

Investigation into Translation Strategies for Culture-Loaded Terms: A Case Study of the English Translation of *Frog*

Haibo Wang

School of Foreign Studies, Nanjing Agricultural University, Nanjing City, China

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Corresponding Author

Haibo Wang

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Abstract

Background: Mo Yan's works have garnered considerable influence in English-speaking countries, with the translator Howard Goldblatt playing a pivotal role in their dissemination and reception. Goldblatt's English translation of Mo Yan's *Frog*, published in 2014, received widespread recognition and praise. The original text contains numerous culture-loaded terms symbolizing traditional Chinese culture, posing significant challenges for the translator. However, it is precisely these elements that contribute to the work's enduring appeal.

Methodology: Based on the framework of Nida's classification of cultural concepts, the study mainly employs the qualitative methodology of parallel text analysis to examine Goldblatt's translation strategies and their effectiveness in rendering the culture-loaded terms in *Frog*.

Findings: The study indicates that to convey the cultural richness of the source text while ensuring readability and acceptability for the target readers, Goldblatt employed different strategies based on the nature of the terms. For terms with close or direct English equivalents, the translator opted for domestication. In contrast, particularly for linguistic culture-loaded terms, he frequently used literal translation or transliteration. However, when terms with rich cultural connotation might confuse English-speaking readers, Goldblatt resorted to domestication accompanied by direct explanations to provide readers with contextual understanding.

Conclusion: The study concludes that translators must thoroughly understand the target readers' expectations. Translators should strike a balance between creativity and fidelity to the source text. While remaining faithful to the original's ideas and style, they may appropriately adjust their translation strategies to align with the comprehension level and reading preferences of target readers.

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1. Introduction

Translation transcends mere linguistic conversion, functioning as a crucial bridge for cross-cultural exchange. In literary translation, culture-loaded terms are particularly significant, facilitating the communication and integration of diverse cultures. Culture, as an important part of a nation's soft power, reflects a country's overall influence to some extent. Although China has made significant progress in its economic power and national strength in recent centuries, its status in cross-cultural communication is not ideal compared to Western developed countries. For instance, in terms of book audiences, the influence of Chinese translations and foreign original

works on Chinese readers far surpasses the impact of Chinese books and foreign translations on readers in other countries. “In the face of how to better promote Chinese culture, translators can act as bridges for cultural dissemination, not only effectively introducing foreign cultures into China but also promoting domestic culture abroad, thus advancing the international spread of Chinese culture” (Zheng, 2016).

Howard Goldblatt, an American sinologist and a prominent translator of Chinese literature, has played a pivotal role in the cross-cultural dissemination of Mo Yan’s works. Through his translations, including celebrated novels such as *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, Goldblatt has brought Mo Yan’s distinctive narrative style and culturally rich stories to global readers. These efforts have significantly elevated the international recognition of Mo Yan’s literature, contributing to his Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012, and meanwhile offered as an exemplar for better promoting Chinese culture abroad. The English translation of Mo Yan’s novel *Frog* was published in the United States by Viking Penguin in 2015 and was included in The Washington Post’s list of “Notable Fiction of 2015”, which was regarded as another successful case of translation promoting the dissemination of Chinese literature abroad.

The existing research on Mo Yan’s works and the English translation by Howard Goldblatt mainly falls into the following three categories: The exploration of the original work includes the exploration of themes, characters, and writing techniques. For example, Chen (2014) explored the dual physical and psychological torment caused by the conflict between national ethics and bioethics in the novel’s main character “Auntie”; Cong (2021) concluded that this work shows the regeneration of “sin” and the unfinished nature of “repentance”, which is far from the true “repentance”; Zhang (2022) believes that Mo Yan’s “mixture of literary writing and realism” makes this novel have both a sense of reality and absurdity. There are also studies on discussing translated works and translators, She (2021) took Howard Goldblatt’s English translation of *Frog* and another work as the research object, and found that the changes in the translator’s translation strategies can be attributed to Howard Goldblatt’s “increasingly shaped translator habitus, a well-established Chinese contemporary literary translation field, and the continuous accumulation of translator capital”. For the discussion of the original and translated works, Yin and Shen (2020) analyzed the translation strategies adopted by Howard Goldblatt in translating *Frog*, and found that the translator’s unique translation practice of “betraying the form to a certain extent and remaining faithful to the overall style and spirit of the original text in content” made the translated work more acceptable to readers in English-speaking countries.

