

Translation of Culture-loaded Words in *The Golden Cangue* under the Perspective of Reception Aesthetics

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Good translations play a very important role in cultural exchange. The idea of reception aesthetics think the reader as the center in translation process. This paper will study the translation of culture-loaded words from the perspective of reception aesthetics. It is divided into five parts. The first part mainly introduces the background and theoretical foundation of this paper, the second part introduces the writer's works, the third part gives examples to analyze the culture-loaded words appearing in *The Golden Cangue*, the fourth part gives examples of the translation methods, and the fifth part is the conclusion. It aims to provide a reference for the English translation of culture-loaded words.

Keywords: Culture-loaded words, Reception Aesthetic, *The Golden Cangue*, Eileen Chang

1. Introduction

With the increasing research of Chinese to English translation, translators should pay more attention to culture-loaded words. In recent years, translation research on them has been increasing, Eileen Chang, as a famous writer, her works give us a general understanding of the life in Shanghai decades of years ago. There have been many researches on the literary influence of her works, however, there are a few researches on her self-translated works. Combined with the categorization of culture-loaded words, this study will be guided by the theory of reception aesthetics to study the English translation of culture-loaded words in *The Golden Cangue*. It aims to provide a reference for the translation for related works.

1.1 Theoretical Foundation

Culture-loaded words have always been the focus of research when studying traditional novels, and the proposal of reception aesthetics provides an effective theoretical basis for the study of culture-loaded words.

1.2 Reception Aesthetics

Reception aesthetics as a critical theory has made a significant impact on Western literature. The study of reception aesthetics focuses on the reader, who occupies a key position in the reading process. The target reader's receptive ability plays a very important role in the reading process. Therefore, in the theory of reception aesthetics, it is necessary to ensure that a good interaction between the work and the author. In the creative process, the reader should be taken as the foothold in the creation of literary works.

The main viewpoints of reception aesthetics include “expectation horizon” and “reader-centeredness”. The “expectation horizon” refers to the reading effect that readers hope to achieve when they read an article (Fang, 2004). The “reader-centeredness” emphasizes that the reader does not passively accept the content of the text, but automatically understand the text in mind. Readers also take part in literary creation. Due to the different levels of education, countries and social environments, the readers’ understanding of literary works vary greatly.

Translator plays a dual role in the translation process, he is the receiver of source language and the creator of target language (Yi, 2023). That is to say, when translating, it is necessary to fully understand what the original language expresses, and at the same time, it is also necessary to take into account the knowledge and cultural level of the target language readers as well as the cultural environment. In other words, the target language readers should be put in the center, so that the translation can be more compatible with the cognitive habits of the target language readers.

1.3 Culture-loaded Words

Culture-loaded words are produced because different cultures have their own geographical environment, social system, religious believes. Culture-loaded words reflect different cultural characteristics and ways of thinking. According to Liao Qiyi (2000) words, “culture-loaded words” not only refer to specific things in a particular culture, but also include idioms and allusions. Culture-loaded words reflect the unique way of life for every culture. In addition, he also mentioned that “culture-loaded words are terms or phrases that express the specific situations and things of a certain culture” (Liao, 2000).

In 1945, Nida systematically described culture as (1) ecological culture; (2) material culture; (3) social culture; and (4) religious culture (Nida, 1945). In short, there are many cultural categories. Culture-loaded vocabularies can thus be categorized into ecological, material, social, religious and cultural vocabularies. This paper will study the translation of culture-loaded words in the English version of Chang’s novel *The Golden Cangue* based on Nida’s categorization of culture-loaded words under the guidance of reception aesthetics.

2. Introduction to Writer’s Works

Chang’s main achievement lies in literary creation, she also did well in the translation of foreign works. In the 1940s, Chang’s novels *Love in a Fallen City* and *Red Rose and White Rose* made a great success. Her novels focused on depicting the daily life of ordinary people. What makes her novels unique is her deep understanding of women’s life. In the 1940s, she did not follow the mainstream, but focused on “marriage, love and family”.

