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Analysis of Shi Longlian' translation of *the extensive commentary on the bodhisattva's way of life* from the perspective of relevance theory

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of Relevance Theory and translation through an analysis of Shi Longlian's *The Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. The study begins with an introduction to Santideva, the esteemed 8th-century Indian philosopher, whose work laid the foundation for Mahayana Buddhist ethics and practice. Following this, it examines Shi Longlian, a prominent contemporary translator and scholar, highlighting her contributions to Buddhist literature and her extensive commentary that enriches the understanding of the Bodhisattva path. By applying these Relevance Theory as theoretical frameworks, this paper focuses on how Shi Longlian's commentary achieves optimal relevance, facilitating comprehension for contemporary readers while remaining faithful to the original text's intent. This study emphasizes the importance of Relevance Theory in translation, showcasing how it enhances the audience's understanding and appreciation of Buddhist teachings in the modern context.

Keywords: Shi Longlian; Translation; The Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva's Way of Life; Relevance Theory; Buddhist scriptures

1. Introduction

China has a long history of translation, with written records of translation theory beginning with the translation of Buddhist scriptures. The earliest existing text reflecting the ideas of Chinese Buddhist translation is the *Preface to the Dhammapada* by the renowned translator Zhi Qian. Zhou Zuoren divides the history of translation into three phases: first, the translation of Buddhist scriptures from the Six Dynasties to the Tang Dynasty; second, the translation of the Bible during the late Qing Dynasty to the era of the *Shiwubao* (a progressive journal); and third, the transition from Yan Fu and Lin Shu to the New Literature period (as discussed in Chapter 4 of this book on Zhou Zuoren). Qiu Zhuchang considers it possible to divide the history into two periods: the first period is the translation of Buddhist scriptures before the Tang Dynasty, and the second is the period of translating Western literature, philosophy, and science during the late Qing Dynasty (as noted in Qiu's *Casual Talks on Translation*). Ma Zuyin believes there were three peaks of translation before the May Fourth Movement: first, the translation of Buddhist scriptures from the Eastern Han to the Song Dynasty; second, the translation of science and technology during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties; and third, the translation of Western learning after the Opium War.

Regardless of the method of classification, all approaches mark the Tang and Song dynasties as a turning point and peak for Buddhist scripture translation.

During the Cultural Revolution, the translation of Buddhist scriptures came to a standstill. After the liberation, Buddhist practitioners recognized the importance of translation and reopened a new chapter in Buddhist scripture translation. Shi Longlian, known as the "greatest contemporary female monk," took the lead, dedicating herself wholeheartedly to

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the translation of Buddhist scriptures and the training of Buddhist talents, thereby contributing an indelible chapter to the translation of Chinese Buddhist texts. Her translation of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* (*The Comprehensive Explanation of the Bodhisattva Path*) not only circulated widely at the time but also remains an essential reading for Mahayana Buddhist learners today.

2. Introduction of Santideva

Santideva, originally named Jikai, is believed to have been born between the 7th and 8th centuries in the kingdom of Suvarnabhumi in South India. He was the son of King Shankai. From a young age, he was exceptionally intelligent; it is said that at the age of six, he learned the *Manjushri Sharp-Witted Wisdom Accomplishment* from a yogi and diligently practiced it, achieving a direct vision of the deity Manjushri. Dissatisfied with the emptiness of royal life and disillusioned with luxury, Jikai fled the kingdom on the night before he was to ascend the throne, seeking refuge with the Lion King of East India. He served in this position for over ten years, broadening his knowledge and understanding. Eventually, he renounced his worldly life and ordained at Nalanda Monastery in front of the throne of Shakyamuni, adopting the name Santideva.

After his ordination, Santideva immersed himself in the study of the Tripitaka at the monastery, maintaining a low profile in his daily life. Apart from eating, sleeping, and attending to basic needs, he appeared to engage little in formal practice. This led to jealousy among his peers, who believed he did not deserve the offerings he received. During a sutra recitation assembly, he was asked to recite a text he had studied. When it was his turn, he asked, "Would you like to hear something you have heard before or something new?" The assembly, seeking to challenge him, requested a new text. In response, Santideva effortlessly recited the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* (*Entering the Bodhisattva Path*).

