

# The Translation of Culture-Loaded Words in Chinese Poems from the Perspective of Globalization—A Case Study of Lin Yutang's Translation of *Forlorn* and *Taiyu Predicting Her Own Death*

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Manuscript received September 11, 2023; revised October 30, 2023; accepted December 7, 2023; published May 31, 2024

**Abstract**—As a bridge between different cultures, translation is also crucial to the cultural soft power of a nation and a country. Due to the differences between different cultures and the choice of translation strategies, there are still many obstacles in cultural exchanges as shown in translated works. Under the background of globalization, this paper takes Lin Yutang's two poetry translation works as the research object, explores their writing background and cultural connotation, and selects the culture-loaded words to explore the effective ways of cultural transmission.

**Keywords**—culture-loaded words, globalization, Lin Yutang, poetry translation

## I. INTRODUCTION

The world is now entering an era of great cultural development and prosperity, as well as an era of intercultural exchange and integration. In order for different cultures to learn from each other and thus achieve mutual promotion and progress, it is necessary to solve an old problem - the problem of language interchange. As a bridge between two different languages, translation plays an indispensable role in this progress. Translation is a need for human communication, which determines that the main task of it lies in helping the exchange of ideas and promoting cultural development [1]. In addition, translation plays an irreplaceable role in improving the international status of a country and its cultural soft power.

Lin Yutang (1895–1976) was a world-renowned writer, scholar, translator and linguist. His studies at Shanghai Baptist University, Harvard University and Leipzig University gave him proficiency in both Chinese and English as well as a profound understanding of both Eastern and Western cultures. These valuable experiences and his rich knowledge base laid a solid foundation for his achievements in literary and translation. In his preface to Wu Shutian's *On Translation*, Lin Yutang [2] discusses his theoretical ideas on translation in a comprehensive and systematic manner. Firstly, he believed that the translator must meet three requirements: the first is a thorough understanding of the original text; the second is a good command of Chinese; and the third is the training on translation. Secondly, Lin Yutang [2] also proposed three criteria for translation, namely "faithfulness", "fluency" and "beauty". With regard to the translation of poetry, he believed that context came first and that the choice

of words should be evocative.

Yan Yu of the southern Song dynasty said in his *Cang Lang poetry*: "poets chant temperament." Thus it can be seen that poetry is a genre to express the poet's feelings and aspirations, which contains rich emotion. It can be said that poetry embodies the essence of Chinese culture for thousands of years and it is an indispensable part of the treasure house of Chinese culture. In a world of globalization, this paper studies the strategies and methods adopted by Mr. Lin Yutang in his poetry translation and summarizes his experience in order to explore an effective way to spread Chinese culture and show Chinese gorgeous beauty to the world.

## II. STUDIES ON LIN YUTANG'S TRANSLATION

Since the 1990s, the research on Lin Yutang has entered a period of development and initial prosperity because of the increase of research papers both in number and depth. During this period, not only the research methods became diversified, but also specialized research institutions appeared, and more attention was paid to his "humorous" prose [3]. As Shen [4] said, "in addition to the traditional literature, a humorous school is added, which indirectly makes Chinese literature more diversified and enriches people's feelings and thoughts, this humorous school helps Chinese traditional literary forms become more westernized."

Most of the researches on Lin Yutang's translation focus on his translation practice. Among them, most researchers pay attention to his work *Six Chapters of Fu Sheng* and *My Country, My People*. Zhang [5] tried to find out Lin Yutang's translation theories and cultural strategies. As a translator who can successfully combine Chinese and western culture together, there are also researches that try to use Lin Yutang's translation practice as a guide to find a way to help Chinese culture go out. His translation thoughts were detailed in *The Historical Manuscripts of Chinese Translation Theories* (Chen Fukang, 2003) and *The History of Chinese Translation Thoughts in the 20th Century* (Wang Bingqin and Wang Jie, 2009). Table 1 shows some of the works translated by Lin Yutang, from English to Chinese. And Table 2 are the Chinese to English works. Few scholars specialize in the poetry translation of Lin Yutang.

