

A psychological-semiotic approach to cultural translation: A case study of translational performance text and translated cultural identity

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Abstract

Cultural translation promotes cross-cultural syncretization and hybridization. Against the backdrop of cultural assimilation and inherent conceptual contestation of different languages, the cultural meaning of the source performance text is interpreted and re-constructed by specific cultural translator who intentionally creates the aesthetic value and significance for a specific target readership/audience. Drawing on Valsiner's cultural psychology and Marais' notion of representamen translation, this paper focuses on an exemplary example of a cross-cultural stardom-fandom exchange regarding the Korean artist Lee Joon Gi, who produces his translational performance texts of the source Chinese performance texts for his target Chinese audience. The psychological-semiotic approach to Translation Studies also explores the issue of translated cultural identity within cultural translation. Thus, the concept of translational performance text is proposed as Lee is deemed as both cultural translator and translated cultural product simultaneously. On the one hand, by incorporating non-linguistic semiotic process-phenomena into the conventional linguistic-biased Translation Studies, Translation Studies could be nurtured promisingly with cultural psychology and semiotics for interdisciplinary progress. On the other hand, a translational perspective enhances the understanding of the profound psychological-semiotic aspect of cultural translation pertaining to the production of entertainment *jouissance* within cultural translation.

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Introduction

Much to the amazement of many Chinese audiences who watch, on spot or online, Lee Joon Gi (hereafter referred as Lee), a Korean artist performing Chinese pop songs in both Mandarin and Cantonese beautifully and articulately at his performance tour at Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China, they cannot help but soon get captivated by and mesmerized at Lee's performances. In essence, Lee's performance is argued as *translational* in the framework of cultural translation, which showcases Lee's cultural affinity to his target Chinese audience by exploiting his stardom charisma. In order to demystify Lee's stage wonders which are well received and admired by his target Chinese audience, a translational perspective is included to explore the understanding of the profound psychological and cultural transformation which occurs at the intersection of cultural translation and cultural studies in the digital environment. In this way, a psychological-semiotic approach could contribute to "development of new methodology that honors the qualitative, dynamic, and holistic nature of cultural phenomena" (Valsiner, 2014, p. 147) in a setting of cross-cultural communication. In particular, the notion of culture could be translated into the "processes of semiotic mediation and proceed to analyse those in various social settings" in the domain of cultural psychology (Valsiner, 2019, p. 14). Thus, Lee's translational performance belongs to the categories of cultural translation and semiotic process-phenomena which produce aesthetic pleasure for his target Chinese audience. In this context, a metaphysical reflection from the translational perspective is conducted to discuss Lee's autonomous cultural assimilation for a specific purpose of aesthetic manipulation concerning the target audience. In this vein, Lee could be interpreted as his own commissioned cultural translator who is responsible for culturally transferring his stardom business into a target cultural locale. In the meanwhile, Lee could be deemed as the exact cultural product that gets translated, which appeals to the target audience's expectation of aesthetic appreciation in a cross-cultural context.

It might sound ignorantly naïve to adopt an attitude of translational relativism under the umbrella term of culture with a view of pushing the disciplinary boundaries of Translation Studies. But it might also sound hopelessly short-sighted by simply ditching the possibilities and feasibilities of identifying appropriate cross-cultural communication cases which could be interpreted from the perspective of cultural translation as the enlargement of Translation Studies. First and foremost, to translate is to communicate. Translation Studies and communication studies, the two "relatively closely neighboring disciplines", principally look into "problems of comprehension and cross-cultural understanding" (House & Loenhoff, 2016, p. 98). More importantly, the two disciplines both need "an act of re-contextualization" (House & Loenhoff, 2016, p. 101). Thus, the semiotic process-phenomena reflected in Lee's translational performance texts shall be put into recontextualization, in alignment to its specific context which is accommodated in a

time-spatial continuum both physically on the spot and virtually in a perpetuating form of multimodal text that circulates on the Internet.

In the meanwhile, it is important to include more translational phenomena although the studies of interlingual translation/translation proper (Jakobson, 1959/2012, p. 127) remains predominant in the field of Translation Studies. For instance, van Doorslaer challenges such still-dominant academic standing by resorting to a hedged statement that “the traditional borders of *translation proper* **may seem** too restrictive” (2019, p. 221, italics in the original, emphasis mine). Besides, Marais launches an ambitious project of theoretical construct “that covers all semiotic process-phenomena” (2019, p. 120) and could “study all instances of translation process-phenomena” (2019, p. 121), namely in his book *A (Bio)Semiotic Theory of Translation*. Marais renders Jakobson’s translation categories obsolete (2019, p. 121), which are intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation (Jakobson, 1959/2012, p. 127). Marais proposes that his theoretical schema is designed to account for all translation process-phenomena by emphasizing the “semiotic processes in which language does not play a role at all” (Marais, 2019, p. 121). Marais does have a point in relation to an alternative understanding of the enlarging scope of translation that translation could substantially occur without involving any linguistic transfer at all, particularly within the framework of cultural translation. In this vein, Translation Studies could and should deal with more aspects than the mere linguistic aspect, such as cultural psychology and semiotic process-phenomena where the specificity of cultural context signifies. In addition, the ubiquity of translation is well acknowledged in different contexts (e.g., Blumczynski, 2016, p. 168). The semiotic process-phenomena reflected thereof merit careful attention, namely meaning construction, cultural identity swap, audience reception as well as the domestication strategy in relation to Translation Studies.

