Translation of Metadiscourse Marker *Huashuo in Er Pai*

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ABSTRACT

Metadiscourse markers are highly multifunctional, and because of their syntactic optionality, they are often overlooked in translation, especially in literary translation where translators' subjectivity plays an active role. Huashuo (as the story says) is a recurring metadiscourse marker in Chinese classic vernacular fictions, and despite its seeming redundancy, it functions as an important textual connective as well as an interactional marker to engage the readers. This paper focuses on the English translation of huashuo in Chinese vernacular short stories Erpai (Pai'an Jingqi and Erke Pai'an Jingqi). By comparing the functions of huashuo in the source text with those of its translations in the target text, we find that huashuo is often treated in the translated versions in three ways: omission, retention and functional mismatch. Although huashuo in Chinese classic vernacular fictions may not pose a great challenge to translators, the unawareness of its functions will cause misinterpretation and affect the continuity of the narration in the target text. It is suggested that translators should first consciously recognize the functions of huashuo according to the source context before translating and then can ensure an appropriate translation of it.

KEYWORDS: *metadiscourse marker, huashuo, Chinese classic vernacular fictions, functions, translation*

INTRODUCTION

Huashuo is a metadiscourse marker in Chinese classic vernacular fictions used to initiate a topic or start a story. Its function is to organize the narrative text and reflect the narrator's intervention in the narration by emphasizing the presence of the "storyteller". The term "metadiscourse" was coined by Zellig Harris in 1959 to offer a way of understanding language in use, representing a writer's or speaker's attempts to guide a receiver's perception of a text. The concept has been further developed by researchers such as Williams (1981), Vande-Kopple (1985) and Crismore (1989), and collects together a range of discoursal features such as hedges, connectives and various forms of text commentary to show how writers or speakers intrude into their unfolding text to influence their interlocutor's reception. "Metadiscourse" has always been a vague term. In the past years researchers have adopted different perspectives to lay a theoretical foundation for their own studies on metadiscourse, so it has been labeled discursively as signaling device, gambits, metatalk, metacommunicative markers, non-topical material, evidentials, discourse connectives, and etc., associating more fuzziness with this concept. Although the term "metadiscourse" is not always used and defined in the same way, it is typically employed as an umbrella term to include a heterogeneous array of linguistic material "which does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret and evaluate the information given" (Crismore et al., 1993, 40).

Metadiscourse has generated considerable research interest over the past few years including metadiscourse markers, interactional metadiscourse, pedagogical implications by using metadiscourse, and etc. Qualitative approach, corpus-based approach and comparative approach are employed most frequently in this field (Yu, 2021, 41). We may notice that researchers use "metadiscourse" and "metadiscourse marker" in their studies interchangeably. Despite the controversies over the connotation and denotation of the two concepts, this article regards "metadiscourse" as a more inclusive term because metadiscourse sometimes appears in the form of a long sentence while metadiscourse marker are some words and phrases. So, it can be said that *huashuo* is a metadiscourse marker that belongs to metadiscourse.

This study intends to investigate the two following questions: What specific functions does the metadiscourse marker *huashuo* perform in Chinese classic vernacular fictions? How should *huashuo* be translated into English in the target text? Particularly, it probes into the textual and interpersonal functions of *huashuo* in Ling Mengchu's *Erpai* and analyzes how the overlook of its functions may result in translation

failures in the English version. To address these questions, this article will begin with an overview of the definition, classification and functions of metadiscourse in various studies, and then concentrate on the analysis of functions of *huashuo* in *Erpai*. Later, it will provide a sketch of its translations in the English version, aiming to account for translation strategies adopted by different translators and explore the reasons behind the choices.

STUDIES OF METADISCOURSE

This section will briefly review definitions, features and classifications of metadiscourse from narrow and broad perspectives. In addition, it will touch upon the focuses and trends of published research on metadiscourse.

Definitions of Metadiscourse

Metadiscourse is used as a tool to represent the intention of a writer or speaker to guide the recipient through a text and comment on the use of language in the text. The identification and classification of metadiscourse have become inevitably extensive because the linguistic materials that can be applied to organize a text and interact with the recipient are extremely huge and diverse.

Williams is one of the first to use the term metadiscourse formally in applied linguistics. metadiscourse is "discourse about discourse", which "differs itself from the content that informs the reader about primary topics" (1981, 65) and can help writers to increase the text accessibility for readers. Similarly, Vande-Kopple defines metadiscourse as "discourse about discourse or communication about communication" (1985, 83). He further states that on the level of metadiscourse, we do not expand ideational material but help our readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate, and develop attitudes towards that material. Later, Hyland offers a more coherent definition of metadiscourse as "the cover term for the self-reflexive expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer or speaker to express the viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community" (2005, 37).