Although Santideva's writings are few, his impact is significant, making him a major figure in the Madhyamaka school following Aryadeva. In addition to the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, he is also credited with works such as *Bodhisattva Studies* and a *Sutra Collection*. Both Bu Ston's (1986) *Great Treasury of Buddhist History* and Dharmakirti's (1988) *History of Indian Buddhism* document his contributions. The *Bodhisattva Studies* is available in Sanskrit, and its Chinese translation, titled *The Collection of Mahayana Bodhisattva Teachings*, is attributed to the translator Dharmaraksha.

3. Introduction of Shi Longlian and Her Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva Path

3.1. Introduction of Shi Longlian

Shi Longlian (1909-1996) was born in Shantujiao Street, Leshan, Sichuan, in the residence of the You family. Later, she lived in her maternal grandfather's house in Yijiaxiang. In 1921, she began learning to read at her grandfather's home. In the same year, she entered Leshan County Women's Primary School but only attended for six months due to her grandfather's passing. While going through her grandfather's books, she discovered *Jing Zhong Jing You Jing*, which sparked her interest in Buddhism.

In 1927, she started self-studying Chinese literature, history, geography, and arithmetic, and learned English from the wife of an American pastor, Yan De'en. After 1927, she taught at Leshan Women's School and Chengdu Women's Normal School. In December 1936, she participated in the county personnel examination held by the Sichuan Provincial Government and ranked first. In 1937, she was appointed to the translation office of the provincial government secretariat. She studied under Master Changyuan, the president of the Sichuan Buddhist Association, and learned Tibetan from Yue Xigxi. She published her first poetry collection, *Zhi Xue Chu Ji*.

In 1939, she attended Dharma lectures at the Shaocheng Buddhist Society in Chengdu and learned Tibetan from Master Fazun. On June 17, 1941, according to the lunar calendar, she resigned from her position in the provincial government and took monastic vows. In 1943, she attended lectures by Master Fazun at the Shaocheng Buddhist Society, where he taught the *Entry into the Middle Way*. She took notes and later wrote *Lectures on the Entry into the Middle Way*, which was published 40 years later in *Fayin* magazine. She continued to study Tibetan under Master Fazun.

In 1952, at the request of Master Nenghai, she lived in a straw hut on the outskirts of the city to translate *Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva Path*. At the invitation of Professor Zhang Yisu, director of the Literature Research Institute at Sichuan University and chief editor of the *Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary*, she participated in the compilation of the *Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary*. In 1984, through Shi Longlian's efforts, the Sichuan Buddhist Institute for Nuns was established, where she served as the principal and took on significant teaching responsibilities until her death.

3.2. Shi Longlian's Main Works

Shi Longlian's works include writings, translation and poems, which are listed as follows,

- **Writings:** Her writings include *A Brief Commentary on the Treatise on the Great Vehicle*, *A Brief Practice of the Three Refuges*, *Lecture Notes on the Retreat at Taiping Temple*, *Commentary on the Offering to the Guru*, *Commentary on the Ornament of Clear Realization*, *Commentary on the Seven Aspects of Cultivating Bodhicitta*, *Commentary on the Entry into the Middle Way*, *Commentary on the Song of the Accumulation of the Path*, *Commentary on the Aspiration of Meeting the Great Master Tsongkhapa of the Three Realms*, *Compilation and Commentary on the Measurement of Icon Creation*, *Overview of Master Nenghai's Achievements in Spreading the Dharma*, *The Excellent Traditions and Development of Buddhism* and *The Buddhist Perspective on Morality* etc.
- **Translations:** Her translations include *Vinaya for Bhikshunis, Part II* (Translated from Chinese to English), *The Ritual of the Sky Goer Mother* (Translated from Tibetan to Chinese), *Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva Path* (Translated from Tibetan to Chinese), *Ritual of Green Tara's Four Mandalas* (Translated from Tibetan to Chinese), *The Mudras of the Virarāja Ritual* (Translated from Tibetan to Chinese) etc.
- **Poetry:** Her poetry is mainly collected in *Zhi Xue Chu Ji* (A Collection of Poems), and some poems are published in magazines such as *Modern Buddhism*, *Fayin*, *Ming'e Poetry Manuscripts*, and *Sichuan Poetry* among others.