Table 1. Works translated by Lin Yutang (English-Chinese)

English	Press	Year	Chinese
Memories of the Nanking Revolution	Shanghai Beixin Bookstore (上海北新书局)	1928	《国民革命外记》
Between Tears and Laughter	Shanghai Beixin Bookstore (上海北新书局)	1928	《女子与知识》
Ibsen and His Creation	Shanghai Chunhao Bookstore (上海春潮书局)	1929	《易卜生评传及其情书》
Pygmalion	Shanghai Kaiming Bookstore (上海开明书店)	1929	《卖花女》

Table 2. Lin Yutang's translation works (Chinese-English)

English	Press	Year	Chinese
Letters from a Chinese Amazon and Wartime Essays	Shanghai Commercial Press	1930	《女子从军日记》谢冰莹
A Nun of Taishan and Other Translations	Shanghai Commercial Press	1936	《老残游记》刘鄂
Six Chapters of a Floating Life	Shanghai West Wind Press	1939	《浮生六记》沈复
The Travels of Mingliao	Shanghai West Wind Press	1940	《冥寥子游》屠龙

As a genre that condense the spirit of the Chinese nation and has a strong national identity, poetry is more capable of presenting the image of China to the West. Lin Yutang is recognized as a great translator, and his English translations are highly regarded. Therefore, under the background of globalization, it is necessary and important to study the methods and paths of Lin Yutang's poetry translation.

### III. READER-RESPONSE THEORY AND TRANSLATION

#### A. Reader-Response Theory

In the second half of the 20th century, Eugene A. Nida first introduced the reader-response theory into translation practice, which was a new theoretical leap in western literary criticism and was widely used in the field of translation. Nida's definition of translation is "to reproduce the information of the source language in the most appropriate, natural and equivalent language from the semantic to the stylistic level, first in meaning and then in style" [6]. First, he believes that translation is a skill that can be applied in the process of translation practice. Second, from the aspect of social semiotics and sociolinguistics, he thinks all translations can be regarded as the portrait of art. Besides, he also holds the view that translation is a science, he changes the statement that "translation is science" into "translation research is science". In his opinion, the translation process requires the participation of multiple disciplines, including linguistics, cultural anthropology, psychology and communication theory [7]. Therefore, he devoted himself to applying linguistic theories to translation and regarded the scientific study of translation as an important branch of comparative linguistics.

When it comes to tell whether a translation is good or not, Nida believes that the criterion is not whether the words can be understood or whether the syntax is normative, but the reflection of readers. He believes that a good translation can accurately convey the emotion of the original text to the readers. According to his theory, translation should firstly compress the original text into the kernel of the event with the simplest structure and the most obvious meaning. Then the meaning of the source language is translated into the receptor language with the simplest structure, and the whole translation is constructed by the expression way that

conforms to the style and semantics of the receptor language.

#### B. The Application of Reader-response Theory in Poetry Translation under the Background of Globalization

Nida's reader-response theory should be regarded as a process guide, aiming to attract people's attention with reader-response as the introduction. His main purpose is to make the translator translate step by step according to his theory, finally the translator can achieve the effect of making the translated reader produce the same feeling as the original reader. According to this theory, the feelings and reflections of the readers should be fully considered in translation, and appropriate methods should be adopted to enable the readers to understand the target text. Due to the special background and form of creation, many words or images which is unique to Chinese culture often appear in poetry, they can be called culture-loaded words. For example, "风" and "月" in Chinese can be used to represent beautiful things or express homesickness. "风", in particular, can be divided into easterly, westerly, southerly and northerly, each of which has a different meaning. So, they cannot be simply replaced by "wind" and "moon" in English. There are also some unique Chinese words such as "阴阳", "正月", "太极", etc. These words were formed in the development history of China and represent a certain aspect of Chinese characteristics. If they were simply translated literally, they would probably not be understood by foreign readers. And because of the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, there will be differences in meanings or the feelings conveyed. Therefore, translators are required to convey the deep meaning of the original text to readers through different translation approaches and strive to make the readers of the translation can understand the meaning that the author wants to express smoothly. In order to vigorously promote Chinese culture to go out and strengthen cultural output, translators must consider the feelings of western readers when translating and conduct translation activities in the most acceptable way.