The use of "non-propositional" to define metadiscourse is controversial. The most reliable approach to identify metadiscourse is to focus on its linguistic functions within the context it appears, and context centrality is the key issue in identifying metadiscourse.

Features of Metadiscourse

Although the concept of metadiscourse is debatable, its features have reached a consensus: metadiscourse is multifunctional and context dependent.

Crismore et al. analyzed the example *I think*, which fulfills two functions simultaneously: showing doubt and identifying the source of the idea. This multi-functionality reveals that "metadiscourse cannot be regarded as a strictly linguistic phenomenon at all but must be seen as a rhetorical and pragmatical one" (Hyland, 2005, 25). In this respect, metadiscourse is important for us to analyze the strategies a writer or a speaker applies to engage with their text and recipients, thus enabling the comparison of the strategies used by different language groups, which may shed light on its translation studies.

Metadiscourse is also context dependent. As metadiscourse is multifunctional, it can fulfill different functions in a context, and it can be metadiscursive and non-metadiscoursal depending on the specific context. Mauranen advocates "in order to decide what is metadiscourse and what is not, we need to take the context into account" (1993, 22). This context sensitivity greatly motivates the emphasis of metadiscourse studies on interpreting metadiscourse devices in context rather than simply identifying and classifying metadiscoursal language items.

Classifications of Metadiscourse

The classifications of metadiscourse vary according to different research perspectives and standpoints. They can be divided into two groups: the narrow approach and the broad approach.

The narrow approach primarily investigates the aspects of text organization while largely excluding interpersonal elements (Wang, 2020, 21). It places more weight on the text itself than on the writer and on the potential reader of the text, thus restricting the concept of metadiscourse to a narrow range. The main researchers using this approach are Schiffrin (1980), Mauranen (1993), Dahl (2004), Ädel (2006) and etc. The weakness of the narrow approach, however, is that the stance as an interactional dimension is excluded because of "lack of reflexive nature" (Ädel, 2006, 186). This claim is not convincing in that metadiscourse connects the writer and the reader with the current text while stance also connects them with the real world (Salas, 2015, 23).

Unlike the narrow approach, the broad approach views metadiscourse as the means to make the writer's presence in the discourse explicit, and this can be achieved by either manifesting attitude toward the propositions or showing how the text is organized. Under the broad approach, many researchers have inherited Halliday's three metafunctions of language to define and classify metadiscourse in their own study, namely, Williams (1981), Vande-Kopple (1995; 2002), Crismore (1989; 1993), Hyland (1998; 2004) and etc. Among all the classifications of metadiscourse, Hyland's taxonomy, which divides metadiscourse into interactive and interactional metadiscourse (2004, 49), has become predominant in metadiscourse studies in recent years. "Interactive metadiscourse concerns linguistic resources for organizing the text and for guiding the reader to comprehend the text, whereas interactional metadiscourse concerns the ways in which writers position their stance and attitudes, and involve readers into the text" (Peng & Zheng, 2021, 3). Nevertheless, Hyland's model has also been criticized for

its all-inclusiveness, lack of centrality on the context, and concealment of multi-functionality of certain metadiscourse analysis.

As can be seen, previous studies have provided us with important understanding of metadiscourse, though there are still some controversies over its concept and models. Whether metadiscourse can influence the propositional content of a discourse is still in dispute. And researchers have not reached a consensus in the clarified taxonomy of metadiscourse. In light of the uncertain distinctions in current studies, we should regard metadiscourse as an integrated level of propositional content of discourse and take a functional perspective to explore the mechanism and use of discourse, certainly taking the context into our account.

Since the term metadiscourse was introduced in 1959, the interest in metadiscourse studies has grown up tremendously over the past 60 years, and now metadiscourse is a widely used term in current discourse analysis, pragmatics and language teaching. According to Hyland, the analysis of metadiscourse should center more on its rhetorical and pragmatic significance, but there is "a serious danger that the approach might remain too closely associated with the description of a limited range of text types" (2017, 27). In this sense, literary works should also be added to the research list, and metadiscourse marker, which has inspired a considerable amount of research and contributed enormously to how language works as communication, will definitely offer fresh insights into translation studies.

HUASHUO AS A METADISCOURSE MARKER

According to *Modern Chinese Dictionary*[1], *huashuo* has two basic meanings: one is a verb meaning "to tell", and the other is a topicalizer used at the beginning of a paragraph to introduce the following content in classic fictions. This article will focus on the second meaning and analyze its features and functions in classic vernacular fictions. Within Systemic Functional Linguistics, language is seen as being organized around, and simultaneously realizing three broad purposes or "metafunctions": the ideational function, the textual function and the interpersonal function (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 7). The ideational function is concerned with construing experiences, the interpersonal function is concerned with enacting interpersonal relationship through language, and the textual function is concerned with organizing ideational and interpersonal meaning as discourse. These metafunctions do not operate independently and discretely but are expressed simultaneously in every utterance. The meaning of a text lies in the integration of all three functions, each of which is understood in relation to the others. As a metadiscourse marker, *huashuo* is also multifunctional and context dependent in Chinese classic vernacular fictions.

