

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CULTURE-
SPECIFIC ITEMS IN CLASSICAL CHINESE
LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF *WATER
MARGIN***

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**ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CULTURE-
SPECIFIC ITEMS IN CLASSICAL CHINESE
LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF *WATER
MARGIN***

by

AN GANG

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
TL	Target Language
TT	Target Text
SC	Source Culture
TC	Target Culture
CSIs	Culture-Specific Items
LT	Literal Translation
WM	<i>Water Margin</i>
GIM	Gain in Meaning
LIM	Loss in Meaning
EIM	Equivalence in Meaning
SL	Source Language

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- Appendix A *Water Margin* Chinese and English Database
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**TERJEMAHAN BAHASA INGGERIS BAGI ITEM BUDAYA KHUSUS
DALAM KESUSASTERAAN CINA KLASIK: SATU ANALISIS *WATER
MARGIN***

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini memfokuskan kepada item khusus budaya (CSI) yang terdapat dalam karya sastera klasik *Water Margin* (水浒传). *Water Margin* (水浒传) dianggap sebagai salah satu daripada Empat Karya Klasik Hebat China dan telah diterjemahkan ke dalam pelbagai bahasa. Kajian ini membandingkan CSI dalam teks sumber terhadap penggunaan bahasa Inggeris mereka dalam versi terjemahan H.S. (1872), bertajuk *The Adventures of a Chinese Giant*. Empat objektif kajian dikemukakan, meliputi dimensi strategi-strategi terjemahan, termasuk kekurangan, peningkatan, dan kesetaraan dalam maksud pascaterjemahan. Pengkategorian CSI oleh Newmark (2010) dan teori domestikasi dan pengasingan oleh Venuti (2008) membentuk asas kajian ini. 180 CSI telah dipilih secara rawak (daripada sejumlah 800) untuk analisis; setiap satu daripada enam pengkategorian berikut terdiri daripada 30 CSI: Ekologi, Kehidupan Awam, Kehidupan Sosial, Kehidupan Peribadi, Adat dan Usaha, Amalan Peribadi. Strategi domestikasi didapati sebagai strategi yang paling dominan digunakan dan antara 152 CSI yang menunjukkan penggunaan domestikasi, kekurangan makna pascaterjemahan dilihat sebagai yang paling kerap (91 dapatan), diikuti oleh kesetaraan makna (46 dapatan), dan peningkatan makna (14 dapatan). Strategi pengasingan hanya digunakan sebanyak 28 kali, iaitu kekurangan makna pascaterjemahan berlaku 13 kali, kesetaraan makna sebanyak 11 kali, dan peningkatan makna berlaku 4 kali. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa walaupun strategi domestikasi berpotensi membantu pembaca sasaran

memahami CSI dengan lebih baik, ia juga boleh dianggap tidak mencukupi dari segi kesesuaian penyampaian makna budaya sepenuhnya dalam teks asal. Bagi strategi pengasingan, walaupun ia membantu mengekalkan lebih banyak identiti budaya sesebuah teks, masih terdapat cabaran dalam penyampaian makna budaya yang lengkap. Berdasarkan dapatan kajian ini, disyorkan agar para penterjemah mempertimbangkan untuk mencari keseimbangan antara domestikasi dan pengasingan, terutamanya ketika berurusan dengan unsur budaya dalam kesusasteraan klasik, bagi memastikan pengekalannya kedua-dua budaya dan makna. Sehingga kini, tiada kajian sedia ada yang mencerminkan hala tuju dan reka bentuk kajian ini. Diharapkan dapatannya akan memberikan panduan kepada kajian dan amalan-amalan terjemahan sastera pada masa hadapan, bertindak sebagai panduan penting untuk komunikasi silang budaya, dan berfungsi sebagai cara untuk memelihara warisan budaya China.

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC ITEMS IN
CLASSICAL CHINESE LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF *WATER
MARGIN***

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the culture-specific items (CSIs) found in the classical literary work *Water Margin* (水浒传). *Water Margin* (水浒传) is regarded as one of the Four Great Classical Works of China and has been translated into various languages. The present study compares the CSIs in the source text against their English renditions in H.S.'s (1872) translated version, titled *The Adventures of a Chinese Giant*. Four research objectives are addressed, covering the dimensions of translation strategies, as well as loss, gain, and equivalence in meaning post-translation. Newmark's (2010) categorization of CSIs and Venuti's (2008) theory of domestication and foreignization form the foundation of this study. 180 CSIs were randomly selected (from a total of 800) for analysis; each of the following six categorizations comprised 30 CSIs: Ecology, Public Life, Social Life, Personal Life, Customs and Pursuits, Private Passions. The domestication strategy was found to be the most dominant strategy utilized and among the 152 CSIs that demonstrated the use of domestication, loss in meaning post-translation was observed to be the most common (91 occurrences), followed by equivalence in meaning (46 occurrences), and gain in meaning (14 occurrences). The foreignization strategy was employed only 28 times, of which loss in meaning post-translation occurred 13 times, equivalence in meaning occurred 11 times, and gain in meaning occurred four times. The findings show that although the domestication strategy can potentially help target readers understand CSIs better, it

