

**Cultural Untranslatability: A Comparative Study of
Four-Character-Idiom Translation in Two English
Versions of *Xi You Ji***

By

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4 June 2010

DECLARATION

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Abstract

The study comparatively and qualitatively analyses the translation of four-character idioms in Chinese novel *Xi You Ji* by Wu Cheng'en to examine the existence of cultural untranslatability in translation. Anthony C. Yu's *The Journey to the West* (1977) and W.J.F. Jenner's *Journey to the West* (2000) are the two English translations chosen to be the parallel corpora. The results from detailed comparisons between the two versions are predicted to support the hypothesis that cultural untranslatability exists in the translation of four-character idioms in *Xi You Ji* and cultural elements have significant influence on the degree of cultural untranslatability. The research findings are expected to echo Catford's (1965) argument that cultural untranslatability is a relative notion and it can turn to translatability to some extent.

Key words: cultural untranslatability, culture elements, four-character idiom, referential meaning, pragmatic meaning, foreignization

Abbreviations:

A: annotation

CI: cultural image

CU: cultural untranslatability

CUD: cultural untranslatability degree

D: domestication

F: foreignization

FCI: four-character idiom

JT: Jenner's translation

LM: literal meaning

LT: literal translation

LU: linguistic untranslatability

P: paraphrase

PM: pragmatic meaning

RM: referential meaning

SL: source language

ST: source text

TL: target language

TT: target text

YT: Yu's translation

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Chapter 1 Introduction

As one of the Four Great Classical Chinese Novels, *Xi You Ji* possesses rich Chinese traditional cultures, and has been translated into many foreign languages. *The Journey to the West* by Anthony C. Yu and *Journey to the West* by W.J.F. Jenner are the only two full-length versions in English and also the translations of considerable influence in the world. Four-character idioms (FCIs), with their strong Chinese cultural “colour”, are widely used in *Xi You Ji*, and make the text livelier but also cause difficulty translating. According to Catford’s dichotomy model of untranslatability (1965, p.99), this kind of problem mainly stems from cultural untranslatability. This paper is an attempt to comparatively analyse the translations of selected FCIs in *Xi You Ji* to examine the existence of cultural untranslatability and the influence of cultural elements on its degree.

This chapter will firstly give background information of *Xi You Ji* and the two English translations of it. Then the broad aim of the study and three research questions based on the aim will be raised. Finally a summary of all the five chapters within this thesis will be presented.

1.1 *Xi You Ji* and Its Translations

Xi You Ji is one of the most prominent novels in China’s literature history. It is a

100-chapter novel creating a world full of fantasy and illusion written by Wu Cheng'en (ca.1510-ca.1582) some four hundred years ago. And it comes from a true story of a famous Buddhist monk Tripitaka (602-664) about his historical journey — traveled alone on foot through Central Asia to Sindhu (today India), the birthplace of Buddhism, in quest of the True Scriptures of Buddhism¹.

With its distinctive cultural characteristic that typically presents Chinese history, culture and traditions, *Xi You Ji* has been long appealing to the rest of the world, especially the Western world and been translated into several languages partly or fully. The famous Japanese novelist Kunimoto Kawahito was the first one to translate *Xi You Ji* in 31 volumes in a five-part set. (Shi, 2000, p.48) The first translation into English — *A Mission to Heaven* — was made by Timothy Richard and published in 1913 by the Shanghai Christian Literature Society. (Ibid) Following that, a number of versions were published in various English-speaking countries.

Among them, *The Journey to the West* (1977-1983) by Anthony C. Yu and *Journey to the West* (1977-1986) by W.J.F. Jenner are the only two full-length versions and also the translations of considerable influence. (Ibid) Though it is almost an impossible mission, both Yu and Jenner attempt to completely and faithfully reproduce the original story in English meanwhile preserving both the style and content of it. In fact,

¹ The earliest scriptures of Buddhism introduced to China are not directly from India. They are mostly written in many languages of small ancient countries in Central Asia. Therefore, the tenets included in those scriptures inevitably deviated from the original one in Sanskrit to some extent. So only the scriptures written in Sanskrit are regarded as being of true value by Buddhists and so are called the True Scriptures and quested by Tripitaka.

they both have done very excellent jobs and received worldwide recognition. There are, however, still a number of words or phrases that have not been translated perfectly such as FCIs bearing strong Chinese cultural features. According to Catfor's dichotomy model of untranslatability, this phenomenon largely stems from cultural untranslatability (CU).

