

# *Study of the Translation Strategies for the Chinese Culture-loaded Words in Peking Opera under Functional Equivalence Theory*

Manying Li

*School of International Study, Communication University of China, Beijing, China  
2802034747@qq.com*

**Keywords:** Functional equivalence theory, culture-loaded words, Peking Opera Translation

**Abstract:** As China's "quintessence", Peking Opera has become an important channel for foreign people to understand Chinese culture. One of the characteristics of Peking Opera is that its librettos contain a wealth of culture-loaded words. Based on this, under the guidance of Eugene Nida's functional equivalence theory, this thesis explores the translation strategies of culture-loaded words of the famous Peking Opera fragments in *Translation Series of a Hundred JingJu Classics*, and make suggestions for revisions on its deficiencies. After research, the thesis finds that, firstly, the quality of the translation is higher when abiding by functional equivalence theory; secondly, for different types of culture-loaded words in Peking Opera, translators will adopt different translation strategies; thirdly, the commonly used translation methods of culture-loaded words in Peking Opera are as follows: free translation, amplification, annotation, omission and substitution, among which free translation and substitution are the most widely used.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rise of the "Belt and Road Initiative", cultural exchanges at home and abroad have become increasingly frequent and in-depth. As China's "national quintessence", Peking Opera has attracted a large number of overseas audiences with its unique charm and has become an important channel for foreign people to understand Chinese culture. It has attracted the attention of foreign troupes, artists and many general audiences. Gradually, more and more cross-border cooperation between the East and the West emerged, such as international performances in art schools, providing a platform for cultural exchanges.

As we all know, there are many obstacles that appear during the process of transmitting Peking Opera culture, and language is the main obstacle. Peking Opera is characteristic for its cultural elements, which are greatly represented by culture-loaded words. Culture-loaded words are deeply branded with the region and era of a certain language society, and are words or phrases that express things and concepts unique to a certain culture. Such words not only carry rich cultural connotations, but also "exist only in a certain culture and are blank in another culture". Thus, it is essential to study the translation standards of culture-loaded words in order to export the cultural core of Peking Opera in a better way.

In practice, the thesis focuses on culture-loaded words translation strategies and methods. Due to the special semantic features of culture-loaded words, translators may meet many difficulties in translating culture-loaded words. The most common ones are culture conflict and culture vacancy. Thus, the thesis figures out how to choose appropriate translation strategies and methods to overcome the difficulties. In this way, it will be more convenient and efficient for other translators to learn and use appropriate translation strategies and methods when translating Peking Opera, which can be beneficial to spread Peking Opera and export traditional Chinese culture.

## 2. Literature Review

Scholars at home and abroad have long made research on the translation of Peking Opera and culture-loaded words. There are various studies on Peking Opera translation, including translation studies on jargon, opera title, libretto and so on; for culture-loaded words, scholars mostly focus on the transformation and transmission of cultural connotations in literary works.

### 2.1. Study on Peking Opera Translation

Domestic and foreign scholars have studied on Peking Opera translation for about two centuries. However, there are only simple pieces of officially published translations. After making research on domestic and foreign studies on Peking Opera translation, the thesis concludes that domestic scholars and foreign scholars tend to apply different translation strategies.

#### 2.1.1. Study on Peking Opera translation at home

At home, the research on the translation of Peking Opera started late, and the scope of the research was relatively narrow at first. Shao Jingfen(1986) analyzed Elizabeth Ann Wichmann's English translation of the classic Peking Opera *The Phoenix Returns to the Nest* and she believed that the translation preserved the style of the original opera well, and pointed out that the most important purpose of Peking Opera translation is to deliver Peking Opera to the foreign audience in its original way[1]. Mao Fasheng(2002) published a paper on the study of Peking Opera terminology, in which he tried to translate such terms as roles, music, instruments, costumes and masks. He believed that translation can be regarded as successful as long as it can be accepted by the target readers and get roughly the same feelings from the original readers. At that time, most scholars focused on the translation and practice of term and jargon, rather than the translation study of the whole script[2]. Zhao Hui(2008) analyzed The English version of *The Phoenix Returns to the Nest* by Wichmann, explored the translation of Peking Opera from the perspectives of performance, acceptability and aesthetic function, and put forward the existing problems in the translation of Peking Opera[3]. However, it can be seen that the research on Peking Opera translation did not follow specific translation principles at this time. After that, more and more scholars analyzed Peking Opera translation under the guidance of different theories.

Zhang Linlin(2013) studied the translation of terms in Peking Opera from the perspective of domestication and foreignization, and believed that translation should abide by the translation principles of “accuracy” and “readability”. Moreover, domestication and foreignization are not good or bad, but should be compatible and integrated[4]. Cui Xiangwei(2015) studied the translated librettos of *Translation Series of a Hundred Jingju Classics: The Great Enthronement* and pointed out that the translators should recognize the context of the original librettos and convey their meaning and spirit[5].