This study focuses on Mo Yan’s *Frog* and its English translation by Howard Goldblatt, aiming to explore the translation strategies and techniques employed by the translator in coping with culture-loaded terms in the original text. It seeks to understand how these choices have contributed to the wide readership and dissemination of the English version in English-speaking countries.

2. *Frog* and Its English Translation

Frog is a masterpiece by Nobel laureate Mo Yan, which won the Mao Dun Literature Prize in 2012. Set against the backdrop of 60-year rural family planning history in China, the novel depicts the implementation of the family planning policy in Gaomi (in the northeast of China). The story centers on the character of “Aunt”, a rural obstetrician, and highlights the family planning situation in the countryside during a specific period. The language is highly local, filled

with slang from Gaomi, while the writing is delicate and straightforward, allowing readers to gain an in-depth understanding of people's lives during that time, evoking both sympathy and reflection.

In 2014, Howard Goldblatt's English translation of *Frog* received widespread praise in English-speaking countries. Mo Yan has repeatedly emphasized that his Nobel Prize achievement owes much to the contributions of translators' hard work, underscoring the irreplaceable role translators play in bridging cultural gaps. The reasons for choosing *Frog* as the targeted text can be attributed to the following factors. On the one hand, *Frog* is one of Howard Goldblatt's recent translations of Mo Yan's works, with relatively limited existing researches and meanwhile its translation quality can be assured. On the other hand, the English version of *Frog* has been well-received by its English-speaking readers, making it a valuable subject for study.

This study selects the translation of culture-loaded terms in *Frog* as its case study because the novel contains a large number of culture-loaded terms of various types. The culture-loaded terms in *Frog* are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and historical context of rural China, so how well these terms are translated are especially significant for cross-cultural communication. Goldblatt's translation philosophy and practice can not only illuminate strategies for handling such terms but also offer valuable insights into the international promotion of Chinese literature and culture. A comparative analysis of the original text and its translation reveals that Howard Goldblatt employed different translation strategies for different categories of culture-loaded terms, and even within the same category. The reasons behind these differences merit in-depth exploration.

This study compares the original text with Goldblatt's translation, exploring the translation methods employed by the translator when dealing with culture-loaded terms, and assessing whether the information from the original culture is effectively conveyed. The study also analyzes and evaluates the translator's handling of local language, aiming to provide a reference for the future translation of Chinese rural literature.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Classification of Culture-Loaded Terms

Language and culture are closely intertwined. Language is not only a part of culture but also a tool for cultural communication. A country's language develops and improves through continuous use by its people, gradually reflecting the unique cultural background and characteristics of the nation. Language is made up of texts, paragraphs, sentences, and vocabulary, with vocabulary revealing the cultural traits of the people. To date, scholars across the world have provided various definitions of culture-loaded terms.

Baker (2018) defines culture-loaded terms as words with some conceptual meanings and specific cultural connotations. These words are relevant to social customs and religious beliefs in the original languages and culture and are used to express abstract or concrete concepts. Nida (1993) divides the concept of culture into five categories: ecological, linguistic, religious, material and social culture. Culture-loaded terms are words and idioms that reflect the distinctive aspects of a culture.

