



A Study of English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words Based on *The Mountain Whisperer*

Delian Liu, Yanxia Qin

School of Foreign Languages, Xian Shiyu University, Xi'an, China
Email: 1425501729@qq.com

How to cite this paper: Liu, D.L. and Qin, Y.X. (2024) A Study of English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words Based on *The Mountain Whisperer*. *Open Access Library Journal*, 11: e12701.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1112701>

Received: November 25, 2024

Accepted: December 21, 2024

Published: December 24, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

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



Open Access

Abstract

The Mountain Whisperer is a long novel written by Jia Pingwa, a famous contemporary writer, which involves a large number of words related to Shaanxi folk culture. Christopher Payne, a Canadian translator and professor at the University of Toronto, recognized that the translation of culture-loaded words was a difficult task in the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer*. This paper takes the English translation of Jia Pingwa's novel *The Mountain Whisperer* as a case study. On the basis of folklore theory, and in accordance with the 12 culturally specific translation methods proposed by Aixela, the culture-loaded words in the original work are classified into four categories. Meanwhile, culture-loaded words are a difficult problem for the translation and dissemination of Chinese novels. It is also suggested that the future development of Chinese novels can provide a model for the dissemination of similar novels in the English-speaking world.

Subject Areas

Culture, Linguistics

Keywords

The Mountain Whisperer, Culture-Loaded Words, English Translation Research

1. Introduction

The data show that the study of culture-loaded words in translation in China has been in a relatively marginal state, which means that the study of culture-loaded words is not yet mature in China. The main perspectives of domestic research are to explore the methods of translating culture-loaded words by text-level language

transformation, semantic contrast analysis, and discuss the translation methods of culture-loaded words from the perspective of cultural contrast or to study the translation methods of literary dialects from a certain theoretical perspective. For illustration, Zhao Hongyan and Wu Yulian analyze the translation of Shaanxi dialect in the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* from the perspective of the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions [1], as well as using ecological translation theory as a theoretical guide; Li Qingming and Wang Ping propose to analyze the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* from the perspective of three-dimensional transformation, exploring the translation strategies and methods adopted by the translator in the translation process, achieving the ecological balance of translation and intercultural communication [2].

Foreign scholars have conducted fewer studies on the English translation of the culture-loaded words of the translation of *The Mountain Whisperer*. However, through comparison, it can be found that the status of foreign studies can be divided into two aspects: professional book reviews and academic exchanges according to the subject of study. Professional book reviews refer to authoritative overseas media reviews, which have a certain guiding effect on readers. Jia Pingwa's works received the most praise. The English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* was described as "Christopher Payne's translation makes the work abundant and vivid" (Amazon book review). According to the survey conducted at the beginning of November 2023, the overall rating of the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* on the US version of Amazon.com was 5, 4 and 3 stars, and the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* had 65%, 22% and 11% of 5, 4 and 3 star ratings respectively (Amazon website). It can be seen that the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* has been quite positively received overseas, and the translation and dissemination have been more successful. Generally speaking, overseas readers are still positive about the translation. Academic research includes international academic papers, but such research is only found in overview studies of Chinese writers, and there is a lack of thematic literary theory studies abroad.

To sum up, the research results on the translation effects of culture-loaded words and their acceptance in the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* at home and abroad are relatively few, which not only limit the influence of overseas scholarship, but also have limited effect on broadening the research horizon due to the poor theoretical richness.

Based on Zhong Jingwen's folklore theory, this paper classifies culture-loaded words into four categories, namely material culture-loaded words, spiritual culture-loaded words, social culture-loaded words, and linguistic culture-loaded words, etc. [3]. And on the basis of this classification, the English translation of material, spiritual, social and linguistic-culture-loaded words in the text *The Mountain Whisperer* is analyzed with examples.

2. Introduction to *The Mountain Whisperer* and Its Translator

The English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* was released by ACA

Publishing Ltd in April 2021, which is another successful attempt to export the best of Chinese contemporary literature [4]. This chapter will provide a detailed introduction to *The Mountain Whisperer* and the translator.

