

An Exploration of English Translation Strategies for Classical Chinese Poetry from the Perspective of Frame Theory: A Case Study of Classical Chinese Poetry Written by Mongolian Poets in Guangxu and Xuantong Periods of Late Qing Dynasty

Suting Wu, Jinyu Liu*

College of Foreign Language, Inner Mongolia University, Hohhot, China

Email: *jinyuliu2008@163.com

How to cite this paper: Wu, S. T., & Liu, J. Y. (2025). An Exploration of English Translation Strategies for Classical Chinese Poetry from the Perspective of Frame Theory: A Case Study of Classical Chinese Poetry Written by Mongolian Poets in Guangxu and Xuantong Periods of Late Qing Dynasty. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 13, 403-422.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2025.135023>

Received: April 16, 2025

Accepted: May 24, 2025

Published: May 27, 2025

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This paper explores the translation of classical Chinese poetry written by Mongolian poets during the Qing Dynasty, focusing on the application of Frame Theory to address translation challenges. The study examines the cultural and non-cultural imagery in these poems, highlighting specific translation methods such as frame hierarchy adjustment, frame component replacement, and frame transplant. The paper also addresses the translation of metaphors and metonymies, emphasizing strategies for preserving the original concepts through changes in frame relations. Additionally, the paper discusses techniques for maintaining the visual beauty and emotional depth of the poems, utilizing various frame operations, including frame perspective shifts and component adjustments. From the frame-based perspective, cultural differences in poetry translation come from the divergence between the frames activated in the minds of the source and target readers. Compared to other approaches to classical Chinese poetry translation, Frame Theory offers greater flexibility and often results in translations that are more culturally adaptive.

Keywords

A Study of Classical Chinese Poetry by Mongolian Writers in Ancient China, Translation of Classical Chinese Poetry Written by Mongolian Poets, Frame Operations, Cultural Imagery, Metaphors and Metonymies

*Corresponding author.

1. Introduction

During the Qing Dynasty, the fusion of ethnic cultures was a significant feature of the era. Mongolian writers flourished in the field of Chinese literary creation, and many scholars emerged from Mongolian literary families, who were well-versed in writing. The genres of Chinese literary works produced by Mongolian literary families in the Qing Dynasty were diverse, with poetry being the most prominent, followed by prose. These Chinese writings reflected various aspects of Mongolian history, culture, religion, and customs during the Qing period (Liu, 2022: p. 100). Meanwhile, the imperial examination system provided the necessary conditions for the cultural elites of all ethnic groups, clarified their path toward official positions, and laid the foundation for the development of a shared national consciousness. In this context, the classical poetry written by Mongolian writers in the Qing Dynasty should not be regarded merely as literary texts, but rather as a unique cross-ethnic cultural phenomenon and literary legacy. These works carry profound marks of cultural exchange and preserve a vivid cultural space and literary scene (Ma, 2021: p. 144). The classical poetry written by Mongolian of this period also provides important reference material for the study of ethnic cultural exchange history.

The poems mentioned in this paper selected *Study of Chinese Classical Poetry Written by Mongolian Poets* as the source text. According to the book, we have learned that the development of ancient Mongolian poetry in China spans over 700 years, with nearly 150 poets contributing more than 10,000 poems.

2. Frame Theory

This chapter provides a brief introduction to frame theory, covering its development, Professor Xiao Kairong's further application of frame theory in the context of classical Chinese poetry translation, and the frame operations in the translation process.

2.1. The Development of Frame Theory

In the 1930s, psychologist Frederic Bartlett proposed the schema model of concepts through experimental research on memory, suggesting that Schema refers to an active organization of past reactions, or past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response (Barlett, 1932: p. 201).

Fillmore introduces the notion of frame into the linguistics field and puts forward frame theory. Fillmore defines a frame as a schema of concepts or terms interconnected as a system, imposing structure or coherence on certain aspects of human experience (Fillmore, 1975: p. 123). According to him, certain scenes with certain linguistic frames have a close relationship in people's minds. Frames are interconnected in memory through shared linguistic material, while scenes are linked through similarities in entities or relationships. Fillmore explained complex phenomena in language, establishing a more dynamic and context-sensitive

model of language understanding, and provided new perspectives for research in natural language processing and semantics. Based on the framework theory's perspective on the representation of human experience and knowledge systems, linguistic researchers have conducted studies in various fields, including cognitive semantics, cognitive grammar, discourse and discourse analysis, natural language processing, and language acquisition. From his perspective, he uses the concept of "frame" as a broad term intended to encompass several related concepts mentioned in the literature on natural language understanding, including schema, script, scenario, ideational scaffolding, and folk theory, among others (Fillmore, 1982).

With the development of frame theory, it was applied to translation teaching in the 1980s. In the handling of cultural elements in translation, Rojo draws on Fillmore's frame theory and identifies five types of frames that involve cultural factors: visual frames, situational frames, text-type frames, social frames, and 'institutional' frames (Rojo, 2002). The categorization of frame types helps us understand the application value of frames in the translation of cultural elements. With the deepening of these studies, the application value of frame semantics theory in translation research has become increasingly evident. Building on previous research and reflections, Xiao Kairong further developed frame theory by integrating insights from cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, and artificial intelligence studies related to frames. This thesis adopts Xiao Kairong's frame theory to address the challenges in translating classical Chinese poems by Qing Dynasty Mongolian poets.

2.2. Frame Theory Developed by Xiao Kairong

Professor Xiao defines the frame as follows: "A frame is a schematic representation of human experience at the conceptual level, reflecting the structure of a knowledge system. It is composed of components and relationships and is related to the entities of specific cultural scenes in human experience. Frame components, frames, and frame systems form a three-dimensional structure, exhibit prototype effects, follow cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor and metonymy, and possess cultural and dynamic qualities. Frames are gradually acquired during the process of human socialization" (Xiao, 2012: p. 45).

