



澳門大學

Universidade De Macau

## Coming Alive in Context

### —A Case of Idiom Translation in *Camel Xiangzi*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Translation Studies

by

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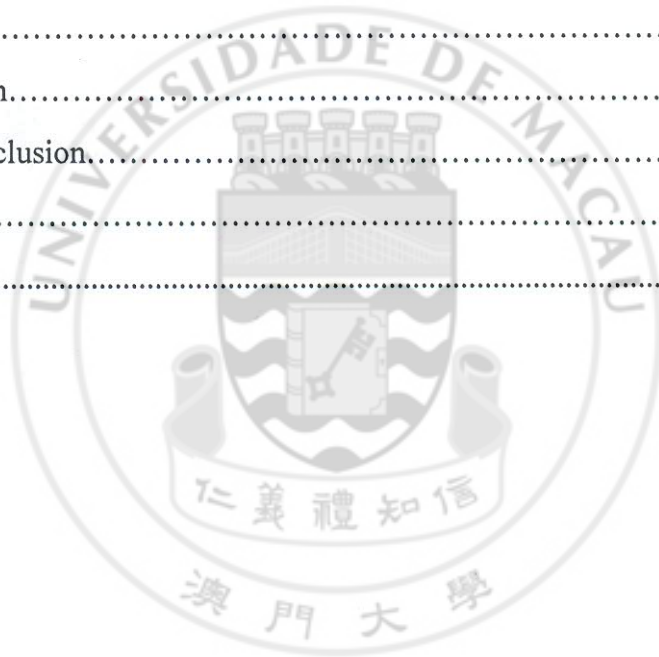
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## Abstract

The work presented in this thesis focuses on the differences between idiom translation in text and idiom translation in dictionaries. As an essential element of a language, idiom carries a country's history, custom and culture. When translating Chinese idioms into English, translators should have an abundant knowledge of the vast linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages as well as the specific source language background. Translation is a bridge between different languages and cultures; one of its missions is to express accurately the culturally-embedded meanings to the target readers. An idiom's meaning is bound to factors of the context. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the pragmatic meanings, as opposed to the lexicographic meaning, of an idiom when translating it in text.

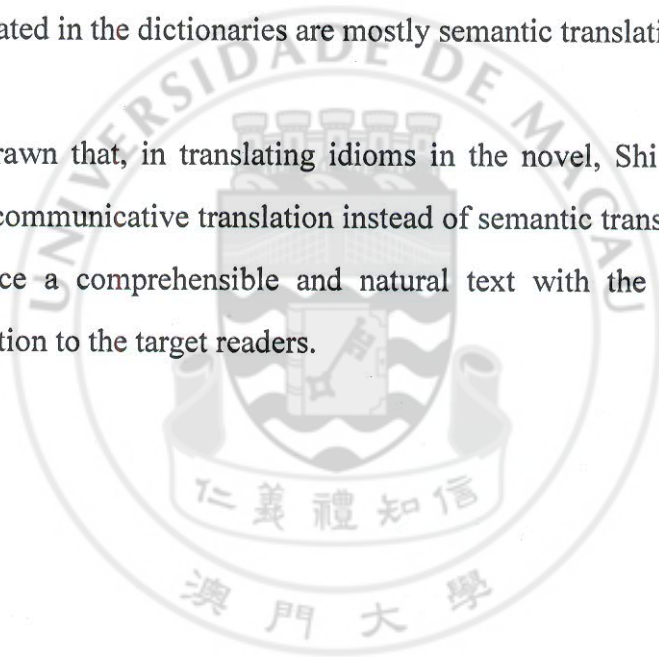
In this thesis, the author focuses on the translation of Chinese idioms. Analysis is made of the idioms used in *Luotuo Xiangzi*, a famous novel written by Lao She(老舍), with its English version *Camel Xiangzi* translated by Shi Xiaojing (施晓菁). The writing style of Lao She is noted for his unique Chinese idiomatic expressions of Beijing characteristics. In *Luotuo Xiangzi*, there are numerous idioms which are frequently used in daily life and some idioms have their extended meanings within specific contexts. Therefore, translating these idioms calls for a comprehensive understanding of the context and background knowledge of the Chinese culture. Idiom translation in text is different from idiom translation in dictionaries, since idiom translation in text has a close relationship with the context; while idiom translation in dictionaries, isolated from the context, only offers a general reference for the dictionaries' users. Therefore, the author attempts to find out how the context factors influence idiom translation and how translators should make correct use of Chinese-English idiom dictionaries.

As data for analysis, A hundred and seventeen *chengyu* from *Luotuo Xiangzi* and its translated version of *Camel Xiangzi* were extracted. Comparisons between the idiom

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translation in text and idiom translation in dictionaries were made, in order to testify that idiom translation in text tends to be more dynamic than idiom translation in dictionaries due to the contextual factors. The author adopted the dichotomy of semantic translation vs. communicative translation postulated by Peter Newmark as the theoretical model to analyze the idiom translations in *Camel Xiangzi*, aiming at finding out which translation strategy is more frequently adopted by the translator. 117 typical idioms from *Luotuo Xiangzi* were selected and their translations studied by following through the analytic model. The result shows that, more than 70 percents of the idiom translations in *Camel Xiangzi* are of communicative translation, while the same idioms translated in the dictionaries are mostly semantic translations.

A conclusion is drawn that, in translating idioms in the novel, Shi Xiaojing relies predominantly on communicative translation instead of semantic translation strategies in order to produce a comprehensible and natural text with the fullest possible contextual information to the target readers.



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## List of Abbreviations

ITT: Idiom translation in text

ITD: Idiom translation in dictionaries

S1: Situation One

S2: Situation Two

S3: Situation Three

S4: Situation Four

S5: Situation Five

S6: Situation Six





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