can also be deemed insufficient in terms of appropriately conveying the full cultural meaning of the original text. As for the foreignization strategy, although it helps to retain more of a text's cultural identity, there remains the challenge of conveying complete cultural meaning. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that translators consider seeking a balance between domestication and foreignization, particularly so when dealing with cultural items in classical literature, in order to ensure the dual retention of culture and meaning. To date, there is no available research embodying the present study's direction and design. It is hoped that its findings will inform future literary translation research and practices, serve as an essential guide for cross-cultural communication, and function as a means of preserving China's cultural heritage.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of this study and the problem statement of translation in China. Following that, the research objectives and research questions are listed. The significance and scope of this study are also presented in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter provides the definitions of key terms used in this study. The thesis's organization and a chapter summary are presented at the end of this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Language plays a pivotal role, serving as both a preserver of tradition and a conduit for its transmission to future generations (Rangriz & Harati, 2017). Translation practices involving at least two languages were typically conducted between various cultures and within specific cultural contexts, subsequently influencing the translation culture. The inextricable link between language and culture is well established.

Context, in its broadest sense, encompasses the atmosphere and setting of a translation. Specifically, it refers to the terms, phrases, fragments, and sentences accompanying a given expression. Malinowski (1923) introduced the concepts of a sense of circumstance and the meaning of society, emphasizing the importance of considering the entire way of life (cultural context) in analyzing an utterance (Halliday, 2002). Since human contact occurs within a cultural context, this factor emerges as the most defining factor in human interaction. Culture is how we organize our feelings, desires, and actions with our surroundings.

Cultural context encompasses high- and low-context connectivity, individualism or collectivism, meaning orientations, power gaps, and weak/heavy uncertainty avoidance (Ghalib, 2019). These factors unconsciously manifest in our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. In most cases, their implicit but profound influence on behavior extends to emotional, affective, behavioral, and linguistic decisions.

With numerous prominent translators and translation theorists globally, the extensive tradition of cultural exchange between China and other nations is widely recognized (Vyas, 2020). According to Lei and Li (2011), translation experiments and contemporary linguistics research originating in the United States of America, France, Russia, and other countries eventually found their way to China. In response to the global shift in translation research, Chinese translators have increasingly focused on cultural issues and challenges from theoretical and practical perspectives (Marais, 2018). Over the past decades, Chinese scholars have tried to publish key international works on translation theory. This effort has laid the foundation for developing a distinctly Chinese approach to translation, characterized by the Chinese translation analysis method (Xiao & Hu, 2015). This method is considered more reliable than open, synthetic, interdisciplinary, and systemic approaches.

China's reform and opening up took place in 1978, a reform that was responsible for significant changes in the social, political and cultural spheres. This period marked the reintegration of Chinese and world literature and culture. This is because before 1978, literary translation was highly influenced by ideology and was dominated by Soviet literature and works of a more political nature. After the Reform and Opening Up, Chinese translation research and practice witnessed a revival and diversification, and the scope of translation was much widened. This reform not only covered a wider

range of Western literary works, but also promoted the exploration of new translation strategies for classic Chinese literature. In the case of the English translation of *Water Margin*, for example, after 1978, there was a resurgence of scholarly interest in the translation of the novel, and more diverse translation strategies emerged. Early English translations, such as Pearl S. Buck's (1933) and J.H. Jackson's (1937) version. The cultural significance of these classics has contributed to the substantial demand for their translation. Accepting these translations among readers is a dynamic process influenced by the historical era, highlighting the time's spiritual requirements and aesthetic standards (Dollerup, 1997). Therefore, in most cases, the translation of literary classics involves multiple translations undergoing continuous improvement rather than a single translation focusing on enhancing the original work.

Taking the case of *Water Margin* (水浒传) by Shi Nai'an (AD 1296–1370), the literary community and the general public have commended this widely read novel in China since its publication. With over 1 million words in 100 chapters, *Water Margin* portrayed impressive characteristics of the Chinese language and literature. The novel presents an artistic description of the entire Song Jiang uprising in Chinese history from its inception (Song, 2011). It has also profoundly revealed the social roots of the uprising. Specifically, it revealed the underlying historical factors that led to the uprising's failure (Sun, 2019).