### 2.1.2. Study of Peking Opera translation abroad

Peking Opera, the quintessence of Chinese culture, has been deeply loved by audiences at home and abroad. It was not only a bridge for cultural exchanges among the people, but also a powerful tool for diplomatic work. After 1949, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture were responsible for the overseas dissemination of Peking Opera, therefore, how to make overseas audiences better understand and appreciate Peking Opera is the top priority. For this purpose, many foreign scholars have conducted researches on it, among which Rulan Chao Pian, Elizabeth Ann Wichmann and Hwang Wei-shu are famous.

In fact, translations of Peking Opera could start as early as the 19th century, with British diplomat G.C. Stent, who moved to Beijing in 1869 as part of a British legation escort. He has translated many popular Peking Opera works, such as *RenGui Back To Cave Dwelling*(1873) and *Yellow Crane Tower*(1876). In 1874, he delivered a speech titled *Chinese Theatricals*, comparing Chinese and Western operas with his own experience[6]. Rulan Chao Pian(1987) of Harvard University has practiced a lot on Peking Opera translation. She translated *The Fisherman's Revenge*, *Su San Under Police Escort* by listening to the records of the performances[7]. Professor Wichmann(1986) of University of Hawaii who has contributed the most to “English Peking Opera” published an article about the English translation of *The Phoenix Returns to the Nest*. Wichmann is an American, who came to China to learn Peking Opera from Shen Xiaomei, a disciple of the Mei School, and is known as “foreign imperial concubine”. In her opinion, Peking Opera, as one of the symbols of Chinese culture, is a supreme form of opera art, and to appreciate this beauty completely, it is far from enough to have some book knowledge or general observation, it is necessary to learn performance meticulously and rehearse representative plays in person. She also believed that translators can get creative or “rewrite” the opera by properly applying replacement and other translation methods. In her doctoral thesis *Peking Opera: A Study on the Art of Translating the Scripts with Special Reference to Structure and Conventions*, Hwang Weishu (1976) integrated theory with practice. As far as Hwang is concerned, the ultimate purpose of translators is to fit the translation of Peking Opera for onstage performance. She held the view that translators could rewrite the opera, especially the wordplay appeared in the dialogue, under the guidance of functional equivalence theory.

On the whole, domestic and foreign scholars have studied the translation strategies of Peking Opera's title, jargon and libretto and so on. It is worth noting that when translating librettos with cultural connotations, most of them agreed to pursue functional equivalence, that is, focusing more on conveying the meaning of the librettos rather than pursuing consistency in content and rhyme. However, there is still a lack of research on the translation strategies of culture-loaded words in Peking Opera, which will be further discussed in this thesis.

## 2.2. Previous Studies on the Translation of Culture-loaded Words

Every nation has a different history and different culture. In other words, every nation processes many kinds of unique things, including lifestyles, languages, religions, authorities, etc. To some extent, words describing those things can be only understood by people living in those nations. We call such words culture-loaded words, which are products of language and culture, and vehicles for emphasising cultural identity.

### 2.2.1. Previous Studies on the Translation of Culture-loaded Words at home

With the continuous development and improvement of translation theory, scholars and translators have had different views on culture-loaded words. Since 1980, Xu Guozhang(1980) published

*Culturally Loaded Words and English Language Teaching in Modern Foreign Language*, more and more scholars at home and abroad have begun to study culture-loaded words[8]. Liao Qiyi(2000) defined culture-loaded terms as words, phrases and idioms that signified something specific to a culture and reflected the distinctive ways of activity of a particular people that have accumulated over a long period of history[9]. Taking the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games mascot “Fuwa” as an example, Wang yinquan(2006) discussed the translation strategies of such culture-loaded words, and pointed out that according to objective needs and realistic purposes, such words should be translated in a way that appropriately preserved the cultural differences embedded in the original language[10]. Starting from the English translation of “naked marriage” and “naked official”, Meng Xiangchun(2011) put forward three translation strategies for Chinese culture-loaded words, namely literal translation, literal annotation and interpretive translation[11]. He believed that the strategies themselves are not absolutely good or bad, and the translation strategies adopted by translators should depend on various factors such as context, style and purpose.

In a short, domestic researches on culture-loaded words translation mainly focus on its translation strategies and methods under the guidance of cultural equivalence theory and culture-loaded words translation in literary works.

