

## Article

# Translating through Ups and Downs — A Critical Review of Creation and Restriction: Factors That Affect Translation

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**Abstract:** *Creation and Restriction: Factors That Affect Translation* by Prof. Deng Di is a comprehensive scholarly work that explores the multifaceted constraints influencing the translation process. Published by Routledge in 2024, the book integrates insights from linguistics, literature, culture, and society, offering a systematic analysis of translation constraints at micro, meso, and macro levels. The book excels in its theoretical rigor, particularly in its balanced approach to internal and external constraints, and its focus on the cognitive processes of translators. However, it falls short in providing practical guidance for translators, limiting its applicability for practitioners. Despite this, the book makes a significant contribution to translation studies, bridging gaps between theory and practice, making it a valuable resource for scholars and advanced students in the field.

**Keywords:** translation constraints; translation community; translation theory and practice; cognitive process; interdisciplinary approach

## 1. Introduction

*Creation and Restriction: Factors That Affect Translation* is an academic work authored by Professor Deng Di from Yancheng Institute of Technology [1]. Published in June 2024, the book is globally distributed by Routledge, a renowned academic publisher celebrated for its excellence in humanities and social sciences publications. Its author, Prof. Deng is a distinguished scholar and translator whose work has significantly contributed to the fields of translation studies, comparative literature, and cultural studies [2]. With a strong academic background and extensive experience in both theoretical research and practical translation, Deng often focuses on the interplay between creativity and constraint in translation, exploring how linguistic, cultural, and socio-political factors shape the translation process. His interdisciplinary approach and insightful analyses have earned him recognition in academic circles, making him a respected figure in the study of translation.

As a leading publisher in this area, Routledge ensures that the book reaches international audience of scholars, students, and professionals interested in the theoretical and practical aspects of translation. Deng's association with Routledge not only enhances the book's credibility but also ensures its accessibility to a global readership through the publisher's extensive distribution networks. This review will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the book, focusing on its interdisciplinary approach and relevance to contemporary translation practices.

## 2. Summary of the Book

Deng's book provides a comprehensive exploration of the various constraints that influence the translation process, offering a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to understanding translation as a complex intercultural communication activity. The author, drawing on decades of experience and research, examines translation constraints from

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multiple perspectives, integrating insights from linguistics, literature, aesthetics, culture, and society.

The book is structured into 12 chapters, each addressing different aspects of translation constraints and their implications for translation studies. Chapter 1 explores the translator's power in China, balancing creativity and fidelity, introducing "transediting" to emphasize target language beauty despite deviations from the source text. Chapter 2 defines "translation" and "constraints," providing a theoretical foundation, moving from historical to contemporary perspectives. Chapter 3 analyzes the interplay between translation constraints, focusing on the translator's balance between creative freedom and adherence to constraints. Chapter 4 examines how translation's interlingual and intercultural nature creates specific constraints, shaping the translator's decisions. Chapter 5 discusses functional constraints, emphasizing how the translation's purpose (e.g., literary, legal, technical) dictates different approaches. Chapter 6 highlights challenges in conveying source text meaning, constrained by linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors. Chapter 7 explores how translation goals (fidelity, readability, cultural adaptation) create constraints, stressing the need to align strategies with purpose. Chapter 8 examines how historical, social, and cultural contexts influence translation, affecting both source and target texts. Chapter 9 focuses on logical structures in translation, ensuring coherence and consistency in the target text. Chapter 10 delves into ethical considerations, such as fidelity, transparency, and the translator's responsibility to both source text and audience. Chapter 11 analyzes how theoretical frameworks (e.g., functionalism, skopos theory, hermeneutics) shape understanding of translation constraints and their implications for research and practice. Chapter 12 calls for an integrated approach to translation studies, considering linguistic, cultural, social, and ethical factors to deepen understanding of translation as a complex activity.

To sum up, this book argues that translation studies should be an integrated and comprehensive field, incorporating insights from various disciplines to fully understand the constraints that shape translation. By examining translation constraints at the micro, meso, and macro levels — ranging from the translator's individual decisions to broader cultural and societal influences — the author develops a nuanced and holistic perspective on translation.

### **3. Analysis and Evaluation**

#### *3.1. Strengths of the Work*

Deng's book presents a compelling and innovative approach to translation studies, offering fresh perspectives that significantly contribute to the field. Below, the key strengths of the work are outlined.