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

Water Margin, a prominent example of classical Chinese literature, has garnered significant attention from the literary community and the general public due to its exceptional artistic and literary qualities, establishing it as one of the most valuable novels in China and the English-speaking world (Niu, 2022). The influence and

contributions of *Water Margin* to Chinese classical literature in the English-speaking world (Hu & Ouyang, 2022) and cross-cultural communication (Li, 2018) cannot be overstated. Accurate cultural translation is necessary as literature encompasses all aspects of human life. Translation has long facilitated cross-cultural communication between Chinese and foreign cultures.

The English translation of *The Water Margin* was crucial to the understanding and dissemination of the essence of classical Chinese literature (Idema & Haft, 1997). Globalization emphasizes intercultural communication and understanding (Kluver, 2000). As a classical representative work of Chinese cultural dissemination, *Water Margin*, with its rich storyline, unique characters, and profound social significance, was an indispensable part of Chinese culture (Ge, 2001). However, cultural differences and language barriers hindered the study of its English translation and faithful conveyance of cultural connotations. Cultural translation requires language conversion and a deep understanding of and respect for the original cultural background, values, and social customs (House, 2015). Studying the English-translated version of *Water Margin* facilitated the effective exploration of classical Chinese literature communication, thus promoting communication and understanding among different cultures. Accurate English translation reduced intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts and deepened the international community's understanding and appreciation of traditional Chinese culture (Meng et al., 2023). The translation and dissemination of *Water Margin* gave the world a better understanding of Chinese history and culture and stimulated interest in and research on other classical Chinese literature. Therefore, studying the cultural translation of *Water Margin* is significant for linguistics, translation, and promoting global cultural diversity and respect (Li, 2023).

Cultural translation is essential for China's reception of foreign literature and the translation and interpretation of ancient Chinese literature abroad. Translation played an important role in enabling the reception and diffusion of foreign literature in several cultural contexts, as exemplified by the reception of international literary masterpieces like *Wuthering Heights* in China. Scholarly investigation focused on translating, publishing, and distributing foreign literary works in China (Zhang et al., 2022). The challenges of translating classical Chinese literary works into English were highlighted by the distinctions between English and classical Chinese poetry, notably in literary imagery, meaning, rhythm, tone, genre, and format (Xia & Jing, 2018). Moreover, a cognitive approach to translating the moon image in classical Chinese poetry revealed the difficulties in understanding ancient Chinese poetry (Qiu, 2023).

Cultural translation affected the reception and interpretation of foreign literary works in China, as shown by the interaction between Cambridge literary criticism and China and the impact of Western literary ideas on Chinese literary criticism (Ha, 2019). Research on Ruth Weiss's writing of Lu Xun emphasized the distinct cultural significance of specific works in cultural translation (Zou, 2023). Additionally, Eileen Chang's self-translation of *The Rice-Sprout Song* highlighted the significance of linguistic and cultural modifications in covert translation (Wang, 2021). *Wolf Totem* exemplified how international literature could offer new insights into many cultural settings, highlighting the significance of translation in framing, rewriting, and reception (Cui & Bai, 2023).

The examination of Peter Hessler's travelogue *Country Driving* used cultural translation as a descriptive category for travel writing (Wu, 2021). Furthermore, using fiction's semiotics to teach Russian to non-native speakers revealed broader cultural

translation implications beyond literary works (Korshunova & Petrova, 2021). The transforming quality of cultural translation in the reception of foreign literary works was highlighted by the politics of translation and publishing in the context of Sino-French literature (Xavier, 2019). The examination of the paratext in Graham Sanders' *Six Records of a Life Adrift* highlighted the paratext's importance in translating, publishing, and achieving worldwide recognition. This impacted the canonization of Chinese literature in the English-speaking world (Peng & Liang, 2021).

Numerous studies have examined different characters, events, and legends in Chinese history and the appearance of several foreign writers in these legends. For example, Zhao and Lv (2019) summarized their experience of translating *Tao Te Ching* and highlighted that variation and analogy could fully retain and reproduce the literary nature of the original canon. In other words, translating classics could achieve classical literature's height, depth, and breadth. This suggested the notable value and significance of exploring the richness of the translation of classical texts. Focusing on the need to establish a more profound comparison and analysis between Chinese and Western translators and effective exchange and equal dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures, Yang (2020) analyzed Roger T. Ames's interpretation and transformation of Confucian core concepts to reveal his philosophical interpretation. The study highlighted associative thinking, process philosophy, and heterogeneity for translators and further elaborated that using these ideas could strengthen the study of Confucianism in Chinese canonical texts like Mencius. This would likely yield extensive implications and value to expand the study of Confucianism in Chinese texts. Meanwhile, Wang and Shao (2022) employed Python data processing techniques to analyze the English translation of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. They found high ratings in most non-Chinese readers' reviews for the content, translation accuracy, and value of the translation work.