Culture-loaded terms emerge from specific linguistic and cultural environments, making them unique and distinct. These terms embody the distinctive ideological characteristics and ways of life accumulated by a nation throughout its history (Liao, 2000). This presents challenges for

translators, such as the difficulty of finding corresponding terms in the target language. The difficulty of translating culture-loaded terms lies in how to accurately convey the cultural connotations of the source language while maintaining natural, fluent, and clear language in the target language. Nida's classification of culture is clear and concise, "including both material and spiritual areas" (Zhang, 2012), but it can be somewhat general and insufficiently tailored to the vast and complex context of Chinese culture. For a work like *Frog*, which is rich in culture-loaded terms unique to China, a more detailed classification of culture-loaded terms is necessary. This study builds upon Nida's five cultural categories to develop a refined classification system, selecting representative examples from the corpus for individual analysis. During this process, some culture-loaded terms with multiple categorical identities (e.g., the Chinese term “麒麟”, which is both an ecological and a social culture-loaded term) will require further exploration. Effectively translating these culture-loaded terms in Mo Yan's novels contributes to the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture, promotes the development of Chinese literature, and achieves the goal of “bringing Chinese culture to the world.”

3.2 Methodology

This study employs the qualitative method of parallel text analysis, examining and summarizing the translation strategies Goldblatt adopting to deal with the culture-loaded terms in the original text, while evaluating their reception. Neubert and Shreve (1992, p. 89) defines parallel texts as texts combining “common situationality and informativity” and “to carry the same kinds of knowledge to respective readers”. Li (2009, p. 93) notes that parallel texts can help translators bridge the linguistic and specialized knowledge gaps. The way of using parallel texts can make it easier to find out a translator's style. To be exact, the study aims at exploring the translator's choices when he encounters with those culture-loaded terms symbolizing strong Chinese characteristics.

4. Analysis of the Translation of Culture-Loaded Terms in *Frog*

4.1 Ecological Culture-Loaded Terms

Ecological culture-loaded terms refer to vocabulary that reflects the ecological characteristics of a specific region. These terms highlight the influence of the natural environment on human culture and emphasize the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Due to the strong exotic qualities of these terms, translators need to adopt appropriate strategies to ensure that readers can understand their meaning in the original text.

Example 1:

Original: 当我们漂浮到……东风村时, …… (Mo, 2009, p. 170)

Translation: By the time we reached Dongfeng Village, ... (Goldblatt, 2014, p. 142)

Analysis: In the context where buyers from other provinces come to the village to purchase large peaches, the village committee organizes villagers to transport the peaches to the ferry by both water and land routes. Characters like Wang Jiao take this opportunity to escape because “my” aunt, who is piloting a family planning boat, plans to persuade the Wang family to have an abortion. The word “村” (village), as a part of China's administrative divisions, is commonly translated as “Village” in English. If “村” were transliterated as “Cun,” English readers might find it confusing, so translating it directly as “Village” helps readers understand the location and

events in the novel. This is a way of “transliteration + literal translation”. When translating *Frog*, Howard Goldblatt applied the same method to translate many geographical locations and village names, such as translating “高密县” as “Gaomi Township”, “太行山” as “Mount Taihang”.

There are still many terms translated just in the way of “literal translation”. For instance, the translator translated “吴家桥” as “WuFamily Bridge”, which is just a local place name with a clear structure. Just as “黄河” are translated as “Yellow River”, the way of literal translation allows foreign readers to directly grasp the ecological and cultural characteristics represented by these terms. It is also important to note that while Howard Goldblatt preferred to use foreignization to translate ecological culture-loaded terms, he still used the way of domestication. For example, he translated “娘娘庙村” as “Fertility goddess village”, it is made up of a place name with an administrative division. This village is named with the famous temple “fertility goddess”. It is believed that people who wish to have their own children should go to visit this temple. In this process, the translator use the way of “free translation + literal translation”.

In general, when translating ecological rural language, most of the place names are often translated in the way of transliteration and literal translation. While for terms without a direct equivalent in English, for terms symbolizing special cultural significance, the way of domestication is preferred, so that functional equivalence is assured.