Preceding his bold and insightful elaboration that there is no better way to describe “what happens between the musician, instrument, and music as ‘translation’” (Blumczynski, 2016, p. 169), Blumczynski states confidently that “I have no doubt that many more interesting and true insights about all things translational are yet to be formulated or discovered in areas where they would not normally be expected” (Blumczynski, 2016, p. 168). Therefore, it is hoped that my tentative formulation and discussion about Lee’s stage performance adaptations within cultural translation shall echo to such scholarly appeal to exploring the interesting translational phenomena in a cross-cultural context, by identifying them as translational performative texts and Lee as both a cultural translator and a translated cultural product simultaneously. In particular, since identity could “be explained through physical features, biological descent, linguistic abilities, cultural practices, etc.” (Zhang, 2017, p. 238), Lee’s translated cultural identity is mainly explored from his linguistic abilities and cultural practices which are situated in the context of cross-cultural communication.

In short, drawing on Valsiner’s cultural psychology and Marais’ notion of representamen translation, this paper selects a typical example of cross-cultural dissemination regarding Korean stardom culture as an illustrative case to enrich the scope of Translation Studies in relation to cultural psychology and semiotics. Thus, this paper aims to construct a meaningful dialogue between the disciplines of Translation Studies and cultural studies,

with a focused study of Lee's translational performance texts which serve as a symbolic presentation of cultural *other* for earning his cultural capital in the target cultural destination. To be specific, Lee's translational cultural performance which constructs his translated cultural identity brings forth emotional values of happiness and satisfaction, confidence and consolidation for his target Chinese audience as a desirable reception effect.

Translational performance text in the transnational fandom context

A growing number of fandoms are residing in Chinese cyberspace as a result of "the expansion of cultural industry in China and the advance of internet technologies" (Zhang & Mao, 2013, p. 45). Transnational stardom-fandom cultural industry is featured prominently with cultural transnationality. To begin with, the conceptual links between cultural translation and cultural studies are investigated in the context of transnational fandom business as the "contact zone" where various cultural identities are presented and hybridized. A meaning-transformation process is inevitable when Lee the foreign artist establishes his cross-cultural identity via translational performance which is a specific form of target text in parallel to its source performance text. Marais holds that "meaning entails both process and form", with an emphasis on the significance of "*process*" (2019a, p.123, italics mine). In this vein, Lee Joon Gi's translational performance could be used to demonstrate the primacy of *process* of meaning construction within cultural translation. In particular, Marais explains his theory as follows.

Meaning is achieved by translation, and without translation, there is no meaning. In my conceptualization, this translation does not take place between stable meanings; rather, meaning is itself a never-ending process of creating relationships between meanings, which relationships-creating process is constrained so that it takes a particular (more or less temporary) form or trajectory. (Marais, 2019, p.123)

Since "meaning is itself a never-ending process", the meaning construction of Lee's translated cultural identity is fluid in its semiotic process-phenomena. In Lee's case, such cultural meaning is fulfilled by means of representamen translation pertinent to Lee's translated cultural identity via his translational performance. The meaning fulfilment of Lee's translational performance involves both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. As regards the linguistic aspect, Lee has demonstrated his language talents by performing the source Chinese songs fascinatingly. As regards the understanding of the non-linguistic aspect, it is helpful to resort to Jakobson's definition of intersemiotic translation, or transmutation, as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (2012, p. 127), which could be related to the "non-linguistic dimension" of Lee's translational performance. This "non-linguistic dimension" refers more to the holistic aesthetic effect of Lee's stardom charisma via his singing and performing, which goes beyond language and could be framed in the further discussion of producing *jouissance* for the target audience framed in cultural psychology. As Lee promotes himself as a

transnational cultural product into the target foreign cultural system, the foreignness of his source cultural identity as a Korean artist is concealed through his excellent performance of singing Chinese songs which could be deemed as an excellent modified and domesticized cultural product. However, paradoxically, the target Chinese audience only finds his inherent cultural foreignness all the more attractive because of his language and performance aptitudes. In a nutshell, Lee makes himself a desirable cultural product that fulfils the satisfaction of the target audience by making them feel moved and excited, for instance, about his devotion to presenting himself as directly communicable in an aesthetical sense despite the unavoidable language barriers. By performing in the source language, Lee translates himself, a foreign cultural product, into a domesticized cultural product for his target Chinese audience. In this sense, Lee is a culturally translated man by demonstrating his language talents, performance initiatives and strong determination.

A desired cultural congruence in cross-cultural communication

The cross-cultural communicability between the cultural translator and the target audience who are of various ethnographic backgrounds, is characterized by the contingent cultural congruence against the perennial cultural heterogeneity and linguistic incommensurability. A translational perspective helps account for the power dynamics concerning such translational encounter within the cross-cultural contact zone, which helps contribute to the understanding of the cultural psychology behind the hustling and bustling cross-cultural exchange of the stardom-fandom relations. To be specific, issues like what is being represented and how is it being interpreted, remain fundamental in terms of grasping the meaning which is encapsulated in the practice of cultural translation on the digital platform.

