



Description and Transcription of the Kinesic Constructs in Literary Conversation: The Case of Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*

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The kinesics portrayed in the communicative acts are complex behavioral constructs, which, as Fernando Poyatos observes, contains “conscious and unconscious psychomuscularly-based body movements and intervening or resulting positions, either learned or somatogenic, of visual, visual-acoustic, and tactile and kinesthetic perception” (*Nonverbal Communication* 43). The kinesic acts in the conversation between characters, when transcribed visually, may reveal the particular ways characters move and their body language is used. When blended with verbal and paralinguistic elements in discourse, the audible kinesics or quasiparalinguistic sounding movements, as Poyatos terms it, “discloses a great number of sounds... ineffable verbally because of the expressive limitations of our official dictionary” (28-29). The task faced by the translator is how to preserve kinesic repertoires conceived by the author and translate them correspondingly to match precisely the characters’ style of visual behavior.

This paper aims to evaluate three Chinese translations of kinesic descriptions in the first five chapters of *The Age of Innocence* with a purpose to address specific translation problems in connection with verbal transcription. In order to analyze how the description of kinesic movements are oralized in another language, kinesic markers and features are first identified and foregrounded in an attempt to raise awareness about different types of realization of kinesic behaviors and the verbal -kinesic-paralinguistic complex as iconic signs. Next, examples are selected to show the translators’ renderings and decoding problems. Retranslation is also provided to demonstrate how verbal expression accompanied by a particular kinesic behavior can be more appropriately transcribed so that original image can be visualized in reader’s mind. Useful tactics for optimizing the transfer of kinesic constructs are suggested from the perspective of Relevance Theory.