4.2 Linguistic Culture-Loaded Terms

Language, as an important component of culture, is also the medium for cultural communication. Language culture research focuses on exploring the diversity of languages, the relationship between languages and culture, and the role of language in cultural communication. Belonging to different language origins, and naturally, the two languages express their respective cultures in different ways. Linguistic culture-loaded terms encompass a variety of distinctive expressions, including puns, slang, proverbs, idioms, and dialects. When translating idioms in the novel, the translator needs to adopt appropriate strategies to ensure that readers in English-speaking countries can understand the main information, while also deeply appreciating the liveliness and vividness of the Chinese expression.

Example 2:

Original: 人这一辈子能生几个孩子，都是命中注定的。……你们……瞎子点灯——白费蜡。(Mo, 2009, p. 56)

Translation: How many children a woman bears, ... you people ... a blind man lighting a candle, just wasting wax. (Goldblatt, 2014, p. 53)

Analysis: In this context, the “aunt” is the director of the commune’s maternity and child health clinic, responsible for leading, organizing, and implementing the village’s family planning work. Although she works hard to enforce the policy, the villagers don’t understand, so the results are limited. At this point, “my” mother and aunt engage in a discussion about women having children. The “xiehouyu” (a type of Chinese idiom or two-part metaphorical expression) typically consists of two parts, with the second part serving to complement or explain the first part, often involving a play on sounds. It does not have according expressions in other languages. And its meaning is deeply rooted in the Chinese culture, holds a strong sense of ethnicity. The difficulty of translating such Chinese idioms lies in how to let foreign readers understand the meanings while preserve the artistry and the author’s intention. This expression vividly conveys the speaker’s intent. Here, “my” mother uses the xiehouyu to patiently advise the aunt, suggesting that

controlling women's births should be their right, and that their efforts will be in vain because the villagers won't accept it. Since there is no expression in English for this idiom that would be unfamiliar to English-speaking readers, literal translation is a suitable strategy, as it preserves the original meaning while making it accessible to the readers. Goldblatt translated the xiehouyu directly, rendering “瞎子点灯” and “白费蜡” literally as “a blind man lighting a candle” and “just wasting wax,” respectively. Mo Yan uses a great deal of xiehouyu in *Frog*, such as “狗咬泰山——无处下嘴” (a dog biting Mount Tai—nowhere to bite), a language form that gives the narrative a rural flavor and authentically reflects the villagers' way of life.

However, it is due to the linguistic and cultural barrier, in the process of translating some linguistic culture-loaded terms, the translator has to give up the unique pattern and structural form to adopt the way of free translation. For instance, the translator rendered “吃香的和辣的” as “with fine food and drink”, so that the target readers can better understand this kind of terms.

The novel *Frog* uses many culture-loaded terms related to language, adding a strong rural flavor and exotic appeal to the work. While these unfamiliar expressions and local proverbs pose challenges for the translator, they also attract English-speaking readers to be interested in Chinese culture, encouraging them to explore Chinese rural literature more deeply. When dealing with these linguistic culture-loaded terms, Goldblatt employs both the way of literal translation and free translation. The former applies to those idioms with vivid metaphors of objects, which can give the foreign readers a graphic description; the latter applies to those idioms with abstract expressions or with the similar expressions that can be found in English, such as “吃一堑长一智” as “I lose – wisdom grows out of experience” “添油加醋” as “spice up her accounts”. The translator not only successfully conveys the cultural information from the source language but also increases the reader's interest in the original work, showcasing the unique charm of the Chinese language.

4.3 Religious Culture-Loaded Terms

Religion, as an important element of culture, focuses on the influence of religious beliefs on human culture, including the origin, evolution, and dissemination of religious beliefs, as well as their role and function in society. Generally speaking, there is a significant difference between the religious beliefs of people in English-speaking countries and those in China. This difference can create difficulties for foreign readers when reading translations, and in some cases, it may even touch upon sensitive issues. In the process of localization, religion often merges with local customs, generating religious expressions with distinct regional characteristics. Unlike China's current respect for freedom of religious belief and its integration of Chinese traditional culture with the excellent cultures of various religions, the setting of *Frog* is during the period of the one-child policy in the last century, when people were deeply influenced by traditional ideologies. As a result, the novel features several traditional religious cultural terms. These elements not only require the translator to possess exceptional translation skills but also require the translator to consider the reader's perspective and maintain a cautious attitude.