In terms of delineating the concept of contact zone which starts from the notion of translational encounter, it is necessary to learn what translational encounter is in the global context in that it is where cultural convergence emerges. For instance, [Schäffner & Dimitriu \(2012\)](#) offer detailed observation for the specifications of direct and indirect translational encounters, i.e., “direct encounters with ‘the other’ can happen in our home country, when we meet foreigners who have come to find work, asylum, or as tourists, and equally abroad, when we travel to another country for whatever purpose” whereas “indirect encounters via literature, film, or mass media can occur if we are in our home country or abroad” (p. 261). Furthermore, they add that “[i]n any case, such encounters normally involve some form of comparison (and evaluation) of the self and the other, be it in terms of values, attitudes, and behaviour, including linguistic behaviour” ([Schäffner & Dimitriu, 2012](#), p. 261). In this vein, two types of global encounters occur in the case of Lee’s translational performance in the study. First, the direct translational encounter between Lee and his target Chinese audience occurs on the physical locale as they are all present in the same place; second, the indirect translational encounter occurs on the Internet, which refers to Lee’s online target Chinese audience who watches and appreciates the recorded version of Lee’s translational performances which is made into multimodal texts.

Lee's translational performances function as the entertainment sources which are designed for the specific groups of audience with similar aesthetic tastes within the cross-cultural stardom-fandom exchange. In this context, a translational performance text is a cultural and social construct beyond the linguistic dimension. In the entertainment industry, performers garner their cultural and economic capitals in the fandom economy. As a result, like all other successful performers, Lee has to demonstrate his effectiveness and efficiency of exploiting his performance repertoire to gain the maximum reception effect of positive popularization. In Lee's case, it is noted that a major consideration during the popular star's public performances in the target cultural system could be his/her goal of the reinforcing of the existing foreign fan base by catering to their emotional needs appropriately and strategically. It is expected that Lee's strenuous efforts seen in his translational performance shall invite a greater fan base enlargement potentially.

In this specific scenario of cultural translation, Lee the performing star aims at the optimal transfer of aesthetic feelings and emotions which creates intense feelings of leisure and entertainment consumption for the target audience. To achieve such goal, Lee has engaged in translational performance by imitating the influential stars of the target cultural system with whom the target foreign audiences are familiar and hence recreating his own stardom aurora. In reciprocity, the target foreign audiences showcase their huge support and unflinching faith in Lee who is their desired and appreciated foreign artist. By way of consuming such translational performance, the target audiences could quickly adapt themselves to the renewed aesthetic pattern of the source performance texts through Lee the foreign star's intentional cultural assimilation. In this way, there seems to be a direct communication between Lee the foreign star and his target Chinese audiences through the translational performance regardless of the inherent linguistic obstacles. At this particular moment, the cultural heterogeneity and linguistic incommensurability have been magically effaced through such well-established cultural congruence which is empowered by Lee's masterful performance skills of translating himself into an understandable and more appreciable cultural product for his target Chinese audience.

Constructing aesthetic pleasure in cross-cultural contact zone and transnational fandom context

As regards cultural production, "artistic texts exist as objects of value and pleasure in their aesthetic identity" (Webb, 2002, p. 147). Lee's translational performance could be counted as artistic text that is interpreted by his unique linguistic and musical capacities. Lee has exercised his subjectivity to effectuate his manipulation and control regarding the aesthetic appreciation of his target Chinese audience. Thus, the cross-cultural contact zone become much more contested as it is managed by Lee the foreign star who is striving to present himself as culturally appropriately acceptable for his target foreign audience, given the fact that their direct mutual communication is seriously affected due to the language barriers. Besides, the highest value of Korean celebrities lies in their "appeal to as broad an audience as possible and alienate no one with their politics" in the course of their transnationalization in the global context (Fedorenko, 2017, p. 498). Labelled as "circulating commodities and commercial assets" (Fedorenko, 2017, p. 499), *Hallyu*

(Korean Wave) stars cannot free themselves from “South Korean nationalist appropriation” (Fedorenko, 2017, p. 498) because such ideology primarily portrays them as “exemplary Korean patriots” (Fedorenko, 2017, p. 498). Thus, to some degree, these Korean stars’ strenuous efforts in their accumulation of “global capital” (Fedorenko, 2017, p. 498) might seem inherently contradictory as they are rallied to correspond to showing “sympathy for [the international audiences’] own causes” (Fedorenko, 2017, p. 499). Such external sympathy creates empathy among the target audience which contributes to “affective economics” as the target ideal consumer “is active, emotionally engaged, and socially networked” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 20). In this sense, the ideal consumer might be tantamount to the role of the ideal target audience, or similar to the target readership in a translational sense in the field of Translation Studies. Such ideal target audience is naturally under the influence of the complicate process of negotiations between different national and cultural ideologies. As Andrejevic comments that Jenkins does not offer “thickly developed” notion of affective economics by presenting it “largely as a re-appropriation of marketing rhetoric” (Andrejevic, 2011, p. 606), it is premature to jump at a simple conclusion on how the target Chinese audience consumes Lee’s translational performance for aesthetic pleasure or fulfilling their desire of imagining cultural exoticism.

Therefore, it is imperative to recognize the underneath fandom control and manipulation scheme regarding Lee’s intentional production of empathy for the target Chinese audience, which articulates Lee’s the purpose of constructing aesthetic pleasure via translational performance texts which bears semiotic values of good will and emotional comfort for the target audience. In this way, the creative process of meaning construction of Lee’s performance in terms of the cultural translation from both a metaphorical lens and a practical sense could be explored. Furthermore, a broader understanding of cultural translation regarding the entertainment repertoire of a popular star’s overseas promotion of stardom business is developed, of which the notion of translational performance text is constructed and introduced, in order to account for the cultural transformation of the affective emotional capital in stardom-fandom business as exemplified in Lee’s case.