1.2 Research Aims and Research Questions

The paper aims to examine the existence of CU in translation through comparing the translations of FCIs at both referential meaning (RM) level and pragmatic meaning (PM) level based on the two translation versions. Then the impact of cultural elements on CU and its degree will be revealed. Finally, the alternative translations that can reduce its degree will be elicited if possible.

Based on the aims above, the following three research questions which form the central argumentation of the paper will be discussed in detail:

- § Does cultural untranslatability exist in translation of FCIs in *Xi You Ji*?
- § To what extent do cultural elements contribute to the cultural untranslatability of them?
- § Can cultural untranslatability turn to translatability to some degree and how?

1.3 Value of the Thesis

The study is a good attempt in several ways. Firstly, it is an attempt at a qualitative approach to the study of FCIs in *Xi You Ji* from the perspective of CU. Secondly, it tries to compare the translations of the two English versions in the area of FCIs. Since there is a few of previous studies on this issue of *Xi You Ji* but from different perspectives, this study may provide a new angle of view for other researchers in similar fields.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters as follows:

Chapter One makes an introduction to the whole thesis. An overview of Wu Cheng'en's *Xi You Ji* and Yu's and Jenner's English versions of it are presented followed by the research aims, questions and value.

Chapter Two is the literature review of relevant translation theories and studies regarding translation and culture, CU, meanings and untranslatability, cultural elements and their impacts on meaning expression, strategies towards cultural untranslatability, CU reduction techniques, and chapter review.

In Chapter Three, research methodology adopted in this study is explained and illustrated, including the affecting factors in and process of data collection, an

example analysis, and chapter review.

Chapter Four concentrates on the comparative analysis and discussion of selected FCIs translation of the English versions of *Xi You Ji*. Results found in this study are summarized in one table, and then discussed and concluded followed by chapter review.

The last chapter serves as the conclusion of the thesis. Research questions raised at the beginning of the paper are answered. In addition, implications and limitations of the study are also presented.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In this chapter, previous studies and leading theories about the key issues of the study are presented systematically to support the idea and analysis of the paper. It centres on the definition and properties of CU, and the impact of cultural elements on CU through affecting the conveying of meaning.

2.1 Translation and Culture

As to the notion of culture, according to Edward Burnett Tylor, “culture...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and many

other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (1871, p.1). His definition almost covers every aspect of human’s life and has been the basis of most modern anthropological conceptions of culture. Newmark, from the perspective of a linguist, defines culture as “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression” (1988, p.94), thus implies that different language groups have diverse culturally specific features which are unique to each group. Translation activity across languages therefore inevitably involves the contact, collision, assimilation or rejection of cultures, as Hervey and Higgins put that “translating involves not just two languages, but a transfer *from one whole culture to another*” (2002, p.31).

However, for a fairly long time, the idea of “The best translation does not sound like a translation” (Nida, 1969, p.12) that puts cultural factors and exoticism out of consideration had been advocated by either theorists or common people. With increasing cultural communication across nations and more popular globalisation, more and more scholars have realized the limitations of this view and gone beyond language itself by putting their focus on the interaction between translation and culture. And the shift to include cultural factors in the translation model is considered by Gentzler (2001, p.70) as one most important shift in past two decades occurred in theoretical development of translation.

Taking cultural factors into account, however, brings thorny problem for translators.

Because “translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning, and secondly in terms of style” (Nida, 1969, p.12), which implies that finding the equivalent meaning of the source text (ST) in the target text (TT) has the top priority in translation. On account of the uniqueness of each culture, achieving complete equivalence is implausible and impossible, especially in literary works (Hu, 1993, p.455-456). And “where there is cultural focus, there is a translation problem due to the cultural ‘gap’ or ‘distance’ between the source and target languages” (Newmark, 1988, p.94). Even Nida himself is also aware of the problem and states that “differences between cultures cause many more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure” (2004, p.157).

As a literary work *Xi You Ji* has unique, rich and profound cultural characteristics. Thus its translation must involve the translation of those cultural elements which makes it a painstaking task for translators. Exploring the way and the extent to which cultural elements contribute to untranslatability thus becomes the focus of this paper.