The Backgrounding of the Ideational Function

Huashuo consists of two syllables: originally *shuo* was a verb while *hua* was a noun and they were used separately. Then in the Tang Dynasty, *hua* evolved into a verb and *huashuo* together was used as a verb meaning "to talk about". And it mostly appeared on the epigraphs. According to the corpus data of CCL (Center for Chinese Linguistics)[2], *huashuo* was first used as an introductory particle in classic vernacular fiction in the Southern Song Dynasty. And in the Song and Yuan Dynasties, as classic vernacular fiction appeared as a very popular literary genre, *huashuo* was used increasingly at the beginning of the story to introduce the topic. The storyteller used *huashuo* to start the story, and the subject of the verb *huashuo* is actually the storyteller himself. As the storyteller usually omitted the subject during the performance, gradually *huashuo* became a storytelling formula in oral literature.

In the Ming Dynasty, however, the way of writing and narration of Chinese novels experienced dramatic change in that the so-called "telling a story" by some literati was actually "writing a story" (Luo, 2010, 299). The rise of publishing houses in the Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces in the middle and late Ming Dynasty also accelerated the pace of the change from the master copy for the storyteller to the classic vernacular fiction on everyone's desk. In that case, *huashuo* gradually became a formulaic expression in Ming-Qing vernacular fictions, and thus its ideational function receded into the background.

The Foregrounding of the Textual Function

Since the narrative mode of classic vernacular fictions is the simulation of storytelling scenario, *huashuo* is frequently used as a topicalizer to start a story and it contributes to the cohesion of the text. The omission of *huashuo* might not change the subject matter or propositional meaning in a text, but the meaning of the text will be influenced to some extent. "This is because the meaning of a text is not just the propositional material or what the text could be said to be about" (Hyland, 2005, 22). The meaning of a text is an interaction between the writer and the readers of a text. When a writer uses *huashuo* to guide the readers through the text, he or she is trying to transmit a sense of conviction, authority and rationality, all of which have rhetorical effects.

Huashuo can also be used to change the topic and introduce a new one. When there are two story lines in Chinese classic vernacular fictions, instead of the juxtaposition of events, the narrator usually narrates one story line and then switches to the other. *Huashuo* acts as a sign that the narrator has switched the narrative space in linear narration. As we all know, "human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance" (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, 260). *Huashuo* serves as a cognitive marker that indicates the intention of the narrator and enhances the degree of relevance of the discourse. Thus, it helps the readers to identify pragmatic relations and reduces the processing effort. And it also solves the problem of transition and regulates the narrative tempo.

Besides, *huashuo* also has the function of eliciting the narrator's comments in the text. This is a noteworthy characteristics of classic vernacular fictions in the Ming Dynasty because at that time, stories written by men of letters placed great emphasis on moral education. Writers hoped to enlighten the ordinary people, including less lettered readers through these popular stories. So, they added some comments of didactic value related to the plot of the story even before the actual start of the story. For instance, in the stories of *Erpai*, a poem related to the theme of the story is often located at the very beginning. And then *huashuo* is followed to present the narrator's viewpoints or comments towards the fictional world with the purpose of teaching the readers some moral lessons. In this case, *huashuo* seems to deviate from its semantic meaning and becomes a formulaic expression habitually used by the narrator.

The Foregrounding of the Interpersonal Function

Due to the noisy environment of storytelling places, the storyteller often changed the speed of his speech or strengthened his tone to attract the attention of the audience. So, *huashuo* can realize the communicative intentions of the storyteller. It was a common practice for the storyteller to insert a certain pause after *huashuo* to create a suspense and arouse the interest of the audience. In Chinese classic vernacular fictions, the "simulated context" is that of "the storyteller addressing his audience" (Hanan, 1981, 20), a pretense in which the author and the readers happily acquiesce in order that the information can be communicated. It is not only a mimesis of direct address, but also a mimesis of direct reception. As an indicator of the "simulated context", *huashuo* explicitly denotes the narrator's narrative voice and marks his presence, and it can summon the receptors into the narrative context so as to enhance the communicative effect.

As mentioned above, the Chinese classic vernacular fictions often used a poem as a prologue to briefly summarize the main theme of the story to be told, which showed the literary talent of the writer. But the uneducated audience had no ear for refined poems and only paid heed to the content following *huashuo*. Consequently, *huashuo* plays a vital role of guiding the audience and interacting with them. Besides, *huashuo* reflects the interpersonal connotation of "speak and listen". Classic vernacular stories adopted the framework of oral literature by constantly simulating the storytelling contexts. So, the mode of "write and read" was still represented by "speak and listen", "just like an imperishable storyteller in your head to tell and to instill" (Chen et al., 1998, 239).