### **2.2.2. Previous Studies on the Translation of Culture-loaded Words abroad**

More than half a century ago, the great importance of cultural factors in translating has been realized in western translation field. Nida(1993), once stated that “for truly successful translating, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism, since words only have meanings in terms of the cultures in which they function”, that is to say, he believed that during the process of translating, cultural factors are the most significant, and translators need to have a good command of bilingual competence. Lawrence Venuti(1995) discussed translation strategies for cultural factors in his book *The Translator's Invisibility*, regarding foreignization as a translation method that is often used. He emphasized that translators need to dig out the uniqueness and differences of the source culture from the target culture. David Katan(2004) also held the similar views. He pointed out that “the words ‘culture’ and ‘translation’ are being increasingly linked. Questions regarding whether or not translations can account for culture, or to what extent culture is relevant are very much at the center of the debate”.

It can be seen that foreign and domestic scholars have a lot of researches on the translation of culture-loaded words, but there is little research on whether different translation strategies should be adopted for different types of culture-loaded words, which is also the focus of this thesis.

## **3. Functional Equivalence Theory**

Functional equivalence theory is the main theory of Eugene Nida, a famous American translation theorist. From the perspective of linguistics and communication, Nida proposed the famous functional equivalence theory based on the essence of translation, pointing out that the response of target language information recipients to information should be basically the same as that of source language information recipients to information. This kind of “sameness” can be realized by looking for translation equivalents between languages and cultures and reconstructing the form and semantic structure of the original text in appropriate ways. Nida emphasized that to achieve “equivalence”, equivalence of meaning must take precedence over equivalence of form. Therefore, the translator should not be limited to the semantic structure and language form of the original text, but from the perspective of the reader, make corresponding adjustments to the translated text, accurately convey the spirit of the original text. Nida's translation theory has had a far-reaching

impact on translation circles at home and abroad, and provided strategic guidance and thinking direction for translation.

#### **4. A Case Study on the Translation of Culture-loaded Words in *Translation Series of a Hundred JingJu Classics***

The thesis, based on Nida's functional equivalence theory, analyzes the translation of culture-loaded words in *Autumn River; Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao* and *SiLang Visits His Mother* three classic Peking Opera in *Translation Series of a Hundred JingJu Classics* and explores the translation strategies and rules of different types of culture-loaded words in Peking Opera.

##### **4.1. Features of Culture-loaded Words in Peking Opera**

First, the rhymes and jingles of Peking Opera are invaluable. The librettos of Peking Opera, except for some tunes such as Kunqiang, are mostly regular and tidy corresponding structures of upper and lower sentences. Each sentence can be divided into several small paragraphs, together with musical factors, thus forming a clear sense of hierarchy in singing. This has formed the changing characteristics of Peking Opera language sometimes being majestic, sometimes lingering.

Second, another distinctive feature of Peking Opera librettos is the extensive use of comparison techniques and allusions. For example, “dongbinbamudanxi, zhuangzixianshengsanxiqi, qiuhucengtiaoxiluoshinv, xuepingguitiaoxiwozijiqi”, there are three allusions in the four sentences. Since foreign audiences do not have a deep understanding of Chinese history and culture, how to translate these allusions is another problem.

Third, a large number of classical Chinese sentence patterns are used in Peking Opera. This makes it impossible for some Chinese audiences to fully understand the meaning without subtitles, let alone foreign audiences. Therefore, how to deal with some culture-loaded words in the form of classical Chinese in Peking Opera is also of great importance.

It should be noted that the meanings of allusions, poems and idioms in Peking Opera may be different from the meanings these expressions are often used in other literary works. Therefore, it is necessary to combine special context and content to understand the correct meanings and thus translate them.

##### **4.2. Translation Strategies of Culture-loaded Words in *Translation Series of a Hundred JingJu Classics***

Nida has been involved in the translation of the Bible for a long time. He believes that the main purpose of the translation of the Bible is to faithfully express the will of God and it is a serious and sacred matter, which has an invisible influence on his world outlook and his classification of cultural factors. In his world view, ecological culture contains all of nature, material culture is what people live in, social culture is the customs and habits formed by the things that people do at ordinary times, religious culture is sacred and great in the west, and is one of the main components of western culture, and the linguistic culture is the grammar, vocabulary, expression and so on in literature. Based on Nida in his article *Linguistics and Ethnology in Translation-Problems* divided culture into five categories, this thesis divides culture-loaded words into five categories as well.

###### **4.2.1. Translation Strategies of Ecological Culture-loaded Words**

To a certain extent, different geographical environments breed different cultures. Ecological culture-loaded words usually include words such as climate, landform, place names, organisms and

soils that human beings rely on for survival. China is a vast country, and a proper name may contain rich cultural connotations. For the translation of ecological culture-loaded words, due to the existence of cultural difference and cultural vacancy, the audience cannot directly understand the content and meaning of the original text, and therefore free translation and amplification are often adopted.