2.2 Cultural Untranslatability

Before touching on CU, untranslatability is the basic notion that needs to be clarified first. Although almost all translators and translation scholars have long felt and proved the existence of untranslatability, for a fairly long time, the notion of untranslatability had been very unpopular. The official acceptance and forming of it became true only

in the second half of the 20th century.

2.2.1 Untranslatability Dichotomy

Briefly speaking, untranslatability takes place when a translator cannot convey the meaning from one language into another. (Manafi Anari, 2003, p.14) In the early stage of translation study, there had been no specific definition and classification for “untranslatability”. It is British scholar Catford who first elaborates on this issue.

In his dichotomy model of untranslatability which is the most important and logical theory about the topic, Catford identifies two kinds of untranslatability, namely, linguistic untranslatability (LU) and CU. He describes that LU arises when “failure to find a TL equivalent is due entirely to differences between the source *language* and target *language*” (1965, p.98). Since it “has nothing to do with cultural differences in the wider sense; it is purely linguistic” (Ibid, p.97), LU is not discussed in this paper.

As to CU, it arises “when a situational feature, functionally relevant for the SL text, is completely *absent* from the culture of which the TL is part” (Ibid, p.99). In other words, the relation between the linguistic expression and its culture connotation behind it in the original one fails to find functional equivalent in the target language. For the first time in the history of translation study, the issue of cultural elements and difference has been formally taken into the consideration of untranslatability and analyzed separately from linguistic concern. Catford’s definition for CU and his

related opinions about it constitute the theoretical basis of this paper.

2.2.2 Degrees of Untranslatability

Apart from the definition of untranslatability, many other theorists have also developed their own ideas on the issue of translatability/untranslatability. Van Den Broeck and Lefevere (cited in Bezuidenhout, 1998) put forward the following laws to measure the degree of translatability/untranslatability of a text:

The larger the unit of translation, or the smaller the amount of information, or the closer contact between the source language (SL) and target language (TL), the greater the translatability would be, and vice versa.

Though these laws are talking about translatability, it can also be applied to untranslatability since both notions are actually the two sides of one fact. Similarly to this categorization, Snell-Hornby claims that the “extent to which a text is translatable varies with the *degree* to which it is embedded in its own specific culture, also with the distance that separates the cultural background of source text and target audience in terms of time and place” (1988, p.41). It implies that the degree of translatability/untranslatability of a text firstly depends on the level of cultural connotation it has, which means the less and weaker the cultural connotation, the lower the degree of untranslatability and the easier the translation would be. More importantly, it lies on the degree of divergence between the related cultures. Quite

often, parallels provide a common understanding despite significant formal shifts in the translation. As well as that, time also plays a role in this issue, for with more frequent cultural contact and exchange, cultural elements with high level untranslatability in the past will transfer to be translatable. Based on this view, she further states that “Literary texts, especially those embedded in a culture of the distant past, tend to be less easily translatable than those texts dealing with the ‘universals’ of modern science” (Ibid). That shows idioms deeply rooted in traditional culture like FCIs in *Xi You Ji* are good materials for examining the existence and degrees of untranslatability.

Both views agree that higher degree of contact or exchange between the SL and TL would reduce the level of untranslatability, but the differences between them are also obvious. The level of cultural connotation is one of the major considerations of the latter one. And the former one mentions the impact of the size of the language unit and the information carried by it on translatability/untranslatability. All these four points are embodied in FCI translation. Each FCI only consists of four characters but contains larger amount of information and cultural connotation than it looks like, especially those originating from allusions, anecdotes and legends. In many cases, one is able to fully understand an idiom, provided he/she knows the story behind it. And relatively great cultural difference between Chinese and English undoubtedly increases the degree of untranslatability of FCI translation.

2.2.3 Relativity of Untranslatability

Catford (1965, p.93) also presents his view on the degree of untranslatability by writing that translatability appears “intuitively, to be a *cline* rather than a clear-cut dichotomy”, and “SL texts and items are *more* or *less* translatable rather than absolutely *translatable* or *untranslatable*”. It implies that translatability and untranslatability both are relative. Holding the similar opinion, Hatim and Munday make it much clearer that the term “translatability is a relative notion and has to do with the extent to which, despite obvious differences in linguistic structure (grammar, vocabulary, etc.), meaning can still be adequately expressed across languages” (2004, p.15). This view explicitly relates the degree of translatability/untranslatability to the degree of meaning’s expression across languages, which gives a feasible principle and method measuring and reducing the degree of untranslatability that can be followed in translation practice. The relations between meaning and untranslatability will be further explored in detail afterwards.