Example 3:

Original: 大殿……依次供奉着：……送生娘娘。……敲木鱼的尼姑……探出脑袋：“施主，请给您的孩子配一把长命锁！施主，请给您的娃娃披一件彩霞衣！施主，请给您的娃娃蹬一双青云履！”……出娘娘庙后……(Mo, 2009, p. 194)

Translation: Minor goddesses ... the Goddess of Delivery ... nuns to pound their temple

blocks ... saw us off: “Benefactress, don’t forget a longevity lock for your child! Benefactress, don’t forget to buy a rainbow shawl for your doll! Benefactress, don’t forget to buy cloud slippers for your doll” ... left the Fertility Goddess Temple. (Goldblatt, 2014, p. 158)

Analysis: In *Frog*, the author depicts a scene in which “I” and his wife, Little Lion, accidentally enter a “娘娘庙 (Niangniang Temple). This temple is filled with religious culture-loaded terms, such as the nine “娘娘” (goddesses), “敲木鱼的尼姑” (nuns pounding temple blocks), “施主” (benefactor), “长命锁” (longevity lock), “彩霞衣” (rainbow shawl), “青云屐” (cloud slippers), and “娘娘庙” (Fertility Goddess Temple). These terms are closely related to Taoism and Buddhism and reflect the integration of traditional Chinese culture and religious beliefs.

For some terms with strong religious meanings, the translator substitutes them with expressions in English. For example, Goldblatt translates “娘娘庙” as “the Fertility Goddess Temple.” While the original Chinese term is deeply rooted in religious and cultural traditions related to fertility, Goldblatt’s translation decision reveals a clear strategy: prioritizing functional equivalence to convey the term’s core meaning in a way that resonates with foreign readers. This approach demonstrates his efforts to bridge cultural gaps by choosing the way of free translation that preserves the term’s primary significance without overwhelming readers unfamiliar with the specific religious context. By doing so, Goldblatt ensures both accessibility and cultural relevance, illustrating a thoughtful negotiation between literal fidelity and reader comprehension. Similarly, “木鱼” (temple block), a religious instrument used in Buddhist and Taoist rituals, is directly translated as “temple block” here, which is a commonly used term in English, specifically referring to the percussion instrument used in East Asian Buddhist ceremonies. It is important to note that when “木鱼” appears the first time in the original text, Howard Goldblatt uses the way of “free translation + literal translation” to translate it as “rapped a stick against his Buddhist temple block, known as a wooden fish”. The translation enables the foreign readers clearly understand this special instrument and leaves them a deep impression, and that’s why Howard Goldblatt just translates this term as “temple block” when it reoccurs in the text.

The translator normally uses the way of literal translation for some forms of address terms and . The term “尼姑” refers to a female Buddhist practitioner in Chinese culture, and Goldblatt translates it directly as “nun”, meaning “a member of a female religious community”. Goldblatt adopts the literal translation strategy when rendering this term, as “nun” in English generally refers to female religious figures worldwide, whereas “尼姑” specifically denotes female Buddhists. In this sense, the translation successfully captures the basic meaning of the original term as a female religious figure, allowing readers to immediately understand its reference. However, it may not fully convey the specific Buddhist context inherent in the original. Therefore, if greater precision in conveying this cultural nuance is required, a more specific translation such as “Buddhist nun” could be considered. The term “施主” is an honorific title used in Buddhism and Taoism for donors or benefactors, can be used to call women and men, children and the aged. However, Goldblatt translates it as “Benefactress” rather than “Benefactor” to emphasize that the nuns are addressing a female donor, specifically “my” wife, Little Lion. This translation considers the context, allowing English-speaking readers to better understand the conversation where the words spoken by the nun are aimed at “my” wife, Little Lion, because it was “my” wife that hesitated for a moment about buying those objects symbolizing religious beliefs.