3.3. Shi Longlian and her Translation of Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva Path

In the spring of 1950, Master Nenghai entrusted Longlian with an important task: to translate the ten-volume *Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva Path* by Master Jie Cao from Tibetan. However, during this time, her father unfortunately passed away. After Longlian and her younger brothers buried their father, she restrained her grief and went to the thatched hut in Shiyangchang, dedicating herself to the work of translating Buddhist texts.

The *Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva Path* is a significant Buddhist work that Master Nenghai brought back to Chengdu after studying scriptures in Tibet. There was an existing Chinese translation by Tian Xizai from the Northern Song Dynasty, but it was incomplete, difficult to understand, and lacked annotations, making it challenging for learners. Master Nenghai recognized that Longlian had mastered Tibetan and had a solid foundation in classical literature, making her capable of this task. He assigned the translation to her, and Longlian gladly accepted.

With her wisdom and talent, as well as her rigorous scholarly approach, Longlian translated the verses of the text and Master Jie Cao's annotations entirely. The text contained 715 verses followed by over 120,000 words of commentary. Once completed, she submitted the translation to Master Nenghai for review, who expressed great satisfaction. Longlian then meticulously copied the entire work in her neat small script.

After the founding of the Sichuan Buddhist Institute for Nuns following the Liberation, Longlian made several copies of this manuscript as teaching materials for the institute. Later, she sent it to Mr. Zhao Puchu for a preface. After reviewing the work, Mr. Zhao deemed it very valuable. He not only wrote the preface but also submitted the manuscript to the Jinling Publishing House for printing, with plans to include it in the subsequent Tibetan canon.

4. Introduction of Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory, a prominent theory in cognitive pragmatics, was introduced by Sperber and Wilson in their 1995 work *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. This theory explains communication as an ostensive-inferential process, where both the speaker and the listener share information in a mutually apparent way. Understanding an utterance is considered a cognitive activity. According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), the speaker creates a stimulus that makes it clear to both parties that the speaker's intention is to make a certain set of assumptions more apparent or understandable to the listener.

Sperber and Wilson (1995) describe communication as an ostensive-inferential process, involving both informative and communicative intentions. In this process, ostension and inference are two complementary aspects. From the speaker's perspective, it involves ostension, where the speaker reveals or expresses their informative intention. For the listener, the process is one of inference, where they deduce the speaker's communicative intention from the speaker's ostensive behavior, such as an utterance, based on contextual assumptions. The inferential process aims to find the optimal relevance between the utterance and these contextual assumptions, following the principle of relevance. Therefore, relevance is central to Relevance Theory and key to understanding any utterance.

4.1. Optimal relevance

Optimal relevance is a key principle in human communication, with the idea that "human cognition is geared towards relevance" (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). This means we focus on information that appears relevant to us. Sperber and Wilson (1995) define relevance as the relationship between a proposition and a set of contextual assumptions, stating that "an assumption is relevant in a context only if it produces some contextual effect in that context." They (1995) argue that the degree of relevance is determined by two factors: the contextual effects and the effort needed to process the information. Evaluating relevance, like productivity, involves balancing these two factors. The more significant the contextual effects and the less effort required, the higher the relevance.

Two important concepts to highlight are maximal relevance and optimal relevance. An assumption is said to have maximal relevance in a context when the ostensive stimulus is the most relevant, producing the greatest positive contextual effects with minimal effort. On the other hand, an assumption is optimally relevant in a context when: a) the ostensive stimulus is sufficiently relevant to justify the effort required by the listener to process it, and b) the ostensive stimulus is the most relevant option available, taking into account the communicator's abilities and preferences (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

Sperber and Wilson (2001) argue that successful communication depends on both the communicator and the listener striving for optimal relevance. An utterance is considered optimally relevant when (1) it allows the listener to grasp the speaker's intended meaning without excessive effort, and (2) the intended meaning justifies the listener's effort by offering sufficient benefits. They assert that communication works effectively because both parties adhere to the principle of relevance.