According to Professor Xiao Kairong's classification, frame operations can be divided into two main types: idealized frame operations and non-idealized frame operations. Non-idealized frame operations encompass six major aspects. The classification can be seen in **Figure 1**.

To begin with, intra-frame operations include replacement of frame components, addition or deletion of frame components, and change of frame relationships. When the overall frames in the source and target languages correspond but there are differences in frame components, the translator can achieve the transformation from the source language to the target language by replacing, adding, or deleting specific frame components. When the frames activated by the source

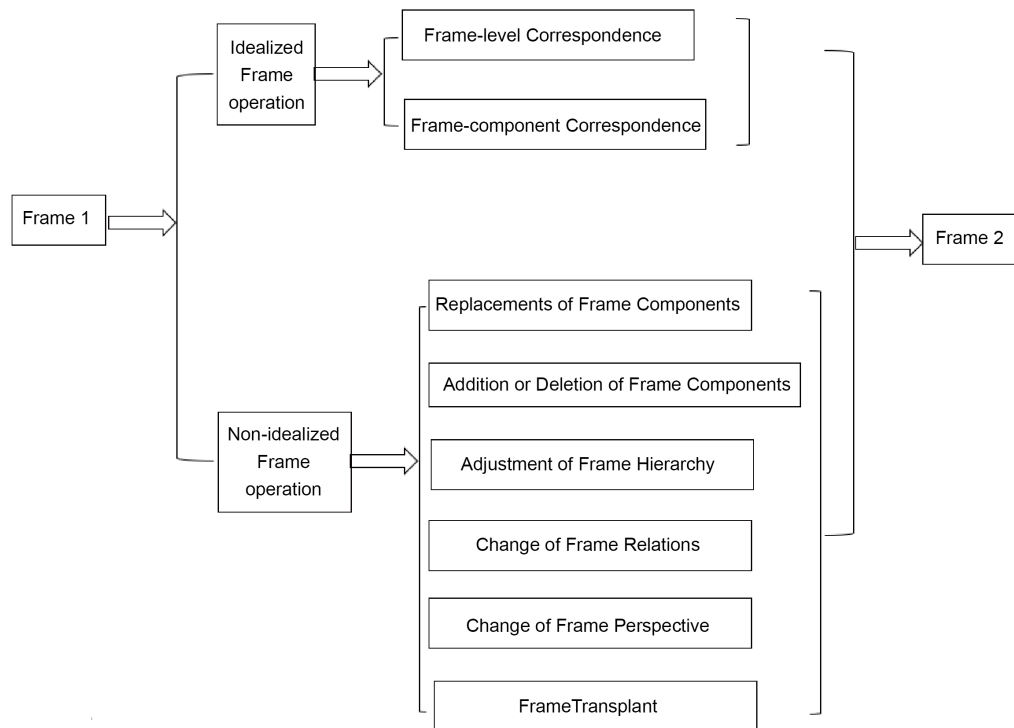


Figure 1. Frame operation in translation (translated Xiao, 2012: p. 66).

text differ in the relative status of components compared to those in the target culture, the core components of the source frame, which occupy a central position, may be marginal or absent in the target culture. In such cases, the translator must modify the frame relationships. Additionally, adjustments or substitutions in the metonymic or metaphorical relationships within a frame also fall under the category of change of frame relationships.

One of the fundamental properties of the frame—its hierarchical nature—determines that during the translation process, the translator can adjust the frame hierarchy to resolve cultural conflicts and achieve cross-cultural correspondence. A frame consists of corresponding attributes and values, and any specific attribute or value can itself form a subframe, continuing recursively. Thus, the lower-level frame components are more specific, culturally distinctive, and harder to align across cultures. During translation, the translator can achieve equivalence of frame components by adjusting the frame hierarchy.

Cognitive frames exhibit a distinct characteristic: when describing the same scenario, differences in cognitive perspectives lead to variations in linguistic expression (Wang, 2005: p. 27). The choice of language depends on where the observer's focus and emphasis are placed, which in turn determines the selection of frames and frame components. The change of frame perspective refers to the process in translation where the translator may either maintain the same frame perspective as the source text or alter the frame perspective in the target text, shifting the focus of the original. Chinese poetry is known for its concise language, frequent omission of subjects, and the expression of nuanced emotions. Based on the specific

requirements of the text, the translator may determine and adjust the narrative perspective, or even shift the spatial perspective, to effectively convey the poem's meaning.

The final type of frame operation is frame transplant. Due to cultural differences between the source and target languages, there may be instances where no equivalent frame exists in the target culture. In such cases, the translator can transplant the cultural frame from the source language directly into the target language's cultural framework, thereby filling the gap in the target culture's frame.

3. Translation of the Ancient Chinese Classical Poems Written by Mongolian

In this part, the author will discuss some solutions to those translation difficulties, including translation of cultural imagery and non-cultural imagery, translation of poems with metonymy and metaphor, translation of the surface implication (visual beauty), and translation of the deep and associative implications. As [Xiao & Wen \(2023: p. 156\)](#) has noted, poetry translation possesses a creative quality. Furthermore, due to the cultural differences between China and the West, the translation of classical Chinese poetry often involves more cognitive operations.

3.1. Translation of Cultural Imagery

Images in poetry are objective and remain unaffected by human emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, or happiness ([Yuan, 2009: p. 54](#)). Poets frequently use vivid and diverse imagery to convey sentiments such as lamenting the fleeting seasons or expressing the sorrows of separation. When translating classical Chinese poetry into English, accurately capturing and conveying the imagery is of paramount importance. According to Xie, cultural imagery takes many forms, including plants, mythical creatures, idioms, proverbs, historical allusions, certain adjectives with specific connotations, or even particular numbers ([Xie, 1999: p. 181](#)). Therefore, when translating imagery, the translator considers the cultural differences of the target audience and applies the frame operations discussed in the previous chapter to translate the original poem into the target language.

