same problem:

S: She (Gullbrá, the sheep Bjartur believes to have lost) was one of the Reverend Gudmundur breed that I've had so much faith in; they're such grand animals (*Independent People*: 106).

X: 它是你那只叫做盖里的古德蒙多尔种公羊配过后生下的，我始终非常相信这种羊；它们是非常杰出的牲畜（*独立的人们*：132）。

Obviously, we never use “杰出” (outstanding, with excellent ability and achievement) to modify “牲畜”. As an adjective, “杰出” is only used to modify a person of outstanding ability and achievement (MCD: 580). For example, we can say “他是一位杰出的作家” (He is an outstanding writer). It can also be used to describe one's achievement (MCD: 580). The sentence “他一生中取得了杰出的成就” (He made excellent achievements all through his life) is acceptable in Chinese. In my translation, I use a much more commonly used word, “太好了”, to replace “杰出” so that it can form a natural expression that can be used together with “品种”.

Ideally, a translator should possess adequate competence in both languages; they should not only fully understand the meaning of the original text, but also express the meaning of the original text adequately in the target language. In many cases, however, the translator is hardly a top expert in both the source and target languages at the same time. They should nevertheless at least be able to understand the original text and write appropriately in their first language. A translator without adequate writing ability in their first language can never be a good translator. In the translation of *Independent People*, Xue and Hua do not demonstrate the ability to express ideas appropriately. One problem in their translation is that there is quite a lot of redundancy. Let us consider the following example:

S: But one thing we do demand, and that is that neither you nor anyone else should come here with veiled insinuations about me or my household (*Independent People*: 108).

X: 但是有一件事我们是非要求不可的，就是你或者其他任何人绝不能以隐蔽的含沙射影到这里来对待我或我的一家（*独立的人们*：135）。

This is what the poetess, the wife of the Bailiff, said to Bjartur, who now is unsure whether he should tell the bailiff that he needs somebody to help him look after the baby since his wife Rosa has died. Firstly, the expression “隐蔽的含沙射影” (translated from “veiled insinuations”) is not appropriate because it is too formal for this context. Secondly, in Chinese, “含沙射影” means “express one's hidden sentiments and feelings by means of gentle allusions and ambiguous phrases” (MCD: 438), which overlaps with the meaning of “隐蔽” (conceal, hidden, MCD: 1381) and makes it redundant. The translation is too literal and repeats the idea of ‘hidden’ meaning, which works in English but comes off as redundant in Chinese.

Considering the fact that “含沙射影” in Chinese is quite a formal word and rarely used in daily conversation, I translate “veiled insinuations” as “暗地里说我和我的家人”.

Y: 不过啊，有一样我们可得说在前头，不管是你还是别的什么人，都不要暗地里说我

和我的家人。

The following shows again the same problem of redundancy:

S: I am not going to argue with you about Hebrew, your reverence. But I don't care what anybody says, I think I know as much about sheep as the next one and I say that your rams have done a power of good in these parts (*Independent People*: 114).

X: 我不是来和你辩论关于希伯来的事情的，尊敬的牧师。别人怎么说，我不在乎，我想我对羊懂得比别人不少，我要说你的公羊在这些区域起了很大的良好作用（*独立的人们*: 142-143）。

In Chinese, “良好” means “good, satisfactory” (MCD: 706), thus “良好作用” means “have a good effect on something”, while “很大” means “good, great”. Accordingly, “很大的良好作用” should be translated as “have a great good effect on something”, which is not acceptable in English. “很大的良好作用” is absolutely unacceptable in Chinese. As a matter of fact, we can only say either “很大的作用” or “良好的作用”. I keep “很大” in my translation because it is more acceptable than “良好” in this context.

Y: 牧师大人，这希伯来人说些什么，我可不愿意跟你争论。不过啊，别人说我什么我也不会在乎，我觉得我自己对羊还是比较了解的，在这一点上，我不会比任何人差。另外呀，你弄来的那些羊在这一带可是起了很大作用的。

At times Xue and Hua include some intentional coinages of their own. This is understandable in writing or translation but should be done with moderation so that target language readers can understand the text without any difficulty. Let us consider the following example:

S: Yes, my dear Thorthur, life for all of us is a sort of lottery (*Independent People*: 66).

X: 对，我亲爱的索苏尔，生活对我们大家来讲是一种抽彩给奖法(*独立的人们*: 82)。

Chinese readers will roughly understand what “抽彩给奖法” (translated from “lottery”) is, but would never say it this way. This expression is more like an explanation of “买彩票” (meaning “lottery”, MCD: 101). It is quite unnecessary because “买彩票” is a very common expression that can be understood by everybody in China.

Y: 哎呀，我的好多苏尔啊，对我们大家来说啊，生活就像是买彩票。

The same problem appears again in the following example:

S: The bailiff, who had some local repute as a homoeopath, asked... (*Independent People*: 163).

X: 那位乡长，他作为顺势疗法医生在当地颇有名气.....(*独立的人们*: 201)。

Without the translators' own explanation, nobody would know what “顺势疗法” (translated from “homoeopath”) means. It seems that the co-translators want to create an entirely new expression, but the problem is that no target language reader could understand this “顺势疗法” without further

explanation.

Personally, I believe that creative translation should always be encouraged, but it should align with one important principle of translation: translation is successful only when it is understandable by target language readers. I translate “homoeopath” as “以毒攻毒”, which is a very common expression, easily understood in Chinese.

Y: 这位乡长, 作为一个推崇以毒攻毒疗法的人, 在当地还算是小有名气。

Some mistakes in Xue and Hua’s translation are very obvious and can be easily avoided with just a little bit of careful reviewing:

S: “Pile into the fodder, lads,” cried Bjartur, aglow with hospitality, “and don’t be shy of the coffee!” (*Independent People*: 23)

X: “小伙子们, 把饲料尽量往肚里装吧, ” 比亚图尔喊道。他满脸红光, 正在殷勤待客 “尽量喝咖啡” (*独立的人们*: 26)

The example is from the chapter “Wedding”. Even if we do not read the source text, we can be certain that it is impossible to say “把饲料尽量往肚里装吧” in the context of a wedding because “饲料” in Chinese means “food that is given to cows, horses, and other animals”, never to people (MCD: 1091). This decision can be made without any difficulty according to the microcontext provided in the sentence; “小伙子” are young men, not cows, horses, or other animals. It is highly probable that this kind of mistake appears due to carelessness and lack of proofreading. It is easy to find such mistakes and correct them, as in retranslation below:

Y: “东西呢, 是不怎么好, 但大家还是多吃点儿吧, ”白亚德大声喊道, 脸上热情洋溢, “多喝点咖啡啊! 别不好意思。”

My decision to include a new translation of *Independent People* as a part of my PhD dissertation is due in part to the many errors that I have identified in Xue and Hua’s Chinese translation of this great work. As I have mentioned, not all mistakes are necessarily the result of misunderstanding the original text. Instead, they may merely result from the translators’ mother-tongue incompetence. It may hard to find poets to translate poems or dramatists to translate drama, but a translator should at least be competent in their first language so that translation is understandable and readable for target language readers.

### 3.2.2 Lexical Faults

A common mistake that Xue and Hua make on the lexical level is that they appear in many cases to consult only a single definition of an English word, usually the first definition given in an English-Chinese dictionary. I consider this one of the cardinal habitual mistakes any translator should avoid. Some lexical faults can be explained from different angles, but I will focus on the misunderstanding of context and try to offer my own remedy for these faults. The ultimate purpose of these analyses is of course to provide my own observations on what contexts can be reconstructed in literary translation, and to what extent. I hope that my suggestions will be workable and beneficial to translators, especially those translators who deal with literary translation.

There are many possible explanations for the lexical faults in Xue and Hua's Chinese translation of Halldór Laxness' *Independent People*. One reason is worth noting, although it has nothing to do with the co-translators' first language incompetence: the era in which a piece of literature is translated is worthy of consideration. I am deeply convinced that the translators were affected by belonging to the era during which China began implementing the so-called reform and policy of opening to the outside world. From 1966 to 1976, the vast majority of young people lost their chance to attend university because of the so-called Cultural Revolution. Many university students abandoned their studies to take part in the Cultural Revolution. Some of these educated young people went to the countryside to be reeducated by poor and lower-middle-class peasants. It was difficult to access great works of classical Chinese literature, let alone foreign literature. However, even those who could access some foreign literature (library employees, for example) could not read it because only few universities at the time taught English for students of foreign languages. In addition, Russian was far more popular than English in China due to historical reasons. It was not until the 1980s that English became a popular foreign language to begin studying in middle school. In addition, resources for learning English at that time were very limited. There were no such reference books as English-Chinese dictionaries, or English magazines or newspapers. Many families could not afford a television or a radio, and certainly not families in the countryside. Some teachers were not proficient in English themselves, so it is no surprise that many students at that time spoke English very poorly.

With this in mind, I can easily imagine Xue and Hua's working conditions. There were few reference books for them to consult. Few people at that time had extensive knowledge of foreign countries and cultures in general, let alone Iceland, which is obviously far removed from China. It was extremely difficult for them to picture what a farmhouse in Iceland looked like. For most Chinese people who make a living farming rice in South China, it was impossible to imagine Icelandic agricultural customs and practices. They also lacked well-compiled English-Chinese dictionaries. Those dictionaries they could access may have only one or two very concise definitions for one word, which is far from what they needed. I should say that some mistakes in Xue and Hua's translation are understandable and even forgivable. My work in offering remedy for faults in their translation is completely academically intentioned, and the ultimate purpose is to explore the possibilities of translation so that future translators can provide higher-quality translations for target language readers.

In the following section, I will demonstrate some faults on the lexical level in Xue and Hua's translation. As I have done in the previous section, I will also provide my own remedies for mistakes in diction in Xue and Hua's translation. According to my understanding, most of the faults of this type result from inadequate understanding of the context in the source language text. Accordingly, remedies of these mistakes will be based on correct understanding of the context in the source language text. Let us start from the following example:

S: "There's no need to be stingy with that muck," he said of the sugar, for he always spoke slightly of sweet things (*Independent People*: 38).

X: "不用对那种湿粪这么省着了。"他指的是糖，他总是用轻视的态度谈论甜的食品 (*独立的人们*: 46)。

It surprises me when I find that Xue and Hua translate "muck" into "湿粪" (a moist farmyard

manure). It is true that “muck” in English can refer to “a moist farm yard manure” or “dirt, rubbish, waste matter” or “(informal) something regarded as worthless, sordid, or corrupt”, while “湿粪” (translated from “muck”) in Chinese can only be understood as “a moist farm yard manure” (MCD: 323).

One obvious phenomenon in any language is that one word may have several meanings when used in different situations or contexts. The context of “muck” in this case is that Bjartur is now proud of being an independent man, and he wants to use this opportunity to boast that he has sugar at home and he regards it as something worthless. This is why he says “there’s no need to be stingy with that muck”. Xue and Hua fail to bring this context out in *独立的人们* by translating it into “湿粪”.

Bjartur believes that sugar is just something worthless and something he, as an independent man, should have at home. At least in this case, it has nothing to do with “a moist farmyard manure”. Within this context, I translate “there’s no need to be stingy with that muck” into “那东西只那么好，用不着省的”，and in this way I reconstruct the same context in Chinese translation.

Y: “那东西只那么好，用不着省的”——他说的是糖。每次说到甜食，他都一副无所谓的样子。

Iceland is geographically far away from China and climatically different; and some weather conditions in Iceland may not be found in China and vice versa. Here in the following we can find one example:

S: Just what it would do. The rain had cleared at last, but the drought was truly a mixed blessing (*Independent People*: 46).

X: 一般天气情况大概就是这样。终究雨过天青了，可是干旱的确是福也是祸（*独立的人们*: 57）。

“干旱” in Chinese does mean “drought” or “a long period of time during which there is very little or no rain”, so the translation here is ostensibly not a problem. However, upon second examination, we find that “干旱” in Chinese not only means “drought”, but also in most cases implies “drought which brings serious effect and even disasters”. I do not believe that this is a context that we can detect in the source text. As a matter of fact, the sentence “the drought was truly a mixed blessing” is a neutral statement, which also helps explain this context. Considering this, “干旱” can be “祸” (disastrous) but can never be “lucky”. As a matter of fact, it is the misunderstanding of the word “drought” that ultimately results in the mistranslation: “是福也是祸” (from “mixed blessing”). I avoid this mistranslation by translating “the drought” into “真没有雨的天气”, which is the exact equivalent of “a long period of time during which there is very little or no rain”.

Y: 天气该怎样还是怎样。大雨终于还是停了。但是，真没有雨的天气有可能好，也可能不好。

Sometimes, co-translators Xue and Hua may take a word’s meaning for granted:

S: And what do you get out of these people in the autumn? A few pitiful rattle-bones that you could lift with your little finger, hardly worth poisoning for fox-bait. (*Independent People*: 165)

X: 到了秋天, 你从这些人那里能找到些什么呢? 你可以用小手指挑起几根格格响骨头, 连做对付狐狸的毒饵都不够材料 (《独立的人们》: 204)。

“Rattlebones” refers to “lean and bony persons or animals” according to the context in the source language text, but Xue and Hua translate it into “几根格格响的骨头” (rattling bones), breaks the cohesion between the question “And what do you get out of these people in the autumn?” and the answer “A few pitiful rattle-bones that you could lift with your little finger, hardly worth poisoning for fox-bait”. This clearly reveals the importance of paying attention to microcontext, which not only helps a translator understand the cohesion of the original text, but also the author really says.

The context of the source language text here is the Bailiff showing his contempt for such poor farmers as Bjartur, and complaining that he offers everything to these farmers but gets nothing useful in return. Xue and Hua’s translation does not transfer this context into their target language text. Evidently, “几根格格响的骨头” (rattling bones) is not an exact translation of “rattle-bones”, which means “lean and bony persons (or animals)”. The translation breaks the natural connection between question and answer, thus making it difficult for Chinese readers to understand the meaning of the second sentence. To remedy it, I translate “A few pitiful rattle-bones that you could lift with your little finger, hardly worth poisoning for fox-bait” into “这些人也真是可怜, 都瘦得皮包骨头了, 一根小手指头都能把他们挑起来, 拿他们做狐狸的毒饵都嫌不够”, thereby establishing the connection between the first sentence and the second one and ultimately succeeding in reconstructing the context in which the Bailiff shows his contempt for the farmers.

Y: 到了秋天, 你还能从这些人身上得到什么呢? 这些人也真是可怜, 都瘦得皮包骨头了, 一根小手指头都能把他们挑起来, 拿他们做狐狸的毒饵都嫌不够。

A translator should take great care in dealing with collocations on the lexical level because different collocations may result in quite different meanings. The following example clearly shows the importance of paying attention to collocations:

S: He contented himself that autumn with building a ewe-house with a corrugated iron roof to replace the old hut he had thrown up ten years ago on the bank of the brook (*Independent People*: 239).

X: 今年秋天, 他仅仅满足于建造一座有瓦楞铁皮屋顶的母羊屋来取代十年前他丢弃在小溪岸边的旧棚屋 (《独立的人们》: 299)。

Xue and Hua mistake “the old hut he had thrown up (to build or erect something in a hurry) ten years ago on the bank of the brook” (“十年前他在小溪岸边匆匆建起的旧棚屋”) for “the old hut he had thrown away ten years ago on the bank of the brook”, which results in their wrong translation of “十年前他丢弃在小溪岸边的旧棚屋”. As a remedy, I translate the phrase “the old hut he had thrown up ten years ago” into “十年前他在小溪岸边匆匆建起的旧棚屋” and thus preserve the original context in my target language text.

Y: 今年秋天, 他给他家的母羊建了一间有瓦楞铁皮做屋顶的小屋, 让他们不用住在那个他十年前草草修在小溪边的旧棚子里了, 这让他心里很是满足。

In literary translation, misunderstanding a single word or expression may greatly impact the final translation. More importantly, it may result in the contradiction of related contexts. Please see the following example:

S: “Why must you always be on top of me? Can’t you leave me alone?” and the younger brother moved away a little (*Independent People*: 263)

X: “哦, 你干吗老要压过我一头呢? 让我安静点儿不行吗?” 小弟弟把身子挪开了点儿 (*独立的人们*: 327)。

The translation by Xue and Hua shows that the misunderstanding of “on top of” makes the translation “让我安静点儿不行吗” out of step with the rest of the sentence. Chinese readers may wonder why a sentence like “让我安静点儿不行吗?” (literally meaning “I can’t bear noise or quarreling”) immediately follows a sentence like “哦, 你干吗老要压过我一头呢”, and in turn wonder about “小弟弟把身子挪开了点儿” (and the younger brother moved away a little).

Firstly, Xue and Hua understand “on top of” (very close to, crowded) as “superior to”, and “Can’t you leave me alone?” as “I can’t bear noise or quarreling”, which breaks down the entire translation in terms of context and meaning.

Such mistakes are unacceptable in translation because the context is so obvious that any careful translator should be able to avoid them. In this context, Nonni is angry with his brother Gvendur, and does not want Gvendur near him because they are arguing. It is true that the sentence “Can’t you leave me alone?” can be translated into “让我安静点儿不行吗” (I can’t bear noise or quarreling), but the translation does not follow the question “Why must you always be on top of me?” pragmatically, and makes nonsense of the final sentence, “the younger brother moved away a little” (弟弟往远处挪了挪).

To remedy Xue and Hua’s translation, I translate “Why must you always be on top of me?” into “哦, 你干吗老挨我这么近呢”, according to the correct definition “very close to, crowded”, and ensure that the context transferred to the target language text is equivalent to the context of the source language text. At the same time, I translate “Can’t you leave me alone?” into “你就不能离我远点儿吗?”, which literally means “Can’t you stay a little bit far away from me?”, and thus ensure agreement through my translated sentence.

Y: “哦, 你干吗老挨我这么近呢? 你就不能离我远点儿吗?” 弟弟往远处挪了挪。

Xue and Hua sometimes seem unclear about the difference between a relative adverb and a connecting adverb, which may result in quite different meanings. The following example illustrates this mistake and the difference in meaning that occurs when the word “when” is used in different situations:

S: Nonni, do you remember when Mother fell into Grandma’s arms and couldn’t stand up again? (*Independent People*: 264-265)

X: 诺尼, 你还记得那天妈妈倒在外婆怀里再也站不起来了吗? (*独立的人们*: 330)

In this case the misunderstanding from the clause “when Mother fell into Grandma’s arms and couldn’t stand up again”. “When” in English can be used either as a relative adverb, as in: “The main school holidays are from mid-December till early February, when the days are long and warm”, or a connecting adverb, as in “Can you tell me when the bank opens?” “When” in the sentence “do you remember when Mother fell into Grandma’s arms and couldn’t stand up again?” is a connecting adverb, while the translation shows it as a relative adverb, which is an obvious misunderstanding of the collocational structure of the original sentence. To remedy this, we simply need to translate “when” into “什么时候”:

Y: 诺尼，你还记不记得妈妈是什么时候倒在外婆怀里就再也没站起来过吗？

The following example shows another kind of mistake. Sometimes, two words in Chinese have quite similar meanings and their difference is so subtle that they can only be differentiated according to transitivity, or the object of the transitive verb concerned.

S: Wishing-time had arrived so much like a bolt from the blue that at first the children hardly knew what to make of it (*Independent People*: 332-333).

X: 祝愿的日子象晴天霹雳般地到来了，以致起初孩子们几乎不懂得是怎么回事（*独立的人们*: 415）。

“Wishing” can be translated into Chinese as either “祝愿” or “许愿”. The difference between these two expressions is quite clear: “祝愿” means “to desire something good to happen to someone else (not oneself)” and is used as a transitive verb, while “许愿” means “to desire something good to happen to either someone else or to oneself” and is used as an intransitive verb. The situational context here is that the Bjartur’s children are talking about what they desire to happen to either someone else or to oneself under the instruction of their teacher, so the only appropriate translation would be “许愿”.

As a matter of fact, the following passages provide further context to help us understand the context and meaning of wishing:

Gvendur’s wish:

“My wish,” he said, “is that Father’s sheep should have a good winter. And that he should earn a lot of money before Easter. And buy more sheep next autumn.” (*Independent People*: 333)

Nonni’s wish:

In her suffering his mother had planted in his bosom this one wish: he wished for other countries... “A country with woods in it,” he said. “A country something like the one where the Mississippi rolls along, as it says in the poem. Where the hart and the panther live in the woods. That’s the sort of the country I want.” (*Independent People*: 333)

So, it is quite clear that “wishing” here not only concerns their father, but also Nonni himself. In this case, “许愿” is a better translation.

Y: 许愿的时间就像是晴天霹雳一般突然出现在他们的生活中间。起初，孩子都不知道这许愿究竟是怎么回事。

A word, whether abstract or not, should be used to express clear ideas. If not, a translator should reconsider the translation so that the idea is rendered correctly in the target language text. The following example is difficult to understand because we do not know what the co-translators wish to express:

S: He saw immediately that she was pregnant, and gazed at her long-fingered hands, in which there dwelt a wealth of human reality (*Independent People*: 438).

X: 他一眼就看出她又怀孕了, 他望着她那长着长长的手指的手, 其中蕴藏着人类现实的财富 (《独立的人们》: 541)。

“人类现实的财富”, if back-translated, is “actual wealth of human beings”, which I do not believe corresponds with the original expression “a wealth of human reality”. Asta’s life is full of suffering from the very beginning, which her brother Gvendur is quite aware of. The context in the source text is clear: Gvendur is looking at Asta’s hands, the roughness of which shows the suffering she has endured. Asta’s long-fingered hands remind Gvendur of Asta’s reality, and human reality. This has nothing to do with “actual wealth of human beings”. This is at the same time another example of word-by-word translation. “A wealth of” in fact means “a large amount of something”. To reconstruct the context in the source language text, I translate “there dwelt a wealth of human reality” into “那里写满了真实的人生境遇”, which literally means “her hands tell all the real sufferings she has gone through”.

Y: 他一眼就看出她又怀孕了。他看着她那双纤长的手, 那里写满了真实的人生境遇。

On the lexical level, co-translators Xue and Hua do not demonstrate competence in recognizing and understanding the original words according to their co-text and context, which results in inappropriate expression in target language. This detracts not only from target language readers’ understanding of the meaning of the text, but also their appreciation of the beauty of the original work.

To reconstruct the context on the lexical level in the source language text, a translator is expected to understand the meaning of a word or a phrase according to the context in the source language text. A failure to understand the source context may result in the misunderstanding of a word or a phrase, which in turn results in the erroneous reconstruction of the source context in the target language text. The final result is a word, phrase, or even entire sentence or paragraph that target language readers cannot understand.

It is understandable that a translator may become trapped in a tough spot where they do not quite understand the source context. This is especially understandable in a translation written over thirty years ago in China, when resources that translators needed were not readily available. A responsible translator, however, is expected to try every measure to make sure that they truly understand the context in the source language text in order to reproduce it in the target text.

I was quite lucky as I translated *Independent People* to receive so much help from Icelandic teachers and friends. I cannot imagine what I might have done without their help, because I could not entirely understand some contexts, especially those concerning Icelandic history and culture of previous generations. At the very beginning of my translation, I told myself I would exert myself to the utmost to ensure that my translation was at least understandable to Chinese readers. As far as

the quality of the translation is concerned, I am quite confident. After all, I have considerable personal experience in writing - especially poetry and lyrics, some of which have been published.

### 3.2.3 Irrelevant Collocation

Although collocation is traditionally considered a feature of grammar, which I will cover in the next section, Xue and Hua's translation is so riddled with collocation errors that I will instead address and analyze collocation as an independent item. Accurate use of collocations, as I see it, should be a basic requirement for both writers and translators.

Collocation is a common linguistic phenomenon in any language. Well-organized collocation is based not only on grammar, but also convention and even common sense. It can ensure the smoothness and precision of a text and allow for the accurate expression of ideas. It is almost certain that failure to demonstrate well-organized collocations will result in low readability in a text, which will then ultimately hold little or even no interest for readers.

In literary translation, the reconstruction of well-organized collocations is a basic requirement and responsibility for translators. First of all, we must reconstruct well-organized collocations to ensure that our translation is acceptable and readable. Secondly, whether from the point view of equivalence or faithfulness, we must reconstruct well-organized collocations in the source text so that target language readers can fully enjoy correct collocations and even certain linguistic features of the source language text. Two possibilities may result in incorrect or unsatisfactory collocations in translation. On the one hand, the translator may not be fully aware of collocations in the source text, while on the other they may understand collocations in the source text but fail to reconstruct them in the target text. The first possibility may be attributable to incompetence in English, while the second may be due to incompetence in the first language.

On the collocational level, co-translators Xue and Hua again show that they are not competent enough in their first language, which in my personal opinion is a more serious problem than incompetence in a foreign language. To remedy their mistakes in translation, I provide my own translation according to commonly accepted conventions in Chinese. Let us begin with the following example:

S: "Townfolk," she said, "have no conception of the peace that Mother Nature bestows, and as long as that peace is unfound the spirit must seek to quench its thirst with ephemeral novelties" (*Independent People*: 24).

X: "城里人,"她说,"对大自然母亲赐予的平静一窍不通,一旦得不到平静,他们就必然会以一时的新奇风尚来疗救灵魂的饥渴。(*独立的人们*: 27)"

"疗救灵魂的饥渴" is a strange collocation, or at least a collocation that is hardly found in Chinese. We would typically say "缓解饥渴" or "缓解旱情" instead of "疗救饥渴". Furthermore, "疗救" in Chinese means "provide a cure for somebody" or "make somebody healthy again". It is understandable to say "疗救某人" (provide a cure for somebody), but not "疗救灵魂的饥渴". To reconstruct the collocational context of the source text, I choose the expression "饮鸩止渴" for the source expression "quench its thirst". In addition, "饮鸩止渴" is a four-character idiom, or a set phrase, which is very common in Chinese and adds an air of formality to the speech. Considering that the source text is from a speech made by the wife of the Bailiff, I should instead say, "饮鸩止渴", which is especially appropriate for the source context.

Y: “城里人，”她说，“根本就不了解大自然慈母一般带给人们的那份平静。一旦无法找到那份平静，他们空虚的心灵便只好饮鸩止渴，逐新趣异。”

At times Xue and Hua become confused by the slight differences between two words with almost the same meaning but different collocations. In my view, such mistakes stem mainly from the translators' carelessness rather than a misunderstanding of the original text. In the following example, “He was well on in years” is translated into “他的年龄已经不轻了”, but this is in fact not the correct collocation. Both “年龄” and “年纪” are used to refer to one's age in Chinese. The difference lies in the collocation. As far as “年龄” (age) is concerned, the acceptable collocation is “年龄大” or “年龄小”, while the usual collocation for “年纪” is “年纪轻” or “年纪不轻”. To remedy the mistakes in Xue and Hua's translation, I ultimately choose the four-character expression “上了年纪”, which, although not an idiom, is still welcome in Chinese.