The observation of Lee’s performance indicates that Lee works towards an attainable goal of making a successful cultural transference of himself the cultural other in the target foreign cultural system. It is necessary to delve into the translational mechanism regarding Lee’s proactive rendition of cultural heterogeneity which works towards cultural reconciliation and homogenization. Besides, Lee’s cultural identity swap, or translated cultural identity, and so forth of such cultural encounters could be analysed and interpreted in relation to its directionality. The popular acceptance of source-target supreme in modern Translation Studies suggests that translation is directional (Chesterman, 2016, pp. 3-4), which could not be more sharply felt in Lee’s case of cultural translation by making himself as translated cultural product for his target audience. In this sense, notions of source text and target text, source culture and target culture, source readers/audiences and target readers/audiences will find their conceptual applications as follows.

Constructing a translational performance text

The articulation of Lee's stage performance as a translational phenomenon shall embrace a new conceptual tool of *translational performance text*. In addition, in order to advance the ambition of enlarging the scope of research object in Translation Studies, it is argued that the scope of *target text* could be expanded by adding the dimension of *translational performance text*. The notion is primarily concerned with stage performance as a multimodal text as in Lee's case, since it focuses on proposing a refreshing viewpoint of cross-cultural communication from the translational perspective. In this vein, a succinct definition of translational performance text may override a complex one due to the desired conceptual flexibility. In a broad sense, a translational performance text simply means a performance text of the source culture has been re-interpreted and re-presented in a cross-cultural communication milieu where performance transformation, cultural identity negotiation and culturally ideological manipulation take place concomitantly to varying degrees.

It is concluded that the success of Lee's transnational promotion of stardom in the target fandom market has much to do with interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation which help promote his international publicity. The interlingual translation, for instance, finds itself useful for improving Lee's public exposure in an international arena, since his foreign fandom could watch and understand the multimodal versions of his interviews, performances and the like in the Korean language with the help of proper subtitles in their own languages. Undoubtedly, such interlingual translation is conducive to disseminating the symbolic values that Lee represents in the target cultural market, such as his life philosophy, his work attitude and his commitment to his fans. As regards the aspect of intersemiotic translation, it has to be interpreted differently from Jakobson's definition which means transferring the verbal signs into the non-verbal signs. In an innovative viewpoint, the content of intersemiotic translation could be expanded by including the example of Lee's transference of his cultural capital of entertainment value from the source cultural system into the target cultural system, which is inherently cultural assimilation and appropriation for the sake of affective significance in the stardom-fandom exchange.

Thus, a breakthrough could be effectuated for enlarging the scope of translation by including Lee's translational performance in Translation Studies, which challenges and enriches the conventional notion of translation per se. [Lee \(2019b\)](#) of Korean origin seemingly delivers his mimic performances of the Chinese household names of [Cheung \(2018\)](#) and [Chou \(2018\)](#) for his target Chinese fandom. There is obviously no clear sign of code-switching on the linguistic level which seems to be the bedrock of building a case of translational proper within Translation Studies. That being said, it is still worth exploring the reason why Lee works hard to present himself as the replica of the popular Chinese singers although he himself is already quite a famous and successful star. The language barrier between Lee himself and his target Chinese fandom affects their direct mutual communication. To deal with such communication anxiety resulting from the inherent linguistic incommensurability, Lee has exerted efforts in creating more sensational experiences for his target audience in spite of language barrier by adopting the

method of representamen translation. Lee translates himself into a transcultural product with his performance via the method of cultural domestication by completely transforming himself into a domesticized cultural product in the target cultural system. In essence, Lee calls into attention his inherent cultural heterogeneity concerning his cultural identity for the target Chinese audience. Due to its musical nature, the source performance is open for different interceptions by different performers with their understanding and its entailing external execution by means of individual ways of performing. Therefore, in Lee's case, the source Chinese performance texts get translated and interpreted by Lee the foreign performer's agency for creating a special aesthetics of reception effect.

Lee resorts to the semiotic process method to communicate with his Chinese fandom directly by producing the direct enjoyment of entertainment in their own language. The notion of translational performance is tenable from an interdisciplinary perspective, which helps expand the scope of Translation Studies. Such theoretical advancement echoes to van Doorslaer's observation (2020) that "[t]he blurring of borders is also an ongoing process between [Translation Studies] and adjacent research fields that deal with other text-modifying practices", which "will inevitably affect the seemingly never-ending debate on the name of the discipline" (p. 148). Thus, it is important to investigate how cultural foreignness is introduced to the target audience by referring to Lee's translational performance, in order to examine the role of cultural translation in terms of reconstructing and representing the source performance text for the target audience creatively and effectively.