### IV. THE TRANSLATION METHOD OF CULTURE-LOADED WORDS IN LIN YUTANG'S POETRY TRANSLATIONS

Culture-loaded words are words, phrases and idioms that signify something unique to a certain culture, reflecting the uniqueness of a particular nationality that has gradually

accumulated over a long historical process and is different from that of other nations. Chinese culture-loaded words are an important external expression of Chinese culture, and it is difficult to find their counterparts in other languages [8]. Firstly, although the differences in the languages of various ethnic groups are determined by their respective nationalities, the oneness of human living conditions and physiological constitution determines that the laws of human thinking are similar, and therefore, different ethnic groups have similarities in understanding and recognizing things; Secondly, translation has a long history, and there are numerous cases of translators who overcame cultural gaps and achieved success, therefore, the translatability of culture-loaded words is proven by a great deal of translation practice. It is clear that translators can still use their initiative in a limited space to retain and convey the cultural elements contained in Chinese culture-loaded words.

After reading Lin Yutang's translations, his approach to translating culture-loaded words can be summarized in the following categories.

(i) Direct transliteration

The so-called transliteration is to use Chinese Pinyin to directly mark the pronunciation of words, which is the most common method of translating culture-loaded words. For example, “馄饨” is translated as wonton.

(ii) Transliteration and annotation

This is another direct method developed from the first one. When the use of Chinese Pinyin alone is not enough to explain the meaning of the words clearly, or when it would be difficult for the target readers to understand, the method of adding notes can be chosen to make the translation more understandable. For example, Lin Yutang translated the term “范文正公” in *Six Chapters of A Floating Life* by adding the note “Fan Chung-an, an upright prime minister of the Sung Dynasty”, so that the reader could have a better understanding of Fan Zhongyan.

(iii) Literal translation

Literal translation is to translate Chinese into the corresponding English. For example, Lin Yutang translates the phrase “金母桥” as Mother Gold's Bridge.

(iv) Literal translation and annotation

Literal translation with annotation is the same as transliteration with annotation, aiming at giving the reader a deeper understanding of the text. For example, Lin Yutang translates “五岳” as the Five Sacred Mountains, and here he also adds: The Five Sacred Mountains are: (1) Taishan, the East Sacred Mountains (in Shantung); (2) Huashan, the West Sacred Mountains (in Shennxi); (3) Hengshan, the North Sacred Mountains (in Shanxi); (4) Hengshan, the South Sacred Mountains (in Hunan); (5) Sungshan, the Central Sacred Mountains (in Honan).

(v) Transliteration and literal translation

For example, “沧浪亭” is translated as Ts'anglang Pavilion.

(vi) Liberal translation

If it is difficult to find the same form of expression as the original, the translator may choose to retain only the meaning of the original instead of the form, such as translating《诗经》 as *The Book of Poems*.

Lin Yutang also made extensive use of the above methods

in his translations of poetry.

## V. ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURE-LOADED WORDS IN *FORLORN*

### A. The Main Writing Background

Li Qingzhao (1084–1155) was a famous poet in the Song dynasty whose poetic style was unique and she was a pivotal figure in literary history. Unlike her earlier works, which were written in a bright and lively style, *Forlorn* was written at a time of foreign invasion, the loss of home and the death of her husband. In the late autumn, she wrote this poem which is full of sadness, describing the lonely and desolate scenery of late autumn to express her longing for her husband and her suffering of being uprooted and lonely.

Among the English versions, this article selects the translation version of Xu Yuanchong and Lin Yutang, which are widely spread, for comparison.

### B. The Translation of Culture-loaded Words

Some of the culture-loaded words in this poetry are listed as Table 3.

Table 3. Culture-loaded words in *Forlorn*

The original text	Lin Yutang's translation	Xu Yuanchong's translation
寻寻觅觅，冷冷清清，凄凄惨惨戚戚	so dim, so dark, So dense, so dull, so damp, so dank, So dead!	I look for what I miss, I know not what it is; I feel so sad, so drear, So lonely, without cheer.
乍暖还寒	now warm, now cold	lingering cold
三杯两盏	a few cups	cup on cup
黄花	fallen flowers	yellow flowers