S: He was well on in years, rather corpulent, his cheeks and nose blue-tinted (*Independent People*: 112).

X: 他的年龄已经不轻了，有点发胖，脸颊和鼻子上显出一道发青的阴影（*独立的人们*: 141）。

Y: 上了年纪的他大腹便便，脸颊和鼻子上也有些发青。

Collocation between a verb and a noun is a rather common linguistic feature in both English and Chinese. Inappropriate collocations may result in bewilderment for Chinese readers:

S: His [a visitor's] proximity was like the flavour of Sunday in mid-week, like an interval in the downpour, colour in drabness, material for thought in apathy, stimulation in the midst of life's cheerlessness (*Independent People*: 223).

X: 他在附近出现，给人一种在星期三盼星期日的滋味，就象是：倾盆大雨中的间隙、出现在单调乏味生活中的色彩、冷漠寂寥时的思想材料、惨淡生活里的刺激（*独立的人们*: 279）。

The collocation in “给人一种在星期三盼星期日的滋味” is wrongly used because we would say “给人一种在星期三盼星期日的感觉”. At the same time, “滋味” is not an appropriate word here because it is often used to express one's taste. Unless it is used for rhetorical purpose, it is often used with words denoting food or drink. For example, we can say “牛肉的滋味很不错” (The beef is rather delicious). Sometimes “滋味” can be used rhetorically in literature. We find this in a Chinese popular song, “你知不知道思念一个人的滋味，就像喝了一杯冰冷的水”. Literally, it can be translated as “Do you know the taste of missing somebody is like drinking a cup of chill water?” Clearly, taste is a personally perceived sensation rather something given by somebody else. This precludes such a saying as “给人一种在星期三盼星期日的滋味”. In my translation, I use the metaphor “他的到来就是他们盼望的礼拜天” to reconstruct the collocation represented by a simile (“His [a visitor's] proximity was like the flavour of Sunday in mid-week”) because I wish to maintain agreement of structure throughout the sentence.

Y: 对他们来说, 他的到来就是他们盼望的礼拜天, 是他们期待的风停雨歇, 是昏暗天空中的一抹亮色, 是索然寡味时的灵感乍现, 也是他们毫无快乐可言的生活中难得的新鲜感。

As in English, there is no shortage of correlative conjunctions in Chinese. These conjunctions are used in pairs to join words and phrases of equal weight in a sentence. We find many correlative conjunctions in English: either...or, not only...but (also), neither...nor, both...and, whether...or, no sooner...than, and rather...than. We find a wealth of them in Chinese as well: 要么.....要么 (either...or), 不仅.....而且 (not only...but also), 既不.....也不 (neither...nor), 一.....就 (no sooner...than) and 不是.....而是 (rather...than). One basic feature of these correlative conjunctions is that they are used in fixed pairs, which cannot be changed. The following example shows a violation of this basic feature.

S: Reykjavik will still be there though you miss one ship and catch the next (*Independent People*: 254).

X: 即使你错过了一艘船, 就换乘第二艘船, 雷克雅未克又跑不了 (*独立的人们*: 318)。

In the sentence “即使你错过了一艘船, 就换乘第二艘船”, the correlative conjunctions used are “即使.....就.....”, which is contradictory to the collocational convention in Chinese. Correct correlative conjunctions in this case can be either “就算.....还.....” or “即使/即便.....还.....”, as in the following sentences:

Y: “就算你错过了这班渡船, 你还可以赶下一班渡船, 那雷克雅未克不是还在那儿的吗?”

As a basic principle, the predicate, which completes a sentence, should agree with the subject of the sentence. This agreement is required not only collocationally but also logically.

S: but unfortunately, it is not everyone who can escape thither, for the world is unwilling to release its prey (*Independent People*: 310).

X: 不过, 很不幸, 不是所有的人都能从那里逃开, 因为这个世界总不愿意放过它已经捕捉到手的东西 (*独立的人们*: 387)。

There are at least two problems here. Firstly, in the second part of the sentence, “这个世界” (the world) can hardly serve as the subject of a sentence with the predicate “is unwilling to release its prey”, because “世界” in Chinese means “The earth, especially together with the life it supports”, and it is impossible for us to say “这个世界总不愿意放过它已经捕捉到手的东西”. As a matter of fact, “the world” in English can be understood as “people as a whole; the public”. In this sense, there is no problem of agreement between the subject “the world” and the predicate “is unwilling to release its prey”.

Secondly, if we take a closer look at the co-text before the sentence, we find: “I have dwelt out in the great world for many years and have long gazed out over the ocean of human life. When a man has suffered what I have suffered, he begins to yearn for a tiny world behind the mountains, a simple and blissful life such as may be found in this loft” (*Independent People*: 310). It is clear now that the teacher is talking about his difficult experiences of life in the city. However, in Chinese translation, “捕捉” (to arrest, to capture) spoils the context because, when used as a verb, “捕捉” is

often followed by animals when used as a verb, or by something which can be captured like animals when used metaphorically. To remedy mistakes in the Xue and Hua's translation, I translate "the world" into "世界上的人" and the collocational context into Chinese.

Y: 不过,有些遗憾的是,并不是所有的人都能从那个地方走出来,因为对于已经得到的东西,这世界上没人愿意放弃。

It is common in both English and Chinese that some words can be used rhetorically for the purpose of improving the readability of literature. However, when they are used inappropriately, the readability of literature may be reduced or even lost. The following two examples demonstrate misuse of collocation for rhetorical purposes:

Example 1:

S: ...but now the time had come to make amends and to cleanse her name of all these popish superstitions (*Independent People*: 385).

X: 但是,如今已到了补救的时刻,要洗清罗马天主教一切迷信加于她的名誉损失(《独立的人们》: 477)。

It is impossible to say "洗清.....损失" (translated from "make amends") in Chinese. By "洗清", we mean "to clean something by means of washing" or, metaphorically, "to remove something". The usual collocations include "炊具要经常洗清消毒" (Dinnerware must be washed and sterilized) or "洗清冤屈" (grievance redressed). As a matter of fact, the word "损失" in Chinese is often used after the verb "挽回" or "夺回" (to get something back). The thing is, whether we use collocations rhetorically or not, they should be acceptable to target language readers. To remedy them, I insist that grammaticality and conventionality be the translator's primary concern when translating collocation.

Y: 现在该是改弦易辙的时候了,与她有关的那些毫无道理、不恭不敬的说法也应该寿终正寝了。

Example 2:

S: He stole a quick glance at the big two-storied house with its third floor of gable attics, to see if anyone had noticed him when he rode in on his horse. But in a mansion so famous no one came to the windows to gaze on vanity; all he saw was the poetess's flowery plants spreading their lovely petals in the rays of the sun (*Independent People*: 422).

X: 他迅速地朝这座有两层楼和一个三角形顶楼的大厦偷看了一眼,看看是否有人注意到他骑马来到这里。但是在这著名的大厦里,没有一个人来到窗前眺望他的虚荣行为:他只看见女诗人栽培的花种在阳光照耀下绽开了可爱的花瓣(《独立的人们》: 522)。

"眺望" (translated from "gaze") means "look into the distance from a high place" in Chinese, so the object after this transitive verb is usually a person or an object. However, we see the object "虚荣行为" (translated from "vanity"), which is neither a person nor an object, thus making the collocation of "眺望" and "虚荣行为" unacceptable in Chinese. To remedy it, I translate "gaze on vanity" into "关注这么无聊的事情" so as to reconstruct the collocational context "gaze on vanity"

and the situational context in the source text: Nobody has any interest in his riding on a horse.

Y: 他飞快地朝这座有一个三角形阁楼的两层小楼扫了一眼, 想看看他骑马过来的时候是不是有人注意到了他。只可惜, 这座漂亮的房子里根本就没人来到窗前关注这么无聊的事情。除了那座楼房以外, 展现在他眼前的就只有女诗人种的那些花了。阳光下, 朵朵鲜花都是那么可爱。

On the collocational level, most of the problems in Xue and Hua's translation can be put down to ignorance of the agreement between predicative verbs and their subjects. Such problems may partly arise from inadequate recognition of the original context, though most of them here are the result of the co-translators' incompetence in their first language. As a matter of fact, some mistakes (those concerning correlative conjunctions, for example) are so obvious that a little consideration should have helped the translators avoid them. Some mistakes that may result from insufficient knowledge of Chinese collocation can be hard to avoid, and this proves the necessity of translation criticism, where analysis of mistakes can provide remedies. Frankly speaking, I recognize the co-translators' great effort in creating collocations of their own for purposes of rhetoric, and I cannot deny that some of them are successful. But as translators of a major literary work, they could have done better to help Chinese readers appreciate some of the more beautiful expressions in *Independent People*.

### 3.2.4 Ungrammaticality

Although traditionally grammar includes syntax in some ways, I prefer to list mistakes on the grammatical level an independent category, because grammar obviously includes more than syntax. It is natural for a translator to make occasional grammatical mistakes, but too many may result in a translation that is unintelligible and difficult to read and, perhaps more seriously, in loss of reader interest from the very beginning. Various grammatical mistakes can be found in Xue and Hua's translation of *Independent People*. I must emphasize that Chinese grammar is quite different from English grammar, and so English grammatical structures sometimes do not transfer to the Chinese target texts. To a certain extent, Chinese readers without any knowledge of English may even be able to detect some grammatical mistakes. This again shows that Xue and Hua are not well-qualified translators even though their debut translation of Halldór Laxness' great novel offers Chinese readers the opportunity to become acquainted with Icelandic literature and culture.

It is difficult to list all the grammatical mistakes in Xue and Hua's translation. In this section, I will identify and explain some of these errors. I will also try to provide remedies for mistakes in Xue and Hua's translation in the hopes that the remedies help reconstruct not only the grammatical context but also the semantical context of the source text in the target text. We start with the following example:

S: She had a scaffold built for incantation behind the house, where in fire and reek she used to chant to the fiend Kolumkilli on autumn evenings (*Independent People*: 6).

X: 在她屋后有一座专为施妖术而搭起来的高架, 秋天的夜晚, 她常站在架子上, 在烟火缭绕中为恶魔考隆姆吉里唱赞歌。(《独立的人们》: 5)

Grammatically, 在.....中 (in the middle of) invites a nominal structure because it is a

prepositional structure. 烟火(yān huǒ, translated from “fire and reek”) is a noun, but 缭绕(liáo rào, meaning “coil up, curl up”). I do not know which word can be the counterpart of this “缭绕” in the source sentence. Furthermore, “缭绕” is never used as a noun. A characteristic of the Chinese language is its flexibility regarding parts of speech. A large number of Chinese words can be used either as nouns or as verbs (工作 gōng zuò: work/job; 游泳 yóu yǒng: swim, swimming), while some can be used either as nouns or adjectives. However, not all Chinese words enjoy this flexibility. Take “缭绕” (translated from “fire and reek”) as an example. In Chinese it can only be used as a verb, which makes “在烟火缭绕中为恶魔考隆姆吉里唱赞歌” grammatically unacceptable. To reconstruct this context in the source text, I translate the expression “in fire and reek” into “在一片烟火中”, as in the following sentence:

Y: 她在屋后立有高架。秋天的夜晚,她常会在一片烟火中为科伦基利的鬼魂颂唱赞歌。

The following example shows that co-translators Xue and Hua are not so clear about different parts of speech in Chinese:

S: “No,” he said defiantly (*Independent People*: 11).

X: “不”他挑战地说 (*独立的人们*: 10)。

“挑战”(tiāo zhàn: challenge) can be used as a verb or a noun, but never as an adverb. It is therefore impossible for it to appear in front of “说”(shuō), a verb. Furthermore, if we say that someone is defiant, we mean that they show aggression or a spirit of independence by refusing to obey someone. The translation “挑战” is there not a good choice of word to convey the source context. To remedy it, I translate “defiantly” into “不服气地”, which makes the sentence suitable not only grammatically but also contextually.

Y: “不!”这个农户不服气地说。

Some mistakes in Xue and Hua’s translation demonstrate a lack of attention to agreement between subject and predicate. In addition, Xue and Hua often take one definition of a word (quite possibly the only definition they know) and use it exclusively, resulting in a uniform Chinese translation of a word throughout their text. In the following example they use only one possible definition of the word “discuss”:

S: He went on discussing this subject after he had left the path and was making his way over the marshes towards the home-field... (*Independent People*: 12)

X: 等他离开小径,在沼泽地上向家庭牧场走去时,他还在讨论这个题目.....(*独立的人们*: 12)

When there is one single person involved, it is impossible to “讨论”, which means “to talk about (something) with another person or group”. In other words, the subject of “讨论” should be “they” or “we” or “you”. As a matter of fact, “讨论” is only one possible meaning of “discuss”. Just look at another possible meaning, “to give information, ideas, opinions, etc., about (something) in writing or speech”. Taking the microcontext of this sentence into consideration, it is immediately

apparent that this is the intended meaning of “discuss”. This is reminiscent of the rote learning of English in Chinese middle schools, where pupils are required to memorize new vocabulary according to their Chinese translations. Take the word “discuss” as an example. We remember the meaning “讨论” (to talk about (something) with another person or group) because this is the meaning provided in textbooks and most small dictionaries. But the fact is that the word “discuss” is polysemous. When it means “to give information, ideas, opinions, etc., about (something) in writing or speech”, the possible Chinese equivalents would be “说话”, “自言自语地说”, “写下来” or “叙述”, which have nothing to do with “讨论”. The following translation shows the exact meaning of “discuss”:

Y: 他离开那条路, 走向通往家庭牧场的一片沼泽, 口中还在念念有词。

The same problem appears in the following translation:

S: The countryman, on the other hand, walks out to the verdant meadows, into an atmosphere clear and pure, and as he breathes it into his lungs some unknown power streams through his limbs, invigorating body and soul. The peace that reigns in nature fills his mind with calm and cheer, the bright green grass under his feet awakens a sense of beauty, almost of reverence. In the fragrance that is borne so sweetly to his nostrils, in the quietude that broods so blissfully around him, there is comfort and rest (*Independent People*: 24).

X: 另一方面, 农民走向青翠的牧场, 走进纯净的空气里去, 当他把这些吸入肺部后, 一种不知名的力量会渗透他的四肢, 使肉体 and 灵魂都生气勃勃, 主宰着自然界的平静使他的头脑充满安宁和愉快, 脚下碧绿的小草唤醒了一种美感和几乎产生一种崇敬之情。他的鼻孔感到甜蜜的芬芳, 周身如此幸福地笼罩在一篇宁静之中, 这里是舒适与安宁 (*独立的人们*: 27)。

In Chinese, “这” (zhè: this, it) is used to refer to “the person or; thing present, nearby, or just mentioned”, while “这里” (zhè lǐ) means “at or in this place”. It is an accepted rule that the structure “这里是” (zhè lǐ shì) should be followed by something concrete instead of something abstract, except in a figurative way. The most common expressions in Chinese are “这里是上海” (This is Shanghai) or “这里是我出生的地方” (This is my birthplace). In this translation “这里是舒适与安宁”, both 舒适 and 安宁 are abstract, which makes the sentence “这里是舒适与安宁” unacceptable in Chinese. In fact, “there be” is a rather common existential structure which asserts the existence or nonexistence of a thing. The verb most often used in existential sentences is a form of “be”, though other verbs (e.g., exist, occur) may follow the existential. In Chinese, the equivalent of “there be” is often “这里有” instead of “这里是”. In my version, “there is comfort and rest” is translated into “那是多么惬意悠闲的时光”, which is not exactly the equivalent structure as in the source text, but is at least grammatically and contextually close.

Y: 和城里人不同, 乡村牧民则可以走向翠绿的草地, 呼吸清新纯净的空气, 这种空气沁人心脾, 而此时此刻, 一种不可思议的力量会贯穿他的全身, 令他的身心充满活力。大自然的平静让他的内心充满安宁, 洋溢欢欣。脚下碧绿的草地会唤醒他内心深处美的愉悦, 隐隐然还有一种敬意。当四处都充满了甜蜜的芬芳, 当静谧在他身边幸福地守望, 那是多么惬意悠闲的时光。

Sometimes, disagreement between subject and predicate involves collocation problems, which makes disagreement more complicated. Although target language readers may not perceive that, it is still grammatically and lexically wrong.

S: They have shown that the heroic spirit of the first settlers is not yet extinct in the Icelanders of today, and long may it reign! (*Independent People*: 53)

X: 他们显示出冰岛第一个定居者的英勇精神在今天并没有泯灭, 这种精神会长久地统治下去! (*独立的人们*: 67)

The word “统治”, translated from “reign”, is often used to mean “rule; dominate; control and run a country or area through political power (凭借政权来控制、管理国家或地区)” or “control; govern 支配; 控制”. The former meaning is derogatory while the latter is often used as a transitive verb, which, grammatically, requires an object. The former definition is obviously inappropriate according to the context. If the word “统治” is used to mean “支配; 控制 control; govern”, then it is grammatically wrong because there is no object after the transitive verb “统治”. In Chinese, the word “下去” after “控制” is not an object, which makes “这种精神会长久地统治下去” grammatically and lexically wrong and it will confuse Chinese readers. I translate the word “reign” into “永远与我们同在”, which has no political association and enjoys the same context as the source text.

Y: 他们已经向我们表明, 冰岛第一代开拓者的英雄气概在今天的冰岛人中还没有消失, 我也希望, 它会永远与我们同在!

In both written and spoken modern Chinese, a sentence without a subject is ungrammatical, except in some special cases where “hidden” subjects can clearly be inferred from context. The following translation shows that there is no subject in the sentence, which undoubtedly constitutes a grammatical error:

S: And when I say these words, there accompany them many and sincere thanks to you, Bjartur, from our sheep in Utirauthsmyri (*Independent People*: 25).

X: 当我说这话时, 带着乌迪洛斯密里的绵羊对你莫大而诚挚的感谢(*独立的人们*: 28)。

“当我说这话时” is a sub-clause while “带着乌迪洛斯密里的绵羊对你莫大而诚挚的感谢” should be the main clause. However, there is no subject in the main clause, which is unacceptable according to modern Chinese grammar. The mistake quite possibly results from Xue and Hua’s unawareness of the structure “there accompany them many and sincere thanks to you”, which is not a typical SVO structure in English.

It is true that in ancient Chinese literature, especially in poetry, ellipsis of the subject is rather common. Take the following ancient Chinese poem as an example:

#### A Call on the Recluse Who Is Just Out

松下问童子	I asked the boy beneath the pine tree,
言师采药去	The boy said, “The master’s gone herbs to pick”

(Translated by Sun Dayu)

松下问童子      I asked your lad 'neath a pine tree,  
 言师采药去      "My master's gone for herbs" says he.

(Translated by Xu Yuanzhong)

In this ancient Chinese poem, we do not find the subject in each line. From the surface structure of the poem, we cannot see who "asked the boy" and who replies that "the master's gone the herbs to pick". Such ellipsis of the personal pronouns is quite common in classical Chinese poetry. It is not difficult for Chinese readers to figure out the personal pronouns omitted. As in Sun's and Xu's versions, it seems quite natural to put "I" in the subject position in the first line and "the boy" in the second. The point is that most traditional Chinese poems do not contain subjects. Personally, I believe the main reason why poets avoid subjects is to immerse readers in the sentiment of the poem. Nevertheless, it seems that these subjects are necessary in English translation in order to make it grammatically acceptable. Many critics believe this to be a reason for the difficulty of translating Chinese poetry into English. Once a subject is introduced into a translation, the emotional expression of the original Chinese is lost, and the target language reader is unable to connect with the poet's intentions.

However, modern Chinese grammar does not allow this except in some very special structures. For this reason, the translation is wrong from the perspective of modern Chinese grammar; we do not find a subject in the main clause "带着乌迪洛斯密里的绵羊对你莫大而诚挚的感谢". To remedy the mistake in the above-mentioned translation, I use a grammatical structure that is slightly different from the source text. I believe this will ensure the smoothness and readability of the Chinese version.

Y: 比亚迪尔，从乌迪劳斯穆里的羊群里走出来的你，所有我刚才说的话都饱含了我对你无尽的、诚挚的谢意。

The following example shows basic sentence elements missing, which is a common mistake among incompetent Chinese language users.

S: Three crofters with bared heads sang "As the one blossom" in the drifting snow (*Independent People*: 132).

X: 三个没戴帽子的农场主在纷飞的雪花中唱《当一朵花儿》。

Does "当一朵花儿" exactly transfer the context and meaning of the original sentence? Grammatically, "当一朵花儿" cannot form a complete sentence or even a sentence fragment, because "当" is a preposition, which is usually followed by a sentence. Furthermore, "当" rarely occurs independently. As a matter of fact, it is usually used with "的时候". The song title "As the one blossom" implies that life, or everything in life, is like a flower; thus "当一朵花儿" (literally "when a flower") does not transfer the structural context of the original text. To remedy this, I translate "As the one blossom" into "人生如鲜花般绽放":

Y: 在漫天飞舞的雪花中，三个没带帽子的牧民唱起了那首《人生如鲜花般绽放》

When translating from the source language into the target language, we sometimes must pay close attention to grammatical or structural continuity over a sentence or even an entire passage, which we may fail to reproduce in the translation if we do not consider it as a whole.

S: “Not that it matters; the water could be unconsecrated for all I care. Of you I am unafraid, Gunnvor. Hard shall it go with you to oppose my good fortune, old hag, for specters never daunted me yet.” He clenched his fists and with kindling eyes looked up at the mountain cleft, then at the ridge in the west, and then at the lake, still grinding out words of challenge between his teeth in saga style: “– And never shall!” (*Independent People*: 14-15)

X: “这不碍事；我关心的是：这股水不能用来祭圣。我并不怕你，古恩伏尔。你想阻挡我交好运，没这么容易，老妖婆，因为，幽灵从来没有使我沮丧过。”他捏紧拳头，用冒火的眼睛仰望山上的裂缝，然后瞧着西边的山岗，接着又看看湖泊，他以萨迦中的那种神气，从牙缝里迸出一个个挑战性的字眼：“永——不——屈——服！”(*独立的人们*: 16)

“沮丧” is a rather formal word and rarely used in spoken Chinese. A more serious problem appears in the translation “永——不——屈——服！”(translated from “– And never shall!”). Literally, this is an independent expression that seemingly has very little to do structurally with the sentence at the beginning of the paragraph. However, when we examine the source text, we can immediately see that the last phrase, “– And never shall”, is indeed structurally connected with the quotation at the beginning of the paragraph. Although the two utterances are separated by other text, it does not change the structural or grammatical connection. This kind of structure is in fact quite common in English but not in Chinese. This structural context can actually be reconstructed in Chinese, although we may have to repeat the phrase “吓到我！”(daunted me), considering that the quotation is interrupted by narrative.

Y: “这没什么事儿吧。我可管不了那么多了。它可以不再是神水！我才不怕你古恩沃尔呢。你想让我交不上好运，没那么容易。你这个老妖婆！妖魔鬼怪从来就没吓倒过我。”他攥紧双拳，两眼炯炯有神，看看两山之间，再看看西边的山，最后看了看那个湖，从他牙缝里斩钉截铁地般迸出几个史诗般的字眼：“——永远都别想吓到我！”

Tense is common in alphabetical languages. Tenses usually include past, present and future, and are indicated by formal changes to verbs. However, this is not the case in Chinese. One challenge for Chinese learners, especially beginners, is the lack of a clear indication of tense. Let us examine the following Chinese sentences:

过去，他是一个大学生。

He was a university student.

现在，他是一个大学生。

He is now a university student.

将来，他会是一个大学生。

He will be a university student in the future.

We clearly see that the verb “是” does not change to reflect past, present and future, though the character “会” is added to indicate that something will happen in the future. The fact that Chinese

is tenseless also presents a challenge for a translator, who must consider this during the translation process. In some ways it is the translator's responsibility to render these differences in translation to prevent confusion for target language readers who know nothing about the source language context. Let us consider the following sentence and its translation:

S: Your mother had always thought of making something of you, so maybe you had better go (*Independent People*: 354).

X: 你妈妈总想好好栽培你, 也许你还是去的好 ( *独立的人们*: 444)。

Without considering the context, this translation seems correct. The main context is that Bjartur is speaking to his son Nonni, who intends to leave for America. The hidden context here is that Nonni's mother died long ago, a fact that is revealed in the past perfect collocational phrase "had always". Chinese does not have such tense markers, but it is nevertheless possible to show this context lexically (曾经, 过去, 以往). Xue and Hua's translation does not show this context, which detracts from the quality even though it is somewhat understandable and even readable. For example, we may use such adverbials of time as 曾经, 立刻, 正在, 在, 马上, 常常, 经常, 渐渐, 刚, 刚刚, 已经, 永远, 忽然, 突然, 顿时, 从来, 仍然, 暂且, 仍旧, 依然, 才, 终于, 一直, 一向, 始终, 早已, 向来, 从来, 往往, 每每, 就 and so on. We can also use such auxiliary words as 着, 了 and 过 to show that an action or state takes place either in the past or the future. Xue and Hua's translation seems to overlook the meaning implied by the past perfect tense "had always thought". I translate "Your mother had always thought of making something of you" into "你妈在世的时候总想着你能有些出息", and in this way I preserve the context of the source text.

Y: 你妈在世的时候总想着你能有些出息, 所以呢, 你最好还是走吧。

One of the most basic and frequent mistakes throughout the Chinese translation of *Independent People* is a lack of attention paid to the different ways of expressing affirmation and negation, particularly when showing agreement with something, whether affirmative or negative. For example:

S: He called to her and bade her listen. No, she had not misheard (*Independent People*: 300).

X: 他喊她, 并叫她听着。不, 她没有听错( *独立的人们*: 374)。

For Chinese beginners of English, such mistakes in translation are understandable because they are often influenced by their first language. For a translator who wants to bring a great literary work to target language readers, however, they are unacceptable. Indeed, Chinese and English differ greatly in how they express agreement and disagreement, especially in tag questions. The following two examples illustrate this:

Example 1:

English: A: You are not a student, are you?

B: No, I am not.

Chinese: A: 你不是学生, 对吧? (nǐ bú shì xué shēng , duì ba?)

nǐ = you

bú: negative marker = not

shì = are  
 xué shēng = student  
 duì ba? = aren't you  
 B: 对, 我不是学生。(duì, wǒ bú shì xué shēng.)  
 duì = yes  
 wǒ = 我  
 bú: negative marker = not  
 shì = am  
 xué shēng = student

Example 2:

English: A: You are not a student, are you?