Cultural translator, translated cultural product and promoting cultural foreignness and foreign cultural identity

Some of the target cultural markets are easily subject to the strong influence of the transnational cultural phenomena concerning Korean Wave. The target audiences are voluntary to learn their foreign idols despite the linguistic and cultural challenges, which might suggest that, there is some issue of underlying servile cultural mentality than the mere instinctual curiosity towards the cultural other regarding the target audience. Because the target audience might love to devote time and effort to learning much foreign information about their foreign idols whereas they might neglect or care less about the learnings of their own language and culture, especially the younger generation. Interestingly, Lee's translational performances of singing Chinese songs for his target Chinese audience in effect ameliorates such tension caused by the external cultural influence, in that Lee seems to genuinely to showcase his willingness to take the initiatives to theatrically adapt himself to the aesthetic taste of the target audience. In this way, Lee becomes a domesticated translational cultural product which seems to efface his foreign essence temporarily. Most importantly, Lee becomes the very cultural translator who chooses what translational performance he will deliver and how he shall execute such performances in a successful way during the cultural encounter with his target Chinese audience. In the meanwhile, the target audience actively engage in the consumption and evaluation of Lee's translational performance, which adds the layer of affective significance in such cultural encounter.

The notion of the target audience should be understood in a broad sense as the notion of intersemiotic translation becomes enlarged. The target audience could be understood as the audience who consumes the entertainment programme and performance by the performers regardless of their cultural backgrounds. In the following, four multimodal texts of the recoded videos which are available on the Chinese platform [Bilibili.com](https://www.bilibili.com) are selected. They are Cheung's "*Toufa luanle*" (*Hair Was Awry*) (2018) and Chou's "*Gaobai qiqiu*" (*Love Confession*) (2018) as the source performance texts, whereas Lee's "*Toufa luanle*" (*Hair Was Awry*) (2019) and "*Gaobai qiqiu*" (*Love Confession*) (2019) are the target performance texts, or translational performance texts.

Lee's translational performances are quite appreciated by the Chinese audience. The chosen multimodal texts circulate on the website <https://www.bilibili.com/>, the popular Chinese online platform which is characterized by "its deep-rooted ACG fan culture and free access to all contents" as well as "the most active viewer participation and interaction through the *danmaku* interface" (Yang, 2020, p. 259, italics in the original). As a built-in design in the highly interactive social media platform, the *danmaku* interface reveals part of the online audiences' feedback which could account for the desirable reception effect that reflects some of the general readings of the said multimodal texts by the target online audience. For instance, one of the repeating themes from the *danmaku* is about the online audiences' admiration of Lee's clear Chinese pronunciation in both Mandarin and Cantonese during his translational performances. As intended, Lee's delicately cultural representation which produces cultural affinity brings aesthetic pleasure and entertaining excitement to his target Chinese audience. The translational perspective reveals that how Lee the Korean star and the cultural other finds his way into the target Chinese cultural milieu successfully with the strategy of cultural assimilation for aesthetic manipulation.

By emphasizing that Lee's case is exemplary for developing an in-depth understanding of cultural translation, first of all, it is helpful to look into Tymoczko's ambition of enlarging the scope of translation. Tymoczko contributes to enlarging the understanding of cultural translation by accentuating the ideological aspect in her proposition, saying that a translator is empowered to "choose and control the representations being aimed at" under the pretext of a full recognition of "the cultural field of the source text" (Tymoczko, 2014, p. 251). In this vein, Lee has purposely constructed his translational performance that is directed at the target audience, which enriches the content of such representations of the source performance text. To begin with, Lee's translational performance text conducted in the Chinese language seems to offer incredibly transparent aesthetic appreciation by creating a fantastic illusion of cultural authenticity for his target Chinese audience. Thus, the target Chinese audience obtains two sources of cultural satisfaction, i.e., both their instinctual quest for cultural foreignness and their ethnocentric sense of cultural superiority are fulfilled. Thus, it needs to point out that a particular ideological and aesthetic manipulation through such cultural exchange might occur without the target Chinese audience's cultural awareness.

Alternatively, de Campos's concept of isomorphic transcreation (1963/2007) could account for Lee's translational performance text as well. Odile comments that de Campos's metaphorical use of cannibalism helps "reveal and radicalize the difference translation is conventionally thought to erase" (2012, p. 39). On the surface, Lee seems to

erase the cultural differences between himself and his target Chinese audience via his translational performance through the method of cultural domestication. Lee creates a cultural chronotope in which his target Chinese audience could truly appreciate him for what he *is capable of*, a foreign artist who doesn't speak the target language, wrestling with the original Chinese performances to foster a seemingly authentic sense of constructing a direct communication expediently for his target audience. In this sense, Lee deliberately attracts his target audience to his translational performances, so as to boost his own stardom charisma and add up to his symbolic capital, instead of truly serving to promote the original Chinese versions. Gentzler discusses that de Campos repudiate the "preordained original" in their approach to literary translation, where they "view translation as a form of transgression" (1993, p. 192). In the similar vein, Lee's aesthetic manipulation constitutes his cultural transgression into the target cultural market by transcreating the original Chinese versions. Lee adapts himself into the target cultural system with such form of cultural transgression that corresponds to his career ambition in the overseas market.

Similarly, Kinga and Pál's "cultural back-translation" challenges the conventional notion of "original text" in translation practice, which means that "authors have somehow to express the [cultural specific-elements] of [the foreign] country in their own language" (Kinga & Pál, 2020, p. 44). And during this process of transferring foreign cultural specific elements (CSEs) for their target audiences, the authors "may use the same solutions as translators: they may transfer some other-language CSEs into the [source text] with the help of foreignizing strategies or they may use domesticating strategies" (Kinga & Pál, 2020, p. 44). Understood in an opposite direction, Lee the foreign cultural translator transforms himself as a cultural product with his specific cultural element in the target language and culture by the strategy of cultural domestication for his target Chinese audience.