In the translation of the whole piece, the first line is of the utmost importance. The author uses 14 double characters in a row, and although he does not directly write the word “sorrow”, he does show it everywhere, creating a sad and lonely atmosphere, and it also has a beauty of the rhyme. The words “寻寻觅觅”，“冷冷清清”，“凄凄惨惨”，“戚戚” are all unique in Chinese for describing the environment or sorrow. It is difficult to find direct equivalents in English, and the words “寻寻觅觅”，“冷冷清清” are semantically repeated. Therefore, when translating this line, both the artistic conception and the rhythm of the original text should be taken into account. In Xu Yuanchong's translation, the first two lines are similar in structure, while the next few lines are repeated in another structure, with the ending “without cheer” echoing the sentiment of the original. In contrast to his translation, Lin Yutang [2] says, “In my translation of Li Yi'an's *Forlorn*, the 14 words of “寻寻觅觅，冷冷清清，凄凄惨惨戚戚” really troubled me. The whole meaning of this poetry is conveyed by “梧桐更兼细雨” and “独自怎生得黑”. So I use the two-tone method, translate them into “so dim, so dark, so dense, so dull, so damp, so dank, so dead”. These 14 words exactly express a feeling of loneliness. The word “dead” is burdened with the heaviest feeling. It is the pain and joy of the translator: only by taking great pains can a good article be translated.” Lin Yutang adopts the single sound byte in the words which begins with “d” and uses

double sound and alliteration to maintain the beauty of the original text. At the same time, dim, dark, dense, dull, damp, dank, dead, these seven words express a more and more deep feeling one by one, which can let readers experience the author's despair, sad in person.

The explanation of “乍暖还寒” in Chinese is “describing the climate at the end of winter and the beginning of spring with hot and cold”. Lin Yutang translated it into “now warm, now cold”, which conforms to the Chinese meaning. Compared with Xu Yuanchong's translation, it can convey the feeling of unstable temperature at the end of winter and the beginning of spring. “三杯两盏” in the poetry is to express the author's mood, among which “三” and “两” are mostly indeterminate numbers in Chinese, rather than refer to three or two cups of wine. Lin Yutang's “a few cups” and Xu Yuanchong's “cup on cup” did not translate it into exact numbers, but retained the expression habits of Chinese.

“黄花” in the poetry is usually synonymous with chrysanthemum, but it has a lot of meaning. First of all, it is a symbol of nobleness such as Qu Yuan's *Li Sao*. Secondly, it is also a symbol of seclusion. Tao Yuanming always use it in his poetry in order to show his leisure and contentment. In Li Qingzhao's *Forlorn*, “黄花” is a sentimental symbol, expressing a sense of change and fading. In Xu Yuanchong's translation, “黄花” was directly translated into “yellow flowers”, he simply found the words with the same meaning in English and combined them together, which could not reflect this feeling. By contrast, Lin Yutang translated it as “fallen flowers”, which expresses the bleak feeling of fallen flowers.

## VI. ANALYSIS OF CULTURE-LOADED WORDS IN *TAIYU PREDICTING HER OWN DEATH*

### A. The Main Writing Background

*Taiyu Predicting Her Own Death* is one of the most popular ancient poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, recited by Lin Daiyu in the 27th chapter of the novel. *Taiyu Predicting Her Own Death* has rich and unique imagination, it imitates the song style of the early tang dynasty. On the surface, this poetry's purpose is to write flowers, but in fact, it is a metaphor of people, expressing Lin Daiyu's sentiments about herself. The whole poem is full of tears, resentment and anger, the emotional tone is strong and sad, showing a bleak and bitter feeling. This poem fully displays Daiyu's sentimental character and her subtle but complex psychological activities. It expresses her anxiety and confusion about life and death, love and hate, which has a strong sense of artistic appeal. It is the feeling of Lin Daiyu's own life experience and plays an important role in the successful shaping of the image of Lin Daiyu by Cao Xueqin. Because this poetry expresses very rich emotions, so how to convey this emotion has become a major problem in translation, which also increases the difficulty of the translation.

### B. The Translation of Culture-Loaded Words

Some of the culture-loaded words in this poetry are listed as Table 4.