B: Yes, I am.

Chinese: A: 你不是学生, 对吧? (nǐ bú shì xué shēng, duì ba?)

nǐ = you  
 bú: negative marker = not  
 shì = are  
 xué shēng = student  
 duì ba? = aren't you

B: 不, 我是学生。(bú, wǒ shì xué shēng.)

bú: negative marker = not  
 wǒ = I  
 shì = am  
 xué shēng = student

Tag questions are a feature of both English and Chinese. Both languages answer tag questions after positive statements in the same way but differ in their response to tag questions after negative statements. In the two examples above, we find that Chinese speakers say “是 or 对 (yes)” before expressing disagreement, while “不是 or 不对 (no)” is often used before showing agreement when a negative statement is followed by a tag questions. This principle also applies to answers to implied tag questions containing a negative statement.

As far as the sentence “No, she had not misheard” is concerned, the phrase “she had not misheard” can be regarded as a response to the implied tag question, “Had she misheard?” In this case, the Chinese translation should be “是的, 她没有听错”.

Y: 他向她呼喊, 并让她听着。是的, 她没有听错 (*独立的人们*: 374)。

There are too many mistakes of this nature in Xue and Hua's translation to provide an exhaustive list. Here are four additional examples and my remedies, which I believe transfer the exact meaning of the source language texts into Chinese.

(1)

S: Nothing like this could ever happen to them. And the difficulties they would experience in understanding her fate separated her from them to all eternity; no, no one in the world would ever

be able to understand what had happened to her (*Independent People*: 336).

X: 在他们身上，决不会发生类似的事。他们难以理解她，这就使她和他们只得永远隔绝；不，世上不会有谁能够理解她的遭遇（*独立的人们*：421）。

Y: 这样的事情在他们身上永远都不会发生。他们将很难理解她的命运，而这会将她和他们永远地分隔开来。是啊，这个世上没有任何人会明白发生在她身上的一切。

(2)

S: ——What had taken place? And, above everything else, what had she done? No, she hadn't done anything (*Independent People*: 337).

X: ——到底出了什么事？首先是，她干了些什么？不，她什么也没有干（*独立的人们*：421）。

Y: ——这一切到底是怎么回事呢？首先，她得弄明白：她究竟做了什么？对啊，她其实什么也没有做。

(3)

S: No, he could not bear the thought of closing his eyes, rather lay staring up at the roof, at the knot in the wood which had once dubbed a man, even though he had only one eye (*Independent People*: 355).

X: 不，他不肯闭上眼睛，而是眼望屋顶躺着，那里的木头上有一个结节被他看作一个人，虽然只有一只眼睛（*独立的人们*：446）

Hidden context: in the previous paragraph, it says: "...he could not sleep. He felt that never more would he wish to sleep..." (*Independent People*: 355)

Y: 是的，他无法闭上眼睛，只是躺在那里，两眼盯着屋顶，盯着木头上的那个节疤。他曾经将这个节疤看作是一个人，只是这个人只有一只眼睛。

(4)

S: Yes, and they had lain on the banks of the lake, and there had been two swans, a he and a she. But what could have happened to them? They had disappeared, surely it hadn't been illusion merely; no, no, no, she had loved him and then had ridden away from him, out into the blue——(*Independent People*: 423).

X: 对啦，他俩曾在湖岸上躺在一起，那里有一对天鹅，一雌一雄。但结果出了什么事啦？它们不见了，这确实不仅仅是幻觉；不，不，不，她爱过他，后来又离开了他，进入了蓝天（*独立的人们*：523）。

Y: 对啦，他俩还曾一起躺在在湖岸上，那里有一对天鹅，刚好也是一雌一雄。可后来他们都去了哪儿呢？它们不见了，但那肯定不仅仅是幻影。是的，是的，确实是的，她是爱过他的，但后来她骑着马离他而去，直到最后消失在遥远的、蓝色的天际……

Finally, I would like to go a little further and beyond into syntax. I want to mention another kind of error that can be difficult to detect in translation. Under normal conditions, Chinese people

prefer to use subordinate sentences followed by main clauses. It is possible for a main clause to go first, but as a general rule, Chinese people will not say or write sentences like this, except on very rare occasions when you want to add something because you feel it was incomplete or you forgot something. What's more, it can only be used only in spoken Chinese. The following shows an inappropriate sentence with a main clause and a subordinate clause. We can imagine it is spoken by somebody in a certain context, but the thing is, in most cases, we will not say sentence 1. Instead, we will say sentence 2, which is more natural and acceptable.

Sentence 1: 我会给你打电话的, 如果我明天回来的话。

(Literal translation: I will call you, if I come back tomorrow.)

The following is much more widely used:

Sentence 2: 如果我明天回来的话, 我会给你打电话的。

(Literal translation: If I come back tomorrow, I will call you.)

I will call you if I come back tomorrow.

Sentence 1 is in fact more similar to an English sentence in terms of syntax, and is sometimes considered acceptable in Chinese when the speaker wishes, for example, to add the conditional phrase 如果我明天回来的话 ('if I come back tomorrow'). Under normal circumstances, however, sentence 2 is considered more natural and more likely to be spoken by a typical Chinese speaker. Xue and Hua obviously translate the following sentence according to the order of the original sentence:

S: Life was not much to boast about, especially when one examined it with a critical eye. (*Independent People*: 369).

X: 生活没有什么可以夸耀的, 特别当你以批判的眼光看待它时 (*独立的人们*: 462)

The translation here does not reflect normal modern Chinese sentence structure. One major difference between Chinese and English is that main clauses are usually placed before subordinate clauses in English, but the order is reversed in Chinese. Xue and Hua's translation keeps the original structure, which makes it difficult to read and therefore unacceptable in Chinese. Chinese readers may find the following translation by Xue and Hua slightly unusual because it is not in line with the accepted sentence structure in spoken language. However, there is no problem with the source text. Word-for-word translation is obviously not suitable in this case because the difference between English and Chinese is difficult to reconcile. Reconstructing the grammatical context is a challenge in this case. Xue and Hua may want to keep the grammatical context of the source text in their target text, but the result is not appropriate. What we can reconstruct, however, is the grammaticality of the source text within the target text, as the following translation demonstrates:

Y: 如果你向周围的世界投去的不是挑剔的眼光, 那这个世界里还是有很多东西值得夸奖。

One serious problem for Xue and Hua is that they often neglect the differences between grammatical structures in English and Chinese. It is true that we can find similar and even identical

grammatical structures across two different languages, but there also exist a great many dissimilarities. A translator is required to transfer the original meaning of the source text, but not the grammatical structure. This is not only a problem of flexibility in translation, but also a problem of how to find a reasonable and scientific way to deal with translation.

As a matter of fact, there are more mistakes in reconstructing grammatical context in Xue and Hua's translation. Those that I present here are just a few of them. We find that there are some similarities in grammar between English and Chinese, but in most cases, the grammar is quite different. Translators nevertheless forget this sometimes, resulting in mistakes in their translation. This again reminds us of the flexibility of language. Language itself is infinitely flexible, as demonstrated by the ability to express unlimited thoughts and ideas with a limited linguistic inventory. This is of course a mixed blessing for translators. On the one hand, they can always resort to their target language to express what is said in the source language text. On the other hand, they must be very cautious in translating the source language text so that their translation reconstructs the context in the source text exactly, in a way that is understandable to target language readers.

### 3.2.5 Misplacement of Register

I personally regard this as an important aspect of context. In their work *Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social- Semiotic Perspective*, Halliday and Hasan define register as "a configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, tenor and mode..." (Halliday and Hasan, 1985:39). The three variables named here are used to examine how context affects language use, but they also afford us an angle from which to reexamine a translation with the help of context. According to Halliday and Hasan, field is the subject matter or content being discussed. This requires a translator to pay close attention to the content of a novel, chapter, speech or even small talk. For example, we do not expect formal language at a family gathering, or medical terms referring to animal viscera at the dining table. Halliday and Hasan define mode as a channel of communication. This is crucial to a translator, and something that I have observed some translators neglecting. In my view, Xue and Hua make serious mistakes in this regard, which definitely harms the readability of the great work. One obvious mistake is that they neglect the difference between written language and spoken language, which will be explained further in the following section. Tenor refers to the type of role interaction, the set of relevant social relations among the participants involved. It is understandable that relationships between participants in an interaction vary according to their social status, affective involvement and so on. All three of these variables, or aspects of context, provide significant clues for translators when they translate a work into a foreign language. At the same time, register can serve as a useful means of evaluating a piece of translation for the purpose of objective translation criticism. In some ways, register provides convincing evidence that objectivity of translation criticism can be achieved. In other words, we can to some extent decide whether a piece of translation is good or not by examining whether words, expressions, sentences and even passages are in an appropriate register. To reproduce the meaning of the source language text, we may have to consider registers in which words, expressions, sentences and even passages appear. In this sense, to reconstruct context is to reconstruct register. One thing I want to make clear is that register can only be a part of context and will never replace context.

If we examine Xue and Hua's translation of *Independent People* in terms of register, we

immediately find that Xue and Hua do not pay much attention to differences between written language and spoken language, nor do they take notice of idiolect, or linguistic patterns among people from different walks of life. In this section, I will try to offer my own translations as remedies for mistakes in Xue and Hua's translation of *Independent People*. Let us begin with several examples of problems of field:

S: Her husband, who appears to have been the most craven-hearted of wretches, had little freedom, being kept completely under her domination (*Independent People*: 6).

X: 他的丈夫似乎是不幸的人们中最怯懦的一个, 他一点自由都没有, 完全处于她的统治之下(*独立的人们*: 4)。

“统治” in Chinese means “control or run a country or area through political power (CCD: 1926)”. It is often used in political manifestos, chronicles or official statements. However, the passage is about family life and the relation between wife and husband, so translating “domination” as “统治” is obviously not the right decision. In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1978), the word “dominate” is defined as “to have or exercise controlling influence or power (over)”, which is general in meaning while 统治 in Chinese it is specific. Obviously, the original sentence is about family life and has nothing to do with politics, which moves the translation away from the context of the source sentence. To remedy it, I translate it into “摆布”, a neutral word that can be used in relatively wider registers, of course including a register appropriate to discussions of family life.

Y: 可怜她的丈夫, 一看就胆小如鼠, 毫无自由, 完全只能听任妻子摆布。

The following example shows that both translators Xue and Hua translate the expression “private enterprise” by simply using the most common definition, which ruins the context for the whole sentence, ultimately leaving a Chinese reader confused. They would think there were some private companies at that time in the Icelandic countryside, which, I think, would be more likely to be found in Reykjavík.

S: They believed in private enterprise and if they had had a drink of brandy would even quote from the sagas and the rhymes. (*Independent People*: 17)

X:他们信任私人企业, 如果喝上几口白兰地, 甚至还会引用起萨迦和韵诗来 (*独立的人们*: 19)。

The translation from “private enterprise” to “私人企业” in the above example is misleading on account of “企业”. In Chinese “企业” translated from “enterprise” means “从事生产、运输、毛衣等经济活动的部门, 如工厂、矿山、铁路、公司等 enterprise; business; entities engaged in production, transport, trade or other economic activity, such as factory, mine, railway, trading company, etc.” (CCD: 1514). According to this definition, farming, whether private or not, obviously does not fall under the category of “enterprise”. In English, “enterprise” can be used to mean “industrious, systematic activity, especially when directed toward profit”, which is the intended meaning of the word. The interlocutors here are obviously talking about farm life and their belief in activity undertaken by private individuals or organizations under private ownership, rather

than a large factory, company or a national institution. Translating a word used in a conversation among farmers as a word belonging to another field is neither acceptable nor readable. To reconstruct this register in the target text, “private enterprise” should be translated as “私有化”.

Y: 他们对私有化深信不疑。几杯酒下肚, 他们也会引经据典。

In the following example, the register is the same: all words used depict farm life, while the translation “冰岛第一位殖民者” (from “Iceland’s first colonist”) does not fit the register in question since the Chinese word “殖民者” is often used to refer to those who maintain or extend control over other countries, especially to establish settlements or exploit resources.

S: When she was to be confined for the first time, Ingolfur Arnarson, Iceland’s first colonist, had appeared to her in a dream and, after singing the praises of husbandry, had asked her to give the child his name (*Independent People*: 18).

X: 当她快要生第一个孩子的时候, 冰岛第一位殖民者英高福尔·阿那尔逊出现在她梦中, 他唱了赞美农牧业的歌以后, 要求她用他的名字给婴儿取名 (*独立的人们*: 20)。

殖民(colony) and 殖民者(colonist) in Chinese immediately remind us of the policy or practice of a wealthy or powerful nation maintaining or extending its control over other countries, especially in order to establish settlements or exploit resources. In other words, it is a derogatory term. In English, a colonist is “an original settler or founder of a colony”. The translation 殖民者 conveys the second meaning, “a founder of a colony”, which is the exact meaning of the word in the context of Icelandic history. From this definition we see that 殖民者 is a word often used in reference to relations among nations. In other words, it is a more specific usage in terms of the context of “Iceland’s first colonist”. Taking all of this into consideration, I use the more suitable word “移民” in my translation.

Y: 在她第一次待产的时候, 曾经梦见过冰岛的第一位移民英高菲儿·安娜森。这位安娜森先是唱起了赞美农牧民生活的歌谣, 继而要求为她的孩子起名。

There are several problems with the following translation by Xue and Hua, including register. They translate the word “industry” as “工业”, which refers to the sector of an economy consisting of manufacturing enterprises.

S: Domestic crafts, she considered, were the only form of industry legitimate to Iceland, so she spent much time and much art on cross-weaving (*Independent People*: 18)

X: 她考虑到家庭手工艺是冰岛工业的唯一合法形式, 因此她在编织十字花方面花了很多时间和心血 (*独立的人们*: 21)。

It is true that “industry” can be translated into “工业” in many cases, but here “domestic crafts” (which I believe refers to work performed by hand) have nothing to do with “工业”, translated from “industry” in the sense of “the sector of an economy made up of manufacturing enterprises”. To reconstruct the register of the source text in the target text, I use the word “营生”.

Y: 考虑到家庭手工是适合当时冰岛的营生, 所以她花了大量时间和精力来研究十字绣。

Polysemy is the association of one word with two or more distinct meanings and occurs in both English and Chinese. It can help us decide the exact meaning of the word in question. Take the word “legitimate” as an example; when used as an adjective, it has at least four possible distinct meanings:

legitimate adj.

1.
  - a. Being in compliance with the law; lawful: a legitimate business.
  - b. Being in accordance with established or accepted rules and standards: legitimate advertising practices.
  - c. Valid or justifiable: a legitimate complaint.
  - d. Based on logical reasoning: a legitimate deduction.
2. Born of legally married parents: legitimate offspring.
3. Of, relating to, or ruling by hereditary right: a legitimate monarch.
4. Of or relating to drama of high professional quality that excludes burlesque, vaudeville, and some forms of musical comedy: the legitimate theater.

(thefreedictionary.com/legitimate)

In Xue and Hua’s translation of *Independent People*, “legitimate” is translated as “合法”. This is obviously based on the definition 1a. This will confuse Chinese readers, however: Is it true that other forms of industry than “domestic crafts” (if they are indeed considered an “industry” according to Xue and Hua’s translation) were illegitimate (i.e., illegal) in Iceland at that time? To answer this question, we must first look at what is being talked about. The sentence is from the chapter “The Wedding”, in which the Mistress of Myri, or the Bailiff of Myri’s wife, delivers a speech at Bjartur’s wedding ceremony. The subject at hand still concerns farmers who either work for wealthy people like the bailiff or rent a poor plot of land. These poor farmers they may rely on cross-weaving to earn a little bit of extra money to support their families. It is difficult for them to do business or obtain a position in local governmental institutions. For most of them, “domestic crafts...were the only form of industry”. It is obvious that the subject has nothing to do with law, which makes the translation “合法” inaccurate to the context of the original work. To remedy this, I translate “legitimate” into “比较合适的”, which immediately prevents confusion among Chinese readers (see the above sentence).

The following example is another case of the translators neglecting register. As a principle of literary translation, translators are expected to express certain situations in vocabulary appropriate to the field. A translation is hardly acceptable otherwise.

S: Remember, Rosa, that every day you quicken into motion waves that undulate on to the very confines of existence; you stir up waves that break upon the shores of eternity itself. And it is of much importance whether they are waves of brightness that are radiated, bearing light and fragrance far and wide, or whether they are waves of gloom, carrying misery and misfortune to loosen pent-up glaciers that will create an Ice Age of the national heart (*Independent People*: 27)

X: 记住, 罗莎, 每天你使生命的岸边那起伏不停的波涛加速运动时, 你激起浪花, 他们冲击着永恒本身的岸沿。要紧的是: 它们究竟是不是闪亮的光明的波浪, 把光明和芬芳传

播得又远又广；或者它们是阴暗的波浪，把愁苦和不幸冲向凝结的冰川，使它融化，这将会在国民的心中造成一个冰河时期。(《独立的人们》：30)

This is a relatively long paragraph, but a translator is expected to be able to deal with a paragraph of such length, not only in terms of conveying the meaning of each sentence as faithfully as possible to the source text, but also in terms of the paragraph's logical structure. Likewise, the translator should never forget the theme of the paragraph, which determines which kinds of words can be used in particular situations. It is easy to see that the source paragraph here is written with well-chosen vocabulary and coherent structure, resulting in a beautiful paragraph. In Xue and Hua's translation, such words as “加速运动” (translated from “quicken into motion”) and “冰河时期” (translated from “Ice Age”) give the impression that the passage is academic in nature, because this is very formal vocabulary used in such fields as physics, sports science or geography. The Bailiff of Myri's wife, who is delivering a speech at Bjartur and Rosa's wedding ceremony, does indeed intend to lend her speech an air of formality with grandiose words and expressions. However, I do not believe that she intends to employ academic vocabulary, as it will obviously spoil the literary nature of her speech. There is of course more than one expression that means “quicken into motion”. I translate “you quicken into motion waves” as “你都会迫不及待投身到你整个生命中都会起伏不停的波澜之中” in order to avoid giving Chinese readers an impression of technicality. In addition, “Ice Age” is a metaphor, which, in my experience as a translator, can be maintained in the target text if target language readers can understand it; otherwise, it can be translated in some other way. It is true that most Chinese readers can understand “冰河时期”, but the problem is that it's hard to connect it with a speech at a wedding ceremony. I simply use the word “寒冷” (coldness) in my translation, which admittedly fails to reconstruct the rhetorical context of the source text, but manages to ensure the coherence and agreement of register within the passage.

Y: 请记住吧，露莎，每一天，你都会迫不及待投身到你整个生命中都会起伏不停的波澜之中，但你激起的所有浪花最终都会消失于那永恒的彼岸。所以你激起的是什么样的浪花就显得至关重要。如果你激起的是光明的浪花，那它便会绽放耀眼的光芒，还会将生命的芬芳传播到四面八方；但如果你激起的是晦暗的浪花，那它就会带着痛苦和不幸冲向那压抑已久的冰川，令它释放，让寒冷留在每个人的心上。

The same mistake appears in the following paragraph, also from the Bailiff of Myri's wife's speech, as the character is a poetess who looks for any opportunity to showcase her literary talents. This passage is her description of the idyll of farm life. The words and expressions in the source text serve to create a special register characterized by formality, literariness and lyricism.

S: The countryman, on the other hand, walks out to the verdant meadows, into an atmosphere clear and pure, and as he breathes it into his lungs some unknown power streams through his limbs, invigorating body and soul. The peace that reigns in nature fills his mind with calm and cheer, the bright green grass under his feet awakens a sense of beauty, almost of reverence. In the fragrance that is borne so sweetly to his nostrils, in the quietude that broods so blissfully around him, there is comfort and rest... The hillsides, the dingles, the waterfalls, and the mountains are all friends of his childhood, and never to be forgotten... They give us shelter in their valleys and bid us give shelter, too, to those who have neither our size nor our strength. Where,” asked the poetess, “is there bliss

so bountiful as in these tranquil, flowery mountain glades, where the flowers, those angels' eyes, if I may so express myself, point to heaven and bid us kneel in reverence to the Almighty, to beauty, wisdom, and love? (*Independent People*: 24)

X: 另一方面, 农民走向青翠的牧场, 走进纯净的空气里去, 当他把这些吸入肺部后, 一种不知名的力量会渗透他的四肢, 使肉体 and 灵魂都生气勃勃, 主宰着自然界的平静使他的头脑充满安宁和愉快, 脚下碧绿的小草唤醒了一种美感和几乎产生一种崇敬之情。他的鼻孔感到甜蜜的芬芳, 周身如此幸福地笼罩在一片宁静之中, 这里是舒适与安宁……山坡、幽谷、瀑布和群山都是他孩提时代的朋友, 他将永志不忘……在他们的山谷里, 我们得到庇护, 同时, 它也命令我们庇护不如我们高大强壮者, ”女诗人文, “哪里还有比这安静的、开遍鲜花的林间空地更加充满快乐的所在呢? 这里开的花, 请允许我这样来抒发我的感情, 好像就是天使的眼睛, 它们仰望着苍天, 命令我们怀着崇敬的感情向全能的上帝、向美、像智慧和爱情膜拜。(《独立的人们》: 27)

Literary language comes from everyday language, but at the same time it has unique qualities that set it apart from everyday language and other non-literary language usage. In everyday language, vocabulary is less formal and grammar is simpler. Literary language is also different from the scientific language that we find, for example, in specialized texts about mathematics, physics, chemistry or medicine, which is characterized by clarity, conciseness, objectivity and conventionality. Functionally, literary language is intended to satisfy some particular human need, while everyday language is intended for interpersonal communication, and scientific language is meant to convey knowledge.

As mentioned, the above passage is from a public speech by the Bailiff of Myri's poetess wife, who is educated and always seeks an opportunity to demonstrate her superiority by giving speeches or bringing new ideas to the farmers around her. Bjartur and Rosa's wedding is undoubtedly a good chance for her to give a speech in which she can not only show off her literary prowess, but also express her ideas about the beauty of rural life. Xue and Hua's translation unfortunately fails to convey the sense of beauty by using vocabulary not suited to literary writing. Let us take a closer look at these mistakes:

A. The word “肺部”, translated from “lungs” in the sentence “当他把这些吸入肺部后, 一种不知名的力量会渗透他的四肢”, is usually used in the medical field or at least when we talk about health of lungs as in physical exercise. The first part of the sentence may give the impression of a doctor addressing a patient about a diagnosis or treatment plan.

B. The word “鼻孔”, translated from “nostrils”, immediately elicits a feeling of disgust, and as such would be avoided by a typical Chinese speaker. Such a word would never be expected in a formal speech, especially where speaker intends to create an air of beauty.

C. The word “命令”, translated from “order”, is completely out of line with the context or the atmosphere of the passage, in which the poetess is talking about natural beauty and bucolic idyll. When she mentions the shelter that “the hillsides, the dingles, the waterfalls, and the mountains” provide, she obviously employs personification in order to illustrate a close and harmonious relationship between the people and their surroundings. However, the word “命令” greatly detracts from this context and ultimately the meaning of the original text. “命令” is basically a military term in Chinese. A commander will “命令” his soldiers to fight. A word like this is never used in such a literary context, especially when the writer intends to create a sense of beauty.

These three aspects, if not remedied, will not only affect the reconstruction of the meaning in the target text, but also spoil the beauty expressed in the source text. My translation employs vocabulary in the same register that the source text implies, thereby ensuring the accuracy of the retranslation.

Y: 和城里人不同, 乡村牧民则可以走向翠绿的草地, 呼吸清新纯净的空气, 这种空气沁人心脾, 而此时此刻, 一种不可思议的力量会贯穿他的全身, 令他的身心充满活力。大自然的平静让他的内心充满安宁, 洋溢欢欣。脚下碧绿的草地会唤醒他内心深处美的愉悦, 隐隐然还有一种敬意。当四处都充满了甜蜜的芬芳, 当静谧在他身边幸福地守望, 那是多么惬意悠闲的时光。它们让我们在山谷里享受庇护, 也恳请我们为弱小者提供庇护。”她禁不住反问: “还有比宁静安逸, 山花烂漫的乡村更幸福的所在吗? 如果大家不介意我的用词, 我想说这些花就如同天使的眼睛, 它们仰望着天堂, 同时恳请我们虔诚地跪拜全能的上帝, 跪拜自然之美、跪拜人类的智慧和人间的大爱。”

The following is another instance of translating “order” as “命令”:

S: He ordered his wife to knead some rye-meal dough; some took it, others refused (*Independent People*: 249).

X: 他命令妻子做了些裸麦粉团子; 有几只羊吃了, 有几只还是不吃 (*独立的人们*: 312)。

The source sentence appears to depict a domestic scene in which Bjartur tells his wife to make some rye-meal dough for the lambs. It is true that Bjartur does not show much love or consideration for his wife Rosa, and in some sense Bjartur is the dominant figure in the family. Nevertheless, they are still husband and wife; it is hard for us to imagine that he “orders” his wife in the same way that a commander orders his soldiers on the battlefield. “命令” is so strong and rigid that Chinese readers may be confused by such a word in a passage which describing an interaction between a husband and wife. Chinese indeed has many expressions that carry the meaning of “order”; I chose the word “吩咐”, which is a more neutral and therefore more suitable for the register reconstructed in the target text.

Y: 他吩咐他的妻子揉了些黑麦面团, 有的羊倒是吃了, 但剩下的那些羊就是不吃。

An important aspect of register, field plays a major role in helping a translator identify and select vocabulary appropriate for a certain subject, so that the final translation exactly depicts the context of the original work. Field is one aspect of translation that the translator can control, so it is necessary that they give it careful consideration. We can see from the above analysis that co-translators Xue and Hua did not pay much attention to field, which resulted in the selection of vocabulary inappropriate to the field in question.

Tenor is another important aspect of register, and also plays a crucial role in helping a translator select the right vocabulary for the situation. It is understandable that vocabulary and the degree of formality of vocabulary used in speech may vary according to the relationship between interactants. Furthermore, the affective involvement of interactants and the nature of their interaction also help the translator select vocabulary appropriate to the situation.

In the following example, Xue and Hua show some creativity by translating each of the five senses respectively, which is not done in the source text. This, as I mentioned, is actually allowed

in translation, if we consider the fact that there are differences between English and Chinese.