2.1. General Introduction to *The Mountain Whisperer*

The Mountain Whisperer is a full-length novel written by writer Jia Pingwa and introduced by the ancient book *Pathways Through the Mountains and Seas*, which records the story of what happened in a small village in southern Shaanxi during a hundred years. *The Mountain Whisperer* is set in a century of lonely China, but it is also difficult to hide the spirituality of Jia Pingwa's literary view of the world. The story takes place in a mountain village in southern Shaanxi Province and has been written from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day, so it not only epitomizes the growth of modern China, but is also loved by readers at home and abroad. At present, there are few English translations of *The Mountain Whisperer*, and the mainstream translation is mainly translated by Dr. Christopher Payne from Canada.

Table 1. Information of *The Mountain Whisperer*.

Original	Writer	Awards	Translator	Version format
<i>The Mountain Whisperer</i>	Jia Pingwa	The China Top 100 Periodicals Award	Christopher Payne	Kindle, paperback

From **Table 1**, it can be seen that the existing translations of *The Mountain Whisperer* are relatively single and scarce, with only the translation by Christopher Payne. According to the survey, the current studies on the English translation of the culture-loaded words of *The Mountain Whisperer* mainly focus on the three-dimensional transformation of the English translation of Shaanxi dialect under the perspective of ecological translation science and the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* from the perspective of ecological translation science. The English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* was released by ACA Publishing Ltd in April 2021, which is another successful attempt to export the best of Chinese contemporary literature. "Jia Pingwa is a literary spokesman who is loyal to the vernacular civilization" [5], and his works have been known to be difficult to translate due to the extensive use of Shangluo and Guanzhong dialect [6]. In particular, the excerpts from the *Pathways Through the Mountains and Seas* interspersed in *The Mountain Whisperer* pose a new challenge to the translator. The translator, Christopher Payne, deserves high recognition for defying the odds and crossing the language and cultural barriers to finally bring this magnificent work, which spans more than a century of history, to a world audience.

2.2. Translator's Information

The English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* is published by ACA Publishing

Ltd. Its translator is Christopher Payne. In April 2021, Christopher Payne published the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* in Canada. The translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* was accurate and wonderful, smooth and readable, it was a great success and has been reprinted by the publisher many times since the first edition [7].

The Mountain Whisperer is a long novel by Jia Pingwa, translated by Canadian translator Christopher Payne, an associate professor at the University of Toronto. This is the sixth English translation of Jia Pingwa's works, following *Turbulence*, *Ruined City*, *The Lantern Bearer*, *Happy Dreams* and *Broken Wings*. Christopher Payne introduced the guests the main characters in *The Mountain Whisperer* and his anecdotes in the translation process. Nicky Harman, a British translator and co-chair of the British Translation Association, who just received the 14th Chinese Book Exchange Contribution Award in December 2020, introduced the stylistic characteristics of Jia Pingwa's works and her experience in translating works such as *Broken Wings*, *Happy Dreams*, and *Crossing the River*.

3. Translation Methods of Culture-Loaded Words in *The Mountain Whisperer*

It is well known that "meaning" is the first issue that translators must consider in their translations. Regarding the translation of certain cultural items in the original, the translator may consider whether it should be approach to the source culture or the target culture, and to what extent it should be close to the source culture and so on [8].

3.1. Introduction to the Study of Culture-Loaded Words

When it comes to the definition of culture-loaded words, different scholars have differed in their understanding and expression. Apart from the previously mentioned definition summarized by Professor Liao Qiyi, Chen Xirong divided culture-loaded words into two categories. In different languages, there is a category of words that have the same meaning but different forms of expression owing to differences in cultural contexts including history, geography, and political systems, and a category of words that were unique to one linguistic culture and would appear vacant in another culture [9]. According to Wang Enke, culture-loaded words were a composite of conceptual and cultural meanings [10]. The main contradiction in the translation of these terms was the choice of which layer of meaning was dominant in the translation. Wang Dechun regarded Chinese culture-loaded words as "national words", which were reflected in the politics, economy, culture, history and folk customs [11].