As Gutt (2004) notes, "whenever someone signals a desire to communicate, they implicitly convey the expectation that the listener will gain sufficient contextual effects without unnecessary effort." To achieve optimal relevance, researchers must focus on the most pertinent information. The pursuit of optimal relevance not only directs the listener toward the context intended by the speaker but also leads them to the intended interpretation, which occurs subconsciously.

4.2. Cognitive Environment

According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), context is "a psychological construct" representing a subset of the listener's assumptions about the world, often referred to as contextual assumptions or the cognitive environment. More specifically, it is defined as "the set of premises used to interpret an utterance." Relevance theory views context differently from traditional pragmatic analysis, where context is usually seen as fixed, predetermined, and given.

In this definition, "context" is a broad concept that can encompass almost any idea conceivable by the human mind. It includes not only information about the immediate physical surroundings or prior utterances (often referred to as co-text), but also expectations about the future, scientific theories, religious beliefs, personal memories, cultural norms, and assumptions about the speaker's mental state. All of these factors can influence the interpretation of an utterance (Gutt, 2004).

According to relevance theory, context has a direct impact on the relevance of an utterance and its contextual effects. In fact, selecting the most suitable context for an utterance is essentially the search for its optimal relevance. Thus, relevance is contingent upon context. Furthermore, communication within this framework is viewed as a dynamic process, meaning that context must also be dynamic throughout communication. In verbal exchanges, listeners actively seek out specific contexts, and their choice of context is influenced by the pursuit of relevance. This implies that constructing and adjusting the context is crucial for interpreting utterances.

4.3. The Importance of Relevance Theory in Translation

The relevance theory of translation offers a cohesive theoretical framework for translation studies, viewing translation as an ostensive-inferential interpretation process. During this inferential process, the translator must accurately interpret the author's intention and then express this interpretation in a manner that can be correctly understood by the recipients of the target language. The translated text is fundamentally the verbal representation of the author's intention as comprehended by the translator, who acts as a reader recreating this message for a different audience in another culture. As a text producer, the translator operates within a distinct socio-cultural context, aiming to convey their interpretation of "speaker meaning" in a way that achieves the desired impact on the readers of the target text. This process is primarily an act of interlingual verbal communication, requiring consideration of both the source text author's intention and the target audience's expectations.

In reality, the translation process involves decision-making, where the translator must choose between the intention of the source text and the purpose or objectives of the translation, often prioritizing the expectations of the audience. In other words, the translator must first identify the optimal relevance from the ostensive communication of the source text's author and then convey this to the audience of the target text, effectively sharing their own interpretation of the source text. Conversely, the reader of the target text will interpret the translation based on their own contextual assumptions.

In most instances, the source text and the target text can be considered equivalent in several relevant aspects, meaning that absolute equivalence is not attainable in a strict sense. It is advisable for the translator to strive for a translation that closely resembles the original in both form and content while ensuring effective communication and fulfilling the translation's purpose. In other words, the translator's task is to seek the optimal relevance between the source text and the target version.

5. Analysis of Shi Longlian's *The Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

5.1. Example 1

| bde gshegs (sugata) chos kyi sku (dharmakaya) mnga' sras (sons) bcas dang (along with) |

| phyag 'os kun la'ang gus par phyag 'tshal te |

| bde gshegs sras (son, child) kyi sdom (discipline) la 'jug pa ni |

| lung (agama) bzhin (according to) mdor (joined) bsdus nas ni brjod (speech) par bya |

Translated by Shi Longlian (2011)