#### Example 1

ST: Jinjingsuowutong Changtankongsui, yizhenfeng[12](*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.162)

TT[1]: A parasol tree locked in a golden well A long sigh vainly follows a gust of wind “wutong” has many special meanings in Chinese culture, one of which is to symbolize “loneliness and solitariness”. When it comes to “wutong”, many Chinese people immediately think of the bleak autumn. “wutong” here conveys the protagonist Yang Yanhui’s loneliness in a foreign land accurately. However, actually this word has no special meaning in foreign countries at all, and literal translation will cause confusion for the audience. Therefore, translators should translate the word’s cultural image according to functional equivalence theory so that foreign audiences can better understand the feelings of the protagonist SiLang. Here free translation can be applied:

TT[2]: Autumn is coming and I feel lonely A long sigh vainly follows a gust of wind

#### Example 2

ST: Youzhaoyirichunleidong Dehuifengyunshangjiuchong[13](*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.86)

TT: But there will be one day for sure When I will achieve eminence In this example, Chinese “chunlei”, “jiuchong” have rich cultural connotations. “chunlei” literally means “spring thunder”, but actually refers to the advent of important opportunities and the rapid development of things. “chong” refers to “heaven” in Chinese and there are nine layers of heaven, so “jiuchong” refers to the top of the heaven, which is used by the protagonist to describe the height of fame, wealth and status. Therefore, from the perspective of functional equivalence, the original translation is desirable which uses the method of free translation.

#### Example 3

ST: Wenjunengyoujidouchou Qiasiyijiangchunshuixiangdongliu[14](*Autumn River*, p.68)

TT[1]: You may ask how much sorrow I have It is just like the spring river flowing eastward to the sea, This sentence comes from the famous Chinese poet Li Yu's *Yu Meiren*. The protagonist using Chinese “chunshui” as a metaphor for a belly full of hatred represents the endlessness of depression and the turmoil of thoughts. But foreign audiences do not understand how the eastward flow of a river is associated with sorrow and hatred, so according to functional equivalence theory, amplification can be adopted here which can express the mood of protagonist better and the translation should be like:

TT[2]: How much sorrow, pray, can a person carry? Like the spring torrent flowing eastward, without tarry!

#### Example 4

ST: Shiluofanbangshiwunian Yanguohengyanggeyitian(*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.162)

TT[1]: I've been stuck among the barbarian Liao for fifteen years Wild geese fly over Hengyang day after day “yan” has been a symbol of “wandering” in Chinese culture since ancient times, because geese are migratory birds. Every autumn, they fly from north to south and it is said that they stop at Huiyan Peak in “hengyang”, and flew back to the north in the following spring. This kind of regular and free flight is enviable for those who have no home or are homeless due to war and it also reflects the protagonist’s homesickness and sets the tone for the unfolding of the plot. However, foreign readers don’t know where “hengyang” is and the special meaning of “yan” in Chinese culture, so the sentence can be translated by the method of amplification as:

TT[2]: I've been stuck among the barbarian Liao for fifteen years, I really envy wild geese can fly back to their hometown

#### 4.2.2. Translation Strategies of Material Culture-loaded Words

Most of material culture-loaded words have no national boundaries, however, the uniqueness of material culture-loaded words still exists in Peking Opera, and most of them are the names of unique materials in China. Free translation and omission can be used for translating material culture-loaded words.

##### Example 5

ST: Erbianxiangyoutongdel**luanling**zhen Junshichexiabanmasheng(*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.202)

TT: I hear a horse-bell ringing Soldiers, set out the trip rope “luanling” refers to the bell on the carriage that the emperor rode in ancient times, which produces clear and melodious sound, indicating the identity of the emperor. In this example, “luanling” refers to the bells that are equipped on the warhorse or chariot, according to functional equivalence theory, free translation is adopted here so it is proper to translate “luanling” into “horse-bell”.

##### Example 6

ST: Daguojiu: gequ**dingdai** Erguojiu: fafengsanzai(*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.232)

TT[1]: The eldest Royal Uncle: Divest us of our official caps, The second Royal Uncle: Subject us to a fine of three years salary “guojiu” refers to the brothers of the empress dowager or empress in the feudal dynasty, that is, the emperor's mother's or wife's uncle, so we can translate it into “Royal Uncle”. “dingdai” can be understood as an official position in ancient China, and there is a well-known noun “wushamao” which has the same meaning with “dingdai” in Chinese. However, it is inappropriate for the original translation to be directly translated into “official caps” according to the thinking pattern of Chinese people, so according to Nida's functional equivalence theory, we can translate it like this:

TT[2]: The eldest Royal Uncle: Remove us from our posts, The second Royal Uncle: Minus three years of our salary

##### Example 7

ST: Tayaoduowozhu**jinxuolongting**(*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.202)

TT: He is eager to snatch our country “jinxu” is a term unique to China whose original meaning is exquisite and brightly colored silk fabric, and it is often used to describe beauty or beautiful things. The protagonist here used the term “jinxu” to describe the imperial court, expressing his love and loyalty to the country. “long” is the totem of China and Chinese people often call themselves “descendants of the Dragon” and “long” also represents the emperor in ancient China. It would be very verbose to explain all the meanings of these words, so the original text adopts the translation method of omission.