The distinction between the narrator and the author seems to be blurred in Chinese classic vernacular fictions. The narrator is usually the author. So, the interpersonal function of *huashuo* concerns with the ways the author conducted interaction by intruding and commenting on his message. The author's goal is to make his or her views explicit and to involve readers by allowing them to respond to the unfolding text. This is the author's expression of a textual "voice", or community recognized personality, and includes the ways he or she conveys judgments and overtly "aligns himself with readers" (Hyland, 2005, 49). Metadiscourse marker *huashuo* here is essentially evaluative and engaging, expressing solidarity and responding to an imagined dialogue with others. It reveals the extent to which the author works to jointly construct the text with the readers.

TRANSLATION OF HUASHUO IN CHINESE CLASSIC VERNACULAR FICTIONS

In the above sections, we have found that as a metadiscourse marker, *huashuo* possesses more textual and interpersonal functions than ideational function. In most cases, the omission of *huashuo* in translation seemingly may not affect the truth condition of the content in terms of the conveyance of the information. The deliberate "verbosity", however, has certain rhetoric value which forms one of the distinctive features of classic vernacular fictions. So, the appropriate translation of *huashuo* in the target text is conducive to the reproduction of the unique style of classic vernacular fictions.

Translator's Subjectivity and the Omission of Huashuo in Translation

We have to remember that "writing and speaking, acts of meaning-making, are never neutral but always engaged in that they realize the interest, the positions, the perspectives and the values of those who enact them" (Hyland, 2005, 4). The concept of metadiscourse underlines the subjectivity of language, and likewise, the discussion of the role of the translator in translation activities always centers on subjectivity.

The uncertainty of language meaning makes it impossible to find a correspondence between the forms of the source language and those of the target language, and the conversion depends on the translator's understanding and interpretation of the source text. Simply, translation is the transfer of the referential relationship between the source language and the target language, and its success depends largely on the translator's choice of translation strategies (Liu, 2010, 124). The translation process starts with the translator's understanding of the original and ends with his or her interpretation of the original. The translator is by no means invisible but plays a vital role in the translation process. From "invisible" to "visible", the improvement of translator's status renders the translator's subjectivity a hot topic in translation studies.

Human's subjectivity exists at every corner of language, and human cannot abandon such subjectivity to conduct any language activities (Wu, 2016, 9). From this perspective, the translation of metadiscourse markers seems to be more perplexed. Metadiscourse expresses the subjective meaning of language, and has no referent in the objective world.

And a question arises: if a person with subjectivity is asked to understand and interpret such a linguistic unit, will the uncertainty of meaning be magnified? Metadiscourse markers, as the expression of the writer or speaker's intention, not only reflects the subjectivity, but also the interaction between the subjects. That is to say, the translation of metadiscourse markers is the interpretation of the writer's or speaker's subjective attitude. Translators need to rely entirely on their own understanding and interpretation, which enables them to have stronger subjectivity in the more flexible translation process.

As we know, the omission of metadiscourse markers will not change the meaning of the sentence, so the translation strategies adopted by the translators are quite arbitrary. For example, in *Shuihu Zhuan* (*Outlaws of the Marsh*), one of the four great classic novels in China, the narrator starts narration with *huashuo* in each chapter to attract readers' attention and carry over the story line. In the English version *Outlaws of the Marsh* translated by Sydney Shapiro, such expressions with obvious textual functions are mostly omitted, since no alteration of meaning will appear without translation of them. In some cases, they are also flexibly translated as "let us speak of", "as we were saying", "now", "when" and etc. Mostly, Shapiro "removed the narrative features of the original novel and transformed the narrative mode from the Chinese simulated storytelling style to one in accordance with the western narrative tradition. And as an editor-translator, he did not place much emphasis on the reproduction of the literary form" (Wang & Zhang, 2021, 10). But the omission of *huashuo* is regrettable in that Shapiro's translation failed to preserve the characteristics of classic vernacular fictions. The continuity of the narration in the target text will also be harmed since the textual functions of *huashuo* are overlooked.

Quite on the contrary, in another English version *All Men Are Brothers* translated by Pearl S. Buck, *huashuo* is translated into "IT IS SAID:" uniformly every time it appears. "IT" refers to "hua", "SAID" refers to the verb "shuo", and the present tense "IS" produces a sense of reality. In addition, the choice of capitalized form is conspicuous and the use of colon reveals the translator's creativity to attract readers' attention to the story that followed. The reason for Buck's 100% translation of *huashuo* is her fascination of Chinese art of storytelling since her childhood. And her translation habit of "listen and translate" is quite special. She firstly read the whole novel, and then asked Mr. Long[3] to read it out aloud for her. Her translation process was accompanied by Mr. Long's reading. The ingenious combination of storytelling art with literary creation is to generate an illusion in the target readers that they are reading the original. The highlighting of *huashuo* by Buck in her translation undoubtedly can help the target readers grasp the characteristics of the Chinese classic vernacular fictions. For originally, classic vernacular fictions were told by the storytellers rather than written for the readers. As a writer-translator, Buck was able to appreciate the narrative form of the original text so that she reconstructed the Chinese narrative mode of an overt storyteller by a full translation of *huashuo*.