The study noted that certain non-Chinese readers offered critical reviews for various *The Art of War translations*, citing outdated content, overly literal translation, and poor layout, editing, and proofreading quality. In another recent study, Zhu and Luo (2022) examined Julia Lovell's narrative translation strategies in *Journey to the West*, one of China's four classical masterpieces. The study reported improved reading efficiency and effectiveness of translation and interpretation through the adopted strategies, indicating their suitability.

Water Margin (水浒传 or *Shui Hu Zhuan*), one of China's four classical masterpieces, gained early attention from international scholars and readers. By the mid-18th century, it had already been translated into Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and several other languages. After the 19th century, translations emerged in English, French, German, Latin, Russian, and other languages, widely disseminating the novel in the West. Among these languages, the English translation of *Water Margin* has received the most attention.

To date, four English translations of *Water Margin* by Pearl S. Buck (1933), J. H. Jackson (1937), Sidney Shapiro (1980), and John and Alex Dent-Young (1994) have been extensively explored in various studies (e.g., Lu & Zhang, 2019; Liu & Wang, 2020; Zhang, Huang, & Wang, 2020; Hu & Ouyang, 2022). However, no detailed cultural study has been conducted on the first English translation of *Water Margin*, *The Adventures of a Chinese Giant* (1872) (Wu & Zheng, 2017). Although only a few *Water Margin* chapters were translated and incorporated into *The Adventures of a Chinese Giant*, the translator's strategies in this English translation work remain unexplored. Moreover, the global circulation of this particular translation work was limited more than a century ago.

Accordingly, translation was viewed as interlingual communication and cultural integration beyond language. It involves language transfer, cultural transplantation, and transmission. Newmark (1998) described culture as a society expressing its way of life and unique forms through a specific language. Accurate translation considers the cultural backgrounds of the original and translated languages. A translation pursuing a foreign style without considering the cultural background cannot perpetuate over time (Liu & Wang, 2020). Therefore, translators must make informed choices when translating messages and meanings, typically involving domestication and foreignization.

Domestication aids understanding and communication, familiarizing target language readers with the text's information and knowledge. Its apparent ease benefits the general public with limited source language knowledge (Fuadi, 2016). In contrast, foreignization helps grasp the source language culture, benefiting those keen on learning about other cultures. It supports understanding foreign cultures' cultural items and provides a meaningful conceptual understanding (Obeidat, 2019). Translation strategies influence reader understanding and cultural immersion. Translation strategies like domestication facilitate understanding, and foreignization simplifies cultural exploration (Fuadi, 2016). Translators often face challenges when translating Culture-Specific Items (CSIs). Thus, the dichotomy between domestication and foreignization aids decision-making concerning strategy adoption (Shokri & Ketabi, 2015). To sum up, specialized translators and translation agencies should carefully consider translation strategies to prevent problems or misunderstandings compared to domestication and foreignization, as both can benefit the translation process.

Translators are influential cultural transmitters bridging language and cultural gaps, effectively using translation and translation strategies for cultural transmission. Due to target language equivalent absences, translating CSIs might result in meaning loss or gain (Gao, 2023). Translators must provide explanations, footnotes, or context or seek ways to convey meaning without additional information in the target language (Yang, 2021). Translators must be aware of potential challenges and consider the impact of their choices when translating CSIs.

Consulting with the experts or native speakers of the target language should be considered to ensure accurate translation. However, the differences between the source and target languages and cultures in certain cases inevitably result in meaning loss or gain. For instance, idioms and proverbs are typically linked to specific cultural contexts and may lack direct equivalents in the target language. In such cases, translators must determine the best way to convey the original text's meaning in the target language, considering translation goals and the intended audience.

The CSIs in *Water Margin* offer a rich Chinese language and culture of high research value. Translators have used various translation strategies to facilitate English readers' understanding of Chinese culture. However, the cultural gap in CSIs poses challenges. The challenges of translating culturally specific words in *Water Margin* are mainly reflected in the lack of correspondence, loss of meaning, balance between readability and cultural fidelity, treatment of personal names, and differences in historical contexts. Early translators had to choose between domestication and foreignization to preserve the cultural essence. This study analyzes these challenges for contemporary literary translation.