3.1.1. Adjustment of Frame Hierarchy

Example 1

ST: 风定漏声遥，轻寒已渐消。(Mi, 2021: p. 539)

TT (1): The wind stills, leaving the distant sound of the **water clock echoing**.
The slight chill gradually fades away. (ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): The wind has stilled, the drip of the **water clock** sounds distant,
and the light chill has gradually dissipated. (ChatGPT's translation)

TT (3): The wind has calmed down and the sound of the **water clock** comes from afar,
The slight chill has gradually faded away. (Doubao's translation)

TT (4): The breeze lies still, the **water clock's chime**,
The slight chill melts with time. (The translator's final translation)

This poem was composed by Golmin during his service as an imperial guard. The chill in the air gradually fades, conveying a sense of the passage of time, the change of seasons, and the quiet hope of night transitioning into day. The phrase “漏声遥” symbolizes the flow of time. The “漏声” specifically refers to the sound produced by the ancient Chinese water clock, which measured time by the steady dripping of water. This sound serves as an auditory representation of time passing. In this context, “漏声” belongs to the broader conceptual frame of “time,” with the “clock” as a frame component within the “time” frame. And “漏声” actually is the value of the sound of the clocks (the attribute of the clock frame). Since the target culture lacks a direct equivalent for this specific cultural image, the translator adjusted the frame hierarchy, abstracting it to the more general concept of “clock”. To preserve the essential cultural features of the ancient Chinese, the translator specified it as a “water clock” in the translation, achieving frame correspondence.

3.1.2. Replacement of Frame Components

Example 2

ST: 满树凉云添绿意，一庭疏雨静红尘。(Mi, 2021: p. 564)

TT (1): Cool clouds fill the trees, adding verdant hues,
While a gentle rain stills the **dust in the courtyard’s views**.
(ERNIE Bot’s translation)

TT (2): The trees are lush with cool clouds of green, Creating a refreshing and pleasant environment,
In the courtyard, sparse rain quiets the red dust, The scene so tranquil, calming the **worldly clamor**.
(ChatGPT’s translation)

TT (3): The cool clouds over the full tree add to the greenery,
The sparse rain in the courtyard quiets the **bustling world**.
(Doubao’s translation)

TT (4): Clouds above trees add a touch of cool,
Drizzle quiets the world’s **hustle and bustle**.
(The translator’s final translation)

This poem was composed by Golmin to celebrate the successful construction of the Xishuang Garden.

The term “红尘” frequently appears in classical Chinese poetry, symbolizing the secular world and the bustling nature of worldly life. It usually represents the secular world or the bustling, mundane aspects of life. However, the translations produced by the three machine translation systems were rather vague and failed to effectively evoke the intended conceptual frame of “红尘” in the target language. As a frame component, “红尘” belongs to the “social life” frame, referring specifically to the busy and chaotic nature of worldly affairs. To convey the same meaning in English, the translator mapped it to the “social life” frame and opted for the commonly used phrase “hustle and bustle” to capture the sense of a lively

and hectic worldly existence. By substituting the frame component in this way, the translator successfully preserved both the meaning and imagery of the original poem.

3.1.3. Frame Transplant plus Annotation

Example 3

ST: 且喜重逢周岁甲，早征五福自天申。(Mi, 2021: p. 567)

TT (1): Glad to meet again at the cycle's turn of sixty,
Blessed with the **Five Good Fortunes**, heaven's decree.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): Rejoice in reunion after twelve years,
Heaven grants **five blessings** early as a sign.
(ChatGPT's translation)

TT (3): Glad to reach the age of sixty again,
Long ago I've been seeking the **Five Blessings** bestowed by Heaven.
(Doubao's translation)

TT (4): Rejoice in reunion as my sixtieth birthday arrives,
The **Five Blessings**^① granted from heavenly skies.
(The translator's final translation)

Annotation: ① The Five Blessings (Wufu): In traditional Chinese culture, turning sixty is seen as a significant life milestone, symbolizing the attainment of the Five Blessings. These blessings are: Longevity, Wealth, Health and Peace, Virtue, and A Good End (Passing away peacefully and without suffering).

The original poem describes the poet reaching a significant stage in life, expressing gratitude for divine blessings and hope for the future. In traditional Chinese culture, the concept of “五福” signifies that reaching the age of sixty marks an important life milestone and symbolizes having received all five blessings: longevity, wealth, health, virtue, and a peaceful passing. Together, these blessings embody the ideal of a complete and fulfilled life. The concept of “五福” falls within the broader frame of expressions of well-being and good fortune, specifically as a subframe within this category. However, no direct frame component exists in the target culture that corresponds to this concept. To preserve the cultural connotation and improve the readability of the translation, the translator chose frame transplant. By doing so, the cultural significance of the original expression is retained.

3.2. Translation of Non-Cultural Imagery

Chen (1990: p. 13) stated: “Imagery is one of the most important components of poetic art (the other being meter). In other words, the two main elements that organize a poem are meter and imagery.” Therefore, the handling of imagery is especially crucial in the English translation of classical Chinese poetry. Poets always live in a certain environment, and the imagery they create reflects the realities of their time and embodies the historical context in which they exist (Yang,

2011: p. 66). In the translation process, in addition to the cultural imagery mentioned above, the translator also encounters non-cultural imagery, most of which are related to the natural world, as well as issues involving the combinations of multiple images.