##### Example 8

ST: Xiangfumenqianshaqigao, Cengcengmimibaid**daoqiang**, Huagediaoliangshuangfengrao, Yasit**ianzijiulong**chao (*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.88)

TT[1]: Standing before the Prime Ministerial residence door I sense the aura of death, The place is stacked with layers of weapons, Carved phoenixes curve around the brightly painted pavilion beams, As though it were the nine-dragon court of the royal palace, This example of the original is full of distinctive Chinese images and expressions, and while translating them, translator needs to strike a balance between making sense and conveying distinctive Chinese culture. “daoqiang” is a word with obvious Chinese cultural connotation. Here, “qiang” cannot be translated into “gun” or “pistol”, but refers to “spear” in ancient China. Moreover, it is difficult to prove which kind of “dao” refers to. The term “jiulong” actually often represents the imperial power and the emperor,

which is repetitive to “tainzi”, so it is preferable to omit it, because “the nine-dragon court of the royal palace” is a little weird and confusing for the readers. If we study these details too deeply, the translation will try to save a little but lose a lot. Therefore, according to the functional equivalence theory, we can adopt free translation and omission in this sentence and the translation can be changed to:

TT[2]: Here I am Prime Ministerial residence inspires me with awe, Carved phoenixes curve around the brightly painted pavilion beams, It is like the Court of the Emperor himself.

#### 4.2.3. Translation Strategies of Social Culture-loaded Words

Different societies have different historical accumulations and cultural customs. The change of each dynasty in Chinese history was accompanied by a series of changes in the general rules of culture, such as changes in the titles of officials at different levels. Social culture also includes the history, legends, and allusions praised by the people during the process of social development. Social culture penetrates into all aspects of life, and some seemingly ordinary words or names have profound connotations and meanings. In order to enable readers to understand the meaning of these specific social culture, and get the best reading experience, the translation method of free translation and annotation are usually adopted.

Example 9

ST: Taziyouer **juxiaolian** guanbeizhixiao (*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.120)

TT: When he was young for his filial behavior he was appointed as a petty official “juxiaolian” is a system in the Han Dynasty in which talents are selected as officials from the bottom up, and filial piety was one of the main subjects of the inspection system. The qualifications of the candidates were mostly state officials or Confucian scholars who were proficient in scriptures. After “juxiaolian”, one has a bright future and a quick promotion in officialdom and officials born in “xiaolian” are considered to be righteous and clear, and are valued very much. Since “juxiaolian” is unique to ancient China, free translation is adopted here to let foreign readers understand its meaning directly.

Example 10

ST: Shebudeerxianmeiweichu **guimen**wai (*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.232)

TT: I cannot bear to leave my two unmarried good sisters “guimen” refers to the door of the palace garden and the inner room, and it also refers to the palace and family. Besides, “guimen” refers to the place where women live as well, and it has the same meaning with women and wives. Therefore the meaning of “weichuguimen” can be referred to a woman who is not yet married, and we can translate it as “unmarried good sisters” according to Nida’s functional equivalence theory like the last example.

Example 11

ST: RenyancCaocaoduojianqiao Guoranyasi **QinZhaogao** (*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.90)

TT[1]: People say Cao Cao is a scoundrel And, sure enough, he is as bad as Zhao Gao of Qin dynasty Here in this example, “QinZhaogao” indeed refers to the historical figure Zhao Gao, a eunuch of the Qin dynasty of China. Since “eunuch” was unique in ancient China, and there was no similar figure corresponding to Zhao Gao in foreign countries. Therefore, according to functional equivalence theory, translators can use the method of annotation to achieve functional equivalence for the translation of some allusions. And we can add the translator’s note to explain who Zhao Gao was and make Cao Cao’s image more vivid, as a treacherous official. If time and space allow, such annotation is very helpful for the readers to better understand and know more about the context and the personality of Cao Cao, which is quite recommended. Therefore, it can be translated as:

TT[2]: People say Cao Cao is a scoundrel And, sure enough, he is as bad as Zhao Gao\*of Qin dynasty\*Translator’s Note: A eunuch in the service of the First Emperor of China and a byword for duplicity.