It needs to be pointed out that the mentioned properties of untranslatability including degrees and relativity are also applied to CU since CU is part of untranslatability.

2.3 Meanings and Untranslatability

The reason for which Hatim and Munday relate the degree of translatability/untranslatability to the degree of meaning’s expression across languages is due to the key role of meaning in translation. As Catford points out that

“Indeed, translation has often been defined with reference to meaning; a translation is said to ‘have the same meaning’ as the original” (1965, p.35). Holding the same view, Appiah says that “translation is an attempt to find ways of saying in one language something that means the same as what has been said in another” (2004, p.392). As well as that, most of problems caused by untranslatability involve “loss of meaning” as Newmark says “...if the text describes a situation which has elements peculiar to the natural environment, institutions and culture of its language area, there is an inevitable loss of meaning” (1988, p.7). So clearly knowing what meanings language signs carry is the start point and crucial work for transferring them in translation.

2.3.1 Categorization of Meaning

According to Newmark, “Meaning is broken down into linguistic meaning (borrowing elements of Chomsky’s model), referential meaning (the denotative ‘dictionary’ meaning) and emotive (or connotative) meaning” (1988, p.38). The linguistic meaning indicates the relationship between words themselves and the emotive meaning, also called pragmatic meaning, is the external meaning attached to language by the user. (Ke, 1996, p.75) This categorization is relatively comprehensive and easy to learn and widely used by translators. Whenever anyone of the three meanings of the ST fails to be conveyed into the TT, untranslatability will occur.

As for Chinese FCIs, after long-term evolvement, most of their connotative meanings have turned into RMs officially written into dictionaries and are no longer equal to the

simple combination of the meaning of each character. It must be, however, pointed out that in some cases, they still can gain PMs from their contexts.

2.3.2 Prime Meaning(s)

In practice, what can hardly be achieved is to completely convey all the meanings of a word or phrase in the ST into the TL for there is little possibility that all the meanings of the ST word can find the exact equivalent in the TL at the same time. And in most cases, they weigh differently in terms of the style of the text and their contexts. (Ke, 1991, p.32) So “the translator usually has to give priority to the most prominent or important one(s) of them, ensuring its/their correct transference in whatsoever circumstances and, if no other alternative being available, at the expense of the other meanings of the sign” (Ke, 1999, p.291). This point is crucial for translators to decide what meaning(s) should be conveyed and what not and then determine the specific translation method should be applied. In this paper, Ke’s opinion in this aspect is adopted as one of the two criteria for measuring the translations and CU.

When it is specific to FCIs, in most cases, the meaning of the lowest priority is linguist meaning which is purely related to linguistic matters without much connection with cultural issues, so it is not taken into account in this paper. Then the selected FCIs are analysed at both RM and PM level. In most instances, a FCI only has RM. However, PM may occur in special context in which condition it normally gets priority over RM and should be dealt with carefully.

2.3.3 Impact of Context on Meaning

Here, context is a very important notion since “translating is a linguistic process bound to the context of situation” (Wilss, 1982, p.72). Nida (2001, p.31), in his *Contexts in Translating*, claims that “In determining the meanings of words the role of the context is maximized...” due to the fact that “The context not only determines how a word is to be understood, but also how it is to be translated” (Nida, 2001, p.35). It is the fundamental basis for judging which meaning is the most significant one (Ke, 1991, p.44). So the context in which the idiom is used is an important factor considered in this paper to determine the most significant meaning of the idiom.

2.4 Cultural Elements and Their Impacts on Meaning Expression

For CU, the major factor affecting it through meaning expression is cultural element. Cultural word and cultural image are the two key notions related to cultural element. Since unknown authoritative definitions of cultural element and cultural image are found, the writer tries to give them by herself.

2.4.1 Cultural Elements, Cultural Words and Cultural Images

Cultural elements are parts or aspects related to culture and include food, art, politics, religion, social structure and so on. Most of cultural elements are universal and shared by people across nations and states but some are not. When dealing with CU, the main

concern is the items in the ST representing the cultural elements that are so heavily and exclusively grounded in one culture, and it is almost impossible to convey all the information they possess into the TT. As Sider Florin defines that such items are “words and combinations of words denoting objects and characteristic of the way of life, the culture, the social and historical development of one nation and alien to another” (1993, p.123). Newmark refers to them as “cultural words” (1988, p.94) which shows the nature of such items in a simple, straight and highly summarized way and is widely used by researchers today. A cultural image (CI) is a kind of cultural symbol, including relatively fixed unique cultural elements, and is always embodied by cultural words in language. In a word, CIs are the containers of specific and exclusive cultural elements, while cultural words are the linguistic manifestations of CIs.