Though the expressions about the definition of culture-loaded words are distinct, it will be found that culture-loaded words have the following major characteristics by summarizing and comparing them: 1) Culture-loaded words are the unique cultural expression form of a certain nationality, which has the strong national color. Different regions and peoples have different life wisdoms, and this

difference will also be reflected in the language aspect. 2) In addition to its social nature, culture is also a historical phenomenon. Language is the carrier of culture, which reflects the creative activity of human beings over the course of history. As a concentrated expression of the language and culture of the people, culture-loaded words record the cultural heritage of each person over thousands of years. 3) The linguistic and cultural differences between the source and target languages pose certain difficulties in translation, particularly in the phenomenon of lexical gaps. Bao Huinan argued that cultural differences were manifested in four aspects of lexicon: lexical gaps (e.g., the absence of equivalent words in other languages), lexical conflicts (the cultural information of the original word contradicts that of the corresponding target language), semantic associations (the audiences of the two languages have different psychological responses to the same word), and pragmatic connotations (the surface meaning of a word is “different” from its deeper meaning). The “disparity” between the two languages and cultures was conducive to the above four difficulties, which also placed a high demand on the translation.

With regard to translation methods for specific cultural items, Exila summarised 12 culturally specific translation methods that describe in detail “all possible methods available to and used by translators [12].” These methods are as follows:

- 1) Repetition: copy the original text;
- 2) Orthographic adaptation: Converse the alphabetic systems or transliteration;
- 3) Linguistic (non-cultural) translation: Preserve the meaning of the original text as much as possible;
- 4) Extratextual gloss: Add an explanation while using the first three methods, but because it is illegal or inconvenient to put the explanation in the text, marked as an explanation is a better choice, such as footnotes, endnotes, in-text notes, comment text, etc.
- 5) Intratextual gloss: Same as extratextual gloss, expect to keep the explanation in the body so that not to disturb the reader;
- 6) Synonymy: Translate the same cultural proprietary in different ways to avoid duplication;
- 7) Limited universalization: Choose another original language that is more familiar to the reader of the translation;
- 8) Absolute universalization: Use non-cultural specific items to translate cultural proprietary items;
- 9) Naturalization: Chose the target language culture specific items to translate the original language culture-specific items;
- 10) Deletion: Remove the cultural proprietary items that are not accepted by the target language culture, or do not affect the reader’s comprehensible or culturally specific items whose meaning is too difficult to explain;
- 11) Autonomous creation: Introduce the original language culture proprietary items that do not exist;
- 12) Desalination process: Replace the “too strong” words with the “milder”

words in the translation [13].

The most frequent methods were the absolute universalization (80/36.3%) and the language translation method (80/36.3%), while the least frequent was the synonym substitution method (4/1.81%). The absolute universalization method uses “the target language form to translate the formal features of the original” so that the translation is free of obvious dialectal traces and “the translation shows a clear trend to standardization” [14]. The linguistic translation method is mainly used in the translation of taboo languages, reflecting the linguistic truth seeking of the translation in favor of the author and the original text [15]. However, it is difficult for the target language readers to understand the cultural connotations. The second is that transliteration (37/16.8%), mainly used in appellatives, onomatopoeia, and units of measure, where interpretation can provide the reader of the translation with linguistic and non-linguistic factors that influence the creation and reception of a given text [16]. The deletion method (16/7.2%) is mainly applied to childish sounds and the inflectional auxiliary “wow”, etc. For example, all sentence-final intonation words used after negative adverbs were deleted from the translation.

In a nutshell, the degree of linguistic truth-seeking and social pragmatism in the translating the culture-loaded words translation are expressed in the “truth-seeking as a basis, pragmatism as a use”.