S: “I have my five senses,” he replied, “and don’t see what need there is for more.”  
(*Independent People*: 33)

X: “我有视、听、嗅、味、触五种官能”他回答说, “除此之外我看不出还有什么别的需要。”(*独立的人们*: 40)

The source text “I have my five senses”, does not list the five senses respectively, while the translation does. I am not quite sure why Xue and Hua have decided to do so, but this addition is not a problem from the perspective of creative translation. However, it creates new problems. 视 (seeing)、听 (hearing)、嗅 (smelling)、味 (tasting)、触 (touching) are often used as general words and are highly formal expressions in Chinese. They are only used in formal speech and never in informal situations. These expressions immediately remind readers of medical writing or formal speech, and are never expected to appear as oral expressions in daily life, except in very rare and special cases. As a matter of fact, the sentence is from a domestic conversation between Bjartur and Rosa. Formal words like 视 (seeing), 听 (hearing), 嗅 (smelling), 味 (tasting) and 触 (touching) are inconceivable in a casual conversation. What I do in my translation is replace them with more common words, which are often found in everyday spoken language:

Y: “我呀, 耳不聋, 眼不花, 能吃能睡, ” 他说, “我不觉得自己缺什么东西。”

The following is another case in which Xue and Hua pay little attention to the relationship between interactants, in this instance the minister and Einar of Undirhlith:

S: “No, your reverence,” cried he, “this is where I am not afraid to tell you, on my own conscience and responsibility, that you have gone too far. It may be true that late Reverend Gudmundur was never very friendly towards me and that he paid little or no attention to the poor religious verses that I wrote, not for praise or fame, but for my own spiritual solace; but though he was very severe on uneducated men, no one needed to be in any doubt as to his creed (*Independent People*: 288).

X: “不, 尊敬的牧师阁下, ”他喊道, “凭着我的良心和责任感, 我敢于对你说: 你走得太远了。要说已故的古德蒙多尔牧师始终对我不很友好, 对我写的拙劣的宗教诗毫不重视, 这可能是真的, 要知道我写诗不是追求赞美或名声, 而是为了安慰我自己的灵魂; 虽然他对缺乏教养的人态度很严峻, 但是, 没有人会对他的信念抱有丝毫的怀疑。”(*独立的人们*: 358)

In this example “your reverence” is translated as “阁下”. The word “阁下” in Chinese is however only used to address national leaders, royalty in Ancient China or in modern countries with a monarchy. The conversation between a local minister and a farmer does not call for such an address as “阁下”. Reading further in the source text, we find that the relationship between the farmer and the local minister is neither close nor estranged. These two contexts, or register elements, determine that the conversation is not formal, and considering the fact Einar of Undirhlith is speaking to the local minister, we perceive at least some degree of respect from the farmer towards the minister (“your reverence”, for example).

Similarly, in the sentence “凭着我的良心和责任感，我敢于对你说：你走得太远了”，“敢于” (translated from “not afraid”) is a very formal word that typically appears in written language or on formal occasions. Since the conversation here is rather casual, there is no need for this word.

I personally regard this as a case of over-translation, in which translators go out of their way to use a formal word in the target language to express what they perceive as a formal word in the source language, when it is in fact inappropriate to the tenor.

It is necessary for a translator to reconstruct all these contexts, or elements of register, so that target language readers can appreciate what is expressed and implied in the source text. In my translation, I use “大牧师” (from “your reverence”) instead of “牧师阁下”, and “我还真不怕跟你说道说道” instead of “我敢于对你说”. I am certain that this remedy improves the readability of the translation. Chinese readers should at least not find anything wrong with this conversation between a farmer and a local minister.

Y: “不不不，我的大牧师，”他大声喊道，“在一点上，我还真不怕跟你说道说道，我想这也是出于我的良心和责任。我觉得吧，你这也太不靠谱了。要说已经过世的古德蒙蒂牧师始终对我不怎么友好，对我写的那些不怎么拿得出手的宗教诗不怎么看得上，或者说压根儿就瞧不上，这话可能是不假，但我写那些诗既不是图谁谁谁能说我个好，也不是图自己能出个什么名，我图的只是精神上的一种安慰。虽说古德蒙蒂牧师对那些没受过什么教育的人的态度是不怎么样，但任何人都没必要怀疑他宣扬的那些信条。

The following example demonstrates Xue and Hua’s lack attention to affective involvement. There appears to be no problem with translating “rest” twice in the source text as “休息”. However, look more closely at the source text, we find that these two “rest[s]” are used in different contexts, specifically in different affective contexts.

S: Troublesome as the mistress Gunnvor may have seemed in living life, she far surpassed her former evil conduct after her burial; she was considered to rest ill in the barrow and walked again at home on her farm. She woke up with her those several men whom she had destroyed, and folk at home in Albogastathir had little rest from disturbance once the nights took to darkening (*Independent People*: 8).

X: 古恩伏尔夫人生前造成的骚乱似乎已经够多的了，然后她埋葬以后的恶行却远远超过了她生前。看来她在坟墓里没有很好地休息，她又回到了她的农场。她把几个被她毁掉的人都唤醒过来，这样，阿尔博亚斯达蒂尔地方的居民一到暮色降临时就被扰乱得几乎不能休息 (*独立的人们*: 7)。

It is admittedly not a serious problem to translate “rest” in both “rest ill in barrow” and in “had little rest from disturbance” as “休息”, but this can be improved if register relations are considered. A basic requirement of Chinese writing is to avoid repetition as much as possible. But here we “休息” (rest) appears twice. Furthermore, “休息” is used in two quite different situations: the first 休息 is used in a negative microcontext (the source words “rest ill” also illustrate this), the second in a neutral microcontext. The context here is apparent: folk at home in Albogastathir are on bad terms with the mistress Gunnvor, who was “troublesome” in life but who “far surpassed her former evil conduct after her burial”. If we take a closer look at the second microcontext, we find that the situation has caused the people of Albogastathir (阿尔博亚斯达蒂尔地方的居民) great annoyance.

With regard to tenor, both translations could be improved. As a matter of fact, the Chinese word “消停” is well suited to expressing negative connotations associated with “rest”, while “不得安宁” appropriately conveys a sense of annoyance with something unpleasant. I make this change in the following translation, which I believe will greatly help Chinese readers understand the meaning of the original sentence.

Y: 古恩沃尔生前给人带来了无尽的麻烦,埋在石堆里后似乎还变本加厉了。有人认为,她在石堆里也未曾消停过,她又回到了她的农场,还将原来被她杀死的人一一唤醒。此后,每当黄昏来临,住在奥伯雅斯塔希的人便会因为他们的亡魂兴风作浪而不得安宁。

Finally, we will look at mode, the third aspect of register. According to Halliday and Hasan, mode is the role that language plays in the interaction. Language can be written or spoken, spontaneous or planned. This provides very useful guidance under which a translator can be more careful when translating a work into a foreign language. In this case I refer to an earlier example.

S: The countryman, on the other hand, walks out to the verdant meadows, into an atmosphere clear and pure, and as he breathes it into his lungs some unknown power streams through his limbs, invigorating body and soul. The peace that reigns in nature fills his mind with calm and cheer, the bright green grass under his feet awakens a sense of beauty, almost of reverence. In the fragrance that is borne so sweetly to his nostrils, in the quietude that broods so blissfully around him, there is comfort and rest... The hillsides, the dingles, the waterfalls, and the mountains are all friends of his childhood, and never to be forgotten... They give us shelter in their valleys and bid us give shelter, too, to those who have neither our size nor our strength. Where,” asked the poetess, “is there bliss so bountiful as in these tranquil, flowery mountain glades, where the flowers, those angels’ eyes, if I may so express myself, point to heaven and bid us kneel in reverence to the Almighty, to beauty, wisdom, and love? (*Independent People*: 24)

X: 另一方面,农民走向青翠的牧场,走进纯净的空气里去,当他把这些吸入肺部后,一种不知名的力量会渗透他的四肢,使肉体 and 灵魂都生气勃勃,主宰着自然界的平静使他的头脑充满安宁和愉快,脚下碧绿的小草唤醒了一种美感和几乎产生一种崇敬之情。他的鼻孔感到甜蜜的芬芳,周身如此幸福地笼罩在一片宁静之中,这里是舒适与安宁.....山坡、幽谷、瀑布和群山都是他孩提时代的朋友,他将永志不忘.....在他们的山谷里,我们得到庇护,同时,它也命令我们庇护不如我们高大强壮者,”女诗人问,“哪里还有比这安静的、开遍鲜花的林间空地更加充满快乐的所在呢?这里开的花,请允许我这样来抒发我的感情,好像就是天使的眼睛,它们仰望着苍天,命令我们怀着崇敬的感情向全能的上帝、向美、像智慧和爱情膜拜。(《独立的人们》: 27-28)

The above passage is from the speech by the Bailiff of Myri’s wife, who seeks any opportunity to show off her status to the farmers around her; the speech therefore must be well planned and written in advance. It is unlikely that the poetess would use medical terms like “肺部”, “四肢” and “鼻孔”, and thereby detract from the quality of the speech she delivers at a wedding ceremony. I believe one way to remedy Xue and Hua’s translation is to try to avoid such words and replace them with such words as “呼吸清新纯净的空气”, “全身” and “充满了甜蜜的芬芳”.

Y: 和城里人不同,乡村牧民则可以走向翠绿的草地,呼吸清新纯净的空气,这种空气

沁人心脾，而此时此刻，一种不可思议的力量会贯穿他的全身，令他的身心充满活力。大自然的平静让他的内心充满安宁，洋溢欢欣。脚下碧绿的草地会唤醒他内心深处美的愉悦，隐隐然还有一种敬意。当四处都充满了甜蜜的芬芳，当静谧在他身边幸福地守望，那是多么惬意悠闲的时光。它们让我们在山谷里享受庇护，也恳请我们为弱小者提供庇护。”她禁不住反问：“还有比宁静安逸，山花烂漫的乡村更幸福的所在吗？如果大家不介意我的用词，我想说这些花就如同天使的眼睛，它们仰望着天堂，同时恳请我们虔诚地跪拜全能的上帝，跪拜自然之美、跪拜人类的智慧和人间的大爱。

When we talk about mode, we must often acknowledge the fact that languages have changed and will continue to change. Some ancient words may still be used in modern times, while many can be said to have fallen out of existence. A good translator takes this into consideration; if not, it may result in translations hard to be understood by TL readers.

S: The crags soar up from the landslides in sheer constellations, and in one place above the fold the mountain is cloven by a gully in the basalt, and down from this gully in spring cascades a waterfall, long and slender (*Independent People*: 9-10).

X: 山崩的地方，巉岩屹立着象城墙上的雉堞，就在羊圈的上方，大山有一处被玄武岩上的一个溪谷所劈开，春天，从这个溪谷喷出一股长而细的小悬泉。(《独立的人们》: 9)

“Waterfall” in the source language is translated as 小悬泉 instead of 瀑布. It is common knowledge for Chinese speakers that 悬泉 was used in ancient Chinese while 瀑布 is used in the modern language. Zhang Jiuling, a poet living in the Tang Dynasty, once mentioned 悬泉 in his “入庐山仰望瀑布水” (Visiting Mount Lu and Watching Waterfall): “绝顶有悬泉，喧喧出烟杪。” (‘A waterfall hangs from the mountain top with noise coming out from among twigs’). The word can be also found in the poems of Mei Yaochen, who lived during the Song Dynasty. In his “Verse on Pond in Jiangshou Garden” (《寄题绛守园池》), he writes, “the waterfall pours down like flying jade in blue” (悬泉泻竇昼未停，飞玉贮蓝光入屏). In fact, the word 悬泉 is not included even in such authoritative dictionaries as the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (5th edition by Shangwu Publishing House: 2007) and the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (by Zhonghua Book Company: 2009), which is proof enough that the word 悬泉 is not used in modern Chinese. To remedy it, we can use the word “瀑布” to replace “悬泉”, thus effectively reproducing the context of the source text.

Y: 而在羊圈上方，大山被一条溪谷分为两半。春天，瀑布从溪谷里飞奔而下，绵长轻柔，引人入胜。

Register as a part of context helps us decide the meaning of a word, expression, passage or even an entire text because it limits the words and expressions available to use in both text and target text. Furthermore, register can play a very important role in judging whether a translation is good or not according to three variables: field, mode and tenor. In this sense, consideration of register can be conducive to the development of translation criticism. To reconstruct the register for the source text, we should consider the three variables of register, all of which are systematically related and intertwined.

In sum, I personally regard register as a part of context that can not only help us understand why different words are used in different situations, but also help us decide what kind of words can

be used for different situations in translating a work from the source language into a target language. Register affords me a different angle from which to reexamine Xue and Hua's translation. Theoretically speaking, it helps me produce a more specific and academic analysis of the translation, and prepare me for more academic exploration in terms of context recognition and reconstruction in literary translation.

### 3.2.6 Violation of Common Sense

I originally intended to include this section under 3.2.1 First language Incompetence, or the category of mistakes that occur when a translator does not consult the source language text, because Chinese readers can detect many such errors even if they have no knowledge of English. I am writing about common sense mistakes in a separate section because first language although they both result from a failure to consult the source language text. They are very different. The former is more easily detected by target language readers, while the latter can only be found with special consideration. Let us start with the following example:

S: That's exactly what they told Jon Arason just before they chopped his head off (*Independent People*: 289).

X: 这正是他们在砍掉了约恩·阿拉逊脑袋时对他说过的话 (*独立的人们*: 360)。

Xue and Hua's translation goes against the context and meaning of the original text. The sequence of actions in the original context is rather clear: 1. They told Jon Arason something; 2. They chopped his head off. But in the translation, the sequence of actions is the other way around: 1. They chopped Jon Arason's head off; 2. They told him something. English usually relies on connectives to show the sequence of actions, while Chinese sometimes does and sometimes does not. The two translators do demonstrate the collocational context of the original by using “时”, a conjunction, and “了”, which is used as a functional word to show that something has been done or completed. However, the two translators depict the actions in the wrong sequence. Apart from this collocational problem, the logic goes against our common sense. If they first chopped Jon Arason's head off, how could they tell him something? Simply translating the source text according to the sequence of actions as it appears there will guarantee common sense in the translation.

Y: 这也正是他们在砍掉约翰·阿拉逊的脑袋前对他说过的话。

Sometimes mistakes of this kind are difficult to detect because they occur in such close proximity to each other within in one sentence, sometimes even within the same fragment of a sentence.

S: She made off down the slope at a sober trot... she broke into a gallop, clumsy and stiff after the confinement of winter... (*Independent People*: 187)

X: 它用稳重的小跑走下山坡.....它突然奔跑起来, 在冬季长期囚禁以后, 步子显得笨拙.....(*独立的人们*: 232-233)

There are some problems with translating “She made off down the slope at a sober trot” into “它用稳重的小跑走下山坡”. Firstly, “小跑” in Chinese is usually used as a verb but seldom as a

noun, which makes “稳重的小跑” a little bit clumsy in Chinese. Secondly, while it’s true that “小跑” can mean “fast walk”, in most cases it means “jog in half steps” or at least gives the impression of “running” (albeit “slow running”). On the other hand, “走” means “walk”, which creates two contradictory contexts within the sentence “它用稳重的小跑走下山坡”, much like we would find in the oxymoronic expression “straight curve”. I use the expression “它迈着稍显沉重的脚步从山坡上慢跑下来” to translate “She made off down the slope at a sober trot”, which avoids the mistake that Xue and Hua make in their translation.

Y: 它迈着稍显沉重的脚步从山坡上慢跑下来……它突然开始奔跑起来，只是冬天的禁锢让它的跑动有些笨拙，也有些僵硬。

Another instance of the same problem appears in Xue and Hua’s translation, which my translation avoids.

S: The horses, tossing their heads and snorting, trotted away farther up the hollow and began grazing (*Independent People*: 404).

X: 两匹马摆动着脑袋，喷喷鼻子，小跑着走进洼地深处吃草去了（*独立的人们*: 500）。

Y: 两匹马摇动着脑袋，喷着鼻息，一路小跑着到洼地深处吃草去了。

The following example shows another kind of error of common sense, which is due to the misunderstanding of the expression “lack of inventiveness”:

S: It is strange what a great liking cats have for old people. They appreciate that lack of inventiveness, rich in security, which is the chief virtue of old age; or was it that they understood the grey in each other, that which lies behind Christianity and behind the soul? (*Independent People*: 272)

X: 真奇怪，猫怎么总是非常喜欢老人。不知是否因为它们喜欢老年人的主要美德：缺乏创造力和富于安全感；还是因为老人和猫互相都懂得隐藏在基督教后面和心灵深处的那种灰色（*独立的人们*: 339）。

Two problems appear in the translation.

Firstly, Thompson uses “the chief virtue of old age”, i.e., “lack of inventiveness” and “rich in security”. However, within the Chinese cultural context, “缺乏创造力” (translated from “lack of inventiveness”) would never be regarded as a virtue under any circumstance. This problem arises from the misunderstanding of “inventiveness”. The word “inventiveness” can be defined as “of, relating to, or characterized by invention” or “being adept or skillful at inventing; creative”. My personal interpretation is that the quality of stability or unchangeableness that makes a lack of inventiveness a virtue of old age. I think this is also true of English. Nobody would ever think that a lack of inventiveness was a good thing in Anglophone cultures either. Out of context, it sounds like it means dullness or stupidity. It only takes on this meaning of stability in the specific context.

Secondly, “老人和猫互相都懂得隐藏在基督教后面和心灵深处的那种灰色” is a strange translation, especially the last word, “灰色”, translated directly from “grey”. Does the original sentence really mean both old people and cats like the colour grey? According to my knowledge of English, the answer is no; common sense and logic tell us that “grey” is something that both cats

and old people share. We could suppose that old people like the colour grey, but hardly cats. Furthermore, that the colour grey lies “behind Christianity and behind the soul”, which makes the translation “灰色” very unusual.

To avoid the mistakes mentioned, we must define the expression “lack of inventiveness” according to the co-text, or the expression “virtue”. I translate “lack of inventiveness” as “无动为大”, which means “stability, or the quality of being not subject to sudden or extreme change or fluctuation”, and is often regarded as a chief virtue of old age.

Y: 很奇怪, 猫为什么会如此喜欢老人。或许它们喜欢的是无动为大, 喜欢的是平稳安逸, 而这两样可都是老人最大的优点。也或许, 他们能相互理解隐藏在基督教义背后和一个人心灵深处的冥冥愁绪。

### 3.2.7 Lack of Poetic Quality

*Independent People* contains many poems of various lengths and styles, which affords me some insight into how they appear in Laxness’ original Icelandic text. However, all of the poems translated into Chinese are done so in the relatively loose structure characteristic of modern Chinese poetry. There are no strict limitations to the form of such modern Chinese poems, which I believe is one of reasons Xue and Hua chose to translate the poems in *Independent People* in their Chinese version. To their credit, Xue and Hua attempt to keep their translation of the poems close to the style of classical Chinese poetry, which is quite different from modern Chinese poetry.

What is more, Xue and Hua attempt to achieve a balance between English poems and Chinese poems by following the rhyming schemes of both English and classical Chinese poetry. For example, they keep a rhyme in the first two lines of a poem, which is a feature found widely in classical Chinese poetry. However, Xue and Hua follow the rhyme scheme of English poetry by changing the rhyme in the following two lines and may change further if more lines are added to the poem. It is true that there are cases in which the rhyme changes in classical Chinese poems, but this is not typical of classical Chinese poetry. I tentatively translated a few poems in *Independent People* according to the rhyme scheme of English poetry, but I translate most of poems in *Independent People* according to the Chinese rhyme scheme – particularly that of classical poetry – because I believe that these translated poems are intended for an audience of Chinese readers. Chinese readers, especially those with little or no knowledge of English, may wonder if what they are reading is indeed poetry at all, because it is so different from the typical Chinese poems which they are familiar with. Again, we encounter the question of what strategy to use when translating poetry into a foreign language. Do we preserve the form of the source poem, or translate according to target language poetry? Or, as some scholars ask, do we adhere to a policy of foreignization or domestication (Zhao Wenlan, Wang Hongyue, 2003:112; Chen Xiaoqin, 2006:118; Wu Shurong, 2011:143) when translating poems? This may be a difficult question to answer, because translating poetry is a personal choice, and the translator of course chooses their own best strategy. What is more, any strategy has its own pros and cons. While “perfect” translations of poetry may exist in theory, they are hard to find considering the individual nature of poetry and great difference between English and Chinese poetry. I personally believe that translations of poetry should replicate the form of target-language poetry; after all, target-language readers are the intended audience, not scholars of poetry.

Analyzing Xue and Hua’s poetry translations from the perspective of translation criticism

presents challenges, due to the fact that poetry is so different from other genres of literature, and individual translators may each have their unique ways of dealing with poetry. In this section I will provide my own translations based on my personal experience in composing and translating poems. I always adhere to the guideline that a poet should translate poetry in a way that ensures that target-language readers will accept the translations. Furthermore, I am deeply convinced that aesthetic standards, in addition to phonological, grammatical (i.e. diction and syntax) and semantic standards, should figure prominently in how poetry is translated; translating a poem in terms of form alone is meaningless.

The following poem is taken from the chapter “A Day in the Woods”. The rhyme scheme in the source poem is abcb. Xue and Hua attempt to strike a balance between the English language poems (translated from the Icelandic) and the Chinese poems in their translation. They try to keep the rhyme scheme by creating a rhyme in the second line and fourth line, but in fact break the rhyme scheme at the same time by creating a rhyme for the first line and third line.

- S: Stern the struggle, but as brothers  
 Shout the slogan, unaffrighted:  
 “Live for Iceland, work for Iceland!  
 Stand we in the strife united!” (*Independent People*: 53)
- X: 我们不怕斗争多么严峻,  
 象兄弟一样高呼口号, 奋勇前进:  
 为冰岛而劳动, 为冰岛而生存!  
 屹立不动, 团结紧紧!” (*独立的人们*: 67)

A poem is a poem. It is far more than a structure of sentences appearing in separate lines. A traditional poem has its intrinsic character and structure, including distinctive diction, style, rhythm and musicality. The translation here shows that the translators attempt to realize these qualities in their translation, but unfortunately the structure doesn't achieve the correct rhythm of a traditional Chinese poem. The last word of the second line, “进” (jìn), and the last word of the fourth line, “紧” (jǐn), are pronounced the same although they have different tones according to the Chinese Pinyin (phonological) system. This is not an appropriate choice, even if not absolutely unacceptable in Chinese poetry. The usual method of rhyming in Chinese is to find words with sound combinations of different initials and the same finals. Take Li Bai's well-known poem “Homesickness in a Silent Night” as an example.

静夜思 by 李白

床前明月光  
 疑是地上霜  
 举头望明月  
 低头思故乡

“Homesickness in a Silent Night” by Li Bai

Before my bed the silver moonbeams spread

I wonder if it is the frost upon the ground.  
I see the moon so bright when raising my head,  
Withdrawing my eyes my nostalgia comes around.

(Translated by Tu An and Tu Di)

Phonologically, a Chinese character consists of two parts: initial 声母, which is similar to an English consonant, and final 韵母 which is similar to an English vowel. In the modern Chinese Pinyin or phonological system, a syllable is composed of one initial followed by one final. In this poem, we find three characters at the ends of lines 1, 3 and 4: 光 (guāng), 双 (shuāng) and 乡 (xiāng) rhyme on the same final, [ang], with different initials. This is rather common in ancient Chinese poetry. Sometimes it is also possible for four characters at the end of all four lines to rhyme on the same final. This is different from English poems in which the two rhyming words “unaffrighted” and “united” end on the same combination of vowel and consonants, [ted], although sometimes they are spelt differently (like -ighted and -ited). Obviously, Xue and Hua attempt to keep the original rhyme scheme (not exactly, however, as the last words in line 1 and line 3 do not rhyme), but the fact that they choose the same pronunciation to rhyme is probably not a good decision.

Personally, I prefer to translate poetry according to the Chinese tradition, particularly the classical tradition where possible. I change the rhyme scheme in the source poem so that I can use the same rhyme throughout the stanza. The rhyme scheme I chose for my translation is a common one in classical Chinese poetry, especially those quatrains (I mean quatrains in *Independent People*, which are close to very popular Chinese quatrains).

Y: 备受煎熬，所幸有你同胞，  
无所畏惧，我们高呼口号：  
“生为冰岛，奋斗亦为冰岛，  
风雨同舟，你我不屈不挠！”

In the following example, Xue and Hua keep the rhyme in the first three lines but the last line breaks with the scheme; this is usually unacceptable in classical Chinese poems. We may leave the first line or the third line unrhymed, but never the fourth. In my translation, I chose different words to preserve the consistency of the rhyme.

S: Grim he waded seas of blood,  
Dealing death with baleful blows;  
Hewed off heads till none withstood,  
Round him piles of corpses rose.

(*Independent People*: 173)

X: 他冷酷地涉过了血的海洋，  
以无情的打击制造了死亡；  
砍下了颗颗人头，无人再敢反抗，  
他的四周早已是积尸成山。

(*独立的人们*: 214)

Y: 血流已成河，英雄冷峻趟其间，  
招招皆凶狠，死神频频在召唤。  
尸首分两端，试看谁人还当前，  
满眼回望处，尸骸早已堆成山。

The following poem is from the chapter “Ballad Poetry”, in which Bjartur finds himself in a great storm during a trip to find his lost lamb. Facing hunger and exhaustion, Bjartur resorts to reciting poems to himself so that he does not fall asleep and die in the freezing weather. The following poem is about a young queen who is disappointed by the lack of action in the marriage bed on account of the king’s advanced age. Her eyes eventually fall on the king’s son, Grímur the Noble, and she falls so deeply in love with this princely figure that she can neither eat nor sleep. She eventually resolves to go to him at night in his chamber. Of the aged king, his father, she speaks in the most derisive of terms (retold according to *Independent People*):

S: Of what use to red-blood maid  
Sap of such a withered blade?  
Or to one so sore in need,  
Spine of such a broken reed?