Example 12

ST: Xiri**Taigong**cengchuidiao **Zhangliang**jinlvzaiyiqiao(*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.106)

TT[1]: Long ago the old Jiang Shang had been a fisherman before being appointed as the Prime Minister And Zhang Liang on Yi Bridge humbly held the shoes for Master Huangshi to put on.

There is an allusion to two important Chinese historical figures, namely Jiang Ziya and Zhang Liang, and their respective stories. In this version, the translation in this part as a whole is acceptable, but to be more specific, the readers may be confused about who Zhang Liang was and what Master Huangshi did. For historical allusions, generally speaking, it will be more appropriate and considerate to add certain related explanations for the readers to further comprehend the hidden meaning and purposes. The explanations can be distributed either inside if space allows, or outside the text. Just like the last example, we can add translator’s note as follows:

Translators’ Note 1: Chiang Tzu-ya, or Lu Shang, 11th and 12th century B.C. Wen Wang discovered him fishing with a straight piece of iron instead of a hook (upon which the fishes willingly impaled themselves), and appointed him his chief counsellor. Chiang was eighty years old at the time.

Translators’ Note 2: Zhang Liang, died 187 B.C. After his plot to kill the First Emperor of Ch’in failed he met an old man called Huang Shi who had dropped his shoe over a bridge. As he went to fetch it the old man presented him with a book on military tactics, saying: “Read this and you will become the teacher of princes.” He subsequently became counsellor to the first emperor of the Han dynasty.

#### 4.2.4. Translation Strategies of Religious Culture-loaded Words

Religious culture is an ideology formed by a nation in its long history. Due to the complexity and sensitivity of religion itself, we do not have to explain the religious meaning contained in the original text to the audience when translating, but free translation and substitution can be adopted.

Example 13

ST: Tainwendilizhishu, wushubudu **Sanjiaojiuliuzhishi**, wusuobuxiao(*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.94)

TT[1]: I’ve read books in all the disciplines, including astronomy and geography I am well versed in the three religions and the nine schools of thought “sanjiaojiuliu” used to refer to various schools of religion or academics, and also generally referred to people from all walks of life in society. People in ancient times classified the various occupations they were engaged in, and believed that occupations were divided into high and low, and different classes had their own occupational norms, thus ensuring social stability. “sanjiao” refers to the three major religions: Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism in China. The so-called “jiuliu” actually refers to the “upper, middle and lower” third class. Among the three religions, each religion has three classes of people, so naturally people are divided into nine classes in total. Later, the concept of “sanjiaojiuliu” was generalized, and it was also a common name for various religious categories and academic schools. However, foreign audiences do not fully understand China’s religious culture, and religious issues are very sensitive which should not be an obstacle to the dissemination of Peking Opera. Therefore, we do not need to pay too much attention to the meaning of religious words when translating, for example, according to functional equivalence theory, this sentence can be freely translated as:

TT[2]: I’ve read books in all the disciplines, including astronomy and geography I am well versed in all kinds of thoughts, including elegant and vulgar ones

Example 14

ST: Muzimengongweineiziyi**huangquan**(*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.196)

TT: Your wife and your son will hang themselves in the palace “huangquan” in Chinese culture, refers to the place where one lives after death. Chinese ancient thought “tiandixuanhuang”, means that the sky is red and ground is yellow, and we all know that “quan” is underground, so it is called “huangquan”. If you want to explain to foreigners why the sky is red and the ground is yellow, it is difficult to explain clearly, so here the translator directly let the foreign readers know the meaning of the sentence.

Example 15

ST: Bengongdexinshidaoyoumanshuogongzhu, jiushin**adaluoshenxian**, nanyicaitou (*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.168)

TT: Princess, I do have something on my mind but neither you, Nor even a god could guess why I am troubled “daluoshenxian” is a Taoist term. It can be said that “dalu” is the highest pursuit of Taoist believers, that is, to rise to the highest “daluotian” in the “sanshiliutian” of Taoism. This is the origin of “daluoshenxian”, “dalu”, in which “da” means “broad”, which means immeasurable. “luo” means “net”, which means inclusive. Daluo is to be tolerant of all beings, which means that all space is eternal and free. “daluoshenxian” refers to the immortal who transcends all time and space and is eternal and free. However, it is too cumbersome to explain this concept to foreign audiences, so it is better to use “god” instead to achieve functional equivalence.