In the context of globalization, translation no longer "remains restricted to binary relationships between national languages, national literatures or national cultures" (Bachmann-Medick, 2009, p. 2). Instead, translation becomes a requisite for "global translatability" and a medium which is particularly responsible for demonstrating "cultural differences, power imbalances and scope for action" (Bachmann-Medick, 2009, p. 2). Thus, Lee moves across national and cultural boundaries as a cultural ambassador for the Korean pop culture he partly stands for. Hence, Lee inevitably meets the cultural differences which encourages himself to work to render himself as an aesthetic object for the public gaze in the target cultural system amid the cultural challenges. Lee constructs a compelling multimodal discourse that engenders foreign aesthetic experiences to cater for his target audiences' imagining desire of exotic entertainment consumption.

However, as mentioned, it is worth noting Lee's concealed aesthetic manipulation towards the target audience from the perspective of cultural psychology. Lee's translated cultural performance helps hypnotize his target audiences into a sense of reassurance of their own cultural superiority, in particular, for those Chinese fans who have worked hard to learn the foreign information directly in order to follow the updates about their foreign idol, which in turn satisfies their desire of voyeurism. Within cultural translation, it suggests there might be a delicately implicit scheme of cultural infiltration beneath Lee's artistic demonstration via his translational performance. Lee's case proves that packaging a foreign artist through

his translational aesthetic forms could be a powerful means of negotiating the meaning fulfilment regarding his cultural foreignness as a welcomed cross-cultural rhetoric into the target cultural system, which is accentuated in the process of cultural homogenization. But essentially, such translational performance contributes to their own national agenda of cultural expansion and penetration which is fraught with its cultural heterogeneity.

Regarding Lee's case, the purpose of his translational performance includes the transformation and adaptation of his foreign cultural identity in the target cultural market. In a broad understanding of the nature of translation, Blumczynski states that "[t]ranslation is only ever important and inspiring when it is concerned with something else than itself" (2016, p. 169). Interestingly, Blumczynski discusses the notion of translation in relation to "musician, instrument, and music", saying that a musical instrument is "an artifact that gives an audible, recognizable, and analyzable form to music", and music "is experiential and processual" which cannot happen without "the fingertips of the guitarist" (2016, p. 169). Similarly, the materialist significance gains weight in the process of meaning fulfilment which is demonstrated in the juxtaposition of Lee's translational performance with Blumczynski's understanding of translation in the form of musician's playing musical instrument. It is even more helpful to theorize Lee's translational practice in such regard, insofar as Lee renders Cheung's and Chou's performances with his personal artistic idiosyncrasies. Lee constructs a translated cultural identity of himself in the process of cultural homogenization. In this sense, cultural translation serves as a cultural strategy for Lee to translate his foreign cultural identity to accrue affective capital in his cross-cultural stardom promotion in the context of global cultural convergence.

Viewed as the cultural translator in this context, Lee offers his own translational performance texts for constructing sensational experiences of particular aesthetic effects towards the target Chinese audience. In spite of inescapable cultural resistance, a translational performance inevitably entails cultural hybridization concerning translator's cultural specificity. More significantly, one can become the translation object because they get culturally translated "for a political purpose and with existential consequences" (Buden & Nowotny, 2009, p. 198). Such translational performance is the most efficient way for Lee to create the splendid reception effect which indicates that Lee's translational investment is directed to generating positive emotional capital in such affectionate stardom-fandom exchange. Lee creatively translates his own foreign cultural identity at the cross-cultural encounter, which produces cultural affinity that actually challenges the target Chinese audience in their conventional aesthetic pattern of appreciating the source performances. Regarding Lee's translational performance. The *self* and *other* are being altered, expanded and hybridized simultaneously through the translation process, and the both would undoubtedly "become displaced, enriched, and revised" (Xie, 2007, p. 61).

Paradoxically, the target Chinese audience are immersed in the exotic experience of enjoying Lee's translational performance in such defamiliarized way with the help of linguistic familiarity simultaneously. By witnessing how some popular songs of their own pop culture are being culturally translated by a foreign artist with such impressive translational performance, to some degree, the target Chinese audience would feel their cultural confidence boosted. However, as suggested earlier, Lee's translational performance might conceal the potential cultural and ideological manipulation that might count

as the foreign cultural infiltration. In short, the target Chinese audience find Lee's translational performance texts exotically irresistible. Therefore, an interdisciplinary perspective is called for to explain the dynamic translational process-phenomena which are characterized with active interactions between the cultural translator and the target audience. Thus, Lee's translational performance is foregrounded to tease out its semiotic significance pertaining to cultural psychology.

A psychological-semiotic approach to cultural translation

Translated cultural identity and jouissance creation within cultural psychology

In accordance to Valsiner's elaboration on *cultural psychology*, complex signs, such as "musical compositions and bodily practices of massage techniques", is conducive to "study[ing] the *parallel inputs* aimed at the higher psychological processes (morally guided actions, value construction and maintenance, etc.)" (Valsiner, 2019, p. 22, italics in the original). In this vein, Lee provides a specific kind of "value construction and maintenance" for his target Chinese fandom by demonstrating his translational performance. To be specific, his fierce spirit of committing himself to learning foreign performance as part of his life-long learning project in his stardom career, which showcases his sincerity and determination to devote himself to creating jouissance for his target foreign fandom on a continuing basis. As regards "*parallel inputs*", Lee's target foreign fandom's enjoyment of aesthetic jouissance through appreciating Lee's translational performance is juxtaposed with Lee's great investment of hard work for delivering such fascinating translational performance.