(*Independent People*: 95)

X: 充满活力的少女，她的饥渴，  
枯叶的汁液难以止遏；  
多么急迫呀，她的需要，  
从破烂的芦苇身上岂能达到？

(*独立的人们*: 119)

Xue and Hua again attempt to keep the original rhyme scheme, and successfully use 渴 (kě) and 遏 (è) to rhyme on [e] in first two lines, while 要 (yào) and 到 (dào) rhyme on [ao] in the last two lines. However, the translation does not exactly express the meaning of the original poem due to a misinterpretation of several expressions. First of all, I do not understand where the translation 枯叶的汁液难以止遏 comes from. If we back-translate it, the translation should be: “Sap of such a withered blade can hardly be stopped.” I do not feel that this translation adequately expresses the first two lines of the original poem. “Sap of such a withered blade” is a metaphor for the aged king’s impotence. This also goes for “spine of such a broken reed”. The literal translation of “破烂的芦苇” shows the original image in the context but fails to convey the metaphorical meaning. The expression “broken reed” in fact comes from the Bible, and in modern usage refers to a person who cannot be relied upon. Secondly, the rhyme scheme is not in line with typical Chinese poetry. The last word “到” in the last line is a fourth-tone character, which violates the basic standard of classical Chinese poetry, according to which the last word should be a first- or second-tone word. To reconstruct the poetic context of the source poem, I translate “sap of such a withered blade” as “枯枝败叶他老态龙钟”. In doing so I not only preserve the metaphor, but also explicitly convey the metaphor’s meaning. I use the same strategy to translate “spine of such a broken reed” as “泥猪瓦狗叹黔驴技穷”. In order to achieve a typical Chinese rhyme scheme in the target-language poem, I end the last line (and therefore the entire poem) on “穷”, a second-tone word.

Y: 青春妙龄我又有何用，  
枯枝败叶他老态龙钟。  
如饥似渴恨情欲汹涌，  
泥猪瓦狗叹黔驴技穷。

In the next short poem, each line is a uniform length of four words.

S: Fearful for his flock,  
Little light he knows;  
Frozen the fells mock,  
Fallen the one rose.

(*Independent People*: 107)

X: 他为他的羊群担心，  
它们的命运，他毫不知情；  
突然足履沼泽的冰凌，  
一朵玫瑰花已经凋零。

(*独立的人们*: 134)

“Forms have meanings”, as Gaudi Kristmannsson once stated, “They often indicate fixed meanings: An epic contains certain structures which form the content according to particular rules” (2005:21). For Chinese readers, poems, especially traditional Chinese poems, have fixed form. Two most widely used forms are 5-character lines and 7-character lines. This produces among Chinese readers a strong impression that 5-character lines and 7-character lines are traditional poems or at least poems in Chinese traditional form. The source poem in the above example is characterized by its unity. The rhythm of the original poem in its four-word lines immediately reminds Chinese readers of classical Chinese poems in which each line contains five or seven characters. Xue and Hua translate the poem in a relatively loose structure, which can be found in modern poems like Tagore’s. As a matter of fact, most classical Chinese poems have five or seven characters in one line. Since each line in this poem has four words, which I believe is equivalent in some way with classical Chinese poems. This is actually in line with Kristmannsson’s viewpoint that “forms can be translated” although “different forms have different values” (2005:21). Translating the source poem from English into Chinese provides me an opportunity to keep this context, or form, in the target text. It is not clear whether Xue and Hua are aware of this context because their translation of the poems does not convey it. In my translation, I choose to reconstruct this context and translate the source poem in the form of a classical Chinese poem. I must emphasize that few modern poets compose in the classical Chinese style. It is of course a great challenge for me to translate the source poem this way. It requires time and energy, but I believe it is a worthwhile endeavour. For both Chinese readers and students of ancient Chinese literature, classical Chinese poetry has always been regarded as a treasure, and it enjoys an unparalleled status in Chinese literature.

Y: 我心忧羊群，  
何处觅踪影；  
荒原雪纷纷，

玫瑰已凋零。

The following poem is another case in point in which we find six words in each line. Xue and Hua do not depict this special context, while I preserve it in my translation:

S: Wisely the Whimbrel tunes her lay,  
Plaintive the plover calling her lover;  
From southern seas wheeling his way,  
Glides the grey gull crying above.

(*Independent People*:186)

X: 麻鹬啼啭着聪明的歌声，  
    鸻鸟哀怨地呼唤着爱人；  
    来自南海，盘旋着开辟路径，  
    灰鸥鸣叫着在天空滑行。

(*独立的人们*: 232)

Y: 麻鹬轻啼声迷人，  
    金鸻伤心是为君。  
    回旋不舍别南海，  
    鸥鸟飞处泪纷纷。

A Chinese reader's ability to read a foreign poem in a typical Chinese form is highly dependent on the translator's intentions, or, in many cases, the translator's ability to write poetry.

The structure of the following poem is different from what we commonly see in Icelandic or English poetry. What makes it special is that each stanza begins with one word, and that single word occupies an independent line. This is somewhat reminiscent of two-and-half talk, a peculiar Chinese art form in which the first two sentences are normal while the last one ends with just one single word. Strictly speaking, it is hard to say whether two-and-half talk is considered poetry, but since we also find some Icelandic and English poems with peculiar structure, we may tentatively translate them into a peculiar form in Chinese, which is similar to the original.

S: Fairest  
    Of the lovely company  
    Of maidens sweet and wise;  
Rarest  
    Thy tongue's sweet symphony,  
    The glance of thy dewy eyes.

(*Independent People*: 331)

X: 可爱的少女一大群  
    美丽又聪颖，  
    你是其中最美的人；  
    你那美妙的、音乐般的声音，

目光似清露般明净，  
你是位难得的佳人。

(*独立的人们*: 413)

Xue and Hua do not make any attempt to change the form of the original poems, and in previous translations they always try to preserve the original style in their rhyme. What detracts from the readability of the translation is that the same line in two stanzas is of two different lengths. The fact that “美丽又聪颖” (five characters) is so different from “目光似清露般明净” (eight characters) in length may give a Chinese reader the impression that these lines belong to two different poems. We must admit that the idiosyncrasies of an Icelandic or English poem are hard to translate into a target language poem, but it is still possible to find a poetic form in the target language that resembles the form of the source-language poem. I do not insist that a foreign poem can only be translated using a typical Chinese form, but it is worth an attempt where circumstances permit.

Y: 漂亮姑娘千千万  
可爱迷人又能干。  
于我心中只有你  
似天仙。

龙言凤语比蜜甜，  
目若悬珠意绵绵。  
于我心中只有你  
最稀罕。

It has always been the pursuit of poets to imbue their work with aesthetic beauty. The reader receives this beauty not only through the poet's words, but also through the positioning and arrangement of these beautiful words. Other elements that we have discussed, for example, rhyme scheme, also play an important role in realising a poem's artistic beauty. Furthermore there may also exist so-called artistic conception (意境 in Chinese). This is an abstract idea, but we encounter it when reading poetry.

Chinese traditional poetry, or classical Chinese poetry, cultivates a special aesthetic beauty by using either five or seven characters in a quatrain. A five-character quatrain is reminiscent of a waltz signature in music, which gives a sense of comfort and relaxation. A seven-character quatrain gives an impression of a quadruple-time musical composition. In order to achieve aesthetic beauty, poets may break grammatical and even logical rules. This is widely found in modern Icelandic, English and Chinese poetry. However, it remains my firm belief that the aesthetic beauty of a poem is primarily realized through form. For this reason, I translate many of the poems in *Independent People* using the classical Chinese form.

The following poem is from the chapter “Grim on Guard”. Gvendur is to leave for America. He wants to give all of the sheep under his name to his sister, Asta Sollilja. He obviously has great sympathy for his sister, who lives a life that would have been deemed immoral at the time. Bjartur wants Gvendur to recite his poem to Asta Sollilja.

S: Grim on guard where mountains loom

Palely through their hazy shroud,  
 There rears a rock in frowning gloom,  
 Black and sullen, scowling, proud.

No lovely blossom in its lee  
 Seeks that gloom to dissipate.  
 Its flower is fled. Accursed be  
 The Norns that rule its fate.

(*Independent People*: 396)

X:

漫漫的雾幕后出现山岭朦胧，  
 一块岩石耸立着，满脸怒容，  
 它拗黑、阴沉、愤怒而骄傲，  
 坚韧不拔地守卫着，毫不动摇。

可爱的花朵已不在它身边，  
 可以把重重阴霾驱散。  
 花儿已消逝，无处找寻，  
 你该受诅咒，司命的诺恩女神。

(《独立的人们》: 490)

On one hand, I appreciate the attempt by Xue and Hua, who, to a certain extent, try to follow the rhyme scheme of the source poem in which the ending word rhymes with the one in every other line (rhyme scheme of ababcdcd in the source poem has become aabbccdd in Xue and Hua's translation). Here, I agree with Gaudi Kristmannsson, who regards translation as a "necessary negation of mimesis — not even an imitation of a 'true' reality" (2005: 44). I understand Xue and Hua want to show the structure of the source poem, which is of course a compromise. But what I can't understand is why they do not keep exactly the rhyme scheme of the source poem. Besides, the rhyme scheme in their translation is not something Chinese readers can understand because it is not a typical one in traditional Chinese poems. As a Chinese reader, I may just regard it as simply a translation of a poem, but not a real poem. In other words, without the context of translation, I will not regard it as a poem although seemingly it has the form of a poem with separated lines. A translator should always bear in mind that target readers are not expected to read the source text to decide whether it is a poem or not. It is a translator's responsibility to make it possible that target readers know it is a poem not only because of its form but also because of its artistic value, or as Gaudi Kristmannsson says, "a linguistic reformulation of a truth manifested in the unity of experience and representation" (ibid).

On the other hand, I would say the translation by Xue and Hua lacks something important in the source poem. It is the special tragic beauty which is conveyed through words like "frowning", "black", "sullen", "scowling" and so on. This particular poem is about the tragedy of Bjartur's life, having driven Asta Sollilja away. He is the rock and Asta Sollilja is the flower. Throughout the novel, Asta Sollilja suffers greatly from her birth, which I understand to be a reflection of her mother's life in a sense. When Bjartur loses his house at the end of the novel due to his inability to repay a loan,

Asta Sollilja accompanies her father to a shabby and long forsaken house. Xue and Hua's translation succeeds in bringing us the sense of tragedy, but the target-language poem lacks the tragic beauty of the source-language poem.

In my translation, I take advantage of the form of classical Chinese poetry to emphasise this tragic beauty.

Y: 薄雾似纱罩群山，  
大石耸立展愁颜，  
蒙尘依旧心气高，  
我自守望心不变。

石上再无花娇艳，  
阴郁惨淡怎驱散？  
芬芳已随风远去，  
奈何花仙亦蒙冤。

### 3.3 Summary

So far, I have collected from Xue and Hua's translation around two hundred translation cases, in which I identify mistakes of various kinds. For the convenience of discussion, I put them into seven categories: First language Incompetence, Lexical Fault, Irrelevant Collocation, Ungrammaticality, Misplacement in Register, Violation of Common Sense, and Lack of Poetic Quality.

In the category First language Incompetence, I mainly analyze those mistakes that Xue and Hua have made due to inadequacy in expressing ideas in their own first language. Some of these mistakes, as I understand, can be avoided through care and consideration, while others are harder to avoid because it is the translator's responsibility to decide whether, how and to what extent they will translate a work. In the category Lexical Fault, I examine mistakes concerning words, the basic element of a language. One problem for the translators is that they often translate a word according to the wrong definition, without considering the context in which it appears. A possible reason for this is heavy reliance on a dictionary, especially an English-Chinese dictionary more than thirty years old, which often lists only one or two possible definitions of a word. It is common knowledge now that what a dictionary provides are in fact possible or potential definitions of a word. The meaning of a word is context-dependent. In the category Irrelevant Collocation, I focus on those mistakes that result from the lack of agreement between predicative verbs and their objects. In a certain sense, these wrongly used collocations greatly affect the readability and value of the translation. At the same time, it is evidence that Xue and Hua are not skilled enough to produce adequate collocations in their first language in the source-language text. In the category Misplacement in Register, I point out that the translators lose sight of the register; namely, they do not pay attention to the fact that certain words are to be used in certain situations in the target-language text. In the category Violation of Common Sense, I attempt an analysis of mistakes that can be identified using common knowledge. Finally, in the category Lack of Poetic Quality, I list several mistakes in Xue and Hua's translation from the perspective of phonology, semantics, rhyme scheme, traditional external form of poetry and aesthetic beauty.

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As mentioned, some mistakes in this section are the result of carelessness, others from the translators' lack of competence in the first language. Considering that the translation is over thirty years old, I should emphasise that some of these mistakes are understandable. It was a time when the Chinese government had just implemented a policy of opening up to the outside world. Most people had no knowledge of Iceland whatsoever, let alone the literature and culture of this remote country. In addition, although English-Chinese dictionaries were accessible at the time, most of them only provided basic definitions, which meant that they were not a particularly reliable tool for translators. Furthermore, it is impossible for any dictionary to provide all possible definitions of a word. From the point of view of context, I must say that co-translators Xue and Hua do not produce appropriate contexts in the target language, and so Chinese readers miss the meaning of the source language text.

Collecting mistakes from Xue and Hua's translation of Halldór Laxness' *Independent People* is of course not my final aim. This is in fact the first step, which leads to my theoretical observation of context recognition and reconstruction in literary translation. The second step, as put forward in Katharina Reiss' *Translation Criticism*, should be an analysis of these mistakes within a broader context. The third step then should be to provide remedies for the mistakes analyzed.

Presenting my own translations as remedies for Xue and Hua's mistakes does not mean that my remedies are the only perfect translations of the source text. Translating is a highly personal experience in which the translator decides individually on an appropriate translation strategy. There may be great disparity in opinions regarding how to translate literary works into a foreign language and how to comment on translated works, but some basic notions should be put forward so that translation can be performed more rationally and translation criticism can be practised more objectively. Both of these issues have been widely discussed within the fields of translation studies and translation criticism. I owe my gratitude to many ideas and theories from these two fields that help me not only analyze the mistakes in Xue and Hua's translation of Halldór Laxness' *Independent People*, but also help me provide my own remedies for these mistakes. Now it is time to go further and explore these two fields in greater depth, and I expect that I can contribute to them with my efforts in observing and what literary contexts can be recognized and reconstructed in literary translation, and how to achieve this.

## Chapter 4 Recognition and Reconstruction of Context: Theoretical Suggestions

### 4.0 Introduction

Based on what I have discussed in previous chapters, I will mainly deal with three questions in this chapter. Firstly, why should we reconstruct contexts in literary translation? Secondly, is it possible to reconstruct contexts in literary translation? And thirdly, what contexts can we reconstruct and how do we reconstruct them in literary translation?

The first question I want to briefly deal with is: why do we need reconstruct context in literary translation? This question is in fact based on the question of why we need context in literary appreciation, which has been discussed extensively and thoroughly among scholars of literature (Gaganpreet, 2014; Abdullah, 2015; Xiao, 2017) as well as within linguistics (Stalnaker, 1972, Jef Veschuereen, 2000, Brown & G. Yule, 2000, Saeed, 2000; Mey, 2001) and translation studies (Peter Newmark, 1988; Roger T. Bell, 1991; Peter Auer, 1996; Eugene, A. Nida, 2001, Alan, 2010). Xiao mentions two benefits of contexts. One is that context helps the reader infer what is not expressed in words (言外之意), while the other is that it helps the reader infer meaning contrary to the words' explicit meaning (反话, similar to irony in English) (Xiao, 2017:36-37); this is a very traditional view of context. Xiao takes the story of dying Daiyu in *Dreams of the Red Chamber* (one of China's four great classical novels) as an example. Daiyu and Baoyu are two young people, who love each other, but Baoyu eventually marries another girl and Daiyu is extremely depressed. Her unfinished words “宝玉，你好...” before she dies can only be understood with the help of context (Xiao, 2017: 37). “你好” is commonly used either as a greeting or literally “you are nice”. In this case “好” is used as an adjective. But since “好” can be used either as an adjective or as an adverb, the unfinished words can also be understood as “you are extremely...”. This immediately triggers the reader's imagination, which then triggers their ability to contextualize. Contexts, including the reader's personal knowledge, the rules governing linguistic elements and their combinations, the linguistic mechanisms that produce meaningful sentences from these combined elements, common cultural knowledge, and all of the reader's knowledge of the novel up to this point, all eventually play a cooperative role in helping the reader understand what Daiyu really wants to say at the end of her life. The specific word that might come to mind may be different from one reader to the next, but it will undoubtedly be one that is contrary to “好” (“nice”).

Looking more closely at context, we find that context is actually an inseparable part of meaning. This is not only to say that meaning is context bound, or that context determines meaning, but also that context is an innate part of meaning, or to take it even further, as Culler says, “context always comes first, directing the process of meaning construction from the very beginning” (2007:169). In general, dealing with meaning is always the highest priority in translation. Scholars may have different rhetorical formulations, but the core idea is almost the same. Andy Bayu Nugroho believes that “translation is an effort of finding equivalent meaning of a text in the second language”, although we know that it is in fact very hard to reconstruct “equivalent meaning” in translation (2007:66). Surjeet defines translation as “the comprehension of the meaning of a text and the subsequent production of an equivalent text, likewise called a “translation” that communicates the

same message in another language” (2014:125). The question now is very clear. Since context is an inseparable part of meaning and meaning is the core element to be reconstructed in translation, it is then reasonable to say that translation involves not only reconstruction of meaning in TT but also reconstruction of context. In other words, a more logical and reasonable way to deal with translation should be understanding the contexts and meaning of ST and reconstructing both of them in TT.

Some may ask why, since meaning is translated, a translator should reconstruct contexts of the source text in the target text. The answer is that context is a part of meaning and should therefore be translated when meaning is translated. The problem of meaning, however, is that it is a very complicated phenomenon with many elements. General linguistics has long dealt with meaning and achieved a lot in this regard. Subfields of linguistics such as phonetics, lexicography, semantics and pragmatics have contributed to the exploration of meaning and the relationship between words, referents and meaning. Leech (1981) classifies seven types of meaning: conceptual meaning, thematic meaning, and associative meaning; connotative meaning, style meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, and collocative meaning (Leech, 1981; Sandra, 2019). Nida also introduces linguistic meaning, referential and emotive meaning (Nida, 1964) in his *Towards a Science of Translating*. There is also the problem of ambiguity in translating; a translator may encounter multiple meanings, or polysemes and homonyms (Meral, 2017: 1). It is a plain fact that a word can have one meaning in a certain context while in some cases a word may have a combination of several meanings, possibly with one dominant meaning. Leech, Nida and Meral illustrate a point on which translation scholars have long agreed; meaning is characterized by multiplicity and complicity, and it is hard to fully reconstruct context in the target text. Seemingly, at least, it is a fact that we must simply accept. Chinese scholars made this argument even in very ancient times. *易传·系辞上* (Companion to Changes • Appendix One, English version by Zhao Yanchun, 1986; *The Yi Ching: The Book of Changes*, James Legge, 1996), which possibly dates back to 1600 B.C., is a book which is not universally known among the general population in China, but most Chinese people are familiar with the expression “书不尽言，言不尽意” (‘Books cannot include all words and words cannot express all one intends to say’), which comes from that book. It is clear that we cannot expect to be able to translate everything in the source text, because the source text words do not necessarily express everything that the author intends to express. This makes reading between the lines necessary, because some meanings are not immediately or directly expressed in words. This also raises a significant issue: we may have to make sure that we can preserve the manner of how contexts in ST are organized and transfer this manner to TT.

Furthermore, translation itself entails loss from the very beginning. Translation is fundamentally a change from a source language into a target language and this change is essentially the loss of the source language. However, the fact that meaning is complicated and translation inherently entails loss does not mean that we cannot do anything about it. Context, a natural element of meaning, can play a crucial role in helping readers detect covert, subtle meanings in a text. This is a problem that has been discussed within literary theory, traditional and modern linguistics, and translation studies. However, a breakthrough is needed to ensure that context is allowed to play the role in translation that it deserves.

To further answer the question of why we need to reconstruct context in translation, I would like to return to the example of Daiyu’s unfinished words. Chinese readers, who share the same linguistic and cultural background as the author, may easily understand and appreciate these words’ hidden meaning (Jonathan Culler, 1997), even when the words are unfinished. However, we

immediately encounter a problem when cross-cultural reading is involved. A foreign reader without any knowledge of the Chinese language and culture is not expected to understand this if they read the translated novel without the help of appropriate contexts. In previous chapters, particularly in Chapter Three, I have also noted that the great difference between Icelandic and Chinese culture makes the reconstruction of context necessary. Let me take “summerhouse” as an example. Obviously, as far as “summerhouse” is concerned, a modern Icelandic reader may not imagine the same context as a reader of Laxness’ era, let alone Chinese readers who do not know anything about Icelandic culture seventy or eighty years ago. Xue and Hua are no exception. When they translated *Independent People* into Chinese, access to written sources about Iceland was rather limited in China. I fully understand now that some mistakes in their translation must be due to their ignorance of Icelandic culture, which is itself a very important context in helping readers understand *Independent People*.

Since context is so crucial in translation and it is clear that contexts must be reconstructed so that target text readers can use source text contexts to understand what the source text author wants to convey, we must answer the question of whether it is possible to reconstruct contexts in literary translation. On the surface it seems like a fairly easy question; as we have discussed, context is not only a tool to help us understand meaning, but also is a part of meaning. The possibility of reconstructing context in literary translation is in fact neither obvious nor easy, as context is indeed very complicated – no less so than meaning. In the following section, I will explain this from several angles.

It is true that difference and diversity, or as Sanford Budick writes, “alterity” or “otherness” (1996:1) characterize our planet, but commonplace or “yoking definiteness”, to use Aleida Assmann’s term (*ibid*), is always present to keep the world connected. This is natural and at the same time important because it enables people all around the world to engage with each other. The entire course of human history up to this moment and the common space that we all occupy determine that we share the same sky with the same planets around us. This knowledge may lead us to assume that we do not have to reconstruct or translate context in literary translation and this perhaps is one of reasons why we have focused on the translation of meaning for rather a long time. The fact that these phenomena all go by different names around the world doesn’t mean that the experience is not universal, and this universal experience provides a sound basis for interpersonal exchange and communication all over the world. History has proven again and again that exchange, whether political, economic or cultural, always benefits mutual understanding among nations and cultures despite fundamental differences in terms of mentality, knowledge and customs, social systems and values. In talking about language and culture, Reiss and Vermeer believe:

People see their worlds like a refracted light through a prism. The refractions may overlap. There is a refraction shared by all humans which depends on their biological and physiological disposition.

(Reiss and Vermeer, 2014: 23)

The clear and simple fact alone that context is a part of the source text can explain why it is possible to reconstruct context in literary translation. In other words, context is translatable if literature is translatable. Untranslatability of context, like untranslatability in literature, is something that always exists and that we cannot avoid in literary translation. However, untranslatability of

context has not prevented and will not prevent us from translating literature. So-called untranslatability in some sense only reveals the basic fact that there is difference and diversity among languages and cultures.

In their work *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action*, Reiss and Vermeer regard “the use of human verbal language and its immediate derivatives” as “verbal action, as opposed to ‘non-verbal action’”, and believe “one type of action or product may be converted into another” (Katharina, Hans, 2014: 21). The use of context, an aspect of language, can then be “converted into another”. In translation, context in a source text, whether overt or covert, should be and can be understood by a translator and then reconstructed in a target text. In this process, the translated context is then the product of the action of reconstructing context. From another point of view, this shows that contexts can be translated or reconstructed in literary translation.

Globalization and cultural exchange, especially translation and the internet, have greatly contributed to the formation of global conventions. While we can hardly say that these global conventions have replaced culturally specific ones, they have to a great extent allowed us to overcome communication problems that create obstacles in understanding culturally specific conventions. Modern history, in which technology and innovation play ever more important roles, shows that people around the world are now better able to understand each other than ever before. Modern technology (radio, television and internet, for example) provides more means to disseminate information, ideas, thoughts, and even ways of life to nearly all corners of the world, no matter how remote. Globalization allows people to enjoy unprecedented convenience due to the movement and exchange of goods, services, musical performance, sports, and other practices. Pepper was introduced to China around four hundred years ago and is now one of China’s most popular spices. Coffee was unknown to most Chinese people as recently as only forty or fifty years ago, but despite the enduring popularity of tea in China, has become something that many Chinese people cannot do without. These two examples obviously influence Chinese people. In fact, more and more young Chinese people choose to study abroad, and China has become the world’s largest source of international students. Interdependence and exchange allow people around the world to better understand not only foreign languages but also cultures. Let me take the example of the summerhouse again. A summerhouse, or holiday home, used to be unknown to most Chinese people, especially before the so-called Cultural Revolution. Nowadays, however, many Chinese people are familiar with these concepts, and as a matter of fact homestays are becoming more and more common in China, some of which even have very luxurious facilities. Leisure has become a context common to ordinary people in both Iceland and China. When people read foreign literature, they gain new knowledge and will not regard the concepts they read about as “foreign” when they encounter them again. Chinese readers may not have knowledge of Icelandic culture, but with the reconstruction of relevant contexts, it is still possible to present this new information in a way that Chinese readers can understand. Of course, the translator plays a very crucial role here because it is the translator who is expected to reconstruct the relevant source text contexts in the target text.

The new science of memory can also help us to understand the possibility of context reconstruction in literary translation. As Gabriel says, with the development of science and technology, “the task of preserving the past is simpler than ever before”. He believes furthermore that “the existence of a universal media culture threatens previous forms of popular collective memory” (Gabriel, 1996:265). It is true that increasingly extensive cultural exchange has allowed people all around the globe not only to get to know different cultures, but also understand them and

even accept them. This also explains why “the blurring of cultural boundaries obscures the task of translation” (Gabriel, 1996:265). A translator can take great advantage of this memory, whether in the form of literature, audio, arts, or video (including television shows and movies), to understand the source text context and reconstruct them in the target text. With this memory, there is less and less concern about whether target text readers are able to understand source text contexts that have been reconstructed by a translator. Forty years or so ago, Iceland was completely foreign to most Chinese people, but Chinese tourism to Iceland has increased dramatically in recent years. Their memory of Iceland, not necessarily from their own travels, and their desire to travel to that beautiful place in their memory, has inspired them to visit Iceland. Some even choose to stay and live in Iceland. Their stories and the messages that they publish on social media will in turn become part of the memory of more and more Chinese people. As far as Icelandic-Chinese translation is concerned, it can be expected that it will become easier and easier for a translator to reconstruct the source text contexts in the target text. On the one hand, the translator can recognize and reconstruct them in the target text. On the other hand, target text readers can also recognize at least some of the reconstructed contexts because their collective memory already involves certain ideas about Iceland and Icelandic culture.

Reconstruction of context does not mean that all the contexts of the source text can be reconstructed in the target text. Firstly, not all source text contexts, including some very important and obvious ones (I will list them as core contexts) as well as some secondary and subtle ones (I will list them as marginal contexts), can be detected by a translator. A translator who does not detect a source context of course cannot reconstruct it in the target text. Secondly, when a translator can and does detect a context, they may not reconstruct it in the target text due to some technical difficulty. One possible case is when the two languages and cultures are so different that it is impossible to find an equivalent target text context for a source text context. For example, a classic Chinese poem is often characterized by lines of either five or seven characters. This is very obvious and important context for Chinese readers, and familiar even to children as young as three or four years old.