3.2.1. Addition of Frame Components

Example 4

ST: 对月笳声时断咽，临风树影自婆娑。(Mi, 2021: p. 594)

TT (1): Beneath the moon, the sound of the hu jia flute interrupts, like a sobbing sigh,
In the wind, the shadows of trees sway gracefully, dancing freely in the twilight sky.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): The nomad flute sobs, breaking through moonlit air,
Tree shadows sway, flowing with breezes rare.
(ChatGPT's translation)

TT (3): Beneath the moon, the Jiaotone oft breaks, as if in weep,
In wind's embrace, the tree-shadows sway, a lonely scene to keep.
(Doubao's translation)

TT (4): The **nomad flute sobs**, its **melody falters under the moonlight's glow**,
The **swaying trees cast shadows** that **dance with the breeze flow**.
(The translator's final translation)

These two lines of poetry enhance a sense of isolation in the frontier by depicting the sounds of the night and the shadows of trees. The phrase “笳声时断咽” describes the sorrowful melody of the nomad's flute. A direct translation like “the nomad flute sobs” might be misleading. To clarify the imagery of the flute's gradually fading notes, the translator expanded the “sound” frame by incorporating the element of “melody” later in the sentence. In the second half of the poem, “临风树影” evokes the image of tree shadows swaying in the wind, leading to the frame of “tree shadows swaying with the breeze.” A direct translation like “tree shadows sway,” as seen in machine translations, is too plain to fully convey the intended imagery. To enhance the imagery, the translator expanded the frame by first rendering it as “swaying trees cast shadows” and then adding “dance with the breeze” to create a more vivid scene, ensuring frame alignment.

3.2.2. Deletion of Frame Components

Example 5

ST: 难将曲直辨蓬麻，报国无成已破家。(Mi, 2021: p. 562)

TT (1): Distinguishing right from wrong in this tangled world,
Is like separating hemp from peng grass (a challenge profound).
Your loyalty to the nation yielded no fruit,
Your home was shattered, yet you stood unbowed.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): It is hard to distinguish right from wrong among the wild hemp,
Having failed to serve the country and shattered your home.
(ChatGPT's translation)

Continued

TT (3): It's hard to distinguish right from wrong among the tangled miscellaneous plants like fleabane and hemp,
Having failed to serve the country and already seen my family ruined. (Doubao's translation)

TT (4): In a world where **right and wrong** are tangled, hard to tell,
I failed my country, and even my family's fate fell.
(The translator's final translation)

The poem depicts a world where moral clarity is lost and the nation lies in ruins, reflecting both the poet's troubled times and personal misfortune. “蓬麻” is a plant image. The stems of “蓬草” grow in a tangled and disorganized manner, while “麻” is a fiber plant that easily intertwines. Together, they symbolize the intricate and entangled nature of societal affairs. “曲直” is an abstract concept signifying moral judgment—principles of justice and fairness that guide human perception of right and wrong. In the poem, “曲直” and “蓬麻” are linked, implying that the clear standards of right and wrong have become blurred in the face of complex realities. In other words, these two images convey overlapping meanings, both reinforcing the idea of moral ambiguity. However, the symbolic significance of “蓬麻” has no direct equivalent in the target culture. To avoid confusing the reader, the translator chose to omit the “蓬麻” frame and retained only the “difficulty in telling right from wrong” frame, ensuring clarity for the reader.

3.2.3. Change of Frame Perspective plus Replacement of Frame Component

Example 6

ST: 凤楼香篆五云升，火树银花映玉冰。(Mi, 2021: p. 581)

TT (1): A fragrant incense spirals up from the Phoenix Pavilion,
Mingling with five-colored clouds that rise high in the sky,
Torch trees and silver flowers cast their glow on jade-like ice,
Creating a dazzling scene of brilliance and purity.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): Phoenix Tower's fragrant smoke rises with five clouds,
Fire trees and silver flowers reflect on jade-like ice.
(ChatGPT's translation)

TT (3): In the Phoenix Tower, incense smoke like scripts rise high,
With fire-trees and silver-flowers mirroring ice so bright.
(Doubao's translation)

TT (4): **Auspicious clouds** rise above the **Imperial Palace**,
Lantern trees and silver flowers reflect upon jade-like ice.
(The translator's final translation)

The poem captures the grand spectacle of the Lantern Festival, portraying the magnificent and spectacular scenes in and around the palace during the celebration. “凤楼” is an image of palace architecture, often referring to pavilions within

the imperial palace. “香篆” describes curling, spiraling smoke resembling ancient seal characters, metaphorically depicting clouds drifting above the palace. “五云” refers to auspicious clouds, a celestial omen of good fortune. In traditional Chinese culture, auspicious clouds are seen as a symbol of divine favor. Their multi-colored hues heighten their mystical and resplendent allure, representing heavenly protection and grace for humanity. In the translation process, “五云” was rendered as “auspicious clouds” to achieve conceptual equivalence in the target language. In the first part of the poem, the original perspective moves from low to high. The translator opted for a shift in perspective, making “auspicious clouds” the subject to reverse the direction from high to low. By presenting the “auspicious clouds” first and the “palace” second, the translator reinforced the imagery of the palace enveloped in clouds, guiding the reader’s visualization. This approach enhances the reader’s imagination, creating a vivid mental image.

3.3. Translation of Metaphor

Xu (2006: p. 27) believes that: “Both language and meaning involve a unity or contradiction between form and content”. Translation deals with the unity or contradiction of content and form between two languages, a complex situation, and the main challenge is resolving the contradiction between the content of the original text and the form of the translation. This is the process of poetic metaphor projection, where the source domain, defined by the object’s cognitive domain, is projected into the target domain, which represents the abstract meaning the poet wants to convey, achieving an artistic expression (Xiao & Wen, 2023: p. 159). Therefore, in translation, the handling of metaphors involves mapping the metaphor’s meaning into the cognitive domain of the reader.