善逝具足法身及佛子 一切应礼敬处敬礼已
如来胜子律仪趣入处 遵依经教总摄当宣说

以上明赞佛宝，界自性清净离诸垢染之法身，是为法宝。彼依何而有，谓依善逝。善逝法身先后二名亦摄二种色身。法身亦表菩萨灭道，故佛宝及大乘法宝悉是皈敬境。佛子者菩萨圣人，并为三宝，彼等及余所应礼敬和尚阿阇梨等悉三门恭敬作礼。

如来子诸菩萨等，从初发菩提心，修施等波罗蜜行，乃至证大觉位，道之次第，悉皆含摄之律仪也。欲释一切大乘道次第，是依本师所说契经而说故。

5.1.1. Explicitness vs. Implicitness:

The Tibetan original is dense with implicit meaning. It uses Buddhist terminology such as bde gshegs (sugata), chos kyi sku (dharmakaya), and sras (sons) that carry specific theological connotations. The translation provides explicit clarifications, for example, translating "bde gshegs (sugata)" as "善逝具足法身" (Sugata with complete Dharmakaya), making it clear that both the Buddha's transcendental and physical forms are being referenced. Relevance Theory suggests that explicit clarifications reduce cognitive effort for the target audience, especially if they are not deeply familiar with the original language's cultural and philosophical context. By making implicit meanings more explicit, Shi Longlian reduces the cognitive load on the reader, increasing accessibility.

5.1.2. Cultural Adaptation

Shi Longlian translates "mnga' sras" (sons, children of the Buddha) as "佛子" (Buddha's sons), which is a culturally and religiously appropriate term in the Chinese Buddhist context. The term "佛子" carries not just the literal meaning of "sons" but also the metaphorical sense of devoted followers or Bodhisattvas, which aligns with Mahayana thought. This adaptation is an example of achieving relevance through contextual effects—ensuring that the meaning is easily understood in the target culture while retaining the depth of the original.

5.1.3. Effort in Understanding Doctrine

Shi Longlian provides an explanatory note after the translated text, clarifying the deeper doctrinal meaning of the passage:

“以上明赞佛宝，界自性清静离诸垢染之法身，是为法宝。”

This note explains the key Buddhist concept of the Buddha jewel (佛宝) and the Dharmakaya as a symbol of ultimate purity and enlightenment, thus guiding the reader to understand not just the translation but the theological implications.

According to Relevance Theory, such explanatory content increases cognitive effects by helping readers make better connections between the words and the broader Buddhist doctrine, but it also requires more effort from readers, as they must engage with an additional layer of commentary.

5.1.4. Condensed vs. Expansive Translation:

Shi Longlian translates the relatively short Tibetan phrase "bde gshegs sras kyi sdom la 'jug pa" (entering the discipline of the Buddha's sons) as "如来子诸菩萨等，从初发菩提心，修施等波罗蜜行，乃至证大觉位，道之次第，悉皆含摄之律仪也" (the Bodhisattvas, from the moment they give rise to the Bodhicitta, practice the Paramitas such as generosity, and proceed step by step until they attain great enlightenment; all of these stages are included in the discipline).

The Chinese translation expands on the original by specifying what is involved in "the discipline"—the Bodhisattva path and the six Paramitas (perfections). This expansion minimizes cognitive effort by providing additional details that make the abstract idea of "discipline" clearer and easier to grasp for the target audience.

Shi Longlian's translation style minimizes cognitive effort by clarifying technical terms and concepts that might be unfamiliar to the reader and using elaborative phrases and explanations to ensure that readers can easily follow the doctrinal implications without having to infer too much from the text itself. However, the added explanatory sections and expanded interpretations might demand more mental engagement from readers who are already familiar with the basic concepts but are rewarded with richer cognitive effects.

In all, Shi Longlian's translation style aligns well with the principles of Relevance Theory, aiming to maximize cognitive effects while balancing the necessary cognitive effort. By making implicit concepts explicit, expanding on doctrinal points, and adding commentary, the translator ensures that the text is accessible and meaningful to a wide audience, particularly within the Chinese Buddhist context. The translation is not only linguistically accurate but also culturally and doctrinally resonant.