Under the relevance translation theory, *huashuo* can be regarded as a communicative clue which draws the receptor's attention to that part of the utterance that is most relevant, that is, intended to make the greatest contribution to the contextual effects. Communicative clues such as *huashuo* reflect not only the information content of what was said, but also the way in which it was expressed and the special effects that such stylistic features would achieve (Gutt, 2000,135). If translators can preserve all the communicative clues of the original, the translation would make it possible for the receptors to arrive at the intended interpretation of the original. In a word, the omission of *huashuo* in translation is inadvisable because the translation with better communicative effects calls for the preservation of the communicative clues.

Functional Analysis of Huashuo in Pai'an Jingqi

This section will analyze the functions of *huashuo* in *Pai'an Jingqi*, a collection of forty short stories written by Ling Mengchu (1580-1644) and published in 1628. At that time, *wenyan* (the classical language) was used in education and for all formal and official literature over thousands of years in China. The classical language, however, was not spoken in everyday life. By the tenth century, the vernacular stories began to emerge in great numbers, capturing the largest audience. During the Ming period, however, parallel with the formal writing style, a trend toward writing in the colloquial language arose swiftly. This fresh literary activity was due mainly to economic prosperity and ubiquitous commercial development, which prompted creative story writing among individual authors for the entertainment of the townsfolk in urban centers.

Ling Mengchu seemingly took on the guise of a professional storyteller as the narrator, which allowed him to intrude into his tales at will; through pretended dialogues with a skeptical audience, he drew attention to aspects of fiction and was also concerned about the social issues of the day. He amplified the moral messages of his sources and made them more clearly relevant to his readers. Ling's method was of an imaginative satire, his active narrative voice keeping his readers at sufficient distance from his characters to allow reflection on their common foibles and flaws. Ling developed the specificity of his narrator's perspective into a more outspoken and individualistic narrator in his stories. As the catch phrase of the storyteller, *huashuo* was frequently used in Ling's stories. Rather than redundant formula, *huashuo* performs important functions in the source text. In total, *huashuo* appears 43 times in *Pai'an Jingqi*, and distribution of the functions are shown in Figure 1:
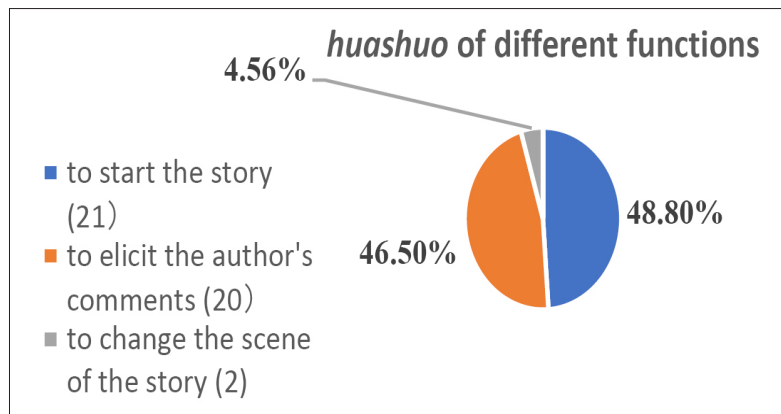
Figure 1. Distribution of *huashuo* of different functions

From the above figure, we may notice that mostly, the narrator uses *huashuo* to start the story. After a lengthy prologue that includes a short story or short anecdotes relevant to the main story and a moralistic warning from the narrator to set the stage, the main story begins with the narrator's *huashuo* to embark on the main story. For example, in Story 4 of *Pai'an Jingqi*, the narrator starts the main story with "Our story proper is about a merchant in Huizhou Prefecture" . In this case, *huashuo* appears at the beginning of the paragraph to act as a topicalizer to introduce the protagonist in the main story. And also the narrator uses *huashuo* to remind the readers of the advent of the main story, which shows the interaction between the narrator and the readers. Therefore, *huashuo* as a metadiscourse marker mainly plays the textual function as well as the interpersonal function.