3.2. An Analysis of the English Translation Methods of Culture-Loaded Words in *The Mountain Whisperer*

Vernacular fiction reflects the folk culture of a specific place. Folklore expert Zhong Jingwen classifies culture-loaded words into 4 categories in terms of content, which are material culture-loaded words, spiritual, social culture-loaded words and linguistic culture-loaded words. Folk culture is an important part of culture-loaded words, and the author will discuss the English translation methods of culture-loaded words from these 4 aspects [17].

1) Material culture-loaded words

Material culture-loaded words are a cultural load term that includes food, clothing and housing. It is formed by the various material goods created by humans to satisfy their needs for survival and livelihood [18]. Because each ethnic group has a different way of producing and living, there is also great variation in their material culture. Food names and dwellings are an important part of *The Mountain Whisperer* text, and these reflect the unique food and dwelling habits of the local people of Shaanxi. Just as the example below:

Example 1: 街道上那些辣汤肥肠摊前，吃喝的人就得防着麻雀粪冷不丁从空中掉下来 (Jia 73)。

TT: What’s more, for the food vendors selling dishes such as spicy soup and pig intestines, or for the men who enjoyed drinking and eating outside, they often had to be more concerned about bird droppings than actually taking pleasure in what they were doing (Payne 168).

Spicy soup and pig intestines were one of the traditional dishes in Shaanxi. The main difference between it and ordinary pig intestines was that when making spicy soup and pig intestines, shredded ginger, chopped green onion, sliced garlic, and other condiments were first laid flat on the surface together with dried chili peppers, and then hot oil was poured on top of the condiments. It was translated as “spicy soup and pig intestines” using the strategy of language translation method plus in-text explanation, which reproduced the connotation in that contextual culture. Among them, fatty sausage was the main raw material in the spicy soup and pig intestines, and wood ear and yellow cauliflower were the auxiliary ingredients. On the one hand, the translator’s direct translation of the main raw materials and auxiliary ingredients of the food can achieve the purpose of preserving the characteristics of the local Chinese food and spreading the excellent Chinese traditional culture; on the other hand, the readers of the translated language can generally get the basic information of the food through the translated text, so that the original language information can be effectively conveyed, thus ensuring the successful achievement of the intercultural communication purpose. It also helped readers to get closer to the original text of the author, which showed the translator’s rigorous and pragmatic attitude [19]. Such a concise and authentic way of expression not only conforms to the linguistic norms of the translated language, but also enables the readers of the target language to read and understand, and at the same time, achieve fidelity to the original language and culture.

2) Spiritual culture-loaded words

Spiritual and folkloric cultural references relate to folk beliefs, witchcraft, taboos, philosophical ethics and folk art. It is well known that the names of characters in literature are often more than just a simple title; they usually carry a deeper meaning than the author intended.

Example 2: 过风楼实在不是个好风水地方，庄稼低矮，树也长不到三丈高，不是到一丈多就生横枝，便是长到桶粗树身开裂，往出流一种黑水(Jia 145)。

TT: In truth, Guofenglou wasn’t blessed with good feng shui. There was a lack of fertile land, and the trees stood well below thirty feet or so (Payne 472).

“Feng Shui” was a superstitious term referring to the situation of residential bases and graveyards. In the process of development and formation for thousands of years, feng shui has absorbed and integrated much wisdom from ancient science, philosophy, aesthetics, religion and folklore. It was a mixture of science and superstition with a reasonable core, and truly reflected the ancient understanding of astronomy, geography and the relationship between people and the environment.

In ancient China, the siting of buildings, cities and houses focused on “feng shui”. In the original text, the translator translated the word “风水” as “feng shui”, and the location of the national wind tower and the growth of crops and trees were used to determine “feng shui”. This phonetic translation conveyed the ideological outlook of people’s lives and the spirit of the times. However, this spiritual aspect was carried by nature, which manifested itself in a natural form. From a philosophical point of view, without natural mountains, shapes and water, there would

be no spiritual “feng shui”. Accordingly, the good “feng shui” of a village depended first of all on the natural environment and landscape of the village.