Table 4. Culture-loaded words in *Taiyu Predicting Her Own Death*

The original text	Lin Yutang's translation
红消香断	faded and broken dreams of fragrance
闺中	mansion door
青灯	flickering lamp
红颜	tender, fragile beauties

In the first line, Lin Yutang translated “红消香断” into “faded and broken dreams of fragrance”. In Chinese, we usually use “香消玉殒” as a metaphor of a beautiful woman's death, which means falling like a jade and withering like a flower. Here, Lin Daiyu uses the withering of a flower to describe her own life. In Lin Yutang's translation, Lin Daiyu was connected with flowers by the translation of “a dream of fragrance”, which can help readers understand the metaphor meaning in this poetry better.

Since ancient times, “闺” in Chinese has had the meaning of a woman's living room, such as “深闺”, “春闺”, “闺阁”, the daughter of a large family with both ability and virtue is often referred to as “大家闺秀”. The woman described in the line is Lin Daiyu herself. From this perspective, Lin Yutang's translation does not reflect the connotation of the Chinese character “闺”.

The word “青灯” also often appears in a Chinese article, and it has religious and historical significance in Chinese, so it can be seen as a culture-loaded word. In the past, the lampshade in temples were made of cloth, the color is usually cyan, so it was called “青灯”. “常伴青灯” is commonly used to refer to a state of mind which is quiet and free from vulgarity, or people who always keep alone. “青灯” in the original text is a metaphor for Daiyu's loneliness. Lin Yutang translated it into “flickering lamp”, which means a light that shines unsteadily. Although it can express the environmental characteristics at that time, the description of Daiyu's inner world is still a little inadequate, lacking some sense of loneliness.

According to the contemporary Chinese Dictionary, the main meanings of “红颜” are: 1. the rosy face of young people; 2. a young person; 3. the beautiful face of a woman; 4. a beautiful woman. Here it refers to both the flowers and Daiyu herself. Lin Yutang's translation is “tender, fragile beauties”, by using these two adjectives to modify the word “beauty”, he not only writes the beauty of the flower, but also shows the fragility of Dai Yu's life, which can make readers have a deeper understanding of the image of Lin Daiyu.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Globalization has always been an inevitable trend, and there must be communication and integration between different languages and cultures. As a unique carrier of Chinese traditional culture, the development of poetry has a long history and is very distinctive. Although many translators and translation theorists have paid attention to poetry translation, the existing research is far from enough. When translating culture-loaded words, it is not enough to only have literal equivalence, especially in the context of globalization, which is also related to the improvement of China's cultural soft power and the improvement of national discourse power [9]. Therefore, the translation of Chinese culture-loaded words is necessary and should reflect Chinese

characteristics as much as possible.

As a writer, translator and scholar who is proficient in both Chinese and western cultures and good at using two languages, Lin Yutang has a natural advantage in poetry translation. His translation is precise and elegant, in that it can combine Chinese and western cultures together. So, not only the readers can understand the connotation in his translation, but Chinese tradition culture can also be spread to the greatest extent by his translation.

Through the study of the translation of these two poetries works of Lin Yutang, we can summarize some methods that can be adopted in the translation of poetry with obvious characteristics of Chinese traditional culture.

First, transliteration method can be adopted for some words that cannot be directly translated to English and are loaded with rich traditional Chinese cultural meanings. This method can introduce and spread some traditional cultural words which are unique to China to foreign countries step by step. And at the same time, it can avoid misinterpretation or misunderstanding caused by cultural differences.

Second, if necessary, the order of the original text can be changed. Due to the particularity of poetic format, some poets may break the normal language order when writing poetry. Therefore, in order to make the translation smooth and easy for readers to understand, the translator can adjust the word order of the translated text according to the specific situation.

Today, combined with the background of globalization, it is necessary to retranslate some cultural works. Although Lin Yutang often adopts liberal translation in his translation, and this method did play a role in spreading Chinese culture in a certain period. However, with the improvement of China's international status, many culture-loaded words have been widely recognized in the western world, such as "shaolin", "mahjong" and "hutong". So, translators should translate in an innovative way (e.g., with literal translation and domestication as the major method) in order to promote

Chinese culture to go out.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Xiao Yu did the basic information analysis and wrote the original draft of the paper. Chunfang Yi provided some background information, helped review and edit and supervised the progress of writing. All authors had approved the final version.

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