Change of Frame Relations-Eliminating the Conceptual Metaphor

Example 7

ST: 挥洒团圞扇，慰望云树思。(Mi, 2021: p. 554)

TT (1): Waving the round fan, I seek to comfort thee,
As I gaze into the distance, clouds and trees.
(ERNIE Bot’s translation)

TT (2): Tears fall upon the round fan,
To console the longing for the distant clouds and trees
(ChatGPT’s translation)

TT (3): Waving the round fan casually,
To comfort the longing thoughts while gazing at the cloud-covered trees.
(Doubao’s translation)

TT (4): Waving the round fan with grace,
To soothe the **longing in my gaze**.
(The translator’s final translation)

This poem, written by Hengkun when bidding farewell to a friend, expresses his reluctance to part with his friend. The poet associates the “plant” frame with

the “longing” frame, where the imagery of “云树” does not refer to literal clouds and trees. Instead, the poet uses the attributes of “height and distance” associated with the “云树” frame to suggest longing for a distant friend. This metaphor directly creates a direct metaphorical link between “云树” and distant longing. The translator thought that keeping “云树” in the target text would fail to convey the intended meaning. Therefore, the metaphor was replaced with a more explicit expression, “longing in my gaze,” which conveys the essence of the original frame without relying on metaphor, ensuring clarity for the target audience.

3.4. Translation of Metonymy

Cognitive linguistics considers metonymy not just a linguistic substitution but a cognitive process (Radden & Kövecses, 1999: pp. 17-19). In everyday language, metonymy is frequently used, and poets similarly employ it in their works to achieve expressive effects.

3.4.1. Change of Frame Relations-Retaining the Metonymy While Clarifying Its Referent

Example 8

ST: 云帆归去会何时，月夕花朝两不知。(Mi, 2021: p. 572)

TT (1): When will the cloud-sailed ship return?

The moonlit nights and flowery mornings are unknown.
(ERNIE Bot’s translation)

TT (2): When will your sails return to me, I wonder?

The moonlit nights and the morning flowers pass by, and still, I know not when we shall meet.
(ChatGPT’s translation)

TT (3): When will I set sail on the cloud-like sails and return? I don’t know,

Neither the moonlit evenings nor the flower-blooming mornings can draw my attention now.
(Doubao’s translation)

TT (4): When will your sails return again?

Moonlit and blooming times are both in vain.
(The translator’s final translation)

This poem was composed by Chengkun when bidding farewell to her maid, Meihua, reflecting the deep bond between master and maid. The phrase “月夕花朝” (moonlit nights and blooming mornings) originally combines a time frame and a natural imagery frame, symbolizing the parting times and the life they will live. The original poem employs this metonymy to create a subtle emotional tone. Therefore, in the translation, the translator chose to retain the original imagery and its metonymic relationship, rendering “月” and “花” as “moonlit” and “blooming.” To enhance the intended associations, the translator added the noun “times” as the subject modified by the two adjectives, ensuring both clarity and the preservation of emotional subtlety in the translation.

3.4.2. Change of Frame Relations-Modifying the Original Metonymic Relationship by Substituting Another Element

Example 9

ST: 知君高会龙山日，定取**骊珠**入握来。(Mi, 2021: p. 564)

TT (1): Knowing you'll gather high on Longshan's day with noble friends,
Surely you'll pluck the pearl of poetry, a treasure to your hands.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): I know you'll gather at Longshan's high assembly, so divine,
And surely, with skill and grace, the precious pearls you'll find.
(ChatGPT's translation)

TT (3): Knowing that you'll have a grand gathering on Longshan Mountain,
Surely you'll grasp the precious literary pearls like seizing the jewels from the
dragon's chin.
(Doubao's translation)

TT (4): You gather with like-minded friends at Long Mountain's height,
Surely, some **rare masterpiece** will grace your sight.
(The translator's final translation)

Knowing about the gathering at Long Mountain, the poet expresses hope that his friends will create remarkable poetry. At the same time, he praises their literary talent, expressing both admiration and best wishes. The term “骊珠” refers to a legendary gem of extraordinary value. In this context, it serves as a metonym for outstanding poetry and the pinnacle of literary excellence. When translating, the translator selected the frame component “rare masterpiece” from the “骊珠” frame to substitute for the original image, using a part to signify the whole. This approach helped bridge the meaning between the source and target texts, making the imagery more accessible to the target audience.

3.5. Methods for Translation of the Surface Implication—Visual Beauty

A poem may seem to simply present natural imagery that already exists in the objective world as if it were inherently so. In reality, however, the author makes subjective choices about what to include, what to exclude, and in what order to arrange the described elements (Chen, 1990, p.70). Therefore, the translator needs to use frame operations to convey the visual effects intended by the original poem to the target language readers.

3.5.1. Replacement of Frame Components

Example 10

ST: 稳巢归鹤修篁密，**高荫**鸣鸠古木平。(Mi, 2021: p. 564)

TT (1): Cranes nest securely in dense bamboo's sheltering shade,
Turtledoves coo in ancient trees, their songs serene and mild.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

Continued

- TT (2):** The crane nests securely in the dense bamboo,
the ancient trees provide a peaceful shade for the cooing doves.
(ChatGPT's translation)
- TT (3):** The returning cranes build stable nests among the dense bamboo groves,
The turtledoves sing under the tall ancient trees with their flat shade. (Doubao's translation)
- TT (4):** In thick bamboo bowers, the cranes build their lair,
Neath ancient, **shady trees**, the doves sing their air.
(The translator's final translation)
-

This poem praises the beauty of the garden's natural ecology and its tranquil, harmonious atmosphere. The term “高荫” belongs to the “plant” frame, specifically an attribute under the “tree” value, describing dense foliage rather than literal height. When translating, the translator opted to replace the frame component, shifting from the original focus on “tree shade” to “shady trees”, a frame more intuitive for the target audience. This adjustment helps convey the image of dense foliage in the reader's mind, effectively preserving the poem's visual richness.