3) Social culture-loaded words

Social culture-loaded words are mainly related to various aspects of social culture such as lifestyle, manners, values and beliefs, which have strong national, regional and unique characteristics and are difficult to find their counterparts in other cultures. *The Mountain Whisperer* contains a large number of social culture-loaded words such as honorifics and customs and rituals, and it is these social culture-loaded words that reflect the unique culture of Shaanxi.

Example 3: 戏生的爹不仅是半截子, 而且还是个秃子, 村里人叫他是乌龟, 但这乌龟在双凤县却是了不得的签手(Jia 209)。

TT: Not only did Xi Sheng’s father suffer from dwarfism like all the other men in Danggui, but he was bald as well. His distinct appearance led to him being given the nickname Tortoise, but in Shuangfeng he was best known for being the most amazing shadow play puppeteer ever seen (Payne 467).

As is known to all, the name of a character in a literary work was usually more than just a simple name, but contained a deeper meaning that the author wanted to convey. The translator directly compared the Xi sheng’s father to a “Tortoise”, which was a simple and clear way of translation, vividly reflecting the character features of the Xi sheng’s father.

The original name of his father was not the same, but some characteristics of his body make others call him so. The translator used the synonym substitution methods, translating “乌龟” directly into “tortoise” instead of turtle, which not only reflected the distinctive character characteristics of the Xi sheng’s father, but also showed the rustic atmosphere of the countryside, as well as made the translation compact. The nickname “tortoise” came from some characteristics that the Xi sheng’s father holds (e.g., his walking posture). The word “turtle” conveyed his character and traits, and also accurately conveyed the meaning of the original text.

4) Linguistic culture-loaded words

Linguistic culture-loaded words are expressions, vocabulary and customary usage that are rich in cultural connotation and ethnic characteristics. Language is the carrier of culture, and the language of a nation is not only a tool for communication, but also a reflection of the cultural characteristics of the nation. The Chinese language contains a large number of allusions, four-character idioms, proverbs and hysteries, etc. These expressions, with their special semantics and expressions, are loaded with the long historical traditions and folk customs of the Chinese nation. There are a large number of four-character idioms and fixed expressions in the text based on *The Mountain Whisperer*, most of which are simple, powerful and rhetorical, some of which can be inferred from their literal meaning in context, while some can only be effectively conveyed by interpreting the cultural connotation of the original text.

Example 4: 番禺坪在莽山上, 那里是一条骡马古道, 常有驮队和脚夫经过, 也正如收获麦子也得收获麦草一样, 莽山上的土匪也最多(Jia 16)。

TT: He was dispatched to the area of Panyu that lay along the Mang mountain range in southern Hunan, near the border with Guangdong Province. The route was a well-known passage for pack animals carrying agricultural produce between the interior and the more coastal regions (Payne 35).

“Mule and horse ancient road”, the original description of the Central Plains to Lingnan’s major transportation routes, also known as salt and iron ancient road or official hat Avenue. The term “骡马古道”, a direct translation of the text will be “ancient mule and horse trail”, which was bound to be confusing to the target readers in that context. So in order to meet the needs of the readers, the translator made an effort to improve the readability. The translator adopted an absolute universalization translation method and used the neutral indicator “pack animals carrying agricultural produce” to reproduce the literal indication of “骡马古道”. This translation method transformed the implied meaning “pack animals carrying agricultural produce” into a non-implied meaning to a certain extent, and also conveyed the cultural connotation of “pack animals carrying agricultural produce”. It allowed readers to realize the purpose of cross-cultural communication in the process of reading.