This study analyzes the translated version of *Water Margin* to address shortcomings in the current literature. Exploring domestication and foreignization of translation strategies used by early translators and their consideration of the culture of their time would yield valuable findings. These experiences with translation strategies can serve as methodological examples of translating contemporary literary works from various cultures for an international audience.

In short, while the English translations of *Water Margin* by Pearl S. Buck (1933), J. H. Jackson (1937), Sidney Shapiro (1980), and John and Alex Dent-Young (1994) have been extensively studied, the first English translation, *The Adventures of a Chinese Giant*, has been overlooked. This study focuses exclusively on *The Adventures of a Chinese Giant*. Addressing the identified gaps, this study examines the translation of CSIs in *Water Margin* using textual analysis from a meaning gain, loss, and equivalent perspective. It analyzes CSIs translated by the translators, comparing Chinese and English versions and examining translation strategy characteristics for CSIs in *The Adventures of a Chinese Giant* based on domestication and foreignization principles. This study examines the propensity to use domestication and foreignization to translate CSIs in *Water Margin* in early historical periods and the meaning gain, loss, and equivalence of these translation strategies. Furthermore, CSIs in the original text are organized according to Newmark's classification of CSIs. This study is an essential guide for future literary translation and cross-cultural communication.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the translation cultures based on domestication and foreignization. The specific objectives are

- RO1: To identify the dominant strategies (domestication and foreignization) used in translating culture-specific items in the classical Chinese literature *Water Margin* (水浒传).
- RO2: To ascertain the type of culture-specific items demonstrating the most gain in meaning post-translation.
- RO3: To determine the type of culture-specific items demonstrating the most loss in meaning post-translation.
- RO4: To investigate the type of culture-specific items demonstrating the most equivalence in meaning post-translation.

1.5 Research Questions

With respect to the listed specific objectives, this study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the dominant strategies (domestication and foreignization) used in translating culture-specific items in the classical Chinese literature *Water Margin* (水浒传)?
- RQ2: Which type of culture-specific items demonstrates the most gain in meaning post-translation?
- RQ3: Which type of culture-specific items demonstrates the most loss in meaning post-translation?
- RQ4: Which type of culture-specific items demonstrates the most equivalence in meaning post-translation?

1.6 Significance of the Study

With its five-thousand-year history, China has an extensive, rich cultural heritage in diverse forms of ancient classics in astronomy, culture, economics, geography, medicine, military, philosophy, politics, and other fields. Four great masterpieces of classical works in the history of Chinese literature—*Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Journey to the West*, and *Dream of the Red Chamber*—are among the world's valuable intangible cultural heritage. Reflecting the spiritual wealth of creators and contributing to China's immense wealth, ancient Chinese classic literature exhibits unique ideological content, artistic form, and performance and transmission styles.

Water Margin exemplifies the rich Chinese culture and way of life. As a representative of distinctive Chinese culture, its literature and literary history warrant exploration. With the global expansion of economic and cultural exchanges, accurate translation of Chinese classics into other languages can substantially influence the development and transmission of Chinese culture. Effective translators balance simple and conflicting translation strategies. Regardless of the translation process, a successful translation avoids grammatical, stylistic, or textual errors.

Focusing on translation cultures, this study provides valuable insights into domestication and foreignization, significantly enriching the existing body of knowledge, particularly regarding the comparison of translation strategies. Analyzing the first English translation of *Water Margin* enriches the current literature on the English translation of *Water Margin* and Chinese classical literature. Based on theories and perspectives in translation, literature, and culture, this study offers a scientific interpretation of the meaning and strategies of *Water Margin's* first English translation.

It explores the cultural translation strategy and highlights the cultural significance of translation. In-depth analysis of the translation process and translated texts provides constructive opinions and perspectives.

The study also explores different CSIs of *Water Margin* in early historical periods, which present substantial practical significance. The findings provide significant benefits for professionals such as linguists and interpreters, translation students, and language learners in translating language phenomena, particularly regarding translating literature from Chinese to English. Furthermore, considering China's prominent international status, the initial *Water Margin* translation might have differed due to the influence of time and circumstances. Exploring different cultural translation strategies and cultural considerations used by translators in different historical periods offers significant insights. The choices or selection of cultural translation strategies provides fundamental methodological examples for the globalization of modern literary works from different cultures. Based on the translators' opinions concerning the adoption of different translation strategies, informed decisions on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the selected translation strategies have been made.