##### **3.1.1. Innovative Research Perspective**

One of the most notable strengths of this work is its adoption of a novel research perspective that bridges the gap between macro and micro approaches in translation studies. Traditionally, translation research has often oscillated between overly broad macro-level analyses, which risk losing sight of specific details, and excessively narrow micro-level examinations, which may overemphasize certain factors at the expense of a holistic understanding. This work, however, proposes a balanced approach by combining both long and short focal lengths. By selecting a reasonable research scope and then conducting detailed analyses within that framework, the study achieves a systematic and profound understanding of translation activities. This methodological innovation is particularly effective in capturing the dynamic interplay of factors that influence the production and reception of translations, thereby enhancing our comprehension of the translation process.

### 3.1.2. Introduction of the “Translation Community” Concept

Another significant strength lies in the introduction of the concept of the “translation community,” inspired by the notion of “interpretive community.” This concept is a valuable addition to translation theory, as it provides a framework for understanding how groups of translators, who share similar socialization and professionalization experiences, collectively influence translation norms and practices. The study convincingly argues that while members of a translation community may share common ways of thinking and hold similar views on many issues, they are not homogenized in their output. The recognition of diverse value orientations and interpretations within a translation community is a nuanced and realistic portrayal of the field. Furthermore, the study’s exploration of how institutional and philosophical divergences can threaten the cohesion of a translation community adds depth to the discussion, highlighting the complex social dynamics at play in translation practices.

### 3.1.3. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The work’s theoretical contributions are not merely abstract; they have practical implications for the field of translation. By focusing on the constraints and influences that operate during the translation process, the study offers insights that can guide translators in making more informed decisions. The emphasis on the translation community also underscores the importance of collective norms and shared practices, which can help maintain consistency and fidelity in translation while allowing for individual creativity and interpretation. This balance between collective norms and individual agency is a crucial aspect of translation practice that the study addresses effectively.

## 3.2. *Weaknesses of the Work*

This book provides a thorough analysis of the constraints and challenges in translation studies, but it also reveals certain limitations in the work. The following are the key limitations of the book.

### 3.2.1. Lack of Practical Application

One of the primary weaknesses is its insufficient focus on practical application. While the study extensively examines the various constraints that influence translation — ranging from internal factors such as the translator’s interpretive abilities and the source text’s linguistic features, to external factors like societal, organizational, and group influences — it fails to provide a clear pathway for integrating these insights into actual translation practice. The study acknowledges the complexity of these constraints but does not offer concrete strategies or methodologies for translators to navigate these challenges in real-world scenarios. This gap between theoretical analysis and practical application limits the work’s utility for practicing translators who seek actionable guidance.

### 3.2.2. Inadequate Exploration of Translator’s Interpretive Abilities

Another significant weakness is the study’s incomplete exploration of the translator’s interpretive abilities. While the work rightly emphasizes the importance of a translator’s cognitive and expressive skills, it does not provide a comprehensive or convincing framework for what constitutes adequate interpretive competence. The study references Gadamer’s notion that “all translation is interpretation,” but it stops short of defining the specific cognitive and expressive capabilities that a competent translator should possess. For instance, how much linguistic and cultural knowledge is necessary for effective interpretation? How can translators develop and refine these skills? The lack of a detailed and persuasive discussion on these questions leaves a critical gap in the study’s analysis, which could have otherwise provided valuable insights for translator training and professional development.

### 3.2.3. Limited Discussion on Translator's Knowledge Accumulation

Deng's book briefly touches on the idea that a translator's interpretive ability is influenced by their accumulated knowledge and experience, which they draw upon during the translation process. However, this discussion remains underdeveloped. The work does not delve deeply into how translators can systematically build and organize their "information repository" to enhance their interpretive skills. Additionally, the study does not address how new knowledge acquired during the translation process can be effectively integrated into this repository. A more detailed exploration of these aspects would have strengthened the study's contribution to understanding the cognitive dimensions of translation.

## 4. Comparison and Context

*Creation and Restriction: Factors That Affect Translation* is a thought-provoking contribution to the field of translation studies, offering a nuanced exploration of the various constraints that influence the translation process. The following review situates the book within the broader scholarly conversation, compares it with two related works, and evaluates its unique contributions to the field.