5.2. Example 2

dños po (thing, impermanence) phal pa (ordinary, mundane) cuñ zad (little slight) la'añ (when) | | yid (mind) kyis sbyin par (generosity) bsam (think) byas (do) nas | | mi (human) gañ sbyin par mi byed pa (not done) | | de yañ (that is to say) yi dags 'gyur (become) gsuñs (it is said) na | |

Translated by Shi Longlian (2011)
经云若心欲布施 微少下劣寻常物 其人布施不果行 后当堕入饿鬼中
所施之物虽寻常劣少一抔之食等，若意中思维而未果行，如《正法念处经》云：「若思欲施者有纤毫未施，当生饿鬼趣中，若已发愿而不施，当堕有情地狱中。」

5.2.1. Explicitness vs. Implicitness

In the Tibetan language, dños po (thing, impermanence) phal pa (ordinary, mundane) cuñ zad (little slight) la'añ (when): Refers to a small, insignificant mundane object. yid (mind) kyis sbyin par (generosity) bsam (think) byas (do) nas indicates thinking about generosity in the mind but not completing the action, mi (human) gañ sbyin par mi byed pa (not done) means a person who fails to give, despite having thought of giving, and de yañ (that is to say) yi dags 'gyur (become) gsuñs (it is said) refers to the consequences of failing to act on generosity, as stated in the text.

Shi Longlian translates this passage with precision and additional commentary for clarity

In the Tibetan "yid (mind) kyis sbyin par (generosity) bsam (think) byas (do) nas" is rendered simply as "thinking about generosity", implying that the person only thinks of generosity without carrying out the act. Chinese Translation, Shi Longlian expands it to: "若心欲布施 微少下劣寻常物" (If the mind wishes to give a slight and ordinary thing). besides, explicit detail is provided: "微少下劣寻常物" (a slight, inferior, and ordinary thing). Shi Longlian emphasizes not only

the idea of thinking about generosity but also the small, mundane nature of the object being considered for giving. This reduces the cognitive effort for the reader by spelling out nuances that might be implied in the Tibetan version.

Tibetan original mentions that a person who thinks of giving but does not act on it becomes a *yi dags* (hungry ghost). Shi Longlian translates: “其人布施不果行 后当堕入饿鬼中” (The person who does not carry out the act of giving will later fall into the realm of hungry ghosts). The Chinese translation retains the core message but also clarifies the consequence of non-action in terms that are culturally resonant for Chinese Buddhist readers. By making this point explicit, Shi Longlian reduces the mental work needed to interpret the consequences, increasing the cognitive effects (the reader’s understanding of the karmic consequences).

5.2.2. Cultural Adaptation

Shi Longlian frequently adapts the Tibetan Buddhist terms to a Chinese cultural and doctrinal context. “饿鬼” (hungry ghost) is a term well-known in Chinese Buddhism, used for one of the six realms of existence in *samsara*. This term has the same meaning as *yi dags*, but using the Chinese term increases relevance for the target audience by connecting it to familiar Buddhist concepts. The use of culturally relevant language makes the cognitive effects more immediate and understandable for the Chinese-speaking audience, aligning the translation with their doctrinal understanding.

5.2.3. Commentary and Explanation

In the second half of the translation, Shi Longlian adds commentary from the *正法念处经* (*Saddharma-smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra*):

“如《正法念处经》云：「若思欲施者有纤毫未施，当生饿鬼趣中，若已发愿而不施，当堕有情地狱中。」”

The addition of this quote further clarifies and contextualizes the consequences of failing to act on generosity. This not only reinforces the meaning of the Tibetan original but also provides additional scriptural authority, enriching the reader’s understanding.

According to Relevance Theory, such elaboration can enhance the cognitive effects, giving the reader a more profound insight into the karmic laws surrounding generosity. However, this also increases the cognitive effort for readers, as they must now engage with an additional layer of interpretation and references.