3.5.2. Addition of Frame Components

Example 11

-
- ST:** 初月影寒侵几席，晚荷香冷透衣裳。(Mi, 2021: p. 564)
- TT (1):** The slender crescent casts a chill upon our seats and tables fair,
The fragrance of late lotus, cold and pure, seeps through our garments rare. (ERNIE Bot's translation)
- TT (2):** The new moon casts its cold light on the tables and seats,
The scent of late-blooming lotuses, cool and refreshing, penetrates the clothes.
(ChatGPT's translation)
- TT (3):** The cold moonlight of the new moon invades the tables and seats,
The cool fragrance of the evening lotuses penetrates our clothes.
(Doubao's translation)
- TT (4):** The rising moon casts a chill, **touching tables and robes**,
Late lotus fragrance drifts, **permeating** our clothes.
(The translator's final translation)
-

This poem conveys a sense of tranquility and emotional immersion. It reflects his admiration for nature and his cherishing of peaceful moments during the gathering. The term “几席” refers to ancient furniture used for leaning, sitting, or reclining (Figure 2). In this context, the description of the cold environment under the moonlight extends beyond the “几席” itself to include the person seated on it. Therefore, the translator added the “robe” frame to represent the person seated on the “几席”. Additionally, To enhance the imagery of the moonlight's chill and the evening breeze's coolness, the translator introduced two verb-frame components, “touching” and “permeating”, enriching the sensory experience and offering the target readers a vivid, immersive scene.



Figure 2. Chinese traditional seats Ji Xi.

3.5.3. Adjustment of Frame Hierarchy

Example 12

ST: 江右词坛岭外开，黄花秋雨况相催。(Mi, 2021: p. 564)

TT (1): Verse gardens flourish beyond Jiangyou's east, and Lingnan's wild,
Chrysanthemums and autumn rains, urging the season's shift.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): In Jiangxi, poetry flourished, now spreading to Lingnan's shore,
Amid yellow blooms and autumn rain, sentiments rise once more.
(ChatGPT's translation)

TT (3): The poetic circle of Jiangyou spreads its influence beyond the Lingnan region,
The yellow chrysanthemums and autumn rain seem to hasten each other's pace.
(Doubao's translation)

TT (4): Beyond the Five Ridges, the poetic realm of Jiangyou Region^① blooms swiftly,
Chrysanthemums yellow and autumn rains cold hasten each other **desolately**.
(The translator's final translation)

Annotation: ① Five Ridges refers to the mountain ranges that separated the Central Plains and Lingnan region in ancient China, symbolizing a geographical and cultural boundary.

The poet experiences a mix of emotions prompted by the chrysanthemums and autumn rains, which lead to reflections on the passage of time. Chrysanthemums symbolize autumn, while autumn rains evoke a sense of desolation and bleakness. Together, they create an atmosphere of autumn. The phrase “况相催” conveys the idea that the chrysanthemums and autumn rains mutually reinforce and accelerate the arrival of autumn. A deeper interpretation suggests that they not only signal the season's change but also bring with them the desolation intrinsic to autumn. However, in the target language culture, expressing this directly may not convey the intended visual effect of the original poem. Therefore, the translator adjusted the frame “况相催” by adjusting its hierarchy. Using “desolately”, the value of the frame, the translator recreates the desolate and bleak imagery created by the chrysanthemums and autumn rains, offering target readers a vivid por-

trayal of autumn's desolation.

3.5.4. Additions of Frame Components Plus Adjustment of Frame Hierarchy

Example 13

ST: 冰雪影团团，谁道梅花瘦。(Mi, 2021: p. 572)

TT (1): Ice and snow cast shadows round and round,
Yet who dares say the plum blossom is thin and frail?
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): In the reflection of ice and snow, the blossoms seem round and full,
Who says the plum blossoms look thin?
(ChatGPT's translation)

TT (3): In the ice and snow, the figures of plum blossoms are so plump,
Who says that plum blossoms are always slender?
(Doubao's translation)

TT (4): With icy embrace, snow **rounds the blooms so fair**,
Who would say the plum flowers are **frail**?
(The translator's final translation)

In the first half of the line, The phrase “影团团” describes the clustered shadows cast by plum blossoms enveloped in snow, conveying both the cold stillness of the environment and the plum's solitary and transcendent beauty in such harsh conditions. However, a literal translation of this phrase would be too vague and fail to vividly convey this image to the target language readers. Therefore, the translator added more detailed framework elements by explicitly rendering the image of “snow wrapping around the plum blossoms”. In the second half of the line, the poet employs a rhetorical question to reject the common misconception that plum blossoms appear frail in the cold. They stand tall and proud amid the snow, slender yet beautiful. Here, the “瘦” framework corresponds to the attribute of “fragility”, which further emphasizes the plum's resilient spirit. In handling this framework, the translator adjusted the framework hierarchy by using the term “frail” to directly convey this contrast, allowing the target language readers to intuitively grasp the plum's spirit.

3.6. Methods for Translation of the Deep and Associative Implications

Translation, as a form of human cognitive activity, inevitably shows the mark of “subjectivity” and inherently involves a certain level of creativity (Wang, 2005: p. 17). However, in the process of translation, the translator's creativity must be based on the content of the original text, rather than being fabricated. Translators must have a deep understanding of the emotional meaning conveyed by the imagery and replace the original imagery with equivalent or similar imagery in the target language (Zhang, 2018: p. 59). Consequently, frame operations in translation are quite necessary.