It is also noteworthy that besides starting the story, the narrator often uses *huashuo* to elicit the author's comments on certain themes relevant to the story. These comments plus *huashuo* appear at the beginning of the paragraph right after the poem which summarizes the main theme of the story. For example, in Story 12 of *Pai'an Jingqi*, the narrator uses "Our story makes the point that everything that happens in one's life is predestined" to express the author's attitude towards one's destiny. As can be seen, "fate" is an underlying theme, and is repeatedly invoked in Ling's stories. Here *huashuo* is used to initiate the author's comments while it plays the textual function and indicates the interaction between the author and the readers. Nevertheless, its interpersonal function outweighs its textual function because the author

wished to edify his readers and improve the social climate in the late Ming Dynasty though these comments.

Huashuo is rarely used as a cohesive device to change the scene of the story. But we have found two examples in *Pai'an Jingqi*. For instance, in Story 20, in the middle of the prologue story, we found the expression "But I digress. Let me pick up a different thread of that story and tell of a scholar who lived in Wujiang". The narrative time is linear in classic vernacular fictions, and the narrator cannot describe the different scenes of the story simultaneously. So the narrator uses *huashuo* to indicate the shift to another scene, which requires due attention if it needs to be translated.

ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION OF HUASHUO IN *ER PAI*

This section will discuss the translation of *huashuo* in *Pai'an Jingqi* and *Erke Pai'an Jingqi*. And different English versions will be used for comparison.

Huashuo to Start the Story

When in the original text *huashuo* is used to start a story, it was translated into "our/the story takes place", "our/the story tells that", "as our/the story goes", "our/the story is about" and etc. in Yang Shuhui & Yang Yunqin's version. We may see that their English version is faithful to the original every time they encounter this marker, and they carefully translate it into the target text, preserving the meaning of "hua" (story) and successfully retaining the role of the "simulated storyteller". We will list some examples to illustrate the translation in detail.

Table 1. Translations of *huashuo* in *Pai' an Jingqi*[4]

Source text (*Pai'an Jingqi*)	Yang Shuhui & Yang Yunqin (2018)	Ted Wang & Chen Chen (2004)	Wen Jingen (1998)
话说国朝成化年间 (Story 1)	**Our story takes place** in the Chenghua reign period [1465–87] of this dynasty [Ming]	During the Chenghua reign [1465–1488] of our present Ming dynasty	**It is related that** during the reign of Chenghua [AD 1465–1487] of our [Ming] dynasty
话说国朝成化年间 (Story 11)	**Our story goes that** in the Chenghua reign period [1465–78] of this dynasty [Ming]	During the current Ming dynasty	**It is related that** during the reign of Chenghua[1465–1487] of our [Ming] dynasty

Table 2. Translations of *huashuo* in *Erke Pai' an Jingqi* [5]

Source text (*Erke Pai'an Jingqi*)	Li Ziliang (2008)	Ted Wang & Chen Chen (2004)	Ma Wenqian (1998)
话说宋神宗朝有个大臣王襄敏公 (Story 5)	During the reign of Emperor Shenzong (1068-1086) of the Song Dynasty, there once lived a minister...	In the days of Emperor Shenzong of the Song Dynasty there was a prime minister...	During the reign [1068-1086] of the emperor Shenzong of the Song Dynasty, there was a minister...
话说苏州亚字城东，玄妙观前第一巷，有一个人 (Story 39)	**It is said that** there once lived a man in the first alley by Xuanmiao Temple in the eastern part of the town of Yazi in Suzhou.	The man lived in Alley No.1 in front of East Xuanmiao Temple in the Yazi area of Suzhou.	During the reign of Jiajing [1522-1567] of our [Ming] dynasty there was a thief named Lazy Dragon in Suzhou...

From Table 1, we can find that Ted Wang & Chen Chen's version omitted the translation of *huashuo*. Their version does not only omit the translation of metadiscourse markers but also some poems and verses of scenery description and even the prologue story. Their version, as a matter fact, is not a complete translation of the original. Neither of the two translators, during their professional careers, have been associated with Chinese studies or Sinology. Their intention, as lovers of Chinese and English literature, is to "treat an interested English-reading public to a delectable selection of toothsome stories" (Wang & Chen, 2004, xi). In this way, they kept as close to the original texts as possible for informative and entertaining reading and stayed away from flowery poetic flourishes and "extraneous" narrative elements, but these narrative elements are not extraneous at all. On the contrary, the functions they play in the original text should be emphasized in the target text. And it would be a great waste if these narrative characteristics were not made available to a wider English-reading audience who may be in search of a panorama of Chinese classic vernacular fictions. As in Yang Shuhui & Yang Yunqin's version, their translation "our story takes place" and "our story goes that" realizes the textual function of *huashuo* to start the story. And "our" refers to the interaction between the narrator and the recipient. We can say that the textual and interpersonal functions are achieved through translation. As in Wen Jingen's version, "it" refers to "the story", and the translation "it is related that" seems to have realized the textual function but overlooked the interpersonal function of *huashuo*.