This study delves into the translation strategies of CSIs in *Water Margin*, and the research focuses on applying naturalization and alienation strategies. By systematically analyzing the transfer of cultural meanings of these strategies in the *translation* process, this study aims to enhance the quality of literary translation and deepen the understanding of cross-cultural communication. The study results provide a new understanding of translation theory and offer practical guidance for educators and practitioners of cultural exchange, promoting the development of translation education

and mutual cultural appreciation. This is of great significance to both academia and the field of practice.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Focusing on translation cultures and the English translation of the classical Chinese literature *Water Margin*, this study explores translation strategies, the meaning of gain and loss, meaning equivalence, and translators' decisions and choices. It compares early English and Chinese translations, specifically on the use of domestication and foreignization in the translation of Chinese literature. In particular, the study considers one of the earliest English translations of *Water Margin*. Only specific CSIs translations were analyzed comprehensively. The fundamental analysis of translation strategies and CSIs might have been biased and varied based on translators' understanding of culture-specific words used in ancient China's first mature vernacular-length novel

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

1.8.1 Back Translation

Newmark (2008) defined back translation as translating the original text into another language and then translating the result back into the original language. If the translation result matches the original language, the translation from the original to the target language is correct.

1.8.2 Culture-Specific Items (CSIs)

Newmark (2010) provided six CSI categories. Ecology is the first category connected to the geological and geographic environment. The second category is public

life, which relates to terms or phenomena about a community's law, politics, or governmental patterns. Social life is the third category, which includes terms or phenomena associated with the economy, social welfare, occupations, health, or educational systems. The fourth category is personal life, which is related to clothing, food, and housing patterns. Private passions are the fifth category related to religion, music, poetry, and clubs. Customs and pursuits are the sixth category related to traditions and practices.

1.8.3 Domestication

Venuti (2008) described domestication as a translation strategy that adopts a transparent, fluent style to reduce the foreign text's incongruity for target language readers.

1.8.4 Equivalence in Meaning

Peter Newmark's concept of equivalence distinguishes semantic and communicative translation techniques in meaning. Semantic translation prioritizes form and authorial purpose while striving to accurately convey the source text's meaning within the bounds of the target language. Conversely, communicative translation prioritizes readability and impact on the intended audience, aiming to elicit the same reader reaction as the source (Newmark, 2008).

1.8.5 Foreignization

Venuti (2008) described foreignization as producing target text intentionally discontinuing target conventions by maintaining the original version's foreignness.

1.8.6 Gain in Meaning

Bassnett (2013) proposed the idea of gain in meaning, suggesting that translation conveys the original text's meaning while potentially generating new meanings.

Translation is a creative activity where the translator understands and recreates the original text so that the translation may differ from the original text. Bassnett's view emphasizes the translator's creativity, allowing interpretation and expression of the original text in the translation process.

1.8.7 Literary Translation

Literary translation refers to rendering a literary work from one language into another (Venuti, 2004). It involves a complex interplay of linguistic knowledge, cultural understanding, and creative interpretation. The primary aim of literary translation is to accurately convey the meaning and stylistic features of the original while maintaining its aesthetic value and impact in the target language (Lefevere, 2016).

1.8.8 Loss in Meaning

Loss in meaning refers to the inevitable detriment to the semantic content, stylistic nuances, and overall impact of a source text when translated into another language. This phenomenon arises from the inherent language and cultural differences, making it impossible to fully replicate meaning and effect in the target language (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998; Venuti, 2004).

1.8.9 Source Text (ST)

Source Text (ST) refers to the text needing translation into the receptor language. It is the original written text forming the basis for the translation process. It serves as the input for the translator and contains the message that needs to be conveyed in the target language (Munday, 2016).

1.8.10 Target Text (TT)

When a text is translated from one language to another, the result is known as Target Text (TT). This is the last product of the translator's labor, and its goal is to convey the original meaning accurately in the target language (Munday, 2016).

1.8.11 Translation

Translation refers to substituting written content in one language with corresponding written content in another (Catford, 1965). Venuti (2008) defined translation as the forcible replacement of a foreign text's linguistic and cultural differences with a text understandable to the target language reader (Venuti, 2008).

1.9 Organization of the Study

This thesis comprises five chapters. **Chapter 1** introduces the current study on translation as intercultural communication, the relationship between translation and culture, culture of translation, and domestication and foreignization. The chapter presents the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance, and scope of the study.

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of key literature on language, the translation-culture relationship, translation procedures, and domestication and foreignization in translation. This chapter also presents the theoretical framework and underpinning theories.