Therefore, regarding the cross-cultural communication between the artist and their foreign fandom, translational performance is a powerfully effective channel to relieve their direct communication anxiety caused by inherent linguistic heterogeneity. And, the lack of jouissance derived from direct communication is compensated by the alternate feelings of amazement, aesthetic comfort and mutual trust via Lee's translational performance, which is executed by Lee's artistic tactics of adapting the source performance texts, so as to create "emotional recontextualization" that could "only be achieved by mediating the affective expectations of the target reader" (Sun, 2014, p. 278).

Inescapably, the language barrier between Lee and his target Chinese audience causes communicative anxiety since they have great affection for each other. In Lee's case, it is observed that, in order to help maintain a sound and stable relationship with his target Chinese fandom, Lee has acutely resorted to a psychological-semiotic approach to address such major issue of the lack of direct mutual communication. "If desire derives from lack and metonymically moves from one Signifier to another in search of satisfaction, jouissance has been seen as its opposite, as satisfaction and certainty" (Homer, 2016, p. 104). In this vein, such high level of satisfaction and happiness that the target Chinese audience has garnered by gazing at Lee's translational performance has temporarily relieved the said communication anxiety, as the target Chinese audience feel ascertain of Lee's devotion to themselves in return. By presenting himself as a desired foreign artist for his target Chinese audience with certainty, Lee has demonstrated love and respect for his foreign fandom via

his semiotic process of translational performance, which is considered as a specific artistic form of cultural translation. Lee's performance has directly showcased his sincerity and autonomy to cater to the aesthetic needs of his target Chinese audience, insofar as his translational performance functions as an effective tool of communicating his cultural trans-semiotic value to his target Chinese audience, in the hope of earning and keeping their support and loyalty. In the meanwhile, by offering sense of happiness, comfort and confidence to his target foreign fandom as a whole, Lee delivers his translational performance to consolidate the sense of the fandom community because his target Chinese fandom shares the similar aesthetic appreciation of Lee's artistic performance. In short, as one of semiotic process-phenomena, Lee's self-empowerment of learning and rendering the foreign performance text serves as one of the sources of *jouissance* and trust for his target audience.

Since language barrier is the root cause for direct mutual communication between the artist and his foreign fandom, the *jouissance* of Lee's construction of translational performance regarding the language aspect and its relevant *jouissance* merits further careful attention. The primitive source of pleasure is much related to "the acquisition of language as pure signifiers", "verbal play" and "the pure utterance of word forms" (Lacan, 2017, p.75). In this sense, Lee has gained his own pleasure from strategically establishing his translated cultural identity via his translational performance in the form of "verbal play". As a result, the *jouissance* Lee has created for his target audience is essentially related to language performance. Additionally, Fink discusses a Lacanian perspective that is "the subject of the signifier and the subject of *jouissance*" in a speech situation (Fink, 2002, p. 24). In the similar vein, Lee becomes both "the subject of the signifier and the subject of the *jouissance*" for his target Chinese audience via the translational performance of wordplay in the target foreign language. Regarding "the subject of the signifier", Lee has constructed his translated cultural identity as a foreign artist that performs Chinese pop songs for his target Chinese audience in terms of cultural assimilation; regarding "the subject of the *jouissance*", Lee has become a translated cultural product, who satisfies his target audience's emotional need of aesthetic pleasure.

A semiotic process-phenomena approach to cultural translation

A psychological-semantic perspective would enhance the understanding of the target Chinese audience's cognitive, epistemological and philosophical interpretation of their own emotional response by gazing at Lee's translational performance. In this way, it is hoped that Lee's target fandom could be aware of the underlying cultural and aesthetic manipulation besides their received *jouissance* of the entertainment consumption regarding Lee's translational performance. A semiotic process-phenomena approach to investigate cultural translation could be adopted based on that "a sign is a process" (Merrel, 2003, p. 167), so as to frame Lee's translational performance as the specific cultural sign of semiotic process-phenomena within cultural translation. Additionally, taking the satisfaction and *jouissance* of the target Chinese fandom as a point of departure, the notion of representamen translation is also used to analyse the semiotic process-phenomena concerning Lee's translational performance. Marais argues "[t]ranslation is the process by which interpretants are taken as new representamens and then related to

objects and new interpretants, *ad infinitum*” (Marais, 2019, p. 123). Marais further explains that representamen could be both material and mental forms, emphasizing that mental representamens are the genesis of translation processes (Marais, 2019, p. 147). Thus, the objects of abstract ideas, such as cultural sign, aesthetic value, philosophical concept and so forth could be included in the scope of translation practice. Correspondingly, Lee’s distinctive interpretation of the source performance could be viewed as representamen translation.

Lee’s translational performance adds up to his cultural repertoire, which is site of conflict between the explicit cultural assimilation and the implicit cultural competition in the cross-cultural context. Lee’s culturally “camouflaged” translational performances help make himself an artistic and symbolic representation with cultural domestication for the target Chinese audience. And, a modeling pattern of semiotics is used to scrutinize Lee’s translational process that is fraught with cultural and aesthetic implications. Specifically, Lee’s translational performance could be viewed as “a product of mimetic modeling” according to one of Sebeok and Danesi’s classic categories (2000, p. 47). Mimetic modeling equals to “a simulative process guided, in large part, by the conscious inferences people make about the perceptible features of the referents they are attempting to encode” (Sebeok & Danesi, 2000, p. 47). In this vein, Lee’s translational performance belongs to the “mimetic (intentional) forms” (Sebeok & Danesi, 2000, p. 45), in that Lee intentionally constructs to prompt a sensational self-representation for the target Chinese audience. At a deeper level, Lee is enthusiastic to showcase his cultural adaptability potentials via such translational performance which is conducive to promoting his ambition of self-marketization in his overseas stardom business.

