

A Study on Julia Lovell's Translation of Culture-loaded Words in *Na Han*

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Abstract: There are many Chinese culture-loaded words in Lu Xun's novels, the translations of which have been the focus for many translators and scholars. Some typical examples of culture-loaded words from Lu Xun's novel *Na Han* will be analyzed in this paper, with English versions from Julia Lovell. Through analysis of examples, it summarizes the translating strategies in Julia Lovell's translation. On the basis of that, it will be easier for foreigners to understand Chinese culture for avoiding misunderstanding. Moreover, Chinese cultural-loaded will absolutely enrich the language.

Key words: Julia Lovell; Translation; Culture-loaded Words; *Na Han*

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1. INTRODUCTION

From 1960s, scholars home and abroad have made great contributions to the definition as well as translation of culture-loaded words. In 1996, the Spanish translator Javier Franco Aixelá proposed "culture-specific items" (CSI) and their translating strategies which were given the definition as "those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text (Aixelá, 2007:58). Chinese translation experts have also explained their definitions of these words respectively, among which Liao Qiyi's (廖七一, 2000) definition is well accepted, 'Culture-loaded words are the symbols of specific items, phrases or idioms, reflecting unique social ways of a certain nation gradually formed in their long history'. Generally speaking, culture-loaded words stem from some language phenomena or culture terms of source languages, most of which develop into the unique words with cultural connotation, without corresponding equivalents in target languages due to history background, social customs, religious beliefs or ideological differences. Some of the difficulties of translation stem from culturally idiosyncratic meaning. A text which only reflects the many concepts and literary canons of a particular isolated culture often includes information which is extremely difficult to understand and to translate in a distinct language-culture (Nida, 2001:114). *Na Han* is one of the most representative works of Lu Xun, a collection of 14 short stories written during the May Fourth Movement, which contains a large number of culture-loaded words reflecting the cultural features of that time. The paper will first summarize the classification of Chinese culture-loaded words in this novel and then introduce how Julia Lovell realizes the accurate complete transmission between the target language readers and the referential meaning of the source language through the proper translation strategies.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF CHINESE CULTURE-LOADED WORDS

The standards of division of culture-loaded words are greatly different. According to Nida (2001), it can be generated that culture can be divided into five categories according to cultural factors, namely linguistic culture, material culture, ecological culture, religious culture, and social culture. Thus it can be correspondingly applied to the classification of culture-loaded words, namely linguistic culture-loaded words, material culture-loaded words, ecological culture-loaded words, religious culture-loaded words, and social culture-loaded words. Taking Nida's division for reference, the author tries to sort Chinese culture-loaded words in *Na Han* into these five categories for a better study of Julia Lovell's translation of Lu Xun's novels.

2.1 Linguistic Culture-Loaded Words

Linguistic culture-loaded words refer to the expressions of the characteristics of the phonemic, formal and grammatical systems in a given language community. Thus, linguistic culture-loaded terms are formed under the influence of local culture during the period of the New Culture Movement, such as "陈年流水簿子""十世单传""痍毙""咸与维新"和"割骨疗亲". English and Chinese differ in lexicon, sound, syntax and grammar. Compared with the Chinese language, English is more logical, abstract, streamlined, symbolical and rational, while the Chinese language is more comprehensive, intuitive, pictographic, esthetic and ethical. To some extent, those diversified linguistic peculiarities create barriers in the translation practice.

2.2 Material Culture-Loaded Words

Material culture-loaded words have a close relation to the material things created by Chinese people, such as products, articles, tools, etc., which can directly represent the material culture caused by the people in a given cultural community. The New Culture Movement provided people with a number of unique materials, which can be found in *Na Han*, such as "十九个

钱”“纸钱”“著之竹帛”“阳文”“哭丧棒”“狗气杀”。It brings difficulties in the translation as there are no counterparts in English and then it is quite unfamiliar to the English readers.

2.3 Ecological Culture-Loaded Words

China is a continental ancient country with a vast size, where a variety of ecological culture-loaded words appears and becomes more and more important elements in Chinese language and traditional culture. Ecological culture-loaded terms reflect the geographical and ecological conditions of the people living and developing in a certain culture, including climate, land-forms, creature etc. There are a number of words that fully reflect the special ecological phenomenon at that time, such as “瓦楞”“竹匾”“鬼见怕”and “火克金”。

2.4 Religious Culture-Loaded Words

Religious culture-loaded terms are the cultural words which are closely related to ideology and philosophy, such as different religious faiths and worth. For example, “夜叉”“土谷祠”“大悲咒”and “观世音娘娘”。Religion is an important cultural factor. Religious tradition is the origin of culture-loaded words of this type. China is a country of many religious beliefs, and generally speaking, there are three major religions—Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. These three religions have enriched Chinese culture and have a great influence on Chinese people. While in English-speaking countries, Christian is the popular religion, so there are lots of words concerning it and it poses much difficulty in translating these words.