Chapter 3 describes the adopted methodology in this study. This chapter explains the research design, paradigm, data collection methods, and analysis justification.

Chapter 4 focuses on an in-depth analysis of gathered data from *The Adventures of a Chinese Giant* within the cultural lexicon compiled for the English rendition. The analysis in three key stages primarily focuses on specific terminologies in classical Chinese literature. The first stage analyzes domestication and foreignization strategies used to translate the ST and TT, evaluating collocation translations. The second stage retrieves or preserves the Chinese semantic equivalence of colloquial expressions in the context of cultural terminology and the interpretation of the English rendition as translated by the translator. The third stage analyzes adopted translation strategies in relation to specific cultures, evaluating their influence.

Chapter 5 discusses key findings concerning the research questions and objectives, concluding the overall study.

1.10 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter presented an overview of the current study. The background of the study and problem statement were discussed, followed by research objectives and questions. The significance and scope of the study were also described in this chapter. In addition, the definitions of key terms were provided. The thesis organization was included at the end of this chapter.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of related literature on translation and culture, including the role and importance of culture in translation. It discusses the early history of literary translation in China and post-1978 literary translation. The chapter reviews the conceptual predecessors of domestication and foreignization, their history, and their application in translation practice. It reviews similar past studies and theoretical underpinnings and presents a conceptual framework.

2.2 Translation and Culture

Preserving textual content is the most crucial aspect of translation (Ahmadova, 2025). Fundamentally, translation involves cultural decoding, recoding, and encoding, including transposing thoughts expressed in one language into another. Santos et al. (2015) described translation as replacing textual material in one language with similar textual material. Putranti (2015) described it as reproducing the nearest natural counterpart of the Source Language (SL) message in the receptor language considering context and form.

Translators communicate unfamiliar content in its most natural form to an unfamiliar social group. Culture manifests in two forms: culturally contextual vocabulary object comparisons (Bernárdez, 2013) and universal but peculiarly articulated SL community definitions. As different cultures merge, the cultural aspect of textual material must be considered in translation (Cadwell & O'Brien, 2016). Translators should consider translation intent when interpreting culturally linked terms

or phrases and addressing translation protocols. However, the complexities of culture make it less feasible to adequately express consistent translation from a cultural standpoint, making cultural translation challenging (Harahap et al., 2025).

Fundamentally, translation involves similar SL expressions in the TL in terms of language meaning and structure without significant linguistic modifications (Amalia, 2022; Halverson, 2007). Culture may refer to components or conditioning elements of potential actions, suggesting cultural variations influence translation and action expression (Veissière et al., 2020). Beyond language expertise in SL and TL, such as vocabulary, word formation, grammar, orthography, and pronunciation, translators must have the necessary sociolinguistic skills to interpret and project the roles of the texts within the context (Bermudez Avendaño et al., 2019).

2.2.1 Components of Culture

Deuze (2006) identified three key components of culture: (1) the initial concept or ideals represented by a process of achieving human sublimity concerning absolute universal values; (2) documentary culture or scholarly and imaginative endeavors that involve accurate description of personal reflections and experiences; (3) social culture or a value-laden way of life in terms of art, education, organizations, and everyday behavior. According to Edwards et al. (2013), culture conceptualization consists of several key components: (1) the material culture or the relationship between humans and the environment for survival and technology acquisition; (2) social culture or human interrelations following their desire for social position; (3) spiritual culture or subjective thoughts, mindsets, values, and associated events.

Essentially, there are two ends to the continuum in studying culture: discovering universals and understanding sociocultural norms. Documentary culture lies between

these endpoints, attempting to record people's lifestyles and generate general laws governing people's lives.

Meanwhile, culture exists in material and non-material forms (Kwak et al., 2021). Material culture represents tangible and quantifiable topics like tools and motor vehicles. However, non-material culture represents nontangible and non-quantifiable topics, such as beliefs, traditions, and social conventions. Material culture involves physical elements, whereas non-material culture involves ideas relating to the usage of objects.

The cultural heritage of a social group is at risk when culture is lost or subjected to a non-material form (Shcherbina & Salmo, 2023). Wang (2023) further highlighted the non-material culture subset defining social standards. Values reflect elements perceived as desirable or undesirable in each culture. Every culture has both desirable and non-desirable values. Respect for elders (filial piety), individualism, and hospitality are common ideal values (Chen & Liu, 2023), while loss of face, lack of punctuality, and disrespect for tradition are considered non-ideal values (Keller, 2023). Culture-specific words should preserve these values in translation (Nguyen, 2024), e.g., *Water Margin* emphasizes loyalty and brotherhood, while betrayal is condemned. Understanding these differences can help in cross-cultural communication and translation strategy selection. Improving material culture involves learning about other cultures through reciprocal interactions and exchanges. Although their relationship is not immediately apparent, material and non-material cultures' influence and distinctions become clearer.