### 4.1. Dialogue with Existing Research

Deng's work engages with several key debates in translation studies, particularly those surrounding the role of constraints in shaping translation outcomes. While traditional translation research has often focused on either macro-level factors (e.g., cultural, political, and economic influences) or micro-level factors (e.g., linguistic and stylistic choices), this work bridges the gap by adopting a balanced perspective that integrates both internal and external constraints. This approach aligns with recent trends in translation studies that emphasize the interconnectedness of various factors, as seen in works like Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility*, which critiques the cultural and ideological forces that shape translation practices [3]. However, *Creation and Restriction* goes further by systematically categorizing constraints into micro-, meso-, and macro-level systems, offering a more structured framework for understanding their interplay.

The book also contributes to the ongoing discussion about the translator's agency and interpretive abilities. Drawing on Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy, it highlights the centrality of the translator's cognitive and expressive skills in the translation process. This focus complements recent scholarship, such as Anthony Pym's *Exploring Translation Theories*, which examines the translator's role as a mediator between cultures [4]. However, *Creation and Restriction* distinguishes itself by delving deeper into the cognitive dimensions of translation, particularly how translators accumulate and utilize knowledge to navigate constraints. This emphasis on the translator's interpretive process fills a gap in the literature, as many existing studies tend to prioritize external factors over the internal cognitive mechanisms at play.

### 4.2. Comparison with Related Works

To better understand the book's unique contributions, it is helpful to compare it with two other influential works in the field: Susan Bassnett's *Translation Studies* and Mona Baker's *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* [2,5].

#### 4.2.1. Susan Bassnett's Translation Studies

Bassnett's seminal work provides a comprehensive overview of translation theory, covering topics such as equivalence, cultural transfer, and the history of translation. While Bassnett's book is foundational in establishing translation studies as an independent discipline, it tends to focus more on theoretical frameworks and less on the practical constraints faced by translators. In contrast, *Creation and Restriction* offers a more detailed analysis of the specific factors that influence translation, particularly the cogni-

tive and organizational constraints that Bassnett's work does not explore in depth. This makes *Creation and Restriction* a valuable complement to Bassnett's broader theoretical approach.

#### 4.2.2. Mona Baker's *In Other Words*

Baker's work is widely regarded as a practical guide for translators, focusing on linguistic strategies and techniques for overcoming translation challenges. While Baker provides actionable advice for handling linguistic and cultural differences, her book does not extensively address the broader systemic constraints (e.g., societal, economic, and political factors) that *Creation and Restriction* examines. Additionally, Baker's focus is primarily on the textual level, whereas *Creation and Restriction* offers a more holistic view by integrating textual, cognitive, and systemic perspectives. This broader scope makes *Creation and Restriction* a more comprehensive resource for understanding the multifaceted nature of translation.

#### 4.3. *Uniqueness and Contributions*

*Creation and Restriction* stands out for its systematic categorization of constraints and its emphasis on the translator's cognitive processes. By integrating insights from hermeneutics, cognitive science, and systems theory, the book offers a fresh perspective on how translators navigate the complex web of internal and external factors that shape their work. Its focus on the translator's knowledge accumulation and interpretive abilities is particularly innovative, as it addresses a gap in the literature that has often overlooked the cognitive dimensions of translation. Furthermore, the book's balanced approach — bridging macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis — provides a more holistic understanding of translation than many existing works. While Bassnett and Baker offer valuable insights into translation theory and practice, respectively, *Creation and Restriction* synthesizes these perspectives and adds a new layer of depth by examining the interplay of constraints at multiple levels.

### 5. Conclusion

*Creation and Restriction: Factors That Affect Translation* integrates insights from hermeneutics, cognitive science, and systems theory, highlighting the cognitive processes of translators and societal influences. The concept of the "translation community" is particularly innovative, emphasizing the balance between collective norms and individual agency. However, the book lacks practical guidance for translators and a detailed framework for assessing translator competence. Despite these limitations, it offers a balanced theoretical approach, bridging macro and micro perspectives, and stands out from foundational works like Susan Bassnett's *Translation Studies* and practical guides like Mona Baker's *In Other Words*.

The book is valuable for advanced students, scholars, and researchers in translation studies, providing deep insights into the theoretical and cognitive dimensions of translation. It is well-suited for those seeking a deeper understanding of the complex factors influencing translation in a globalized world, which successfully bridges the dialogue between Chinese and Western translation theories.

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