2.5 Social Culture-Loaded Words

Through long historical development, different societies have had different ways of life, traditional customs, conception of beauty and value systems, etc. Social culture-loaded terms refer to the culture formed during the development of human society, including the formation of different ethnic appellation, literary works, etc. “昆仲”, “知县”“丁举人”“裹脚”“发痧”and “衙役”“扬州三日, 嘉定屠城” are some of the examples of social culture-loaded terms in *Na Han*.

3. JULIA LOVELL'S TRANSLATION STRATEGY

Julia Lovell has a high level of aptitude for the creative use of language. By virtue of her smooth and highly readable rendering of modern and contemporary Chinese works, Lovell has successfully won acclaim from scholars and readers. She has played an important role in the introduction of Lu Xun's works and other modern and contemporary Chinese works.

When talking about the strategies in translating Chinese culture-loaded words, foreignization and domestication are two main translation strategies on Chinese culture-loaded words. Wang Lihui (王丽慧, 2014) classified the translation strategies of culture-loaded words into two types, 1) translation with domestication strategy, including free translation and substitution, 2) translation with foreignization strategy, including transliteration, literal translation and transliteration plus a note. There are two main strategies adopted in Julia Lovell's translation. The priority is taking Domestication as an overt translation strategy, which mainly includes free translation, substitute and explanatory translation in

translating Chinese culture-loaded words in *Na Han*.

Domestication refers to the method that applied the fluent and understandable style to minimum the strange feeling that the target readers have to the foreign text and deliver the exact message of the original text as well as clear the barriers of the difference in language and culture, which is the so called “make the author close to the reader” (方梦之, 2013:50). Nida is one of the representatives of the domesticating translation who says in his *Language Culture and Translating* “Some people have thought that each language is so distinct that there is no valid way in which the discourse of one language can be translated into another. But at least ninety percent of the fundamental structures of all languages are quite similar, and language universals outweigh the divergences” (Nida, 2001:106). Free translation, substitution and explanatory translation will be mainly analyzed in the part.

3.1 Free translation

Free translation is an important translation method. It remains the content of the source language without the form of the original. In translating, not only the content of the original text should be expressed to the target readers, but also the rhetorical style and syntactic form of the original text should be retained as far as possible. Free translation holds that language has different cultural connotations and forms of expression. When form becomes a barrier to translation, it is necessary to adopt free translation. Marked as the beginning of the May 4th New Literature, the real value of Lu Xun's novel lies in its innovative linguistic form and profound spiritual connotation. In translating, there are some forms which cannot be reproduced in the target language, because of the differences between Chinese and English. However, if literal translation is adopted blindly, regardless of English writing habits, it will make the target reader very difficult to read. Therefore, in order to provide readers with a smooth reading experience, Lovell adopts the strategy of free translation in most cases.

TABLE 1 EXAMPLES OF LOVELL'S FREE TRANSLATION

	ST	TT
1	只有廿年以前，把古久先生的陈年流水簿子，踹了一脚，古久先生很不高兴。(2017:9)	All I could think of was that twenty years ago, I stamped on the Records of the Past, and it has been my enemy since. (2009:22)
2	单四嫂心里计算：神签也求过了，愿心也许过了，单方也吃过了，要是还不见效，怎么办？(2017:32)	She had drawn lots, she had beseeched the gods, she was thinking to herself: she had even given him medicine. What else was there left for her to do? (2009:46)

In example 1 "陈年" describes Mr. Gujiu's account book has gone through a long time, which states the hero's appreciation towards it. "陈年流水簿子" is a figurative expression which refers to the long history of feudal rules in China. Lovell translated "陈年流水簿子" into "the Records of the Past", which may be a little bit abstract compared with the deep meaning hidden in the source text, but it can minimize the foreignness of the source-language text by changing heterogeneous elements into what is familiar to the target-language reader.

In example 2 the word "神签" refers to numbered pieces of bamboo with some line of poems, for people with beliefs need to toss for a foretell of future. Lovell translates it into "had drawn lots", basically expressing the original meaning. "愿心" refers to making a wish to gods, which is firstly mentioned in 《清平山堂话

本花灯娇莲女成佛记》. Lovell's translation as "she had beseeched the gods" reproduces the source meaning formally. "单方" means a single kind of herb or herbal medicine which is opposite to "复方". Lovell simplifies it into "medicine", simple but clear to the English readers. Here Lu Xun uses these three words to emphasize Mrs Shan's hopeless anxiety of any resort to her son's illness treatment.

Exact equivalents of these three words cannot be found in English. But the people of any language-culture have sufficient imagination and experience to understand how people of another language-culture may rightly differ in their behavior and values, since the behavioral differences within a single culture are usually greater than those which exist between cultures (Nida, 2001:106). Lovell mainly adopts domestication when dealing with these culture-loaded words to ensure readability, whose translation adapts to the cultural background of English reader well.

3.2 Substitution

Substitution means the replacement of the target culture-specific words for original culture-specific words. Therefore, substituting the original culture-loaded words can help the target reader easily understand the original writer's purposes in his cognitive environment.