Example 16

ST: Loucheng**huangtianzaishang** Fanbangnvzizaixia(*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.176)

TT[1]: Addressing the Emperor in Heaven Saying, here am I, a woman from the northern tribes “huangtianzaishang” is often said by ancient Chinese people in swearing, which has relations with the political system and religion. In ancient China, the ruler of the country was called “huangdi”, also known as “tianzi”, meaning that “huangdi” was “the son of heaven”, and people were expected to submit to him. Therefore, in ancient times, “huang” was always associated with “tian” and had a supreme position in the hearts of the people. But foreign readers may not understand it, so we can translate it by substitution:

TT[2]: Saying, in Heaven's name here am I, a woman from the northern tribes.

#### 4.2.5. Translation Strategies of Linguistic Culture-loaded Words

Chinese and English belong to two different language families. Chinese belongs to Sino-Tibetan language family, while English belongs to Indo-European language family. Some relatively fixed expressions formed during the development of their language, when these expressions become a kind of information, become part of the culture. Language and culture-loaded words refer to expressions with relatively stable structures accumulated over a long period of time in the development of language, such as four-character idioms and common sayings. These words usually have their own connotations, which are difficult for Western readers to understand. This makes it difficult for us to achieve complete equivalence of language form and content when translating. Therefore, when translating culture-loaded words, Nida's functional equivalence theory can be applied and the most important translation method is free translation, followed by substitution.

Example 17

ST: Xiangzhehuanggongneiyuan                      meijingfeichang                      **Naqinlouchuguan**  
yannengshengdeguozhehuanggongneiyuanme (*SiLang Visits His Mother*, p.172).

TT: The imperial palace plenty of beautiful women Those brothels, how could they be better than here in the palace? “qinlouchuguan” is a Chinese idiom that generally refers to singing and dancing venues, mostly brothels. During the Spring and Autumn Period, NongYu, the daughter of King of Mu of the Kingdom of Qin, was very good at flute. King of Mu built a “fenglou”, also called

“qinlou”, for her, where NongYu played the flute for fun. King of Ling of the Kingdom of Chu was particularly lecherous, so he built “zhanghuagong” and chose the most beautiful women in the country to live there for his entertainment. Later generations called “zhanghuagong” the “chuguan”. Here, “qinlouchuguan” is more beautiful than the imperial palace, not only referring to the scenery, but also to the beautiful women. The translator adopted the method of free translation according to the functional equivalence theory, which is more appropriate.

#### Example 18

ST: Nanerruode**qingtianshou** Zirantanxiaomifenghou(*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.84)

TT: If a man is wise and strong enough As naturally as chatting and laughing he can obtain highest position In this example, the Chinese word “qing” is a verb, meaning “to prop up; to hold up”. So “qingtianshou” literally means the hands that are able to hold up heaven. It can be used as a metaphor to describe “huge power”, or “a person who is powerful and can take the world's great responsibility”. In addition, originally, the expression “fenghou” signified “to confer a title of marquis on somebody”, but later on, it has more often been used to refer to “receiving a high position” or “becoming a high official”. If we translate it into “a king or a marquis”, it is a bit too absolute and logically irrational, so here free translation is adopted. This means that to have an accurate translation calls for a good understanding of the original text, which requires certain background knowledge and the original translation does well in it.

#### Example 19

ST: Wobenshitangtangqingshibiao Qiyu**quanma**gongtongcao(*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.96)

TT[1]: As a dignified paragon of history How can I lower myself to eating with dogs and horses  
Animals and plants are also counted as ecological culture-load words. In this example, “quanma” is the core of the translation. Due to the difference in the meaning of dog in Eastern and Western cultures, many words and phrases about dogs in Chinese and English have very different meanings. A lot of words about dogs in Chinese have derogatory meanings, such as “hupengouyou”, “goujitiaoqiang”, “tusigoupeng” and so on. In Western culture, dogs are loyal friends of human beings, so people mostly praise dogs, and they are used to describe people, such as “lucky dog”. Therefore, it is obviously inappropriate to use a literal translation method here. What's more, We know that in English “beast” not only means wild animals, but also only morally corrupt people, so the method of substitution can be applied here:

TT[2]: As a dignified paragon of history How can I lower myself to eating with beasts!

#### Example 20

ST: Xiuneijiguantazenxiao **Shajiyanyongzainiudao** (*Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, p.198)

TT[1]: He has no way of knowing that I have a secret plan Killing a chicken one doesn't use the same knife as for butchering an ox “Shajiyanyongzainiudao” is a Chinese saying, which is actually used to describe taking too much effort to complete a simple job and there are similar expressions in English. On the basis of the functional equivalence theory, we directly replace them with expressions that are more familiar to the target language audience:

TT[2]: He has no way of knowing that I have a secret plan I won't break a butterfly on a wheel

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis discusses the translation strategies of culture-loaded words in *Autumn River*, *Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao*, *SiLang Visits His Mother* three classic Peking Opera from the functional equivalence theory, and the following results are obtained.