4. The Acceptance of *The Mountain Whisperer* in the English World

The Mountain Whisperer was released by ACA Publishing Ltd in April 2021, which is another successful attempt to export the best of Chinese contemporary literature [20]. The English translation by Canadian translator Christopher Payne won the Sixth Chinese Book Award for Outstanding Publications in 2016 and has been enjoyed by a wide range of overseas readers. The relevant book reviews reflect more intuitively the opinions of professional and general readers overseas, and can demonstrate a general idea of how the translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* is received overseas. An exhaustive search for English book reviews and reader ratings of English translations is being conducted, and statistics, collation, translation and analysis have been carried out.

4.1. Book Reviews and Online Reader’s Reviews of *The Mountain Whisperer*

English book reviews can be divided into two categories according to their sources: media book reviews and online platform readers’ book reviews. Among them, media book reviews include paper media book reviews and specialized featured website book reviews. Paper media can be divided into three categories: academic media, popular media and book trade publications, depending on the level of expertise of the book review and the main readership [21]. Specialized websites include *New York Books*, *The Writer’s Lady*, *The Book Review*, the quarterly *Asian Review of Books*, *Strange Horizons*, a U.S. online science fiction magazine, and science fiction blogs, with rapid distribution and wide coverage [22].

A total of 215 English-language book reviews were collected. Among them, 17

reviews of books in paper media and 29 reviews of books on specialized websites were extracted. The vast majority are reviews of pang translations due to factors such as the timing of publication. Among the 17 paper media book reviews collected, there were few from academic media and book industry publications, only *The Cox Review*. The vast majority came from popular media, including *Time*, *The New Yorker*, *The Global Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, as well as online versions of some newspapers and magazines. These media are mainly for the general public, and the book reviews are more concise and in plain language, covering the thematic content of the work, a summary of the storyline, and the author's influence in the Chinese-language market, etc. A significant portion of the reviews also involve feedback on the quality of the translation.

In terms of reader book reviews on online platforms, readers' book reviews were examined on Amazon.com, the world's largest book shopping mall. As the Douban of the English-speaking world, it is currently the world's largest online reading community, and the reader reviews it presents can more objectively reflect the reader's acceptance of *The Mountain Whisperer* in the English-speaking world. Such book reviews are voluminous, but the reviews are short and more focused. It demonstrated fully the evaluation and reception of the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* in the English-speaking world.

4.2. The Comment and Acceptance of *The Mountain Whisperer*

Reader ratings refer mainly to Amazon's user ratings. At present, the overall rating of the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* on the U.S. version of Amazon.com has achieved 5 stars, 4 stars, and 3 stars. The 5-star ratings, 4-star ratings, and 3-star ratings of the English translation on the U.S. Version of Amazon reached 65%, 22%, and 11%, respectively (**Table 2**), indicating that Amazon readers are generally relatively satisfied with the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer*.

Table 2. Amazon readers' review of the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer*.

Star Rating	Number	Percentage
5 stars	83	65%
4 stars	28	22%
3 stars	14	11%
2 stars	0	0
1 stars	3	2%

It can be seen from that the above chart the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* has received quite positive comments overseas, and the translation and dissemination have been more successful. In accession, the acceptance of the translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* in the English-speaking world is also more optimistic, and in general, overseas readers still have a positive attitude toward the translation.

4.3. The Translation Quality of *The Mountain Whisperer*

Some media and online readers commented on the quality of the translation of the English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer*. The positive evaluations included both the evaluation of the translation itself and the evaluation of the subtextual strategy of the English translation, while negative evaluations focused mainly created on the reader care of translation.

1) Positive feedback

The translation of culture-loaded words in *The Mountain Whisperer* was a major difficulty for Jia Pingwa's English translation, including the following aspects: there were few similar translations available, and there is a lack of reference standards; the genre of Shaanxi long novels has a unique language style and many culture-loaded words; there were great differences between English and Chinese languages; the work contained various Chinese historical and cultural background and Chinese "Square Earth Culture", etc. Most readers found the translation were smooth and readable, and the translator's precise grasp of the original style and full preservation of the Chinese flavor reflected the translator's "reader-care perspective" in the context. The Canadian translator Christopher Payne's translation is generally considered to be good. He made some changes in his translation, and this change facilitated the inherent characteristics of *The Mountain Whisperer*.