TABLE 2 EXAMPLES OF LOVELL'S SUBSTITUTION

	ST	TT
3	他们——也有给知县打枷过的，也有给绅士掌过嘴的，也有衙役占了他妻子的。(2017:9)	Those people. They have been pilloried by their magistrate, beaten by their squires, had their wives requisitioned by bailiffs. (2009:23)
4	因为小鸡是容易积食，发痧，很难长寿的。(2017:118)	Because chicks have delicate stomach and easily fall ill, very few reached maturity. (2009:145)

In example 3 "知县" is a title for the officials in Ming and Qing Dynasty, namely "七品芝麻官". Actually Lovell's translation "their magistrate" is greatly different from the original meaning. A magistrate is an official who acts as a judge in law courts which deal with minor crimes or disputes. So magistrate is culturally different from the ancient "知县". "衙役" here is translated into "bailiffs" while "bailiff" in American English means an official who keeps order in court, takes people to their seats, watches prisoners, etc. "衙役" in Chinese means the people who work for the yamen(government office in feudal China), so "bailiff" is linguistically different from "衙役". Since the differences in Chinese and English cultures, some culture-loaded words cannot have formal equivalence but dynamic equivalence.

In example 4 "发痧" is a term in traditional Chinese medical science, which is similar to having a heatstroke. Lovell translates it into "fall ill" for the sake of making it to be accessible to English readers who have no Chinese or know little about China.

These two cultures are historically developing in isolation from each other and are linguistically very remote from each other. There are often historical and literary references that you have to be creative about how you explain to the reader. Julia Lovell says "I think translation problems are everywhere, basically, particularly if you are working from Chinese into English. These two cultures are historically developing in isolation from each other and are linguistically very remote from each other. There are often historical and literary references that you have to be creative about how you explain to the reader" (Baorong Wang, 2014:5).

3.3 Explanatory Translation

Lovell tends to take explanatory translation when dealing with culture-loaded words, usually transliteration adding some explanation. Explanatory translation is a well adopted strategy when translators face with culture loaded words.

TABLE 3 EXAMPLES OF LOVELL'S EXPLANATORY TRANSLATION

	ST	TT
5	杨二嫂发现了这件事，自己很以为功，便拿了那狗气杀。(2017:64)	Exceptionally, pleased with discovery of hers, she flew out of the door, scooping up en route a wooden trough covered over by a grille that we'd once used to prevent dogs getting at chickenfeed. (2009:78)
6	这是民国六年的冬天，大北风刮得正猛，我因为生计关系，不得不一早上路走。(2017:39)	It was the winter of 1917- the sixth year of our new Republic- the north wind scouring the city in great, fierce gusts. Early each morning, in the interests of making a living, I would take myself on to the almost deserted streets of Beijing. (2009:53)

The material culture-loaded word "狗气杀" used to describe the utensils for feeding poultry in China southern countryside. It was made in the form of keeping the dogs or cats away from the chickenfeed. There are no equivalent or similar expressions in English to substitute it for it refers to a unique cultural phenomenon in China. Lovell's translation (王海珠, 2017) is targeted at the general English readers who have little or no knowledge of this word; mindful of the general non-Chinese readership, Lovell becomes visible by adding the background information to help the intended readers easily understand the whole translated text.

"民国" in example 6 refers to a specific history period in China, from 1912 to 1949(the founding of new China). Lovell translates the original calendar of the Republic into western calendar and sets the date aside for a more common dairy style for target readers to understand historical elements hidden behind words. In consideration of English readers' cognitive ability and cultural background, Julia Lovell selects to add further information to help readers have a better knowledge of Chinese culture.

Lovell manages to get the background information worked into the text unobtrusively and economically. With respect to why Lovell adds some information in the text rather than in the footnotes or endnotes, which can be observed in her interview. Baorong Wang noted in 2014 that:

I don't like using footnotes very much in my translations. If there is something that I feel English readers need notes straightaway, I will add a few words into the text, because I feel is closer to the reading experience of the Chinese reader. The Chinese reader would read something and know exactly what it is straightaway. But the English reader needs the notes straightaway. They don't want to flip to the back of the book, or even to the bottom of the page. But I do this only if it can be done relatively unobtrusively. If it really is so complicated, then you know a note is required.

As Lovell herself emphasizes from time to time, she translates for general English readers, emphasizing the general readership and of mastering Chinese culture prompts her to properly deal with Chinese culture-loaded words by employing the explanatory strategy, so as to help the readers better understand the translated text in an easier way.

4.CONCLUSION

Translation is a very personal process, and each translator brings different skills to it. In many conditions target language and source language express the same meaning in different expression forms, thus it's hard to translate it into the target language with the same effect in its original language. In some instances, a text may be in a substandard dialect in the source language, and the translator faces the difficulty of finding an appropriate equivalent in the target language(Nida,2001:112). As for Julia Lovell's selections

when translating Lu Xun's fiction into English, she mainly adopts domestication to reproduce her translation. She brings Lu Xun to the West and manages to disturb target readers as little as possible, as if it is written in English by the writer. Therefore, her translation is more widely accepted by English readers than previous versions of Lu Xun's fiction. However, every coin has two sides. As her translation is so adaptive to the eco-environment of target language, due to some unique culture words or expressions, it fails to bring English reader with the same reading feelings as original readers experience in terms of Lu Xun's writing intention and style.

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