However, this context can hardly be reconstructed in other languages, especially in alphabetical languages like English. This is not only due to the fact that it is difficult to translate a line of five or seven Chinese characters into a poem of five-word lines or seven-word lines, but also the fact that each Chinese character has only one syllable. Considering the fact that there are a lot of contexts to be recognized and reconstructed, some contexts, for example in this case, a Chinese poem of five-word lines or seven-word lines (this is a very unique poetic context), can be regarded as “secondary otherness” (Sanford, 1996:1). As Sanford states, however, when we consider every possible context of a classical Chinese poem, we may find that all of the above-mentioned characteristics are “secondary otherness” (1996:1). While we might not expect to be able to reconstruct such a marginal context in an English translation of a classical Chinese poem, target language (i.e., English-speaking) readers may nevertheless pick up on contextual cues that let them know that what they are reading is a poem. Another possibility in this case is that the translator fails to reconstruct a source text context due to inability. It may be the case that a translator has never learned how to reconstruct source language context, or that they have never had to do so in actual translation. One may learn a lot from courses in translation studies, but their knowledge does not mean they, especially when not particularly experienced in actual translating, can practically solve a problem of recognizing and reconstructing contexts in literary translation, which may be far more complicated than what they

are taught. Thirdly, a translator may overlook some contexts intentionally for some reasons. Take patronage (André Lefevere, 1992: 15-25) as an example, some may translate a piece of literature according to a patron's requirements. Other reasons may include politics, commerce, and what the target readers will readily accept. Personal attitude may also influence a translator's decisions.

Although in some cases source text contexts are impossible to reconstruct, the core contexts are not only perceptible but reconstructable in literary translation. The issues of so-called impossibility and untranslatability may arouse some concern, but they have never become real obstacles in translation, which is a practice with a very long history and one that will certainly continue into the foreseeable future. High jumping at the Olympic Games may serve as a useful analogy to help us understand notions of translatability and context reconstruction in literary translation. The world record in high jumping has been broken again and again, and the record will almost certainly be broken again in the future. However, no matter how high a human being can jump, one thing is for sure: nobody will ever be able to jump to the moon. In the same way, as cultural exchange increases, people from different parts of the world are better able to understand each other's literature. Misunderstanding will always be present and it is obvious that it is very hard for most of us to obtain full and complete understanding of a foreign culture, but this should not impede mutual cultural understanding among different peoples of the world. This, in my personal opinion, is a very important context to consider in literary translation.

It is understandable that there is some loss in reconstruction of a source text context, as also occurs in the reconstruction of source text meaning. The loss in source text context reconstruction (excluding intentional loss in source text context reconstruction) in fact ultimately leads to loss in the reconstruction of source text meaning. This again echoes a maxim in translation studies: a translation of an original text (disregarding perfection of it) can never be perfect, for the fact alone that it is a translation.

#### **4.1 Recognition and Reconstruction of Core Contexts**

After deciding that it is necessary and possible to reconstruct source text contexts in a target text, we now turn to the issue of what contexts can be reconstructed and how. I aim for a practical and workable solution that can help a translator view their task from a different angle in order to produce a quality translation.

A popular expression is often quoted in discussion of context: context is everything. Some may disagree with this, though it does make sense theoretically speaking. As far as literary translation is concerned, context describes every single element of the text you are dealing with. To understand a single word in a sentence, you may have to resort to surrounding words and sentences and sometimes the entire book in which it appears. This is of course not the end of the list. With the progress of linguistics and translation studies, more and more experts have come to realize that the context beyond a text also plays crucial role in helping define a word, sentence, paragraph and even a book. A translator may also have to consider the personal attitude of the writer and even the source language culture for clues to obtain the real meaning of the source text. Based on different views and understandings of context, different scholars may have their own lists of contexts. Besides the traditional classification of linguistic and non-linguistic context, many classifications have been developed in which various contexts have been mentioned. To name some examples, Carlo Penco distinguishes between two kinds of theories of context: a theory of objective context and a theory of subjective context (1999: 270); Peter Newmark suggests linguistic, referential, cultural and

personal contexts (2001: 193); Eugene A. Nida distinguishes between syntagmatic contexts and paradigmatic contexts (2001: 31-38); John I. Saeed regards “knowledge as contexts” (2009: 199).

The aforementioned examples of course do not constitute an exhaustive list of contexts and their classifications. Some scholars do not use the notion of context, but their alternatives, in my opinion, have the nature of context, at least to a certain extent. In *Translating Text in Context*, Basil Hatim mentions Halliday’s three aspects of register: field, tenor and mode (Jeremy Munday, 2009: 37). These three aspects provide a very good point of view from which we can gain further insight into source text contexts. By putting forward the notion of “paratext”, Gérard Genette provides a new perspective from which to consider source texts. He believes that a paratext is a “threshold, or – the term Borges used about a preface – with a ‘vestibule’ which offers to anyone and everyone the possibility either of entering or of turning back” (1991: 261). It is true that if a translator does not “enter” the source text with the help of paratext, how can they enter the world of the source text to explore the source text’s meaning?

A disappointing truth about context studies is that there is no agreement regarding the classification of contexts. This is understandable because scholars in different fields explore context from different perspectives and with different methods. We must admit that various classifications of context can help us understand many possible facets and the nature of context. However, as another saying goes, everything means nothing. On the one hand, too many different classifications of context make it hard for us to deepen our understanding of context, because some classifications have rarely been widely agreed. Another noteworthy point is the idea of exploring all possible contexts so that we can approach every possible meaning of the source text. Obviously, if we insist upon discovering every possible context in order to gain a complete understanding of the source language text in translation practice, we are bound to waste time.

There may be different solutions to context reconstruction, but I prefer to solve it on the basis of the skopos theory, which, I think, can help establish the necessity of context reconstruction and provide some insights in terms of context reconstruction in literary translation. Reiss and Vermeer functionally define translation action as an “offer of information” (2014: 32), which is very significant for translation. For a long time in translation circles there has been debate about so-called literal translation and free translation. Defining translation as an “offer of information” helps resolve this debate to some extent. Of course, “offer of information” does not mean that the sole focus is on “information”. The form of a text, for example in poetry, is very important information. For source language readers and translators who intend to transfer the information into a target text, information surrounding and within a text is of course the source of interpretation. A core principle in skopos theory is that “a translation action is governed by its purpose” (Reiss and Vermeer, 2014: 85). This serves as a very good guide and greatly benefits the translator prior to translating the source text into the target text. With a certain purpose in mind, a translator has a better idea of the intended audience and how they can translate the source text into the target text.

There is still one problem that a translator encounters when attempting to transfer a source text author’s purpose or intention into the target text. As Reiss and Vermeer point out, “not every intention can be transformed into action”. This is understandable because the purpose or intention is in fact something in the writer’s mind. When a translator intends to translate source text into target text, they may have a purpose or intention of their own for the target text. The translator’s first priority is therefore to recognize the author’s purpose, before even beginning the task of translation. Chances are that the translator can perceive some of the writer’s purpose, but not all of it. The

translator should furthermore bear in mind the purpose or intention of their own translation. Once the translator has recognized the purpose(s) of the source text, they can then begin to consider which contexts to translate in order to transfer the source text purpose into the target text. This then allows the translator to decide which contexts to reconstruct, and how to reconstruct them.

This means that it is necessary to give priority to some contexts, which, among so many different contexts, determine whether it is possible to convey the most important purpose into the target text. This is of course a very complicated issue because, as we know, there are a lot of contexts to be considered; this is exactly what I intend to explore and resolve in this section. According to conventional principles, context is generally considered at the early stage of the translation process, i.e. in helping a translator to decide the meaning of a word, expression, sentence, paragraph or an original text in its entirety. The notion of context-dependence has become common knowledge in translation studies, and is a very solid foundation on which I base my present argument. Since the traditional analysis has made it clear that contexts play a crucial role in the early stage of the translation process, why then can we not let them play a crucial role in the later stage of the translation process? In other words, why not translate contexts so that they can also help target text readers better understand the meaning of the source text? This issue is not only interesting but also rewarding, because it not only helps create a translation in the traditional sense, but also helps reconstruct necessary contexts which target text readers can take advantage of in order to better understand the source text author's purpose.

One fact we must bear in mind is that, throughout the entire translation process, it is the translator who is responsible for reconstructing the context of the source text into the target text. However, a translator may, for various reasons such as personal experience, capability, responsibility, patronage (where a person or agency commissions a translation) and so on, be unable to fully or adequately reconstruct the source text context in the target text. As a matter of fact, it is not only impossible but also unnecessary in practical translation to reconstruct all source text contexts in the target text. In order to provide a reliable method for reconstructing these necessary contexts in translation, I would like to put forward the notions of core contexts and marginal contexts. These concepts ensure that those contexts that help convey the source text author's most important purpose(s) are given preference in the translator's reconstruction. It is my hope that this suggestion will be workable.

Two important issues must be addressed before we continue our discussion of what kinds of core contexts and marginal contexts should be reconstructed in literary translation. Firstly, by which criteria do we distinguish between core contexts and marginal contexts? Secondly, which contexts can be established as core contexts or marginal contexts? Here, I would like to take advantage of the skopos theory to develop my argument. But before dealing with this issue, I first want to cite Neubert's classification of source texts:

- 1) Source texts not specifically oriented towards the source language;
- 2) Source texts specifically oriented towards the source language;
- 3) Source texts specifically oriented towards the source language but transcending it;
- 4) Source texts specifically oriented towards the target language.

(Cited from Reiss and Vermeer, 2014: 42-43)

As Reiss and Vermeer say, "Neubert's typology is based on text types or genres...and content"

(2014: 45), but this classification gives us a better understanding of source texts if we regard text type or genre as a context in literary translation. The first type, as I see it, is not the case of traditional literature. User manuals, for example, can be easily “adapted to a new target-language setting” (Neubert, cited from Reiss and Vermeer, 2014: 42). I believe the second type to be partly true of literature; in most cases, the source text is intended for source language readers, without any consideration given to translating the text into any other languages. I consider traditional literature, including novels, drama and poetry, to belong to the second type. Let us take poetry as an example. Classical Chinese poetry is often regarded as being written only for Chinese readers, due to the unique formal and grammatical structures described in previous chapters. Literature could be of the third type because the natural audience of the literature is source language readers. Source texts of this type sometimes takes target language readers into its consideration for purposes of regional and even global promotion. The fourth type is intended for translation but does not apply to literature because, as the second and the third type show, literature in most cases is intended for source language readers. Two of these types are obviously closely related to literary translation, but types one and two can still help a translator decide the strategy that they want to take and the energy that they want to expend in reconstructing context. The second type may require more effort and bilingual ability from the translator in order to achieve a balance between source text context recognition and target text context reconstruction, while the third type may ease the burden on the translator because the source text author has made an effort to bring the source text closer to the target text.

According to Neubert’s classification of source texts, it is clear that we mainly deal with the second type of source text in literary translation. In other words, the natural and logical *skopos* of authors of traditional literature (excluding those texts with special purposes such as business, propaganda, advertisement and so on) is to share information with prospective readers, essentially source language readers. Their goal, as Reiss and Vermeer say, is to offer information (2014: 33).

On this basis, I tentatively put forth a criterion for distinguishing between core contexts and marginal contexts: core contexts are those that ensure that the source text writer’s *skopos*, or purpose, in this context, can be delivered, or the source text author’s *skopos* can be sufficiently reconstructed in the source text, while marginal contexts refer to those secondary ones that help refine the presentation of the source text writer’s *skopos* in the target text. To use the terms of Reiss and Vermeer, core contexts are those that ensure that information, especially the most important information in the source text, reaches the readers of the source text, while marginal contexts are those that do not affect the offer of information, but make the offer of information smoother and easier. Core contexts must be reconstructed in literary translation; otherwise, the transfer of source text information to target text readers is not possible. In traditional linguistics and translation studies, contexts are those cues that help a translator understand and translate the meaning of the source text into a target text. Marginal contexts do not affect the translation of fundamental meaning, but help create a more readable and aesthetically pleasing translation.

In following section, I list some core contexts and marginal contexts according to what I have just discussed.

#### **4.1.1 Genre, Text Type and Register as Core Contexts**

When discussing the distinction between genre and text type, Biber once said:

A genre, in this view, a category assigned on the basis of external criteria such as intended audience, purpose, and activity type, that is, it refers to a conventional, culturally recognised grouping of texts based on properties other than lexical or grammatical (co-)occurrence features, which are, instead, the internal (linguistic) criteria forming the basis of text type categories.

(Biber, 1988: 70 & 170)

The most reliable point of reference for readers or translators is of course the source language text, which may vary widely in genre and type. Furthermore, register, or the way a speaker uses language, can also differ greatly according to circumstance. I group them together because they are closely related, but I shall put them on three levels: text type on the first level, genre on the second and register the third.

#### 4.1.1.1 Genre as Core Context

The text itself “represents, to a greater or lesser degree, a genre”, and it is believed that “no text can be analyzed without considering genre conventions” (Reiss and Vermeer, 2014:136). By definition, genre implies that a translator should consider the different features of texts to be translated and the different strategies that should be taken to transfer these features into the target text.

Genre is also to be considered a primary or core context in translation. I quite agree with Reiss and Vermeer when they say that “the text itself [...] is an individual text”, and “each text represents, to a greater or lesser degree, a genre” (2014: 137). A translator should be very clear from the beginning about what differentiates a text from other texts. The individuality of a text determines not only its quality but also its meaning. In a certain sense, this individuality is a meaning, to which a translator should attach great importance and even prioritize in literary translation. The genre of Laxness’ *Independent People*, for example, is a novel, a fictitious prose narrative that represents reality to a certain degree. This is very significant, theoretically and practically. This genre, a novel, decides the basic form, length, content and usually the high degree of individualism of the text. A translator should loyally adhere to this genre in literary translation because, as Reiss and Vermeer say, “genre conventions” are “triggers of expectations” (2014: 169). Specifically, a translator is usually not expected to translate a novel into other forms, for example into verse or drama. I should say, changing a novel’s length, as was done for example in the Chinese version of *Independent People* published in Taiwan, should not be encouraged, at least under normal circumstances. One of the major problems with this version is that many sentences in the source text are not translated at all. The context of the novel, the story of Bjartur and his dreams of an independent life for which he fights in vain, should remain the same. The tragic ending should not be changed into a happy one. The uniqueness of the novel is rather complicated because it encompasses such elements as linguistic choices, grammaticality, figures of speech, cultural otherness and even paratexts. I will not discuss this in detail in this theoretical chapter, though the issue is an interesting and rewarding one to investigate. Some related issues will also be discussed in the following sections.

A translator is of course required to first determine the genre of the text to be translated so that they can further decide what strategy to use to reconstruct the genre. This may include many elements. One element that we have discussed above is diction, which demonstrates the genre of a text to a large extent.

Take Xue and Hua’s translation of *Independent People* as an example. We sometimes find that

their translation fails in several respects to properly reconstruct the novel genre. Their diction is occasionally unacceptable insofar as they at times use vocabulary that a target language reader would never expect in a novel that contains so much description of Iceland's natural beauty. It is very hard for a Chinese reader to perceive the sense of beauty expressed by the expertly selected vocabulary of the source text. Failure to properly reconstruct genre, for example with such unacceptable diction as “鼻孔” , “四肢” ( *独立的人们*: 27) , spoils not only the beauty of the source text, but also but also target text readers' interest in reading further.

One thing we must remember is that novel as a genre may include sub-genres. In *Independent People*, the prose style writing dominates while poetry (for example at Bjartur's wedding ceremony) is also quite common. In Xue and Hua's translation, these contexts are improperly reconstructed. I will discuss this further in the following section about text type reconstruction.

#### 4.1.1.2 Text Type as Core Context

Typology has been a matter of concern within both linguistics and translation studies. Katharina Reiss believes that an analysis of typology is the first step to evaluate a particular translation because “different kinds of texts call for different kinds of standards (K. Reiss, 2000: xii)”. Eugene Nida also suggests that “[a] translator needs to develop a ‘feeling’ for what is appropriate for different types of texts being translated for different kinds of audiences who will no doubt use the translation for different purposes” (Eugene A. Nida, 2001:85). Reiss and Vermeer provide the following definition of text type:

‘Text type’ is used exclusively in the sense explained [...] for a classification based on the fundamental universal forms of textuality in human communication: transmission of content, aesthetically organized transmission of content, persuasively organized transmission of content and multimedia transmission of the three basic types.

(Reiss and Vermeer, 2014: 157)

These three text types are also known as expressive text type and operative text type “based on communicative intentions” (2014: 137). Reiss and Vermeer believe that “the decision regarding which of these three basic functions takes precedence, and possibly their order of importance, will influence the choice of linguistic signs and force the translator to employ different translation strategies” (2014: 137). They also suggest a fourth translation-oriented text type, the multimedia text type, but a digression about this type does not fall within the scope of my discussion, which concerns literary translation first and foremost.

When discussing how to evaluate the changes in the value of specific elements of the text or the text as a whole in the transfer from source text to target text, Reiss and Vermeer note that:

Each transfer inevitably involves changes in value, which can either be accepted as something quite normal in translational action, focusing mainly on the set of realities and cognitive values common to all humans, or treated as a fundamental problem for any translation. The decision depends, among other things, on the type of text or genre we have in mind.

(Reiss and Vermeer, 2014: 27)

This indicates that text type, which belongs to the function of a text, is one element we must

consider when deciding which contexts can be reconstructed in literary translation. Reiss and Vermeer point out that a translator “must realize what kind of text he is translating before he begins working with it” (2014:16). They then further classify texts into three types: content-focused (imperative) text, form-focused (expressive) text, and appeal-focused (operative) text (2014:26). This can greatly help a translator to select an appropriate translation strategy. What is more important is that the translator should keep the text type in mind, but also create a target text of the same type in translation.

#### 4.1.1.3 Register as Core Context

Genre is of course usually analyzed at the level of the entire text. However, when we immerse ourselves deeply in a text, we notice more complicated and more refined features. When we begin to read a text, we immediately realize that they are so diverse that you can hardly expect the same mode in terms of linguistic demonstration, figure of speech, diction, and even atmosphere created. In other words, register may appear in different form, as I will discuss in the following paragraphs. It is fortunate that this has been the subject of so much scholarly discussion, which allows me to more convincingly conclude that genre should be listed among the core contexts that a translator must consider in literary translation. Here, I would like to take advantage of register to further my discussion. As different genres trigger different expectations, different registers call for different kinds of language and even different ways of collocation. In literary translation, a translator needs to know what is appropriate for different registers in their translations. Since register concerns language as it is used in social situations, it coincides with the aim of my dissertation, which in some sense can be described as how we can perceive language used in context, or in social situations, when non-linguistic contexts are considered in literary understanding and translating.

Halliday’s proposed three variables of register offer us an excellent opportunity to examine translation with the help of context. Field helps a translator decide what subject to be involved in our speech on a certain occasion. Tenor decides how people relate to each other and in what manner they speak with each other. Mode focuses on how the sequences of discourse are built (whether it is written or spoken, whether a text is performative (carrying out an action), descriptive, or reflective, spontaneous or well thought out). Halliday’s three variables provide me an invaluable framework with which to analyze the mistakes in Xue and Hua’s translation of *Independent People*. I know from these analyses that register, as a kind of covert context, is not easily perceived by a translator without adequate academic and professional training. The translation “她考虑到家庭手工艺是冰岛工业的唯一合法形式，因此她在编织十字花方面花了很多时间和心血”（*独立的人们*: 21） of the sentence “Domestic crafts, she considered, were the only form of industry legitimate to Iceland, so she spent much time and much art on cross-weaving” (*Independent People*: 18) is unacceptable because the word “工业” (literally “modern industry which involves a lot of professional workers and equipment”) is not appropriate when referring to life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century of Iceland, when domestic crafts were the only form of industry legitimate to Iceland. This is a mistake due to the lack of consideration given to a certain field in the source text. Inadequate attention to tenor results in such translations as “他命令妻子做了些裸麦粉团子；有几只羊吃了，有几只还是不吃”（*独立的人们*: 312） from “He ordered his wife to knead some rye-meal dough; some took it, others refused” (*Independent People*: 249). In a domestic conversation, the formal word “命令” is obviously not an appropriate translation of the word “order” in the source text.

The purpose of translation is to express the meaning of the source text in the target text with as

little loss as possible. In order for a translator to reconstruct the source-text registers in the target text, they must first perceive them in their original context.

#### 4.1.2 Linguistic Contexts as Core Contexts

I list linguistic contexts as core contexts because language itself is symbolic system of communication in which context, meaning and even culture is transmitted. Compared with those contexts outside texts, they are static, fixed and stable, which makes them relatively easier for a translator to take advantage of them to understand what the ST writer wants to express. As time passes, language and culture may change, but not linguistic contexts. Some may say changes in language will probably make linguistic contexts not so reliable, but the fact that language changes rather slowly even in the long run. The earliest Chinese characters found on shells and bones more than 3,300 years ago can still be read and understood although great changes have taken place all through these years. European languages, which vary a lot in this respect, have changed a lot quicker than that. However, it is still possible to understand ancient literature with the help of knowledge of linguistic development. Linguistic contexts provide the most direct and immediate information, from which, a translator can go further to explore situational, cognitive, psychological and even social contexts.

##### 4.1.2.1 Proper Diction as Core Context

I will start with an anecdote from my early experience of learning English as a middle school student. When we first began learning English, our teachers emphasized the importance of memorizing the definition of a word in a textbook, without making us aware that the definition provided in the textbook applies only to the example sentence in the textbook and that this definition is only one of many possibilities. Students are never taught that meaning is context dependent. Teachers of English or translation at a college or university may emphasize the idea that meaning is context dependent. As we know, theory is one matter, while actual translation is quite another. Understandably, it is necessary for students to spend some time learning how to intentionally take advantage of contexts to recognize the meaning in a source text and reconstruct it in the target text.

It is not always easy to follow the principle of context dependency in actual translation, especially when translating a novel of more than 500 pages. A translator may sometimes unthinkingly translate a word, phrase, or sentence according to the definition they are most familiar with, which possibly results in a violation of the context-dependency principle. In a certain sense, context-dependency itself is a context that translators are expected to follow.

Xue and Hua's translation of *Independent People* contains many mistakes on the lexical level. Most of these mistakes can be remedied by following the principle of context-dependency. Some contexts are so obvious that they can be identified simply by paying slightly more attention. The fact that patience and attention fluctuate throughout the long and lonesome translation process suggests that careful proofreading is necessary, especially in terms of context-dependency.

In actual translation, we find that context-dependency is quite complicated on the lexical level due to the fact that the definition of a word should be built within the cultural framework. For example, there may be great differences in conventions for addressing family members in two languages or cultures. For example, take the common Chinese expressions “姐姐” (jiě jie: elder sister) and “妹妹” (mèi mei: younger sister). Translating these words as “sister” entails a change in terms of linguistic and cultural context. In Chinese culture, “姐姐” and “妹妹” show the familial

hierarchy that members of a family are supposed to follow. Complete reconstruction of context in this case can hardly be realized. However, there is no need for disappointment or frustration, as this is a natural side effect of translation. After all, translation, in essence, is change.

Polite expression is another example in which we find differences between English and Chinese. In Chinese, we use “您” (nín) instead of “你” (nǐ) to show politeness. It is very easy for a translator to recognize this context in Chinese, but it seems hard to reconstruct this context in English simply by translating “您” as “you”. “Would you please” may improve the accuracy of the reconstruction of this context, but it is not a universal solution that guarantees successful reconstruction in every instance.

Both Anglophone and Chinese cultures attribute symbolic value to numbers. The numbers eight and nine have positive connotations in Chinese because their pronunciation are quite close to “发” (fā: prosperity) and “久” (jiǔ: lasting for a long time). This is hard to reconstruct in translation because these numbers have numerical value and symbolic value at the same time in Chinese. This is also true of words with strong associative meaning. “月亮” (yuè liang: moon), for example, is a symbol of peace, prosperity, and family reunion when it is full. The Chinese mid-autumn festival is an occasion for family members to come together and enjoy the full and bright moon. Another category of words that have symbolic value is color terms. Some Chinese color terms have almost the same symbolic value as English words while the others have such a different symbolic value that a translator may be of two minds when deciding a strategy to translate them.

One phenomenon we must consider in literary translation is that languages are in a process of constant change. Only 20 years ago, the word “小姐” (xiǎo jiě: Miss) was used only to address an unmarried girl or a waitress, but has now come to refer to those who provide services in places like karaoke bars, and sometimes even a euphemism for a prostitute. “同志” (tóng zhì) is another example. It was once used formally to mean “comrade”, but is now used informally to refer to gay people. In *Independent People*, “Summerhouses” is what Bjartur names his croft house. Summerhouse now is a building or shelter used for relaxation, which is different from Bjartur’s summerhouse. It is difficult to reconstruct this context in Chinese, though an explanation in an endnote is a feasible solution. This actually shows one property of denotation: it may change over time. This is also why I translate “Summerhouses” in *Independent People* as “夏屋” instead of “夏季度假屋” because the latter is now a building or shelter where people relax in their free time and on holiday.

Recognizing contexts in the source-language text on the lexical level is obviously necessary, and is possible in most cases. To reconstruct these contexts, we must be very careful in detecting cultural elements in related words and expressions.

#### 4.1.2.2 Proper Collocation as Core Context

Collocation is a common phenomenon in any language. Well-organized collocation is based not only on grammar but also on convention and even common sense. It ensures the smoothness and precision of a text and allows for accurate expression of ideas. It is almost certain that failure to demonstrate well-organized collocation will result in a text with low readability, and ultimately detract from reader interest.

In literary translation, reconstruction of well-organized collocations is a basic requirement and a responsibility. Firstly, we must reconstruct well-organized collocations to ensure that our translation is acceptable and readable. Secondly, whether from the point view of equivalence or

faithfulness, we must reconstruct well-organized collations in the source text so that target-language readers can appreciate the collocations and linguistic features of the source-language text.

Two possibilities may result in poor-quality or incorrect collocations in translation. One possibility is that the translator is not quite aware of the collocations in the source text; while the other is they recognize and understand the collocations in the source text but fail to reconstruct them in the target text. The first possibility may be attributable to incompetence in the source language, and the second to their incompetence in the target language.

Chinese is a language of parataxis rather than hypotaxis, which is a fundamental characteristic of English. However, there are many hypotactic structures in Chinese, which is similar to English and therefore allows a translator to recognize and reconstruct them easily. Xue and Hua make many mistakes in this regard, some of which result from misunderstanding of the source-text structure while others result from their language incompetence. They may understand some hypotactic structures in English, but unfortunately, they haven't reconstructed them well in Chinese.