3.6.1. Additions of Frame Components plus Adjustment of Frame Hierarchy

Example 14

ST: 去去当去去，无为儿女忧。(Mi, 2021: p. 554)

TT (1): Go, you must go, with no hesitation,
Do not let the worries of love linger.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): Go, go, I must go,
Don't fret with worries low.
(ChatGPT's translation)

TT (3): Go, go, just resolutely go,
Don't be saddened like the sentimental ones.
(Doubao's translation)

TT (4): You must go, **with courage flow**,
Don't let **family sentiment** bring you low.
(The translator's final translation)

The repetition of “去去” emphasizes the finality and irreversibility of the departure, creating a sense of urgency. The poem's protagonist resolutely leaves home, reflecting the expectations and sense of duty traditionally associated with men in Chinese society. The first half of the poem describes the protagonist's departure from home, with the repetition of “去去” reinforcing the emotional intensity of departure, particularly the courage it takes to leave. Although the poet does not explicitly state this emotion, it is embedded within the repetition itself. Therefore, in the translation, the translator not only retained the “去去” frame but also added the frame component of “courage” to clarify the emotional tone for the target language readers, who may not be familiar with the Chinese cultural context. In the latter half of the poem, the frame “儿女” does not correspond to the Western concept of “son and daughter”. Instead, it represents the broader concept of “emotional family bonds”. Since “emotional family bonds” is a broader conceptual frame that encompasses “儿女”, the translator adjusts the frame hierarchy to match the target culture, ensuring conceptual alignment across cultures.

3.6.2. Change of the Frame Perspective

Example 15

ST: 放棹瀛寰眼界宽，茫茫大陆等浮滩。(Mi, 2021: p. 584)

TT (1): Setting sail on the boundless sea, my horizons broaden wide,
The vast continents appear but as floating sands in sight.
(ERNIE Bot's translation)

TT (2): With oar in hand, the vast world opens wide,
Endless lands like shallow shoals do glide.
(ChatGPT's translation)

Continued

TT (3): Rowing the oars in the vast world, my vision broadens wide,
The boundless continents seem like floating shoals in the tide.
(Doubao's translation)

TT (4): Oars in hand, I row through **the boundless blue**,
The vast lands drift like shoals within the tide's hue.
(The translator's final translation)

The poem conveys a profound sense of human insignificance in the face of nature's grandeur and expresses awe toward the immense power of the natural world. It captures the poet's awe and wonder upon witnessing the ocean's vastness for the first time, as well as his expansive vision, eagerness to explore the world, and yearning for the unknown. To fully convey this sense of vastness to the target audience, the translator chose to change the frame perspective. Since classical Chinese poetry often omits subjects, the translator inferred the poem's perspective from the reader's standpoint, inferred the descriptive viewpoint of the original poem, and explicitly added the subject in the translation to clarify the perspective. The original frame, “眼界宽”, reflects the poet's observation progressing from a distant view to a close one. However, in the translation, the sequence was reversed, shifting from near to far, culminating in “the boundless blue”. This adjustment better aligns with the cognitive patterns of English readers, effectively evoking a sense of human insignificance and reverence for nature.

3.7. Frame Operations and Translator's Choices—The Translation of Upon Seeing Intentions

This poem was composed by Golmin in 1879 during his tenure in Hangzhou. The poem carries a tone of melancholy. Though it consists of only 28 characters, it contains multiple images and verb phrases. In the translation process, the translator applied two types of frame operations: frame transplantation with annotation, and change of frame relations (using a conceptual metaphor that aligns with the target language culture).

ST: 葡萄美酒今须醉，苡薏珠明莫浪猜。
故里春深花自好，托根况复近蓬莱。(Mi, 2021: p. 542)

TT: Today, let fine grape wine delight,
And waste no thoughts on the Yi Yi pearls^①.
Spring flowers flourished in my hometown,
As if wandering in Mount Olympus town.
(The translator's final translation)

① The term “Yi Yi” in Chinese is a kind of millet plant whose seeds are used medicinally and as food. In the context of the poem, Yi Yi pearls, the allusion is used to refer to rumors or misunderstandings.

The term “苡薏” is categorized within the broader “plants” frame. The seeds of this plant are often plump and lustrous, resembling pearls with their bright, beau-

tiful appearance. In ancient Chinese culture, General Ma Yuan was known for collecting “苡薏”, as its seeds were believed to promote health and ward off mis-asma. However, because of their pearl-like appearance, Ma Yuan was falsely accused of stealing precious pearls, leading “苡薏珠明” to acquire connotations of controversy and misinterpretation. In this context, “苡薏珠明” belongs to an allusion frame. If the translator simplified the metaphor by directly converting its implied meaning into a more accessible frame, it would be easier to understand but would reduce the poem’s associative richness. Therefore, the translator chose frame transplant with a note to preserve the original poetic allusion. This strategy ensures the target readers gain both the cultural depth and the historical context embedded in the original verse.

The poem first describes the spring scenery of the poet’s hometown, fully expressing the poet’s admiration and pride in its serene beauty. It evokes an atmosphere that is both vibrant and dreamlike, immersing the reader in an enchanted homeland where the poet’s deep attachment to his native land is palpable. “蓬莱” refers to a mythical mountain in ancient Chinese folklore, often symbolizing a fairyland or an idealized paradise. In the original poem, the author uses “蓬莱” as a “place” frame to reflect the “emotional” frame, praising the beauty of the hometown. The translator changed the framing relationship while preserving the metaphorical concept, maintaining a similar figurative approach in the target language. If the “蓬莱” frame were directly adopted in the target language, as seen in the three machine translations, it would fail to trigger the same metaphorical association in the reader’s mind. Therefore, the translator opted for “Mount Olympus”—a peak in northeastern Greece, revered in ancient Greek mythology as the dwelling place of the gods—as an equivalent frame. Like “蓬莱”, it evokes a celestial realm, thereby achieving a comparable effect.