The English translation of *The Mountain Whisperer* provides key information about the text at the beginning, which helps the initial readers check the features of the characters and connect them to the context, thus deepening their impressions. The majority of readers are positive about this. Amazon readers note: "It (Introduction at the beginning of the translation) helps remind you who each character is, and these character descriptions are brief but illuminating. Each of her works carries a richness of detail, full of movement and imagination, full of saber-rattling excitement. Readers commented, "I enjoyed and looked forward to the illustrations scattered throughout the book, which made a considerable addition to the story and helped me conceptualize the locations as well as visualize the characters and timeline."

2) Negative feedback

Some of the mistranslation in the English translation belong to the details of the daily narrative. Although there are more of them, they involve less context and do not affect the development of the novel's plot. For example, the cantor was asked to sing a yin song in a village because "那里放炮老死人". And "老" as an adverb of frequency is mistranslated as an adjective: "There was an explosion there ... some old men died", and "old men died" is mistranslated as "dead old men".

Some critics believe that readers care of the translation needs to be improved, focusing on the way the translator handles the names and nicknames of the characters appearing in the novel. "Some readers will be annoyed by the handling of names at first. Amazon readers commented, "The disparity in names irritated me—some names retain their pinyin (e.g., Xi sheng), but some are translated directly. It took me a while to figure out who exactly a certain character was, and

I would appreciate it if all these names could be kept in phonetic form to maintain authenticity and readability”.

5. Conclusions

A good literary translation is not a reproduction or imitation of the original work, but a comprehensible re-creation of the original work [23]. *The Mountain Whisperer*, a wide variety of culture-loaded words with classical Chinese characteristics and the translation should be problem-specific, using appropriate translation theories and methods. The English translation of culture-loaded words undertakes the great mission of spreading traditional Chinese cultural ideas, and is an important link and necessary means for Chinese culture to go abroad.

The English translation of culture-loaded words is crucial in the translation of Chinese long works of fiction, and is an effective means of spreading traditional Chinese culture and ideas. Good works need to be introduced through translation, and the words embedded in the works with cultural characteristics need extra attention. As a result, scholars should dive in and increase their research efforts in this area of problems and strive to push the boundaries. More articles and views will be used to push the study of English translation of culture-loaded words to a deeper level. As China’s economic power grows stronger, readers in the English-speaking world want to know more about the life of Chinese people through literary works, long novels that reflect the current situation of Chinese society and promote Chinese traditional culture should be selected for translation to increase the likelihood that the translations will be welcomed by overseas readers. This requires the strength of English translation of culture-loaded words in long novels.

In addition, due to Orientalism, Eurocentrism, the difference between Chinese and Western languages and cultures, and poetic differences, the reception of Chinese vernacular novels abroad has not been satisfactory. On the one hand, the reading body of Chinese literature in English translation is confined to elite intellectuals such as university professors, professional students or researchers, and fewer works are enthusiastically read by the general public. “As things stand now, except for Scandinavian crime novels, it is difficult for translations in any language to become best-selling novels in English-speaking countries [24].” Scholars should combine their efforts in the process of research, broaden their perspectives and enrich their horizons, so as to broaden the depth of research.