#### 4.1.2.3 Grammaticality as Core Context

In this dissertation I define grammatical context as an environment in which words, expressions, sentences, and paragraphs are arranged according to grammatical rules that are widely accepted by native speakers. When translating a literary work from English into Chinese, a translator should recognize this context and try their best to understand and translate those different grammatical structures in Chinese.

I believe that grammaticality should be given priority in the recognition and reconstruction of grammatical context. In other words, a translator should make sure that their translation is acceptable grammatically. It is my opinion that grammaticality should and, in most cases, can be reconstructed in literary translation. However, reconstruction of grammatical form depends on the degree of similarity between English and Chinese. Some things can be completely reconstructed, others only partially, and some never at all.

Some grammatical contexts are easy to recognize and reconstruct. Take Xue and Hua's translation “诺尼，你还记得那天妈妈倒在外婆怀里再也站不起来了吗？” (*独立的人们*: 330) as an example. This sentence is translated from “Nonni, do you remember when Mother fell into Grandma's arms and couldn't stand up again?” (*Independent People*: 264-265). “When” can be used as either a relative adverb or a connecting adverb. As a matter of fact, the difference between them is rather clear: a nominal expression of time is an obvious indicator that “when” is used as a relative adverb. Recognizing this, it is easy to reconstruct this context as I have done in my translation “诺尼，你还记不记得妈妈是什么时候倒在外婆怀里就再也没站起来过吗？”

Xue and Hua's frequent grammatical mistakes call into question their qualification as translators. The translators' poor understanding of the grammar in the source-language text presents a challenge to target-language readers' understanding of the translated text, which in turn prevents a Chinese audience from fully appreciating Laxness' great work. Furthermore, their mother-tongue incompetence means that they fail to capture the elegance of the source language text; this creates confusion for Chinese readers, especially those who have no knowledge of English.

If the above-mentioned mistake is obvious, the next is more difficult to detect. The sentence in the source text “Life was not much to boast about, especially when one examined it with a critical eye.” (*Independent People*: 369) is not an unusual sentence in English. However, the translation does not follow convention in terms of arrangement of main clause and subordinate clause in a

compound sentence. The sentence “生活没有什么可以夸耀的，特别当你以批判的眼光看待它时” (*独立的人们*: 462) is dubious in Chinese even though combined sentences in which a main clause precedes a subordinate clause are possible. It is, however, much more acceptable for a subordinate clause to precede the main clause in a compound sentence. The context of grammaticality is relatively easy to reconstruct in translation if the translators bear in mind that any word-for-word translation should always be grammatically acceptable.

Grammatical differences between English and Chinese may result from different lines of thinking, or even different cultures. A translator should be aware of the differences between English and Chinese in order to reproduce the grammatical contexts of the source text in the target text. The second example in this section shows that the English language has its own way of arranging main and subordinate clauses in compound sentences. Translating into Chinese with an English sentence structure reveals that a translator does not recognize grammatical differences between these two languages.

A challenge in literary translation is that the grammatical differences between English and Chinese mean that some grammatical contexts can never be reconstructed. Some of the many differences between these two languages are so subtle that Chinese learners of English often feel confused. I mention one such subtle difference in Chapter 3. In Chinese, it is customary to say “是” or “对” (yes) to express disagreement while “不是” or “不对 (no)” is often used to show agreement when negative statement is involved in tag questions. Translation errors resulting from a lack of awareness of the difference in tag questions between English and Chinese occur throughout Xue and Hua’s translation of *Independent People*. This is not a unique case, but a common one in papers written by Chinese students, which again serves as a reminder that a translator must pay close attention to grammatical difference between English and Chinese, so that they can properly reconstruct grammatical contexts when they translate a literary work from English into Chinese.

#### 4.1.2.4 Connotation as Core Context

Connotation, often along with denotation, has been widely discussed in such fields as literary criticism, translation studies, linguistics and recently computer science. According to Leech, the term “connotation” was first used by John Stuart Mill in 1843 (1977:175). In Mill’s definition, “‘connotation’ is the signification of the property; ‘denotation’ is the signification of the thing” (cited from Akram, 2013: 81). There may be definitions which are slightly different, but the basic spirit is generally agreed upon. In his paper “The Pragmatics of Connotation”, Keith Allan writes that “the connotations of a language expression are pragmatic effects that arise from encyclopedic knowledge about its denotation (or reference) and also from experiences, beliefs, and prejudices about the contexts in which the expression is typically used” (2007: 1047). Leech defines connotation as the communicative power of a word by virtue of what it refers to (1974: 15). According to Feng, connotation refers to “an idea or feeling that a word invokes in addition to its literal or primary meaning” (Feng et al., 2013:1774-1784). No matter how connotation is defined, one general agreement is that connotation is beyond the text itself and it is detected by a reader according to their knowledge of the language and culture.

We can deepen our understanding of the nature of connotation by reading the work of two scholars who have explored types of connotative meaning. Akram mentions sound connotation, etymological connotation, referential connotation, collocational connotation, reflected connotation and allusive connotation (2013:82-83). James Dickins goes further and lists fifteen types of

connotative meaning: 1. associative meaning; 2. attitudinal meaning; 3. affective meaning; 4. allusive meaning; 5. Reflected meaning; 6. selectional restriction-related meaning; 7. collocative meaning; 8. geographical dialect-related meaning; 9. temporal dialect-related meaning; 10. sociolect-related meaning; 11. social register-related meaning; 12. emphasis (emphatic meaning); 13. thematic meaning (theme-rheme meaning); 14. grounding meaning; and 15. locution-overriding illocutionary meaning. These can serve as a very good guide for translators when they translate a piece of literature from ST into TT. As a matter of fact, we may have our own addition to these lists. What matters here is that a translator has to consider as many connotative meanings as possible so that TT readers can also enjoy those connotative meanings in ST.

One interesting aspect of connotation is that connotation may be either intended by a ST writer or not while it may be recognized or even created by ST readers or even TT readers. Connotations, which rests on a reader's individual understanding of social and cultural contexts, may be subtly or sometimes significantly different even among ST readers, let alone among TT readers. However, the phenomenon of individuality in literary appreciation, as I have mentioned, may be one of the attractions of reading literature, which does not invite a single and conclusive interpretation.

Although "denotation, referential or lexical meaning of a word denote a core meaning of an object, an act, or a quality that is generally used and understood by the users" (Ilyas, 2013:249), nobody will deny the importance of connotation because it is, at least sometimes, the real meaning a writer wants to convey. Since the dissertation centers on context, I will deviate from my established course to focus on the quality of connotation. To clarify, connotation in the following discussion refers to the quality that a word evokes in the reader in addition to its basic or primary meaning. I will use "connotative meaning" to refer to what is traditionally termed "connotation". In addition, I regard connotation in this sense as a core context because, as Ilyas says, "literary works and texts are not intended to convey information in the form of denotative or referential facts, but rather to express human experiences, insights, and comments on psychological, social and cultural aspects of life" (2013: 261).

In a sense, connotation has something to do with what I have previously discussed in the dissertation. Take genre, text type and register for example. Chances are a word in different genres, text types or registers may have different connotative meanings. A word in children's literature may invoke different connotations from those invoked by the same word in adult literature. Different dictions or collocations sometimes imply a piece of writing is intended for a specific audience. "词" (cí), for example, is a kind of lyric poetry in the tradition of classical Chinese literature. Ci is characterized by certain patterns, fixed-rhythm, fixed-tone, and fixed line-length. The immediate connotations of Ci may include its musical nature, literary elegance and sometimes romance.

In order to make sure that connotation can be reconstructed in TT, I tentatively put forward the following suggestions.

Firstly, the fact that connotation exists widely in literature means the translator has a responsibility to detect connotations of words in ST and reconstruct them in TT although it is challenging for all translators.

Secondly, since connotative meaning is related to one's real-world experience, a translator has to bear in mind that connotative meaning can vary among ST readers, let alone TT readers. We expect a translator to properly reconstruct the connotative meaning of ST in TT, but it is not necessary to expect a translator to detect all possible connotations in ST and reconstruct them in TT because, after all, "connotative meaning, unlike the denotative, is culturally-bound" (Mazin, 2008:3).

In the same way, we do not expect TT readers to comprehend all possible connotations in TT, let alone in ST.

Thirdly, a translator is required to use appropriate strategies and skills to reconstruct connotation of ST in TT. One problem which may occur in translation is overtranslation or undertranslation of connotation. Take one translation from Xue and Hua as an example. Their translation “他的丈夫似乎是不幸的人们中最怯懦的一个，他一点自由都没有，完全处于她的统治之下”(《独立的人们》: 4) from “her husband, who appears to have been the most craven-hearted of wretches, had little freedom, being kept completely under her domination” (*Independent People*: 6) shows that they fail to notice the connotative meaning of the word “统治” (translated from “domination”), which, in most cases, reminds us of the influence or power imposed by especially imperial rulers. This connotative meaning obviously does not exist in ST, which is just about patriarchal family life.

Fourthly, words with the same denotative meaning in ST and TT may have quite different connotations. “龙” in Chinese represents potent and auspicious powers, strength, and good luck, while its widely-accepted equivalent in English “dragon” is a symbol of evil and darkness.. Word-for-word translation is obviously not a good strategy. But whether to keep the original image in TT is still a problem which causes a lot of controversy.

#### 4.1.2.5 Poetic Quality as Core Context

If we compare literary translation to a mountain, there is no question that poetry translation stays at the top of the mountain. It is obvious that there is great difficulty in translating poetry because there are so many elements to consider. Lack of anyone of them may result in great loss in translation of poetry, which, as Gaudi Kristmannsson once described “in a vacuum; there is no unnecessary air, every syllable is significant and meaningful” (2014:58). What makes it more difficult to translate poetry is that poetry has its unique rhymes, meter, rhythm, choices of words, rhetoric expressions and metaphors.

There are at least three issues to keep in mind when we discuss the translation of poetry. These three issues have long been topics of debate, though there appear to be no definitive and compelling conclusions to any of them. First is the issue of translatability, whether it is possible to translate poetry from a source language into a target language. This coincides with questions addressed in this dissertation, namely, whether it is possible to recognize and reconstruct poetic context in poetic translation. One school of thought believes that poems can indeed be translated at least to an extent, while the other maintains that poems can never be translated. Both schools appear reasonable and acceptable when we examine their supporting arguments respectively. The second issue is of who is capable of translating poetry. Can any translator translate poems, or can only poets translate poems, as Ling Chung says in “The Poet as Translator” (Ling Chung, 1985: 315)? Finally, there is the issue that has inspired a much more heated debate for many years: do we translate poems into poems, or into some other format (i.e. prose)?

It is impossible to ignore the fact that poetry has been translated among the languages of the world since time immemorial, and readers all over the world have enjoyed the work of “foreign” poets. Many new poetry translations are published every year and will continue to be published well into the future. Regarding the issue of translatability of poems, Gu Zhengkun once said, “It is simplistic to claim that a poem is either translatable or not” (Gu Zhengkun, 2003: 373). I personally agree with the statement that poetry is translatable, although at the same time I agree that there are

so many elements of poetry which cannot be fully translated or even translated at all. André Lefevere believes that “the only rules that can be given in the translation of poetry are the rules of language” (Factors of Poetic Translation, *An Encyclopedia of Translation*: 747, 2001 引用格式要统一). No matter how much poetic language differs from other literary language, poetic language is still language, which serves as a basis for recognizing and reconstructing poetic contexts.

The poetic context is highly condensed, abstract, and indeterminate, which sets it apart from other literary contexts. Many literary critics say that the value of a poem lies not in the certainty of meaning, but in images that move readers and arouse their inner feelings. Since poetic context is very complicated and is not the focus of my dissertation, I will just mention a few important aspects with the aim of discussing how to recognize and reconstruct poetic context in literary translation. I will focus on the comprehensive aesthetic context in my dissertation, as it is one of the most important elements of poetry although it is rather abstract. Take form as one example. In most Chinese classical poems, each line has five or seven Chinese characters, which is believed to correspond with musical rhythm and create a special aesthetic beauty. Indeed, many Chinese classical poems have been used as song lyrics in the centuries since those poems were composed – a practice that continues even today in popular music. Furthermore, there is a timeless tradition in China of reciting this classical poetry. Children begin learning and reciting these poems as early as kindergarten. The Chinese regard these poems as a treasure of Chinese literature and culture, and always recite them with a special emotional intensity, as many people believe they are among the world’s most beautiful poems.

Let us return to poetic translation in the Chinese version of *Independent People*. Xue and Hua attempt to reconstruct the poetic context in their translation. They try to keep a balance between English and Chinese poetics by following the rhyme scheme of both English and classical Chinese poems. For example, they preserve a rhyme in the first two lines of a poem, which is characteristic of classical Chinese poetry. However, even if Xue and Hua keep the rhyme scheme of Chinese poetry in the first two lines, they try to keep the rhyme scheme of English in the rest of the lines, which, I think, spoils the unity of the translated poem. It is true that there are cases of change in rhyme, but this is not typical of classical Chinese poetry. I have tentatively translated a few poems according to the English rhyming scheme, but I translate most of the poems in *Independent People* according to the classical Chinese scheme because I firmly believe that these translations are intended for Chinese readers.

Here, we once more encounter the question of what strategy to employ when translating a poem into a foreign language. Do we keep the form of the source poem or translate it according to the form the target poem? Or, as some scholars phrase it, do we translate poetry according to a policy of foreignization or domestication (Zhao Wenlan, Wang Hongyue, 2003:112; Chen Xiaoqin, 2006:118; Wu Shurong, 2011:143)? It may seem difficult to answer this question because translating a poem is a personal experience in which a translator of course decides on their own strategy. Furthermore, there are pros and cons to any poetry translation strategy. Perfect translations of poems may exist, but are hard to find considering the uniqueness of poetry and the great differences between English and Chinese poetry. Nevertheless, I personally believe that poetry should be translated according to the form that is customary in the target language, as translated poetry is intended for commonplace target language readers, not for scholars of poetry.

A more serious problem in Xue and Hua’s translation of poetry in *Independent People* is diction. Any reader with even the slightest poetic sense will immediately realize that almost none of the

translated poems are written in truly poetic language, which is different from commonly used language. All of these sentences contain only words commonly found in our daily conversations or in common prose. As mentioned before, poems are not just lines of words. They are an expression of emotions or ideas that require special diction, rhythm, and imagery. Xue and Hua attempt to translate the poems in *Independent People* according to a Chinese poetic rhyming scheme, but it is still far-fetched to consider just any collection of rhyming lines a poem; rhyming is only one of many elements of poetry, and not even a necessary one in modern poetry. The work of Rabindranath Tagore is a good example. The Bengali poet who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 is well known for his fresh and beautiful poems, especially those in his collection *Gitanjali* (Bengali: গীতঞ্জলি). Tagore's poems are not characterized by rhyme. What makes a poem is diction and imagination. It is true that many poems contain common, everyday vocabulary, but poetry is usually written in elevated language; otherwise, there is nothing to distinguish poetry from prose.

Translation, especially translation of poetry, is very individual, which makes it hard to comment on the translated poem according to rules in translation criticism. Anyway, poetry is so different from other genres of literature, and ways of translating poetry differ greatly from one translator to the next. My aim in this section is to support my own translation based on my own experience in writing and translating poetry. I always adhere to the suggestion that a poet translate poetry, in order to ensure that target language readers accept the translated poems. Moreover, I am deeply convinced that aesthetical standards as well as phonological, semantic, and grammatical standards should always figure significantly in poetry translation; it is pointless to translate poetry according to form alone.

As far as the qualifications of poetry translators are concerned, I should say the ideal scenario would be that poets translate poems, or at least translators should have profound knowledge of poetry. In spite of the great differences between English and Chinese, I strongly support the opinion that poems can be translated into poems, which, I think, is beneficial to target language readers, especially to those who have little or no knowledge of the source language.

## 4.2 Recognition and Reconstruction of Marginal Contexts

As we have discussed, recognition of core contexts in ST can maximize the chances of reconstructing core contexts in TT so that the core meaning of ST can be recognized and reconstructed in TT. It follows that recognition and reconstruction of marginal contexts in ST can greatly improve the reconstruction of core contexts in TT so that the meaning of ST can be made not only more accurate and specific but also more colorful and richer. If we say the recognition and reconstruction of core contexts in ST is a basic requirement for a translator, then we can say recognition and reconstruction of marginal contexts of ST is more a matter of ability, and sometimes it is even a matter of capacity. In some extreme cases, this capacity can even play an important role in literary translation. However, in any case, it is the responsibility of a translator to recognize and reconstruct core contexts in ST, but also recognize and reconstruct marginal contexts in ST. In this section, I will try to explore some important marginal contexts, which, in my personal opinion, must be recognized and reconstructed in literary translation.

### 4.2.1 Temporality

When a literary work is completed, the time at which the work is written, or the temporal context that can help us understand the work, is immediately and definitely fixed. At the same time,

the sequences of events depicted in the work are also fixed. A translator must be aware that there are sub-temporal contexts in a literary work. It is possible that every chapter of a literary work shares the same temporal context, but it is also possible for different chapters to have different temporal contexts. Temporal context may vary even within the same chapter. Temporal context may change with the movement of seasons or even with the alternation between day and night.

When the time of the work is fixed, then related contexts within that specific time are also fixed. These contexts include social, political, economic, and cultural contexts. To understand *Independent People*, it is crucial to keep this in mind. A translator must be very careful in following the temporal context of a literary work, because this context provides the translator with a horizontal framework in which events in a novel are illustrated. Events should happen within that framework and any violation is unreasonable and unacceptable. Details of narration and illustration should also comply with the temporal context; otherwise, they will be neither convincing nor supportive.

Temporal context not only helps translators who are proficient in their first language and the source language, it also helps target language readers without any prior knowledge of the source language to understand the source language culture. Take for example the bright summers and dark winters in Iceland, due to its northerly latitude. An awareness of this phenomenon will help Chinese readers to better understand why many activities take place even at “midnight” in summer, and why people stay in bed until “midday” in winter. Given the temporal context and its related social and economic contexts, readers of *独立的人们* will better understand why so many Icelanders chose to go to America to seek a new life. These contexts also help readers understand why Icelandic farmers thrived during the First World War, and why they were keen for it to continue. The temporal and related social context provide the reader with a better understanding of why Bjartur strives to seek independence throughout his life, and why he ultimately fails to realize his dream.

#### 4.2.2 Spatiality

Spatial contexts seem to be easier to grasp because they are concrete; not only are they easy to imagine, they are sometimes also tangible. For the convenience of our discussion, I will not define space in the narrow sense. In my dissertation, spatial context refers to a physical context concerning geographical location, space, and objects in the space.

Among these three kinds of spatial context, geographical location is the most easily understood. In a certain sense, it is geographical location that marks the social, economic, and cultural difference among nations and even among regions within one nation. As far as the Chinese version of *Independent People* is concerned, geographical distance is one possible of reason for the many misunderstandings in terms of Icelandic culture, which is not only geographically far-removed from China but also culturally. As mentioned in previous chapters, translators Xue and Hua may have had little knowledge of Iceland when they began translating *Independent People*. Most Chinese people thirty or forty years ago may never even have heard of Iceland, let alone anything about its people, language, literature and culture. In this sense, it is understandable that various mistakes occur in the first Chinese translation of *Independent People*.

Spatial distance plays an important role in helping us to understand that people on remote farms looked forward to visiting towns. In *Independent People*, Bjartur’s daughter Asta goes to town with her father and experiences everything, including the journey itself, as a novelty. This is quite similar to my experiences in the countryside. As a boy of five or six years old, I always looked forward to visiting the county town, which is usually the administrative and commercial center of a county,

with my parents. My imagination and expectations occupied the spatial distance between my home and the county town. At the end of the spatial distance was a world far away and strange to me. I firmly believe that I can fully understand Asta's expectations and translate them with the exact emotions that Laxness wanted to express. The spatial distance also helps readers understand why Icelandic people around the turn of the last century wanted to go to America. Nonni, Bjartur's youngest son, intends like many of his contemporaries to leave Bjartur to find a job in America, a country far away from Iceland and difficult to reach. For common people, staying in Iceland and working on the farm meant a hard life, while going to America meant a bright future.

Objects in space may vary from place to place. This makes it hard for a translator or reader to fully understand what a particular object is. Every country is different from every other, and objects in one country may be different from those in the other. Iceland, as a country far away from China, is unique in many aspects. It is true that Iceland and China have many geographical features in common, such as mountains, rivers, waterfalls, hot springs, and even glaciers, as we see in *Independent People*. Translators should nevertheless bear in mind that there is significant difference between Iceland and China. Remote farms like Summerhouses, for example, are not found in China. Without actually visiting a remote farm from a bygone era, it is difficult to imagine what it must have been like. A translator nowadays may use various resources to find a picture or illustration of such a farm, but Xue and Hua had very limited access to such resources as a point of reference.

Another thing that deserves mention and particular attention from the translator is that definitions of an object can change. Take the word "Summerhouses" again as an example. This is the name of Bjartur's farm, almost an oxymoron, as it is a remote farm at the edge of the habitable land in Iceland. A summerhouse nowadays is quite different from what it is in *Independent People*. In the modern context, a summer house refers to a building or shelter where people relax in their free time and on holiday. Summerhouses are usually well equipped, and are found throughout Iceland nowadays. In *Independent People*, the Summerhouses farm that Bjartur built himself is a rather small and crowded building, half underground. Covered with turf, the farm does not enjoy much sunshine and so the inhabitants often suffer from cold and disease. Bjartur's first wife, Rosa, and Finna, his second wife, successively die in Summerhouses. As I see it, the farm "Summerhouses" has become a metaphor for suffering and even tragedy in some sense. I am lucky enough to have visited some old farms built late last century and some built in modern times, which made quite clear to me the difference between old farms and new summer houses nowadays. I am confident that I have created an authentic old farm in my own Chinese translation of *Independent People*. This reconstructed context will certainly help Chinese readers understand Summerhouses in *Independent People*.

#### 4.2.3 Paratext

Paratext has been studied for some years and it sheds considerable light on literary translation. As French literary theorist Gérard Genette defines it, a paratext is "the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public" (1991, 22: 261; 1997: 1). Genette then further classifies paratext into two types: "peritext and epitext" (1991, 22: 262-264). The former consists of such elements as titles, chapter titles, prefaces, and notes, while the latter consists of interviews, publicity, reviews by and addresses to critics, private letters, and other authorial and editorial discussions. These elements, whether some of them or all of them, have influence on SL readers or TL readers, including translators, in terms of the

recognition and reconstruction of context and, correspondingly, the meaning of the target language.

It is true that it is possible to intentionally create peritext, or, as Valerie Pellat states, there exists a possible “ideological and political motivation and control in the use of paratext” (2013: 7). This of course affects a translator’s recognition and reconstruction of source text context. Normally and in most cases, however, paratexts should serve as marginal contexts outside of the source text, which can help a translator recognize and reconstruct source text meaning.

In China, there is an extreme example of paratext. Rarely is there a piece of literature that leads to an independent field of scholarship. Redology, or 红学 (Hóng Xué) in Chinese, is the study of Cao Xueqin’s *Dream of Red Mansion* 红楼梦 (Hóng lóu mèng), one of China’s four great classical novels. Redology emerged almost immediately after the book was published in the late Qing Dynasty, and many scholars have contributed to the field since then. Some study the origin of the novel while others study the economy, politics, and culture of the late Qing Dynasty with the help of the depictions of miscellaneous facets of life at that time. However, most researchers of Redology offer their insights in terms of literary value and interpretation of numerous expressions with implications.

We must pay attention to the difference between peritext and epitext. Because peritext consists of elements immediately surrounding the text, it seems easy to accept as a marginal context in literary translation. However, epitext, which consists of elements outside of the text in question, is often neglected in translation. One plausible explanation is that it is hard for a translator to consult so many various sources in order to recognize and reconstruct source text contexts. Take Xue and Hua’s translation of *Independent People* as an example. It is easy for Xue and Hua to access the novel’s peritexts. The book cover, the title, the preface, and comments at the back of the book could have helped the translators to recognize and reconstruct source text context and the meaning of the whole novel. It is true that at the time when Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, it was very hard for both translators to access to epitexts, or any further information and resources outside *Independent People*, including comments, bibliographies of the author, translation criticisms, literary reviews, and theses on this great novel. If they were available and both translators would refer to them, they of course would have gained better understanding the novel. Unfortunately, Iceland and Icelandic culture was then an unknown world to most Chinese people. This partly explains why there are so many misrecognitions and misreconstructions of context and meaning.

We cannot say a translator must take paratext into consideration in the process of translation, but of course it is advisable to do so because they can help a translator understand ST contexts and reconstruct them in TT. At least, a translator should take peritexts into consideration so that they can immediately understand ST writer’s intention, writing style, cultural background and so on.

I was lucky in that I could retranslate this great novel in Iceland and at a time when there were so many epitexts to take advantage of. Before I started translating the novel, I had read some comments, book reviews, academic papers, Halldór Laxness’ biography *The Islander*, some other works by Laxness, and of course Xue and Hua’s translation. When I visited the Icelandic turf houses, my Icelandic friends told me that these turf houses were very similar to Bjartur’s Summerhouses. I also paid a visit to Gljúfrasteinn, the home and workplace of Halldór Laxness and his family for more than half a century. During the visit, my Icelandic friends told me some stories about this house and the novelist. These stories, if we adhere strictly to Genette’s definition of paratext, are of course not paratexts because they are not “text”, but undoubtedly these stories have enriched my knowledge of this great novelist and *Independent People*, and thus they helped solidify the

foundation for my translation of the novel. I am confident that I have produced a better translation than Xue and Hua, due not only to my academic and literary experience, but also to the great convenience of having access to so much epitext for this novel.

Epitexts are always present, and as time passes, more and more may appear. Redology is a special phenomenon in this regard. It is actually the continuous process of adding paratexts that finally results in an independent field of academic study. Theoretically speaking, with more paratexts, translators will be better able to recognize and reconstruct source text contexts and meaning. However, how much and to what extent a translator may use them is highly individual. We now know that paratexts may play important role in helping to recognize and reconstruct source text context and meaning, but it is very difficult to require a translator to consult these paratexts, especially epitexts. This is also one main reason for including paratext among the list of marginal contexts.