5.2.4. Condensed vs. Expansive Translation

Shi Longlian tends to expand on the original Tibetan text to clarify its meaning. In the Tibetan, “*de yañ yi dags ’gyur gsuñs na*” (It is said that they will become hungry ghosts) is translated into “其人布施不果行 后当堕入饿鬼中” (The person who does not carry out the act of giving will later fall into the realm of hungry ghosts) in Chinese. As can be seen from the Chinese version, it is more expansive, specifying that the failure to act will lead to a fall into the realm of hungry ghosts, rather than the simpler phrasing of the Tibetan. The translator clarifies the temporal aspect (“later”) and location (realm of hungry ghosts) of the consequence.

This expansion makes the doctrinal point clearer, reducing cognitive effort for readers who might not immediately grasp the implications of the Tibetan phrase. However, for those familiar with the original context, the expanded phrasing might seem redundant, increasing effort without adding much new information.

In a word, Shi Longlian’s translation effectively follows the principles of Relevance Theory, aiming to maximize the cognitive effects for readers by providing clear, expanded interpretations of the original Tibetan text. The translator makes implicit meanings explicit, adds doctrinal commentary, and adapts cultural references to ensure that the target audience can easily understand and engage with the content. The translation is both expansive and contextualized, striking a balance between effort and effect, ultimately making the text accessible and doctrinally profound for a Chinese-speaking Buddhist audience.

5.3. Example 3

| smra na yid phebs ’brel pa dañ | | don gsal yid du ’oñ ba dañ |
| chags dañ ze sdañ spañs pa dañ | | ’jam zñ ran par smra bar bya |

Translated by Shi Longlian(2011)
志诚发心义联属 文义显明令欢喜 远离贪嗔善说词 软语及时应当说
与他谈论时，出于至诚，前后联贯，文义显明易晓， 适悦人意，发起心无贪嗔，软语善说，多少适时，应如是 说，如《十地经论》所说。

In Tibetan "smra na yid phebs 'brel pa dañ" refers to speaking with sincerity and coherence of mind. "don gsal yid du 'on ba dañ" means the meaning is clear and pleasing to the mind, "chags dañ ze sdañ spañs pa dañ" refers to abandoning attachment and anger, and "'jam žiñ ran par smra bar bya" instructs that one should speak gently and independently. Shi Longlian translates this passage with a style that expands and clarifies the original, adding commentary and explanation. This expansion reflects an intention to minimize the cognitive effort required by readers, ensuring the meaning is easily understood.

5.3.1. Explicitness vs. Implicitness

Shi Longlian's translation often makes implicit meanings in the Tibetan text more explicit. The Tibetan: "smra na yid phebs 'brel pa dañ" (speaking with sincerity and coherence of mind) is translated into Chinese "志诚发心义联属" (speaking with sincere intention and meaning that is connected). The Tibetan text briefly suggests sincerity and coherence. Shi Longlian expands this with "发心" (intention or motivation) and "义联属" (the meaning is connected or coherent). This makes the implicit idea of mental coherence and intention explicit, reducing cognitive effort for readers unfamiliar with such nuances.

The Tibetan "don gsal yid du 'on ba dañ" (the meaning is clear and pleasing to the mind) is rendered into Chinese Translation: "文义显明令欢喜" (the meaning is clear and brings joy). Shi Longlian again clarifies the positive emotional effect ("令欢喜" or "brings joy") of clear communication, which is implied in the Tibetan text but made explicit in the Chinese. This makes the cognitive effects clearer for the audience, highlighting the benefit of effective communication.

5.3.2. Cultural and Doctrinal Adaptation

Shi Longlian adapts the text to the Chinese Buddhist cultural context, ensuring the translation is doctrinally relevant. This enhances relevance for Chinese-speaking readers. The Tibetan: "chags dañ ze sdañ spañs pa dañ" (abandoning attachment and anger) corresponds to the Chinese Translation: "远离贪嗔善说词" (avoiding greed and anger, speaking good words). Shi Longlian adds "善说词" (speaking good words) to reinforce the idea of positive speech, which aligns with Chinese Buddhist ethical teachings. This expansion emphasizes the ethical aspect of speech in the target audience's context, increasing the cognitive effects by connecting to familiar concepts.