From Table 2, we can see that Ted Wang & Chen Chen's version

and Ma Wenqian's version both omitted the translation of *huashuo* while Li Ziliang's version omitted once. In the above-mentioned examples, we have somewhat discussed the reason for the omission in Ted Wang & Chen Chen's version. In Ma Wenqian's version, which also omits some verses in his translation, he explained in the introduction of the book that he "omitted in agreement with the editor's intention of facilitating the western reader's understanding" (1998, xi). The translation strategy of omission is decided by the foreign editor rather than the translator, which reflects the social aspects of translation activities. In Li Ziliang's version, he used "it is said that" to translate "*huashuo*" which echoes Buck's translation in her *All Men Are Brothers*. But unlike Buck, he did not capitalize the phrase nor used the colon. Therefore, the effect of emphasis and attraction is probably weakened.

To summarize, when *huashuo* is used to start the story in the Chinese classic vernacular fictions, it is suggested that it can be translated into similar phrases as "our story tells that". And the phrase translators choose can be flexible but its function should be realized.

Huashuo to Elicit the Author's Comments

When in the original text *huashuo* is used to elicit the author's comments, it was translated into "our story makes the point that", "let me begin our story with this comment", "as our story has it", "as they say" and etc. in Yang Shuhui & Yang Yunqin's version. We may see that their translation shows a high flexibility. We will list some examples to illustrate the translation in detail.

Table 3. Translations of *huashuo* in *Pai'an Jingqi*

Source text (*Pai'an jingqi*)	Yang Shuhui & Yang Yunqin (2018)	Wen Jingen (1998)
话说那杀人偿命，是人世间最大的事，非同小可。(Story 11)	**Let me begin my story with this comment**: Nothing can be more momentous in this world than the crime of murder and its punishment-a life for a life.	That a murderer should pay for his deed with his own life is the gravest code of law in the world and it is by no means a trifle.
话说人生极重的是那孝字 (Story 13)	**Our story makes the point that** filial piety has a vital place in the fabric of human life.	**Know, gentle reader**, that the ultimate good in the world is filial piety.

From the above table we have observed that in the original text, the comments following *huashuo* are common social conducts and values shared by the masses in the late Ming Dynasty which serve as some moralistic warnings to set the stage for the story. In Yang Shuhui & Yang Yunqin's version, their translation displays the function of *huashuo* explicitly by using "comment" and "point". And their translation also realizes the interpersonal function of *huashuo* by using "let me" and "our". In Wen Jingen's version, generally *huashuo* was omitted while on some occasions the translator added "know, gentle reader" whose correspondent cannot be found in the original text. In this case, the translator magnifies the interpersonal function of *huashuo* and by addressing directly to the readers, has ensured the interaction between the narrator and the readers. Although the translation is not faithful to the original text, it can be considered as satisfactory for it has successfully achieved the interactional function and also set the stage for the story. In addition, it has preserved the "simulated context" of the original.

Although Yang Shuhui & Yang Yunqin' version is quite faithful to the original text and attempts to preserve the characteristics of "simulated storytelling mode", we have discovered some errors in their translation. For instance, in Story 16, there is a sentence "话说世间最可恶的是拐子" which was translated into "Our story is about the most detestable of all criminals--swindlers". The translators seemed to misinterpret the function of *huashuo* and treated it as a marker to start the story. But this functional mismatch may give readers a false assumption that the protagonist of this story is a swindler, which is rather misleading for the readers and even jeopardizes the reproduction of the theme of the story. It reveals that the misinterpretation of the functions of *huashuo* by translators will cause translation errors and translators should enhance the awareness of its significance.

Huashuo to Change the Scene of the Story

Although *huashuo* is rarely used to change the scene of the story, we still find two examples in *Pai'an Jingqi.* In this case, *huashuo* functions as a cohesive device to connect the scenes in the story and make the story run more smoothly. But *huashuo* does not appear alone but co-occurs with"rujin zai jie qianyin" (now let me pick up a different side of the story) and "rujin zai biao yiduan yuanyin" (now let me start another side of the story). Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin translated the latter into "let me now start another thread of the story". Although we cannot find correspondent of *huashuo* in the target text, its function of coherence has already been achieved by using "another thread" to indicate the change of the story scene. In Ted Wang & Chen Chen's version, they translated the latter into "Now let me address yet another side of the same story". Similarly, we cannot find the correspondent of *huashuo*, but its function as a cohesive device has been achieved by "another side" to signal the scene change. Moreover, Ted Wang and Chen Chen makes

this sentence a separate paragraph, which highlights its textual function and captures the readers' attention.