Paratexts remind me of the name Bjartur in *Independent People*. The name of the novel's hero is hard to place on the list of paratext, but understanding its Icelandic origin can help us better recognize and reconstruct marginal contexts in this novel. In Icelandic, the word "bjartur" means "bright", which implies Bjartur's wish that by living independently in a "Summer" house, he could say goodbye to his dark days as a servant at the Bailiff of Myri's home and finally meet his bright future. The name also implies that Bjartur is "optimistic", or "bjartsýnn" in Icelandic. Without recognizing this, it is impossible for a translator to reconstruct a proper marginal context in the target text. In *独立的人们*, the Chinese translation of *Independent People*, Xue and Hua transliterate "Bjartur" as 比亚图尔. As I see it, this is an unsuccessful translation for at least two reasons. Firstly, "Bjartur" in Icelandic is a two-syllable word. It is understandable to translate "bjar-" as "比亚", because in Chinese we have no similar sound. However, it is hard to understand why they transliterate the single syllable "tur" into the obviously bisyllabic "图尔". Furthermore, the transliteration "比亚图尔" has nothing to do with "bright", which, as I said, is a very important marginal context in the novel. I translate "Bjartur" as "白雅德" in my version. This transliteration is obviously more syllabically similar to the Icelandic sound. More importantly, I use "白", which means "bright" in Chinese (there are several Chinese words that mean "bright", but "白" is the closest in terms of pronunciation). This not only preserves the marginal context, it also make it more acceptable to Chinese readers because "白" is a very common surname in China.

#### 4.2.4 World Knowledge

In linguistics, we must consider the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of a word in order to grasp the full and correct meaning of a word. This non-linguistic aspect, as Peter Hagoort, Lea Hald, Marcel Batiannsen, and Karl Magnus Petersson state, belongs to "the domain of semantics" (2014: 438) and is also called world knowledge. They also point out that our "brain retrieves and integrates word meanings and world knowledge at the same time" (Peter Hagoort et al. 2014: 440).

In translation studies, particularly when we discuss context recognition and reconstruction, I prefer to include more elements on the basis of this definition of world knowledge in terms of linguistics. This essentially includes the knowledge of peoples in the world, their respective histories, unique beliefs and mentalities, cultures, and political and economic systems. We then must limit the range of world knowledge for the convenience of our discussion, since it is impossible for a translator to possess an exhaustive knowledge of the world. A reasonable modification to this, since translation involves two languages, is common knowledge of people who speak the source language

and the target language, and knowledge of both cultures. As Sandra Jovchelovitch states in her work *Knowledge in Context*, this common knowledge may include “common sense, folk knowledge, habitus, thinking-as-usual, collective representations” (2007: 68). To have common knowledge, or the knowledge of both peoples and their culture when translation is concerned, is central to our recognition and reconstruction of context and meaning in a source text. Without this world knowledge, it is impossible for us to translate a piece of literature from a source language into a target language. This is something basic we have to bear in mind before we enter the process of translation.

Although “common” characterizes world knowledge, it is worth noting that the differences between two cultures also constitute part of world knowledge. In my opinion, recognizing and accepting these differences should also be a part of world knowledge. This is especially the case when translation happens between two languages that share no relation. I believe, for example, that translation between English and French is rather different from translation between English and Chinese. The former two languages are closely related and of course have historical connections, while English and Chinese show greater difference in terms of world knowledge because they belong to different language families. With the advancements in technology and especially the internet, it is now more convenient for people to accumulate and expand world knowledge. As recently as forty years ago, Chinese people were trying to catch up with the Western world in almost every field. Nowadays, thanks to this process of gaining world knowledge, the Chinese are very proud that they have achieved such success in some fields that Western cultures learn from China. Exchanges among different countries can obviously contribute to sharing world knowledge. Around thirty years ago, Iceland was nearly unknown to most Chinese people, while in years before the Covid-19 pandemic around 100,000 Chinese tourists visited Iceland annually.

When a society and culture develop, the world knowledge of this society and culture may also develop. Take tea as an example. Tea originated in China in the early Shang Dynasty (1600 - 1046 BC). It was first used as a medicinal drink and nowadays is an everyday beverage for many Chinese people. Tea is very popular when entertaining guests. It was introduced to Europe in the 16th century by Dutch traders and since then has become a popular beverage in many European countries. People all around the world have some knowledge of tea, but we have to be aware that tea may be used to mean different things. As a British person, if they just invite you round for tea they probably mean dinner and you won't get any actual tea. If they say ‘cup of tea’ you might get cake or biscuits if you are lucky. Nobody actually has high/afternoon tea as an event in their house except aristocrats. The differences in world knowledge may lead to another problem: the truth of world knowledge. The sentence “Trees can be found anywhere in Iceland” is semantically coherent, but it is not a correct proposition because it is not in line with our knowledge of Iceland. Due to historical reasons and weather conditions, trees, at least in many areas, are rarely found, although it is true that there are some forests in Iceland. This is of course quite different from the sentence “Planets can be found anywhere in Iceland” because it is obviously contradictory to our common sense. In the sentence “The countryman, on the other hand, walks out to the verdant meadows”, “the countryman” is actually quite different from Chinese “农民” (nóngmín: peasant). “Countryman” in *Independent People* is a farmer, either a private landowner or an employee of one, who raises or helps raise lambs, horses, or dairy cattle. In most of China, “农民” (nóngmín: peasant) is a peasant who grows crops and “牧民” (mùmín: herdsman) is a farmer who makes a living by rearing animals. Xue and Hua translate “countryman” as “农民” (nóngmín) throughout their translation, which is a clear mistake

that results from lack a world knowledge about Icelandic farming.

There are of course other contexts that can be placed on the list of marginal contexts. Completeness of source text, for example, is one of them. Normally, the entire source text should remain in the target text. A translator should not leave any parts of ST untranslated. Nobody wants a target text that leaves out parts of the source text for no justifiable reason. According to skopos theory, some translators may not preserve the entire source text for a number of reasons. As many scholars point out, however, what these translators do is in some sense not translation but adaptation. I firmly support the practice of keeping the complete source text, which is not only the responsibility of a translator but also a matter of conscience.

### 4.3 Context Recognition and Reconstruction: Personal Tendency and Bias

When discussing context recognition and reconstruction, we have to remember the fact that there are two sides of the coin to consider. One side of the coin is that contexts in a source text can largely be recognized and reconstructed although there are many obstacles. Another side of the coin is that it is quite necessary for translators and translation critics to bear in mind that it is impossible for a translator to recognize and reconstruct all possible source text contexts. In the previous chapter, I explored which contexts can be recognized and reconstructed. I tentatively put forward the concepts of core contexts and marginal contexts. I believe that a translator is always expected to recognize and reconstruct core contexts in a source text in order to ensure that the fundamental meaning of the source text transfers to the target text. An experienced and responsible translator should recognize and reconstruct both core contexts and marginal contexts as much as they can so that the meaning of ST can be transferred to TT as much as possible although, as a matter of fact, it is very hard to do so. A translator should try every means to recognize and reconstruct marginal contexts so that those subtle meanings in ST can be understood by TT readers. Core contexts are essential for any translator, while marginal contexts can be regarded as a touchstone for an experienced and successful translator.

It is a fact that a translator must consider many elements in context recognition and reconstruction. Different translators will have their own strategies according to their ability and their understanding of source text contexts. The comparison between my own translation of *Independent People* and Xue and Hua's provides a lot of evidence in terms of context recognition and reconstruction. Translators demonstrate certain tendencies and even biases in context recognition and reconstruction. Some of these tendencies are our natural response to source text contexts, while some stem from our own understanding of the nature of translation. Some tendencies may be conducive to context recognition and reconstruction, while others may develop into bias, which impedes the appropriate recognition and reconstruction of contexts in literary translation. A successful translator is expected to bear in mind these tendencies and to try to keep these biases within a certain and reasonable limit.

#### 4.3.1 Linguistic Context Dependency

Although more and more emphases are placed on recognizing non-linguistic contexts nowadays, a translator still largely depends on linguistic context rather than non-linguistic contexts to get the meaning of a source language text. This, in some way, is understandable. On the one hand, the source text is usually the only reliable source for a translator and the role of the text can never be replaced in terms of context recognition. On the other hand, text is one of the most obvious and

common forms of language. By means of text, human ideas and thoughts are expressed and communicated. In literary translation, text is the most direct way to access the meaning which the ST author intends to convey. Hence, contexts of ST, linguistic ones or non-linguistic ones, must be first recognized through the source text. From any angle, linguistic contexts should always be the primary concern in determining the meaning.

However, this linguistic context tendency also implies that we must consider not only contexts in linguistic text, but also contexts outside of the linguistic text. This is in fact determined by the nature of language, which is one of the most direct and common ways to communicate our ideas and thoughts. The only problem is that sometimes language fails to express our ideas and thoughts completely and exactly. Chinese has such idioms as “言不尽意” (yán bù jìn yì: meaning is not expressible in words or words do not convey the whole meaning) and “纸短情长” (zhǐ duǎn qíng cháng: The paper is too short to describe one's feelings). These idioms have existed in Chinese for more than three thousand years, which shows that people in ancient times realized the limit of language's ability to express ideas and feelings. Nowadays more and more theories, e.g., paratext theories, cognition theories, and the cultural turn in translation studies, have provided new insights into those non-linguistic contexts. It has been proven again and again that failure to pay attention to nonlinguistic contexts results in significant loss of meaning.

Dependence on linguistic context is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it helps us to recognize and reconstruct context. On the other hand, overreliance on linguistic context may lead to ignorance of non-linguistic context, which correspondingly leads to loss of source text meaning in translation.

#### 4.3.2 Overt Context Dependency

As many people who read will recognize, meaning is sometimes not explicitly stated in the text. However, context can be of help in recognizing source text meaning. Collocation, for example, is one of these obvious contexts. It exists everywhere in a source text and always helps us recognize the related contexts so that we eventually obtain the appropriate meaning from those contexts. Another obvious context is syntactic structure, which I have discussed in the section about grammaticality. Take the structure of a compound sentence as an example. In English, it is usually the case that an independent clause comes before a dependent one. This is also the case of Xue and Hua's Chinese translation of *Independent People*. It seems quite natural for a translator to rely on this context to decide how to reconstruct context. However, there is the problem of the difference between how English and Chinese juxtapose dependent and independent clauses. One major difference is that an independent clause in English often precedes a dependent one while in Chinese a dependent clause precedes an independent one. It is also quite common for an English passage to begin with a topic sentence, while in Chinese the topic sentence often comes at the end of the passage (though there are some exceptions to this where the opposite holds true).

Overt context dependence may result in a translator ignoring those covert contexts, which include not only covert linguistic contexts but also covert non-linguistic contexts. The difference in syntactic structures between English and Chinese is an example of a covert linguistic context. If a translator merely follows the syntactic structure in a source text (an overt context) without considering the different structure of a compound sentence (the covert context) and reproduces this overt context in the same structure in the target text, the translation will immediately fall into an oft-mentioned trap in translation studies: a word-for-word translation. In most cases this is a fatal

mistake and a violation of grammaticality, which in my thesis is regarded as a core context that a translator must always keep in mind.

Machine translation has been developing for some years and has reached a new stage with the help of artificial intelligence. Translation produced by a machine is, however, far from satisfactory. It is true that machines can handle some simple compound sentence translation. A sentence like “I will call you when I come back” is translated in Google as “我回来时会打电话给你” (Google translation on February 22, 2022). Google appears to reconstruct the covert context and different syntactic structures in Chinese and English, which is an impressive improvement compared with just a few years ago. We nevertheless still encounter two problems, both related to covert context. Firstly, “when I come back” is translated as “我回来时”, which is a sentence in Chinese written language. A more feasible and better translation would be “我回来的时候”. According to my discussion in previous chapters, Google fails to consider the mode of the language, a very important register, which is a covert context that translators (including machine translators) often ignore. Secondly, Google translates “I will call you” as “我会打电话给你”, which is another obvious word-for-word translation. The translation reveals that Google still follows the overt syntactic context without considering the covert context: there is a difference between English and Chinese in terms of syntactic structure. “我会打电话给你” is an acceptable sentence in Chinese that anyone can understand, and nobody will find fault with. The only thing is that in most cases, Chinese speakers would say “我会给你打电话”. The different position of “给你” demonstrates a widely accepted syntactic rule: an adverbial structure with a preposition is usually put before a predicate verb. This covert context is in some sense overt at the same time. The more a translator considers covert contexts, the better the translation will be.

In Xue and Hua’s translation of *Independent People*, there are too many mistakes in ignoring covert contexts. Sometimes it is register or spatiality; at other times it is temporality or culture. The result is that the translators fail to reconstruct them in their translation. This leads to not only loss of source-text meaning, but also creates a lot of difficulty for Chinese readers. With overt contexts, the meaning of the source text may be roughly reproduced in the target text. However, with covert contexts working together with overt contexts, the meaning of ST may be more accurately produced in the target text, though the source text meaning cannot be fully reproduced in the target text.

### 4.3.3 Dictionary Dependency

It is not just quite common but universal for a translator, especially a translator who is not fully fluent or proficient in the source language, to translate with the help of dictionaries. Nowadays electronic dictionaries, dictionary applications installed on phones and computers have largely replaced traditional printed dictionaries due to the fact that they are not only more compact, but also more flexible and smarter, which allows them to respond immediately to a translator’s request. It is understandable that a translator, especially one without professional training, should rely on the definition from a dictionary to explain a word or expression in the source text. This again reminds us of denotation, which is often reliably found in dictionaries. However, there may be two problems here.

Firstly, a dictionary should ideally be as exhaustive as possible. In reality, however, we often find so-called concise dictionaries that only offer two or three definitions for a word, whereas a large dictionary may offer twenty or thirty. Such concise dictionaries may suffice for a beginning student of a foreign language, but they are far from adequate for a translator working with a piece of

literature, especially a novel like *Independent People*, which includes a tremendous vocabulary.

A second and more serious problem with dictionary consultation is that a translator, especially an inexperienced one, may sometimes determine the meaning of a source-text word or expression by consulting only a concise dictionary or the first definitions provided in a more comprehensive dictionary. A translator may also read a definition that roughly explains a word or expression so that the sentence is almost coherent, but then stop there. Chances are that if the translator digs a little deeper, they may find a more suitable definition and produce a more accurate translation. The idea of connotation can play a role here because it clearly shows us how a translator can intentionally and strategically find connotation. In a certain sense, connotation is also important context: a word is not only defined by a dictionary, but also defined by a reader, who adds the final touches to the significance of a piece of literature, that is, reading it with their own understanding.

Throughout Xue and Hua's Chinese translation of *Independent People*, we find so many simple mistakes, some of which are almost absurd, that I cannot help but conclude that Xue and Hua have either consulted a very concise dictionary, or only read the first two or three definitions of one word in a larger dictionary before they decide upon that meaning. One obvious mistake they make is translating "crafts, she considered, were the only form of industry legitimate to Iceland" (*Independent People*: 19) into "她考虑到家庭手工艺是冰岛工业的唯一合法形式, 因此她在编织十字花方面花了很多时间和心血" (*独立的人们*: 21). It is true that in almost all English-Chinese dictionaries, the first definition of "legitimate" is "legal or lawful" (MCD: 452), while the definition "rightful or proper" may be listed among the last few items. However, it is this definition that accurately and exactly meets the context in the source text and ultimately allows for the proper comprehension of the source text.

It is now quite clear that some of Xue and Hua's mistakes are quite possibly due to their dependency on dictionaries. A translator should always keep in mind the common sense that a word in can often be defined in quite different ways. Dictionary dependency itself is not a problem. It becomes a problem only if a translator does not use a suitable dictionary, or uses a dictionary in an unsuitable way.

There are of course other tendencies in context recognition and reconstruction. Presentism, (Craig Bourne, 2006:1-23), for example, is a very interesting topic because it offers some explanation for why translators tend to recognize past contexts by referring to current contexts, which sometimes results in a misunderstanding of the true meaning of a source text. I also intended to discuss individual mentality dependency, which mainly focuses on the tendency for a translator to always seek to overlap their cognitive context with the source language reader's cognitive context, so as to discern the core context through which they can determine the meaning of a source language text. Recognition of the context may be natural for a source language reader, but this is not necessarily the case for a target language reader. A target language translator must break the context recognition bias in order to acquire the source language text meaning. However, due to limited space, I cannot provide a deeper exploration of the above-mentioned tendencies. I may explore them in the future, and I am confident that the exploration of all of these aspects can greatly help translators achieve a better understanding of context, and ultimately help them realize and avoid certain tendencies and biases when they produce literary translation.

#### 4.4 Readership and Criticism

Context helps readers along a path towards understanding the meaning of a source language

text. However, context cannot guarantee that readers will understand all possible meanings of the source language text. In other words, the extent to which readers can understand the meaning of a source text with the help of related contexts varies in accordance with readers' personal ability and their cultural framework, which also can be regarded as contexts. This is not only true of source language readers, but certainly also target language readers who, on the whole, are not as contextually proficient as source language readers. Due to the fact that translation is on the whole conducted by an individual, translation can never be perfect when judged by critics. It is quite common and seemingly natural that there are always more critics than translators. Critics may judge a translation from their individual points of view and provide quite reasonable arguments to support their views, positive or negative. It seems that it is hard to blame either critics for their negative comments or a translator for their mistakes because, strictly speaking, no translator can take every possible context into consideration when they translate SL text into TL text.

As far as interlingual context recognition is concerned, we may have to avoid two misconceptions. Firstly, a translator is expected to recognize all related contexts so that a perfect translation can be produced. It is now commonly believed that all factors that can help fully understand the meaning of ST can be regarded as contexts. Take a literary work as an example. Ubiquitous contexts of a literary work are always there to influence our understanding of every word, every sentence, every chapter of the work and the work as a whole. Besides source language text and the related culture, which are unanimously regarded as contexts that a translator must take into consideration, the book's cover with its special design and color and casing can also be contexts that can help us understand the intention involved and ultimately the meaning of the book as a whole. However, no matter how many contexts we can name when we try to understand the source language text, we must bear in mind one important fact: no translator is able to take advantage of all possible related contexts in order to understand the source language text. More importantly, it is sometimes unnecessary for a translator to take advantage of all related contexts in order to understand the source language text. I will further develop this point in the following sections.

The second misconception is that because of the impossibility of recognizing all related contexts, acquisition of accurate meaning of the source text is impossible and, as a result, translation by its very nature can only be satisfactory. An extreme formulation of this notion is that translation is impossible, or, as an Italian adage goes, *traduttore, traditore* ('translator, traitor'). This issue is closely related to a widely discussed topic in translation studies: translatability and untranslatability. Many scholars have contributed valuable ideas to this discussion. Unfortunately, it is easy to take this discussion to either of two extremes. A more acceptable saying is translation is always possible, but with varying degrees of loss.

Reconstruction of context in literary translation involves two languages and two cultures, which are sometimes so distant from one another that the translated work seems like a completely new creation rather than something derived from a source language counterpart. It is widely known that, although linguistically a SL text consists of form and content (or meaning), what translation in fact does is render the meaning of the SL text in the form of the TL. Due to the common knowledge that meaning is contextually dependent, in a certain sense we can say that translation is by nature the translation of context.

#### **4.5 Translatorship**

By translatorship, I mean what a translator is expected to do and what they actually do. A

translator is a bridge that connects SL text and TL text, or, to take it further, a bridge that connects the SL author and TL readers. In this sense, a translator is not only expected to turn SL text into TL text, but also to bring SL contexts into TL text so that TL readers can not only understand the literal meaning of the SL text, but also prevalent perspectives, inspirations, emotions, and intentions. Among many possible contexts, I think that a translator should take the following elements into consideration:

Firstly, a translator is expected to bring all possible meaning of the SL text into the TL text, but in reality, this is impossible. A translator lives in a different time and place from the SL writer; a translator does not have the same experience, religious beliefs, and family structures as a SL writer; a translator does not have the same capacity for recognizing contexts as a SL reader. A translator is not omnipotent, but subject to certain limitations in what they can translate.

Secondly, there are many difficulties and challenges in turning SL text into TL text, and as a result, it is understandable that a translator can hardly produce a perfect translation, but it is the responsibility of a translator to bring as much of the meaning of the SL text into the TL text with the help of core contexts and marginal contexts.

Thirdly, a natural and reasonable conclusion that we can draw from the above two points is that a translator is allowed room for individuality and creativity. This is the charm of translation in some sense, because diversity characterizes not only our minds but also our thoughts, which is the nature of both creating and appreciating literature.

#### 4.6 Summary

In this chapter, I intended to solve the problem of context recognition and reconstruction in academically logical and reasonable way by raising and answering three questions. Firstly, why should we reconstruct contexts in literary translation? Secondly, is it possible to reconstruct contexts in literary translation? And thirdly, what contexts can we reconstruct and how do we reconstruct them in literary translation? Seemingly it is not difficult to answer the first two questions, but I try to do so from my own point of view. To answer the third question in a solid and convincing way, I used many examples from Xue and Hua's Chinese version of *Independent People* to show how meaning is not properly transferred to TT due to the fact that contexts are not recognized and reconstructed. At the same time, I also provide my own translations as remedies to show ST contexts can be recognized and reconstructed in TT. In brief, contexts should be and can be reconstructed to make sure meaning can be properly reconstructed in literary translation.

As a matter of fact, failure to recognize core contexts is unavoidable, but people still read and translate literature. Nobody is expected to reach an exact interpretation of a discourse or a text. In some sense, individuality characterizes literary reading. The final interpretation of the meaning of a textual context comes not only from the linguistic context, but also from non-linguistic contexts. In answering the question of what kind of contexts should then be taken into consideration when ST is translated into TT, core contexts should certainly be given priority, as they play a crucial role in determining the core meaning of a source language text. Marginal contexts of course play an important role in helping a translator determine the meaning of ST. I use the term "marginal context" because these contexts are "marginal" in our cognitive view. A translator may neglect these marginal contexts, intentionally or unintentionally (in most cases the latter applies, I think), but obviously, marginal contexts are indispensable in literary translation because they provide vital support in understanding those subtle meanings, which, sometimes are the very meanings an author wants to

convey.

The above is of course far from a complete list of core contexts and marginal contexts. This list is mostly based on theories that I have mentioned in this dissertation and on my observations, mainly from the comparative study of 独立之子 (my Chinese translation of *Independent People*) and 独立的人们 (Xue and Hua's translation). A translator is expected to recognize core contexts in a ST and correspondingly reconstruct them in literary translation. Failure to recognize these contexts results in obvious loss of meaning of the ST. With regard to marginal contexts, we may include far more items than core contexts. It is understandable that many individuals (i.e., translators and maybe translation critics) will have their own marginal contexts, and this is why no list of such contexts can ever be exhaustive. However, we must be very careful to avoid a pitfall that I mentioned: believing that every possible context in a SL text should be considered so that every possible meaning can be translated into the TL text. This is theoretically reasonable but practically impossible.

Using many examples of mistranslation in Xue and Hua's Chinese version of *Independent People*, I also suggest how we can recognize and reconstruct contexts in literary translation. I hope those specific problems in Xue and Hua's Chinese version of *Independent People* and my remedies can provide some inspiration for scholars in literary translation and translators who strive to produce quality translations.

I hope my exploration of tendencies and bias in context recognition and reconstruction will help translators, especially beginners, avoid pitfalls from the outset of their career so that they can better shoulder the responsibilities of a translator.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

Context has been studied in many fields, and these studies from various angles and on different levels have not only widened our view on context but also deepened our understanding of its nature. The traditional concept of context dependency is now studied more and more in terms of how context can provide support in such fields as machine translation, artificial intelligence, history, psychology, sociology, criminology, cognition and so on. In linguistics and translation studies, more details and elements of contexts have been explored and much ground has been gained. Using the framework of some of these achievements and my own observations, I hope to make some contribution to the study of context and provide some practical suggestions in literary translation.

My initial aim of using a case study in my dissertation brought me into close contact with Icelandic literature in a way that I would never have imagined. I not only read Icelandic literature, but I chose a pearl of the Icelandic literary canon: *Independent People* by Halldór Kiljan Laxness. I intended to read this novel to find some evidence of context recognition and reconstruction. However, the more I read the more fascinated I became. I then tried every means to find a Chinese version of the novel, but unfortunately this version turned out to be a failure, which inspired my bold and risky attempt to translate *Independent People* by myself. I have never regretted the following four-and-half-year struggle that not only cost me great energy, but also substantially delayed my dissertation and defense.

A comparative study can be conducted in many different ways and for many different purposes. However, my comparative study, which was inspired by Katharina Reiss' translation criticism and later functionalism, differs significantly from traditional ones in that I am the conductor of the case study as well as the translator of the work that is used as a source for comparison. The advantage of this practice is obvious: I can try to observe how a translator makes judgments and decisions in context recognition and reconstruction. More than two hundred mistranslations by Xue and Hua are classified into several categories, and typical examples are analyzed in detail so that I can explore what, how, and to what extent contexts can be recognized and reconstructed in a creative and convincing manner.

My translation and a close comparative study make me more confident in my theoretical proposals in terms of context recognition and reconstruction. Firstly, context recognition and reconstruction are not neologisms, but this is the first time that a systematic study of these concepts has been tentatively conducted. Since context is an indispensable part of a text, context reconstruction should be an integral part of literary translation. Secondly, because it is impossible and unnecessary to consider all possible contexts in a source text, I propose the notion of core context and marginal context. With skopos theory as my basis, I suggest seven core contexts: genre, text types, and register, proper diction, proper collocation, grammaticality, and poetic quality. Five marginal contexts include temporality, spatiality, humanity, paratext and world knowledge. I also suggest that a translator should make sure to recognize core contexts and marginal context so that accurate meaning can be guaranteed. However, in practical translation, priority should go to core contexts due to their role in determining the fundamental meaning of the ST. Recognizing and reconstructing core context should not only be the translator's responsibility, but also a basic requirement for translators, especially professional translators. Recognizing and reconstructing marginal context, on the other hand, is more a matter of ability than of conscience and professional

ethics. In order to help a translator to recognize core context and marginal context, I put forward the concepts of overt context and covert context. I believe that a translator should try their best to identify covert contexts so that they can decide which core contexts and marginal contexts to reconstruct in literary translation. For the first time, I paint a clear picture of tendencies and biases in context recognition and reconstruction.

It is true that in some cases it is difficult to translate meaning, but it is possible that context can be translated. In other cases, meaning may be imprecisely translated, but contexts may be not definitely imprecisely translated. TT can be very close to ST, but it is never the case that contexts or meaning of TT can be the same as those of ST. However, this provides translators with scope for creativity. In a certain sense, it is both the ST and translator's creativity that work together to produce the final TT.

Obviously, there is a lot to explore in context recognition and reconstruction in literary translation. I hope that what I have done in this dissertation contributes in some way to context study, and is of benefit to scholars and translators.

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