Tibetan: "'jam žiñ ran par smra bar bya" (speak gently and independently) is translated into Chinese "软语及时应当说" (soft words should be spoken at the appropriate time).

Shi Longlian interprets "independently" (ran par) as "应当" (should), implying the moral responsibility to speak at the right time, an important aspect of Buddhist teaching in the Chinese context. This cultural adaptation enhances the relevance of the message by connecting it to familiar ethical obligations, making the text resonate more deeply with the audience.

5.3.3. Expanded Commentary and Explanation

Shi Longlian adds commentary to further clarify the meaning of the text. "前后联贯" (consistent and coherent) expands on the Tibetan's suggestion of coherence, "发起心无贪嗔" (developing a mind without greed or anger) emphasizes the ethical aspect of communication, "适时" (timely) adds the idea of saying the right thing at the right time, which aligns with Buddhist teachings on right speech.

By providing these elaborations, Shi Longlian helps readers make connections between the text and broader Buddhist ethical practices. According to Relevance Theory, this increases cognitive effects—the understanding of how the text fits into a larger framework of Buddhist behavior—but also increases cognitive effort for readers who need to engage with additional layers of meaning.

5.3.4. Condensed vs. Expansive Translation

Shi Longlian tends to expand on the Tibetan text to ensure clarity and understanding:

Tibetan "chags dañ ze sdañ spañs pa dañ" (abandoning attachment and anger) is rendered into "远离贪嗔善说词" (avoiding greed and anger, speaking good words) in Chinese. The Chinese translation expands the original by adding "speaking good words" (善说词), offering more specific guidance on how to replace negative emotions with positive speech. This reduces cognitive effort for the reader, as it provides concrete examples of good practice.

Tibetan "'jam zin ran par smra bar bya" (speak gently and independently) is translated into "软语及时应当说" (soft words should be spoken at the appropriate time) in Chinese version. Shi Longlian's expansion here makes the instruction more specific by adding the idea of timeliness. This expands the text's practical guidance, ensuring that readers understand the importance of timing in communication. This increases cognitive effects by offering more actionable advice, while also reducing ambiguity in the original.

Shi Longlian's translation follows Relevance Theory by maximizing the cognitive effects for readers while minimizing the cognitive effort required. The translation expands on implicit meanings in the original Tibetan, making the ethical and doctrinal points clearer for a Chinese-speaking audience. By adapting the text to the cultural and doctrinal context of Chinese Buddhism, it ensures the message resonates with the target readers. By adding commentary that connects the passage to broader Buddhist teachings, it helps readers understand the ethical and practical implications of right speech. Overall, the translation is both clear and contextually relevant, offering a deep understanding of the original Tibetan text while being accessible to the target audience.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the significant interplay between Relevance Theory and the translation of Buddhist texts, particularly through the lens of Shi Longlian's *The Extensive Commentary on the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. By examining the historical and philosophical contexts of Santideva's original teachings, we have gained insights into the rich tradition of Mahayana Buddhism and the ongoing relevance of its core principles in contemporary society.

Shi Longlian's work exemplifies how effective translation can bridge cultural and temporal divides, ensuring that profound teachings remain accessible and applicable to modern audiences. Her rigorous application of Relevance Theory allows for optimal relevance in translation, enhancing cognitive engagement while minimizing unnecessary effort for readers. This approach not only preserves the original text's essence but also enriches the understanding of its concepts, fostering a deeper appreciation of the Bodhisattva path.

Ultimately, the integration of Relevance Theory into translation practices highlights the necessity for translators to consider the cognitive environment of their audience. By doing so, they can create translations that resonate meaningfully and effectively, thus promoting the dissemination of Buddhist wisdom and values in an increasingly interconnected world. This study underscores the potential of Relevance Theory to enhance the practice of translation, particularly in the context of complex philosophical texts, affirming its significance as a valuable tool for contemporary translators and scholars alike.

Compliance with ethical standards

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