Firstly, the thesis finds that Nida's functional equivalence theory has a strong guidance for English translation of culture-loaded words in Chinese Peking Opera. His analysis of the relationship between language and culture plays a foundation role in the translatability of culture-loaded words in Peking Opera. Culture-loaded words are unique expressions in one culture but unfamiliar to another. Therefore, translating culture-loaded words is a difficult task for translators. Nida believes that anything that can be said in one culture can be expressed in another, because the core structures of different languages are very similar. This serves a basic principle in translation of culture-loaded words. The priority of translation is to reproduce the source language, which means to be faithful to the source text. Functional equivalence theory's analysis of grammatical meaning and semantics provides practical standards for translators to measure the fidelity of translations. Nida focuses on evaluating the equivalence of the source language and the target language. The main points of functional equivalence theory, for example, the minimum and maximum levels of equivalence, closeness, naturalness and fitting the receptors context provide feasibility for translators to evaluate the readability of translated works.

Secondly, this thesis finds that we need to adopt different translation methods for different kinds of culture-loaded words. After analysis, there are five main translation strategies for culture-loaded words in Peking Opera: free translation, amplification, annotation, omission, and substitution. Free translation and amplification are commonly used in the translation of ecological culture-loaded words; when translating material culture-loaded words, free translation and omission are often used; when translating social culture-loaded words, free translation and annotation are applied; free translation and substitution are often used in translating religious culture-loaded words; when translating linguistic culture-loaded words, free translation and substitution are better to choice. And it can be seen that free translation is the most commonly used method for translating culture-loaded words, followed by substitution. In some special cases, amplification, annotation and omission are also feasible. According to the language environment of the librettos and the characteristics of the culture-loaded words themselves, the translator should flexibly choose different translation strategies to achieve functional equivalence, so that the foreign audience can fully understand the meaning of the script and feel the charm of traditional Chinese culture to a certain extent.

However, translation studies of culture-loaded words in Peking Opera texts need more attention, especially those scholars who can sing Peking Opera, which will be of great help to translation practice. Although this thesis attempts to study the translation of culture-loaded words in Peking Opera, there is still much room for improvement. Due to time and space constraints, the dissertation has not been fully developed, and the translation methods of culture-loaded words in other text types have not been studied in depth, while the comparison between different translation methods of Peking Opera texts and other literary texts is of crucial importance.

## References

- [1] Shao Jingfen (1986) *Study on the English Translation of Peking Opera The Phoenix Returns to Its Nest*. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 6, 42-44+6.
- [2] Mao Fasheng (2002) *Translation and Methods of Peking Opera Terminology*. *JOURNAL OF BEIJING INTERNATIONAL STUDIES UNIVERSITY*, 5, 24-26+35.
- [3] Zhao Hui (2008) *Study on the Context and Translation of Peking Opera*. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 23, 114-115.
- [4] Zhang Linlin (2013) *Study on Domestication and Foreignization of Cultural Translation from the English Translation of Peking Opera Terms*. *Shanghai Journal of Translators*, 4, 41-43.
- [5] Cui Xiangwei (2015) *Study on the English Translation of Peking Opera Librettos -- A Case Study of Translation Series of a Hundred Jingju Classics: The Great Enthronement*. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 2, 86-89.
- [6] Yao Wei (2020) *The Early Western Biography of Peking Opera -- A Case Study of The Yellow Crane Tower Translated by Stent*. *ZHONGHUAXIQU*, 2, 315-329.

- [7] Chao, Rulan Pian (1987) *Western Research on Peking Opera. Proceedings of International Academic Discussion on Chinese Opera Art*, 4, 72-87.
- [8] Xu Guozhang (1980) *CULTURALLY LOADED WORDS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING. Modern Foreign Languages*, 4, 21-27.
- [9] Liao Qiyi (2000) *Contemporary Western Translation Theories. Yilin Publishing House*, 203.
- [10] Wang Yinquan (2006) *Translation of "Fuwa" and Strategies of Culture-loaded Words from Chinese to English. Chinese Translators Journal*, 3, 74-76.
- [11] Meng Xiangchun (2011) *The English Translation of "Luohun" and "Luoguan" -- Study on the Translation Strategies of Culture-loaded Words. Shanghai Journal of Translators*, 4, 62-64.
- [12] Sun Ping (2016) *Translation Series of a Hundred Jingju Classics: SiLang Visits His Mother. China Renmin Unniversity Press*, 162-259.
- [13] Sun Ping (2016) *Translation Series of a Hundred Jingju Classics: Beating the Drum and cursing Prime Minister Cao. China Renmin Unniversity Press*, 84-127.
- [14] Sun Ping (2012) *Translation Series of a Hundred Jingju Classics: Autumn River. China Renmin Unniversity Press*, 38-75.