As a cultural translator, Lee constructs a cross-cultural aesthetic meaning via his translational performance, so as to invite the target Chinese audience to take part in the collaborative interpretation process of such construction of aesthetic meaning. The context of such cross-cultural aesthetic meaning obliges the target Chinese audience to process such translational performance text with self-reflection, inasmuch as such context “arranges a quantity of correlations between the various levels of the text so as to permit an ever-new interpretation of the specific expression” (Eco, 1984, p. 128). By juxtaposing Lee’s translational performance texts with their source performance texts, a symbolic significance of cultural assimilation concerning Lee’s translated cultural identity is realized and interpreted in the target cultural system. To some degree, the target Chinese audience grasps “that relations of similarity or of identity” which “may be postulated without the possibility of those relations being further clarified” (Eco, 1984, p. 128), and cultivates an affectionate attitude towards Lee’s translational performance thereof.

Lee’s translation performance constitutes an emotional bond of cultural affinity. By perseveringly engaging in promoting his symbolic value of being a “communicable” artist for his target Chinese audience, Lee enacts an effective aesthetic communication with his foreign fandom as a collective, echoing to Swan’s argument that “fans outside of Korea centralizes their situated experiences and intimate community engagement” (2018, p. 548). Furthermore, Lee’s translational performance is a cultural translation practice by gaining its own independence from the source texts ultimately. Benjamin’s metaphorical saying “tangent touch[ing] a circle” (1955/2007, p. 80) explains that “a translation touches the

original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux” (1955/2007, p. 80). In a similar sense, the semiotic process-phenomena of Lee’s translational performance text via his constructed translated cultural identity has gain its legitimacy in its own right, given the concrete evidences of the remarkable reception effect among his target Chinese audience. Besides, Lee transforms the source performance texts and thus granting an afterlife of the source performance in an idiosyncratic way. In a nutshell, Lee’s translated cultural identity via translational cultural performance is a cultural adaptation and appropriation in a cross-cultural milieu, which satisfies the target audience’s desire for learning cultural foreignness of certain aesthetic semiotic value.

Gentzler urges the Translation Studies scholars to “recognize the fundamental role translation plays in the construction of individual identity” (2008, p. 7). Against the backdrop of transculturation and transnational communication, treating translation as isolated linguistic and cultural activities is no longer appropriate nor productive for its own disciplinary development. As regards Lee’s translated cultural identity, Lee demonstrates his inclusive attitude to learn and practice the cultural foreignness of the source Chinese performance in the process of cultural assimilation. Lee’s own cultural characterization gains a transcultural dimension as he becomes meaning mediator and negotiator in the field of cross-cultural stardom-fandom exchange. Last but not the least, it is suggested that Lee’s delicate translational performance could be treated as “emotional capital” that contributes to “a diverse array of entertainment assets to break into people’s hearts and minds” (Heyer, as cited in Jenkins, 2006, p. 69). In short, Lee’s translated cultural identity via his translational performance provides the source of *jouissance* by accentuating his semiotic meaning/value of entertainment for his target Chinese audience within cultural translation.

Conclusions

Zwischenberger warns against the risks of reducing Translation Studies into the perpetuating “perceptions of ‘translation proper’” which shall obstruct the disciplinary development potentials (2019, p. 266). Similarly, van Doorslaer urges that Translation Studies scholars to “actively reflect about the name and the label” of Translation Studies insofar as they are “subject to new societal, technological, and disciplinary developments” (2020, p. 148). Therefore, from an interdisciplinary perspective, Lee’s example is appropriated as a specific form of cultural translation, which could promote the understanding of expanding the scope of Translation Studies. Thus, fresh concepts of translational performance text and translated cultural identity are constructed in this research. To be specific, a psychological-semiotic approach to stardom-fandom exchange in the context of cross-cultural communication merits careful attention in the domain of cultural translation, in particular, the cross-cultural interactions between the cultural translator and the target foreign audience. As per Lee’s example, it is necessary to “further understand interaction between fans and producers in an era of digital-connectivity”, and to pay attention to the differing communication expectations of both parties in a fan-producer communication (Milner, 2001, p. 743). Lee produces his translational performance to satisfy the emotional needs of his target Chinese audience/fans, in return,

these target audience/fans promote the relevant discussions of his performances via various social media. In a nutshell, Lee has successfully constructed himself as a translated cultural product of entertainment consumption, by creating an illusionary cultural authenticity for his target audience in the cross-cultural context. A psychological-semiotic approach reveals the underlying cultural and aesthetic manipulation by drawing from Lee's example, insofar as specific cultural performances represent the pursuits of various cultural interests which direct the aesthetic appreciation and its profound influence on the target audience. In this sense, it is hoped that this research could contribute to blazing a new trail in providing an inspiring translational perspective to understand the semiotic process-phenomena of cultural translation in relation to cultural psychology.

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