Written in 1943, *The Golden Cangue* was one of Chang’s works. In 1955, she traveled to the U.S. to rewrite the English version of it. The earliest English version, *The Pink Tears*, was rejected by its publisher in 1956. In 1967, another version of this novel, *The Rouge of the North* finally came out, but the response from foreign readers was relatively lukewarm. (You, 2011)

In literary translation, readers will use their knowledge and their life experiences to understand the novel. *The Golden Cangue* almost entirely adopts direct translation method, which makes it difficult for Western readers to read it. As a result, it is unlikely that English version of *The Golden Cangue* will surpass the Chinese version or elicit the same strong response from Western readers.

3. Culture-Loaded Words in *The Golden Cangue*

3.1 Ecological Culture-Loaded Words

Ecological culture-loaded words refer to the environment with geographical characteristics. It includes natural factors such as climate, mountains, lakes, minerals, animal and plant resources. Therefore, *The Golden Cangue* shows the ecological and cultural features of China, so that the readers of the target language can have a better understanding of Chinese culture. A simple example of an ecological culture-loaded is showed below.

Example (1) 小心你那水葱似的指甲。

Be careful of those nails of yours, as slender as scallions.

In Example (1), the nails are compared to scallions. Traditional Chinese culture often uses scallions as a metaphor for fingers or nails, emphasizing that the skin is white. In translating this sentence, the translator has retained the traditional image of the scallion. By doing so, the translator can give the reader a better understanding of this Chinese word.

3.2 Religious Culture-Loaded Words

Religion is an ideology formed by countries in the course of social development, which can be said to be their unique perception and interpretation of birth and reproduction. It is an undeniable fact that it has a decisive influence on the language of human beings, and the different religions will slowly form their own unique cultures. The example is showed below:

Example (2) 长馨想着送佛送到西天,自己再热心些,也没有资格出来向长安的母亲说话,只得殃及兰仙。

Ch'ang-hsing thought she should finish her good deed, but, however enthusiastic, she was not qualified to speak to Ch'ang-an's mother.

In this sentence, “送佛送到西” is a sentence that contains religious culture-loaded words. The Buddha comes from the traditional Chinese religion. Buddhism has a long history in China. In Chinese mind, the Buddha often symbolizes goodness and enlightened character, and words related to Buddhism are often associated with positive images. Buddhism is less well known in the West. The use of free translation can reduce the difficulty of understanding the meaning of the text due to religious and cultural differences.

3.3 Material Culture-loaded Words

Material culture-loaded words refer to the material products created by human beings in the process of social and historical development. They include food, tools, buildings, etc. The material products of each ethnic group also show a unique material culture. The following is a simple example of the vocabulary of material culture in *The Golden Cangue*.

Example (3) 叫人去拿金指甲套子去。

Have somebody go and get your golden nail sheath.

In traditional Chinese culture, the nail sheath shows a person's social status. Every culture has specific things that represent social status. When translating this sentence, the translator kept the image of nail sheath and did not explain too much. In this way, readers can feel the specificity of the culture of the original text.

3.4 Social Culture-loaded Words

Social culture-loaded words gradually appear in the process of social development. It includes units of measurement, historical background, literary works and other aspects. Social culture is the core of all cultures. When translating social culture-loaded words, the translator should firstly familiarize himself with the culture and adopt appropriate translation methods to convey the cultural meaning in the most appropriate way. There is a simple example of social culture-loaded words in the book.

Example (4) 月光照在姜府新娶的三奶奶的陪嫁丫头凤箫枕边。

The moonlight reached the side of Feng-hsiao pillow. She was a slave girl brought by the bride, the new Third Mistress of the Chiangs.

The “奶奶” in this sentence refers to the legal wife of a noble family, who has the highest status in the family. The “奶奶” is usually the head of the younger generation, while the “夫人” is usually the senior matriarch of the family. Since there is no corresponding character or social relationship in English, the translation method is used here to convey the cultural meaning in the most appropriate way.