2.4.2 Four-Character Idiom

Among all kinds of cultural words, idioms might be a very distinctive type. They are mainly characterised by their structural stability and figurative meaning. In addition, being heavily loaded with cultural elements, they better reflect the culture of a nation and therefore are good objects for untranslatability analysis from the cultural perspective. According to Ketteridge (1956, p.v), “An idiom is an expression the meaning of which cannot be deduced from its component parts.” That is to say, the meaning of an idiom comes from the combination of a string of words rather than the individual words.

While this feature is also the same with Chinese idioms, there are still differences between English and Chinese idioms. A major one is that most of Chinese idioms comprise four characters called four-character idioms, which makes them more concise and easier to remember but also quite often makes it impossible to translate them keeping their forms and meanings at the same time. The direct consequence of this problem is LU which is not discussed in this paper. Moreover, for FCIs originating from allusions, fables or historical events, they always carry much cultural messages or even a big story condensed just in four characters which could not include all the key words of the messages. Therefore, their concise forms often become an obstacle for people to fully comprehend them, which would undoubtedly lead to CU.

2.4.3 Impacts of Cultural Elements on Meaning Expression

As it is said above that the cultural nonequivalence between languages is the origin of CU, and the nature of translation is the conveying of meaning. Therefore the cultural nonequivalence, namely the nonequivalence in cultural elements, will certainly affect the meaning expression across languages.

As for the relations between culture and meanings, Lado explicitly points out that “the meanings into which we classify our experience are culturally determined or modified, and they vary considerably from culture to culture” (1957, p.78). According to Ke, cultural elements will work on the comprehension of both RM and PM. With RM,

there are following three conditions:

“The referred object in the SL does not exist or is obviously distinct from the comparable one in the culture of the TL;

The comparable object in the TL that seemingly is the same thing or concept as the referred object in the SL, in fact, differs from it in the scope of the concept classification;

The same referred object in the SL and TL might be represented by words with different literal meanings respectively in the two languages due to diverse cognitive focus.” (1991, p.78-85)

The first two conditions are actually the two phenomena of “lexical gap” which “is the term linguists use to describe a situation in which no single word exists in a language to denote a particular concept” (Crystal, 1995, p.28).

As for PM, Ke also gives the following three conditions:

“Because the referred object per se is not familiar with the culture of the TL, the pragmatic meaning carried by it is then unintelligible to the target readers;

The original word and translated word have the same referential meaning, but one has pragmatic meaning and the other not;

The original word and translated word have the same referential meaning but different pragmatic meaning.” (1991, p.87-95)

To some extent, the first condition overlaps with lexical gap due to the fact that if the referred object is not familiar to the target readers, it always consequently has no equivalent in the TL.

Ke's theory implies that CU degree is possible to be lowered to some extent by reducing the impact of cultural element on the comprehension of prime meaning(s). Specifically, some translation techniques could be applied to introduce the exotic cultural elements of the SL and their connotations into the TL to reproduce the culturally functional relations in the TTs. The suggested methods will be presented in the next two subsections.

However, when applying these conditions to FCIs, things become different that the RMs of a certain number of FCIs have already lost their cultural elements deeply rooted in culture despite the fact that the characters consisting their bodies are cultural words representing unique CIs. This special phenomenon comes from the specialty of FCIs' RMs which are usually not equal to their LMs that the simple combination of the meaning of each character. Therefore, for those FCIs, it seems that CU does not exist in them. However, it should be noted that, though those FCIs have RMs easier to understand and more colloquial than themselves, people still prefer to express those RMs in FCI form in certain context. This is probably because FCIs are more concise and vivid, and more importantly, they can better reflect profound cultural and

historical origins and elements all of which are represented by the CIs. So for those FCIs, it is necessary to translate their CIs and RMs at the same time to produce a similar response that affects English readers “in the same way as the original may be supposed to have affected its” (Nida, 1964, p.164) Chinese readers. Any translations failing to convey either CIs or RMs are not successful translations given the above analysis, and the direct consequence is CU to some degree. As for the necessity of translating CIs, it will be discussed further in the next subsection.