4. Conclusion

C. D. Liu (1998) points out that human beings are endowed by nature with the same mental faculties, which allow for mutual communication. As a product of the mind, poetry can therefore be understood, appreciated, and translated. From this perspective, poetry is translatable (p. 128). The frame operation emphasizes the cognitive interaction between the translator, the original author, the source text reader, and the target text reader throughout the translation process. During this process, the translator adjusts the original frame based on translation purpose and other factors, aligning it with the cognitive frame of the target reader to achieve the comprehension and aesthetic resonance. By comparing the frames used by source and target readers, the translator uses frame operations to establish equivalence, rendering the translatability of the original visible in the translation and enabling the target reader to appreciate its meaning and beauty. From the frame-based perspective, cultural differences in poetry translation come from the divergence between the frames activated in the minds of the source and target readers. Compared to other approaches to classical Chinese poetry translation, Frame Theory offers greater flexibility and often results in translations that are

more culturally adaptive.

Translating the classical poems written by Mongolian authors is the main topic of this paper. These poems contain numerous images, and the translator categorizes the difficulties in translating these images into cultural and non-cultural images. When translating cultural imagery, such as the translation of allusions and culturally specific terms, understanding the historical context of the original poem and applying framework operations—such as change of frame hierarchy, replacement of frame components, and frame transplant—could solve the challenges of translating cultural imagery. For other images, besides cultural ones, methods like adding or deleting frame components, replacing frame components, and changing frame perspectives could be used. In some cases, different frame operations were combined.

This paper also focused on the challenges of translating metaphors and metonymies. By changing the frame relations, these two rhetorical devices can be effectively conveyed in the target language. Change of frame relations includes: preserving the original metaphor or metonymy concepts, adding auxiliary words to help target language readers understand, replacing metaphors or metonymies with similar expressions in the target language, and directly canceling the metaphor and metonymy, naming the abstract concepts they express.

To restore the visual beauty of descriptive poems in classical poetry, the replacement of frame components, the addition of frame components, and the adjustment of frame hierarchy could solve this issue. Similarly, different frame operations can be combined to restore the visual beauty of the poem. Finally, when restoring the deep emotions and connotations expressed in the poem, in addition to the methods mentioned above, the change of frame perspective, especially spatial perspective switching, can also be used.

Funding

This paper marks a stage in a research that was made possible by the funding supported by Research on the Construction of Foreign Translation Discourse System and International Communication Power of Beijiāng Cultural Classics by Inner Mongolia Federation of Social Sciences Project (grant#2024), Multi-lingual Translations and Dissemination of Beijiāng Literary Works Innovative Team Program by Education Bureau of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (grant#2025), Research on the Exploration and Digital Dissemination Routes of Multilingual Overseas Translations of Beijiāng Literary Works by Inner Mongolia Ethnic Affairs Commission (grant#2025).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

Barlett, F. (1932). *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. Cam-

- bridge University Press.
- Chen, Z. E. (1990). *A Study of Poetic Imagery*. China Social Sciences Press. (In Chinese)
- Fillmore, C. J. (1975). An Alternative to Checklist Theories of Meaning. *Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, 1*, 123-131. <https://doi.org/10.3765/bls.v1i0.2315>
- Fillmore, C. J. (1982). Frame Semantics. In I. S. Yang (Ed.), *Linguistics in the Morning Calm: Selected Papers from SICOL-1981* (pp. 111-137). Hanshin.
- Liu, C. D. (1998). *Ten Lectures on Literary Translation*. China Translation & Publishing Corporation. (In Chinese)
- Liu, H. H. (2022). A Review of Studies on the Chinese-Language Literary Production of Mongolian Literary Families during the Qing Dynasty. *Manchu Minority Research, No. 3*, 100-105. (In Chinese)
- Ma, T. F. (2021). On the Mongolian Chinese Poetry Writing in the Cultural Space of Imperial Examination of the Qing Dynasty. *Inner Mongolia Social Sciences, No. 4*, 144-151. (In Chinese)
- Mi, Y. Q. (2021). *Study of Chinese Classical Poetry Written by Mongolian Poets*. China Social Sciences Press. (In Chinese)
- Radden, G. & Kövecses, Z. (1999). Towards a theory of metonymy. In K. Panther, & G. Radden (Eds.), *Metonymy in Language and Thought* (pp. 17-59). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/hcp.4.03rad>
- Rojo, A. (2002). Applying Frame Semantics to Translation: A Practical Example. *Meta, 47*, 296-459. <https://doi.org/10.7202/008018ar>
- Wang, L. R. (2005). Applying the Frame Theory to Translation. *Chinese Translators Journal, No. 3*, 27-32. (In Chinese)
- Xiao, K. R. (2012). *Frame Operation in Translation*. Master's Thesis, Southwest University. (In Chinese)
- Xiao, K. R., & Wen, X. (2023). Re-Conceptualization Across Languages: Cognitive Operations in the Translation of Chinese Classical Poetry. *Chinese Translators Journal, No. 1*, 154-162, 190. (In Chinese)
- Xie, T. Z. (1999). *Translation Studies*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. (In Chinese)
- Xu, Y. C. (2006). *Art of Translation*. China Intercontinental Press. (In Chinese)
- Yang, J. F. (2011). A Study on the Interpretation Space of Image Schema Theory: From the Perspective of the Translation of Imagery in Chinese Classical Poetry. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching, No. 4*, 66-70. (In Chinese)
- Yuan, X. P. (2009). *Study of the Art of Chinese Poetry*. Peking University Press. (In Chinese)
- Zhang, Y. (2018). A Study on Translating Aesthetic Emotions of Images in Classical Chinese Poems. *Foreign Language and Literature Research, No. 6*, 53-60. (In Chinese)