From the above analysis we have observed frequent omissions in the translation of *huashuo* in *Erpai,* especially in Ted Wang & Chen Chen's version. Due to its low informative value, the translators did not find *huashuo* relevant or worthwhile to maintain in the target language. The phenomenon of omission can be explained by translator's subjectivity. For instance, in the preface of Ted Wang & Chen Chen's version, Chen Chen thought "no good literary translation should be verbatim" (2004, xi). Their intended readers are not researchers or scholars in Chinese literature who they thought should go to the original Chinese texts instead. Their translation strategy has everything to do with their life experiences and translation motive. As amateur translators, they chose to undertake the painstaking translation task just out of their fascination for these amazing Chinese tales which is without doubt a literary legacy. With no restraints from peers or from arcane conventions, they embarked on the adventurous endeavor with absolute freedom. But the careless omission of *huashuo* as a connective will certainly have a negative impact on the continuity of the narration in the target text.

By contrast, Yang Shuhui & Yang Yunqin' translation is a "complete" translation in the true sense in that they successfully negotiate the heterogeneous nature of the source texts: a large amount of poetry and parallel prose, simulation of storytelling mode, marginal and interlinear commentaries and even some play on words. *Huashuo*, as a metadiscourse marker and a label for narrative art of the Chinese classic vernacular fictions, are mostly preserved in their translation. As a renowned professor in Chinese literature from Bates College, Yang Shuhui showed his erudition in Ming-Qing vernacular fictions and scrupulousness in the translation task, aiming at stylistic faithfulness to the original text, always trying his best to keep a balance between what might have been overdone and what might have been underdone in every choice of words in the entire process. He and his wife, Yang Yunqin, have spent nearly 20 yeas to translate Feng Menglong's *Sanyan* stories[6] and Ling Mengchu's *Pai'an Jingqi.* Through masterfully balancing fidelity and readability, their rendering of *huashuo* is quite satisfactory.

CONCLUSION

Starting from the observation that metadiscourse is multifunctional and context dependent and that it mainly plays textual function and interpersonal function, this study investigates the functions of *huashuo* and its translation in Chinese classic vernacular fictions in the target text. A detailed analysis of the translation of *huashuo* in Ling Mengchu's *Erpai* stories, by comparing different translation versions, allows us to identify and illustrate three types of translation: omission, retention and functional mismatch. The translation methods are closely associated with translators' subjectivity since the meaning of *huashuo* is rather procedural than conceptual,

and therefore, the translators enjoy liberty in translation. However, it appears that some translators fail to constrain their subjectivity, and the omission of *huashuo* results in the loss of its functions. Consequently, the fluency of narration and the coherence in the target text will be jeopardized. Worse still, the improper omission of the catch phrase of the "simulated storyteller" makes it impossible to relive the scenarios of teahouses and marketplaces where storytelling was performed in ancient China.

In order to avoid functional mismatch in translation of *huashuo*, the translators should at first clarify its functions according to the context in the original text. As a metadiscourse marker, *huashuo* can be mainly used to start the story, to elicit the author's comments and to change the scene of the story. So, the translation should correspond respectively to each function and try to realize the function in the target text. We are suggesting that the omission of *huashuo* in the target text is inadvisable and the unawareness of its functions will lead to translation failures.

By focusing on the translation of the metadiscourse marker *huashuo* in the Chinese classic vernacular fiction *Erpai*, this article also accounts for the different strategies used by translators based on each translator's professional background and translation motive. It is hoped that this study can shed some light on the translation of metadiscourse markers in literary works and also the transference of the simulated storytelling mode across cultures.

Notes

1. See *Modern Chinese Dictionary(7th edition)*, published by the Commercial Press in Beijing in 2016, p. 565.

2. For CCL corpus data, see http://ccl.pku.edu.cn:8080/ccl_corpus/index.jsp.

3. Mr. Long refers to Moxiang Long (1880-1940), a Chinese scholar who offered a great help in explaining Chinese conventions, ancient weapons, apparel, dialects and etc. to Buck during her translation of *Shuihu Zhuan*.

4. We choose three different translation versions of *Pai'an Jingqi*: the first is co-translated by Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin, and published by University of Washington Press in 2018; the second is co-translated by Ted Wang and Chen Chen, and published by East Bridge in 2004; the third is translated by Wen Jingen and published by Chinese Literature Press in 1998.

5. We also choose three different versions of *Erke Pai' an Jingqi*: the first is translated by Li Ziliang and published by High Education Press in 2008; the second is co-translated by Ted Wang and Chen Chen, and published by East Bridge in 2004; the third is translated by Ma Wenqian and published by Chinese Literature Press in 1998.

6. Their translation is the first complete English translation of all three collections of Feng Menglong's *Sanyan*

stories (i.e. *Yushi Mingyan, Jingshi Tongyan* and *Xingshi Hengyan*). It was published by University of Washington Press in 2000, 2005 and 2009 respectively, as *Stories Old and New: A Ming Dynasty Collection, Stories to Caution the World: A Ming Dynasty Collection Volume 2,* and *Stories to Awaken the World: A Ming Dynasty Collection Volume 3.*

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