2.5 Strategies towards Cultural Untranslatability

As mentioned above, untranslatability is a relative notion. That means there must be some strategies to minimize the level of it to some degree. Among various strategies used in practice, foreignization and domestication are the two ones distinguished by Schleiermacher as strategies for translating the ST meaning given by a cultural context into the TL.

2.5.1 Foreignization and Domestication

Foreignization and domestication are two terms coined by L. Venuti. Domestication “entails translating in a transparent, fluent, ‘invisible’ style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT” (cited in Munday, 2001, p.146) and the translator “can leave the reader in peace as much as possible and bring the writer to him” (Schleiermacher, cited in Wilss, 1982, p.33). While “foreignization, on the other hand, ‘entails choosing

a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language” (Venuti, cited in Munday, 2001, p.147) and the translator can “leave the writer in peace as much as possible and bring the reader to him” (Schleiermacher, cited in Wilss, 1982, p.33). Obviously, the two strategies are opposite on the purpose and function to each other. Domestication favours the localization of the SL. Which means the TT should be TL- or TT readers-oriented and as readable as if it is an original text in the TL, which is favoured by Nida. On the contrary, foreignization prefers the TT to be SL- or ST writers-oriented and to keep the exoticism of the ST as much as possible, which is preferred by Schleiermacher and Venuti.

Since translation involves cultural transfer between two languages, domestication aims to make the TT in accordance with the habit of the expression and cultural norms of the TL thereby the TT reader would not have much chance to feel and understand the cultural characteristic of the SL. While foreignization aims to be more faithful to the ST, respectful to the SL culture, keeping exoticism, and reproducing the specific cultural ideas and artistic features to introduce or integrate the valuable information of the ST culture into and enrich the TL and TL culture, whereby promotes the exchange and infiltration between languages and cultures of different nations.

2.5.2 Foreignization Dominating Domestication

Given foreignization’s advantage in promoting cultural exchange, it has been

attracting more and more proponents in recent decades, especially in China. According to Sun (2002, p.42), the basic task of translation is to accurately and completely convey the idea and “colour” of the original work, so foreignization should be applied as the major means to achieve this goal and domestication can be used as a “compromise” means to tackle linguistic barrier. He concludes that where possible, foreignization should be used to the maximum extent, especially in terms of culture, but when there is difficulty foreignising the ST, at the purely linguistic level in particular, domestication should then be used instead. (Ibid) Out of the desire to introduce more Chinese outstanding literary works into the West and the world, quite a few Chinese scholars hold similar opinions like Sun. Meanwhile, they also see the weakness of foreignization and try to combine foreignisation with domestication to maximize the advantages of both at the same time.

In *Xi You Ji*'s translation, both Yu and Jenner adopt foreignization strategy as the main strategy in an effort to preserve its Chinese cultural characteristics from the whole point of this literature. When it comes to the specific words or phrases like FCIs, however, domestication is also chosen by them as an effective supplementary tool on their own discretion. With regard to whose translation is better in this respect, there is no clear conclusion in the academia. In this paper, Sun's opinion is partially adopted as one of the two criteria for measuring the translations and CU, namely, making efforts to accurately and completely convey the CIs and their cultural connotation to the maximum degree.

2.6 CU Reduction Techniques

In translation practice, strategies like foreignization and domestication are just purposes or principles guiding translators' work. As to the specific methods and techniques applied to reduce CU degree, there are varieties referred to as "compensation — that is, techniques of making up for the loss of important ST features through replicating ST effects approximately in the TT by means other than those used in the ST" (Hervey, Higgins & Haywood, 1995, p.28).

2.6.1 Literal Translation plus Annotation

There are a number of compensation techniques. In this paper, only two of them, annotation and paraphrase, are focused on due to space limitation and the writer's own preference. Annotation refers to additional information a translator may have to add to his/her version, and accounts for difference between SL and TL culture to make up cultural loss in translation in certain context. (Newmark, 1988, p.91) It may come within the text or as note at bottom of page or end of chapter or book. One of the major types of annotation is the combination of it with literal translation¹ (LT), and this type is normally seen in translating classic or academic works where multi-level meanings of the ST should be expressed in the TT all together without any meaning loss, or when the cultural background or knowledge of the ST is preferred to be

¹ Literal translation refers to "an SL-oriented, word-for-word, style of translation in which the literal meaning of all the words in the ST is taken as if straight from the dictionary, but the conventions of TL grammar are respected" (Hervey & Higgins, 2002, p.272).

introduced to the TL. (Ke, 1991, p.109-110) However, due care should be taken without abuse when using it; otherwise the target readers would feel boring and dull like “reading a heavily annotated novel would seem to me rather like trying to play tennis in chains” (Hawkes, 1977, p.18).