Fund Project

2024 Annual Postgraduate Special Education Reform Project at Xi’an University of Petroleum - Excellent Case Library: “Terminology Has Something to Say” (2024-X-YAL-007).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] 赵红嫣, 武玉莲. 生态翻译学视域下陕西方言英译的三维转换——以贾平凹的《老生》为例[J]. 作家天地, 2023(6): 174-178.
- [2] 李庆明, 王萍. 从生态翻译学三维转换视角看《老生》的英译[J]. 作家天地, 2023(1): 134-136.
- [3] 钟敬文. 民俗学概论[M]. 北京: 北京大学出版社, 2011.
- [4] Payne, C. (2021) *The Mountain Whisperer*. Alain Charles Asia.
- [5] 黄平. 阴歌: 乡土文明的现代中国想象, 细读《老生》[J]. 文艺争鸣, 2017(6): 76-82.
- [6] 谢天振, 编. 隐身于现身: 从传统译论到现代译论[M]. 北京: 北京大学出版社, 2014.
- [7] 余颖. 在英国重新发现中国“贾平凹翻译文学研讨会”[EB/OL]. <http://www.360kuai.com/pc/941e521e52d1aa7a41dbd>
- [8] Zare Behtash, E. and Firoozkoobi, S. (2009) A Diachronic Study of Domestication and Foreignization Strategies of Culture Specific Items: In English Persian Translations of Six of Hemingway's Works. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 7, 1576-1582.
- [9] 陈喜荣. 从功能语法语境理论看文化负载词的翻译[J]. 四川外语学院学报, 1998(1): 96-100.
- [10] 王恩科. 文化负载词翻译技巧选择探讨[J]. 重庆商学院学报, 2002(4): 83-85.
- [11] 王德春. 汉语国俗词典[M]. 南京: 河海大学出版社, 1990: 8-11.
- [12] Lefevere, A. (2021) Culture-Loaded Words and Translation Equivalence. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 11, 210-215.
- [13] Aixelá, J.F. (1996) Culture-Specific Items in Translation. In: Alvarez, R. and Vidal, M.C., Eds., *Translation, Power, Subversion, Multilingual Matters*, 52-78. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800417915-005>
- [14] Toury, G. (1995) *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.4>
- [15] 周领顺. 译者行为批评: 理论框架[M]. 北京: 商务印书馆, 2014.
- [16] 陶忘机. 论中国现代文学翻译[C]//马会娟. 彼岸的声音——汉学家论中国文学翻译. 天津: 南开大学出版社, 2019: 125-141.
- [17] 邵霞, 马会娟. 中国乡土小说中的文学方言英译与接受研究——以《到黑夜想你没办法》英译为例[J]. 解放军外国语学院学报, 2021, 44(2): 74-82.
- [18] 王珺. 跨文化视域下的英汉翻译策略探究[M]. 长春: 吉林大学出版, 2020: 86-87.
- [19] 钟敬文. 民俗学概论[M]. 第2版. 北京: 高等教育出版社, 2010.
- [20] 王吉. 世界文学语境下的乡土景观[J]. 世界中的中国文学, 2022(6): 125-130.
- [21] 缪佳, 汪宝荣. 麦家《解密》在英美的评价与接受——基于英文书评的考察[J]. 中国现代文学研究丛刊, 2018(2): 229-239.
- [22] 汪宝荣. 阎连科小说《受活》在英语世界的评价与接受——基于英文书评的考察[J]. 南方文坛, 2016(5): 60-66.
- [23] 徐曼. 《聊斋志异》翟理斯英译本研究综述[J]. 郑州轻工业学院学报(社会科学版), 2012, 13(3): 109-112.
- [24] 韩斌. 多方努力, 共创佳译[C]//孙宜学, 编. 汉语国际教育与中外文化交流. 上海: 上海三联书店出版社, 2017: 85-88.

Appendix 1. Abstract and Keywords in Chinese

基于《老生》译本的文化负载词英译研究

摘要：《老生》是当代著名作家贾平凹创作的长篇小说，其中涉及大量陕西民俗文化相关词汇。加拿大翻译家，多伦多大学教授庞夔夫认为文化负载词的翻译是《老生》英译过程中的难点，本文以贾平凹的长篇小说《老生》的英译为个案，以民俗学理论为基础，基于艾克西拉提出的 12 种文化专有项翻译方法，将原作中的文化负载词分为 4 类。同时指出文化负载词对于中国长篇小说的对外翻译传播来说是个难点，并据此为其未来的发展提出建议，以期能为同类小说的翻译和在英语世界的传播提供借鉴。

关键词：《老生》，文化负载词，英译研究