The three items mentioned by the nuns – “长命锁”(longevity lock), “彩霞衣”(rainbow shawl), and “青云屐” (cloud slippers) – are also translated directly by Howard Goldblatt using a literal

translation approach. This method reflects his strategy of preserving the cultural uniqueness of these objects while ensuring that their basic meanings are accessible to English-speaking readers. The literal translations provide an authentic glimpse into traditional Chinese culture without over-explaining or diluting their essence. By maintaining the original imagery, Goldblatt allows readers to engage with the text on a deeper level, sparking curiosity and encouraging them to explore the symbolic meanings and cultural significance of these objects. This strategy not only enhances the cultural depth of the translation but also fosters cross-cultural understanding, as foreign readers can appreciate the distinctiveness of Chinese traditions through the preserved poetic beauty of the source text.

4.4 Material Culture-Loaded Terms

Material culture studies the impact of material products on human culture, focusing on people's daily material production and consumption cultures. This includes various art forms, architecture, food, clothing, production tools, transportation, and human creativity and expression related to these material products. Due to different historical, cultural traditions, and natural environments across countries and regions, people's lifestyles and cultural characteristics vary, leading to the creation of diverse material products. Material culture-loaded terms are words that refer to material products with unique cultural meanings in different cultures. Many of these terms are unique to Chinese culture, with no direct equivalents in English. This presents a challenge for translators: how to use concise yet rich language to preserve both the distinctive characteristics and the mystique of the source language.

Example 4:

Original: 你爸爸说, “……油焖大虾, 辣子鸡丁, 鸡蛋炒黄花菜”。(Mo, 2009, p. 42)

Translation: Your father said, “... braised prawns, spicy chicken nuggets, eggs and day lily”. (Goldblatt, 2014, p. 41)

Analysis: In *Frog*, Mo Yan showcases Chinese cultural features through traditional foods. In translating these culture-loaded terms, Howard Goldblatt uses different strategies. For example, he translates “油焖大虾” (braised prawns) literally, retaining both the ingredient and the cooking method. For “黄花菜”, Goldblatt uses the literal translation “day lily.” However, this term in English typically refers to a flower called “daylily,” which is not edible, and it can potentially mislead readers. To better convey the idea, a more explanatory translation, such as “edible day lily” or “yellow flower vegetable,” could help clarify the difference from the non-edible “daylily” and highlight the edible nature of the plant in Chinese cuisine. This would provide a more accurate representation of the term and its cultural context.

However, for “辣子鸡丁”, Goldblatt opts for “spicy chicken nuggets”, employing a way of free translation, instead of a more literal translation like “saute diced chicken with hot peppers and peanuts,” which references fast food culture familiar to English-speaking readers. This approach makes it easier for English readers to understand the dish. While there are also some terms that are transliterated, because these kinds of materials are unique to China, just like “白酒 (baijiu)”. “五粮液(Wuliangye)” is a Chinese alcoholic beverage that is made from grains. Quite popular in China, it is often used to serve distinguished guests on important occasions. Therefore, the translator used the way of transliteration to maintain and disseminate this brand name.

4.5 Social Culture-Loaded Terms

Social culture refers to the study of the impact of social systems, organizations, and culture on human society, and is closely related to the lives and production of the general population. It includes social values, moral norms, behavioral patterns, customs, and traditions, as well as their formation and evolution in human societies. Social cultural terms originate from society and reflect the historical context and social customs of different eras and regions. These terms influence a country's values, history, literature, and customs. In many cases, political and cultural terms related to specific social systems are inevitably involved, which may not be familiar to English-speaking readers. Furthermore, some readers may even have biases or misconceptions about Chinese political systems and societal backgrounds. Therefore, translators face the challenge of preserving the original cultural essence while making the text understandable to readers without the same cultural background.