2.3 Role of Culture in Translation

A country's culture and language emerge from a specific natural climate, historical context, and social reality (Caretta, 2015). Culture reflects a civilization's entire model regarding traditional beliefs and ideals, as well as specific ethnic groups within particular periods and areas. It describes a society with a whole behavioral paradigm. The modern language continues to grow over time (Sosoni & Biel, 2018). Moreover, communication is part of life, and with various languages, translation is necessary due to the significant influence of language as a tool of culture. Culture and cultural exchanges are closely linked and serve as key translation sources. Essentially, society cannot function without translation (Al-Amer et al., 2016). Liu and Zhang (2024) explain that translation gives voice to marginalized groups and is the key to social justice. Without translation, the proper functioning of a multilingual society would cease to exist. From healthcare, science, and law to business, diplomacy, and literature, translation is a fundamental pillar that enables societies to function effectively in a globalized world. Without translation, progress in communication, knowledge exchange, and cultural understanding would be severely hindered (Ioachimescu, 2025). Numerous prior translation studies focused on linguistics, emphasizing linguistic structure and system variations (Piipponen et al., 2021). However, the process of translation involves not only linguistic structures but also various social and cultural factors that influence meaning, interpretation, and reception. Various aspects and issues in the translation process have not been explored within linguistics. Translators must understand the materials' different cultural, social, and historical contexts and their relationships with the world to effectively express the intended meaning and expression (Soang, 2016). The translated documents may convey ambiguous and disordered meanings when the original reading is taken literally without considering the cultural

context. Many translators have conflicted with literal and free translation, regardless of the crucial aspect of culture (Lu, 2019).

Society influences translational discourse in various aspects (Motalleocietybzadeh & Tousi, 2011). Salehi et al. (2014) employed multifaceted viewpoints of culture within the context of translation to review the relationship between culture, language, and translation. The study identified community and translation as the most determining and significant human speech factors. Focusing on cultural translation, Sudirman (2016) primarily discussed cultural losses or equivalences in the translation of literary texts. The study assessed different translation strategies that led to cultural defeats and highlighted the key role of a translator as a cultural insider. The study concluded that cultural insiders significantly influence textual materials to construct a culturally more faithful translation. Meanwhile, Chi (2019) described the relationship between culture and translation as follows: culture is primarily guided by translational practice, and only by incorporating new textual material into culture can it innovate and perceive its uniqueness.

2.3.1 Importance of Culture in Translation

Translation is necessary for people from various cultures, nationalities, states, and countries to comprehend one another (Nur Atikah et al., 2025). Throughout history, it has been a primary vehicle for the dissemination of knowledge and civilization. As Akbari (2013) noted, knowledge often exists primarily in foreign languages, making translation indispensable for its acquisition and sharing. Translation acts as a bridge, enabling the transfer of global cultural structures across time and borders.

Translation has become a cultural transplantation mechanism and an intercultural exchange practice (Fang, 2025). Furthermore, the interplay between

culture and language in translation has increasingly captured the attention of the translation community. The process of translation involves the exchange of culture and language. Al-Hassan (2013) emphasized the importance of exploring the relationship between culture and language to gain deeper insights into the translation process (Al-Hassan, 2013).

Accordingly, translation can be viewed as a cultural interaction (Bassnett, 2007). From a communication theory perspective, it represents cross-cultural contact that involves the exchange of signals and information (Kroó & Torop, 2018). As an influential tool for cultural exchange, translation fosters intercultural connections between authors, translators, and TL readers. Cultural and ideological exchange are core elements of the translation process (Utami, 2017; Han et al., 2023).

Different meanings are conveyed in both TL and the context of the target culture when terms are translated differently (Liddicoat, 2015). Each language is associated with a different context due to the influence of culture. Although the exact words are conveyed from one culture to another, the meanings of those words vary to a certain extent (Chirig et al., 2023). Deeply ingrained social issues in one culture may hold minimal influence on other cultures.

However, certain meaning disparities occur due to these subtle or significant value differences, which can be an issue when translation is concerned. To accurately convey the intended message, translators must consider the moral and spiritual values associated with the words and symbols in the language (Shi, 2020).

For instance, Li (2019) and Suo (2015) analyzed the practical application of Skopos theory using translation strategies like amplification, annotation, and deletion, which excluded domestication and foreignization. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's