3.5 Language Culture-loaded Words

Language is a medium of communication in social life. Language culture-loaded words include phrases that have developed over a long period of time. Each country has its own language, which can reflect its unique cultural heritage. Therefore, language is part of culture. The following is a simple example of a culture-loaded word in the book.

Example (5) 龙生龙，凤生凤。

Dragon raises dragon, Phoenix raises Phoenix-as the saying goes.

The complete expression of this sentence is “龙生龙，凤生凤，老鼠儿子打地洞”. In traditional Chinese culture, this saying explains that children are like their parents in an easy-to-understand way. Therefore, when translating this saying, the translator has kept the image of the dragon and the phoenix and the original sentence structure, so that the English version of this saying contains Chinese characteristics.

4. Methods of Translating Culture-loaded Words

4.1 Direct Translation

Direct translation means translate exactly according to the original word order and keep the meaning of the original words. Direct translation retains the characteristics of the original text to the maximum extent. Let the readers feel different cultural characteristics, but over-emphasizing the formal equivalence between the original text and the translated text may make the reader cannot accurately understand the original text. The example is showed below.

Example (6) 七巧听了,心头火起,喃喃骂道。

Fire leaped up inside Ch'i-ch'iao as she heard it.

In Chinese culture, fire in the heart symbolizes anger. The translator uses a direct translation here, but it is difficult to find the same expression in English. In English, emotional phrases related to fire include “be on fire for”, “be full of fire”, etc. However, the word “fire” in these phrases means that someone is in a good mood. If the translator uses direct translation here, readers may think that he is trying to describe a satisfied person, so it is not appropriate to use direct translation here.

4.2 Free Translation

Free translation can make the target language readers better understand the meaning of the original text. However, there are also some disadvantages, for example, it will weaken the characteristics of the original language, so that the target language readers can not have a better understanding of the culture of the source language, and can not achieve the desired effect of cultural exchange.

Example (7) 七巧觉得自己话里有刺,正待反唇相讥,小双走了进来,鬼鬼祟祟地走到七巧面前,唉声叹气地说:“姥姥来了。”

Ch'i-ch'iao felt the sting and was just about to reply in kind when Little Shuang came in furtively and walked up to her, mumbling, " Mistress," Mistress. mumbling, " Mistress, Master-in-law is here."

Due to the differences between the two languages, free translations are widely used to explain the meaning of four-letter words. Due to differences in religious beliefs, Chinese ghosts can be viewed as the spirits of revered ancestors or as evil creatures that haunt the living. In Western culture, however, the word “鬼” refers primarily to demons. In this traditional four-letter word, “鬼” and “祟” refer to what the ancients imagined to be spirits. In this sentence, it represents a person who walks quietly and does not want others to notice him.

4.3 Phonetic Translation

Phonetic translation is to keep the voice of the source language in the translation, which can keep the original flavor to the greatest extent. However, there are many disadvantages of doing so. Due to the lack of understanding of the culture of the source language, the readers may have obstacles in understanding, which does not reflect the concept of reader-centered translation.

Example (8) 小心吵醒了姑爷。

Be careful you don't wake up Ku-yeh.

In Chinese, “姑爷” refers to the bride's husband, which is correspondingly expressed as “Ku-yeh” in English. In the transliteration, “姑爷” is translated as “Ku-yeh” using the Wechsler Romanization. Although “Ku-yeh” contains the mystery and complexity of Chinese culture, it seems that the relationship between “Ku-yeh” and Ch'i-ch'iao cannot be realized by the target text readers because “Ku-yeh” is an essential character in the development of the story. Therefore, “姑爷” here can be translated as “son-in-law”.

5. Conclusion

There are numerous culture-loaded words in *The Golden Cangue*, and Eileen Chang has adopted direct translation, free translation and many other translation methods. In some of these translations, the meaning of the original text can be accurately conveyed, while others are not. Through the above examples, it is easy to realize that free translation is widely used in translating culture-loaded words because of the cultural connotation it conveys. In addition to free translation, direct translation is also used to convey the meaning of the original language as much as possible, while retaining the characteristics of the original language.

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