Example 5:

Original: 大奶奶……说：“她婶子，你说，心都二十二岁了，与她同年出生的，都抱上两个娃了，可她，怎么连个上门提亲的都没有呢？”我奶奶说：“嫂子，你急什么？像心这样的，没准儿要嫁进宫里做皇后呢！到那时，你就成了皇帝的老丈母娘……” (Mo, 2009, p. 23)

Translation: Wan Xin's aunt, ... “Xin is twenty-two. Girls born the same year as her already have two children of their own, but not a single proposal has ever come her way.” “There's no reason to be concerned,” my grandmother said. “A girl like her, who knows, she could marry into the royal family and wind up as Empress. When that happens, you'll be mother-in-law to the Emperor ... ” (Goldblatt, 2014, p. 24)

Analysis: In *Frog*, Mo Yan cleverly uses many terms of address that reflect the complex family relationships and naming systems in traditional Chinese culture, such as “大奶奶” (great-aunt) and “老丈母娘” (mother-in-law). These terms are deeply tied to social culture and can be challenging to translate while preserving their original cultural significance.

In general, for social culture-loaded terms, especially those family titles, the translator uses the way of domestication as many as possible, except for some terms unique to the Chinese culture. For example, he translates “衙门” as “yamens” “风水” as “fengshui”, using the way of transliteration. In this specific example, Goldblatt translates “大奶奶” as “great-aunt,” a creative choice. While in English “great-aunt” usually refers to a sister of one's great-grandmother or grandfather, in this context, Goldblatt likely chose it as the closest equivalent to “大奶奶,” which represents a high-ranking female relative. Though “great-aunt” is not an exact match for the meaning of “大奶奶”, it provides a clear familial relationship for English readers to understand the connection between the narrator and “大奶奶”. Similarly, “老丈母娘” is translated as “mother-in-law,” which is a standard English term meaning “wife's mother.” This translation follows the domestication strategy, using a familiar English term to replace the source language term, making it easier for English-speaking readers to understand. By using “mother-in-law,” Goldblatt helps English readers grasp the meaning of “老丈母娘” while also conveying the humorous tone in the original text.

Through these translation strategies, Goldblatt effectively preserves the cultural essence of the source text while ensuring that the complex familial relationships are understood by readers in the target language. This approach helps facilitate cultural exchange, allowing English readers to gain

a deeper understanding of traditional Chinese culture.

5. Conclusion

For translators with a certain level of foreign language proficiency, the greatest challenge in translation often lies not in the language itself, but in the cultural connotations carried by the language. Culture-loaded terms in the target language not only carry specific cultural meanings but also embody the author's creative intentions, which imposes higher demands on the translator. By analyzing several excerpts from the English translation of Mo Yan's novel *Frog* by Howard Goldblatt, we can see that Goldblatt employs different translation strategies and techniques when translating various types of culture-loaded terms.

Overall, Howard Goldblatt's translation philosophy emphasizes fidelity to the original text while flexibly applying different translation methods to suit cultural contexts, ensuring the work is accessible and comprehensible to target readers. From the perspective of translation strategies, both foreignization and domestication are important in translating rural languages, with domestication being the most frequently used and yielding the best results (Yang et al., 2022), and this is in line with the so-called hybrid translation approach "reflecting the cultural hybridity" (Jing, 2023). Specifically, the translation techniques employed by Goldblatt include transliteration, transliteration with annotations, literal translation (sometimes with annotations), transliteration plus literal translation, and free translation (Zheng, 2016). In terms of readers reception, Goldblatt's English translation of *Frog* has gained some degree of recognition and dissemination abroad, meeting the mainstream expectations of English-speaking readers. This aligns with Goldblatt's translation style of domestication. It's worth mentioning that "Goldblatt's deletion and modification translation mainly focuses on culture-loaded terms and local expressions" (Hu and Peng, 2024), which is also worthy of further research.

This study analyzes the translation methods used by the translator in dealing with culture-loaded terms in *Frog* and aims to provide some reference and insights for the future translation of Chinese rural literature, in order to better promote the global dissemination of Chinese culture.

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