2.6.2 Literal Translation plus Paraphrase

Another compensation technique adopted in this paper is the combination of LT with paraphrase. Paraphrase “is an amplification or explanation of the meaning of a segment of the text” (Newmark, 1988, p.90). Because it can give more freedom to translators and keep the information of the ST meanwhile, it is widely used in translation practice, particularly in translating idioms and allusions. However, the abuse of paraphrase, for some important cultural concepts in particular, would result in meaning distortion or loss and thereby mislead target readers. To avoid this, LT is introduced in this paper to work together with paraphrase to achieve better effect, which is actually the combination of foreignization and domestication in nature.

2.7 Chapter Review

Within this chapter, a framework of previous studies on relations of translation with culture, CU, meanings, cultural elements, translation strategies and techniques has been portrayed. It theoretically reviews the way nonequivalence in cultural elements leads to CU through affecting the conveying of meanings, and comes to the

conclusion that CU is a relative notion and its degree has to do with the extent to which meanings can be adequately expressed across languages. Finally, two strategies — foreignization and domestication — are introduced regarding CU followed by the techniques preferred by the writer to reduce CU degree in translation practice. The review also helps to determine the criteria for comparatively analysing the translation of FCIs of *Xi You Ji*, namely, preserving the cultural “colour” as well as conveying the prime meaning(s).

Chapter 3 Methodology

Based on the parallel corpora¹, comparative analysis of the FCIs at both RM level and PM level is the key means used in this study. Within this chapter, the affecting factors in and process of data collection, namely, the parallel corpora are explained first. The specific analysis process is then explicated in detail and illustrated by an example.

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis Process

In this section, the first part focuses on the reason and rationale behind the process of selecting specific corpus and reference for the study. Then next is the explanation on the actual analysis process step by step.

¹ “A parallel corpus consists of original, source language-texts in language A and their translated versions in language B.” (Baker, 1995, p. 230)

3.1.1 Factors Affecting Data Collection

Based on the aim of the study which is focused on the CU, the following eight factors are taken into account in data collection.

Firstly, in consideration of the Chinese background of the writer of the paper and the fact that the CU is greater when the cultural and language difference between the SL and TL is bigger, so the Chinese-to-English (C-E) translation is chosen to be the translation direction of the study.

Secondly, out of the need of highlighting PMs of FCIs in their contexts, literary work is chosen to do the analysis. Furthermore, literary work certainly contains more cultural elements.

Thirdly, the reason for choosing *Xi You Ji* as the source of corpus is that, as one of the Four Great Classical Chinese Novels, it contains rich cultural connotation and has a relatively long history of being translated into various languages, which makes it typical for comparative analysis from the cultural perspective.

Fourthly, in order to better examine the relative nature of CU, two translated versions are chosen to do comparative analysis.

Fifthly, both versions are full-length versions and recognized by the academia as

highly faithful to the original work. Moreover, the two versions were finished and published almost in the same period which makes them comparable.

Sixthly, a FCI is a concentrated form of language with strong cultural “colour” and connotation involving broad areas of daily life. It is unique to Chinese language and culture, and stands for the distinctiveness of Chinese culture which makes it an excellent material for analyzing CU.

Seventhly, there are too many FCIs in *Xi You Ji* to be totally reviewed one by one within the limit of the paper. So only twenty idioms in Chapter 64 (Wu, 2000, p.2100-2132) are chose for the analysis. The chapter is selected at random without any specific criterion.

Finally, the New Age Chinese-English Dictionary is the most suitable dictionary available to the writer for it covers most of the FCIs appearing in *Xi You Ji* and normally gives their translations at both LM and PM levels which largely facilitates the analysis work in this paper. As well as that, it is published by one of the best publishers in China, the Commercial Press, and the Chinese notable scholar Jingrong Wu is the chief editor of this dictionary. All of this makes it authoritative and appropriate for this paper.

3.1.2 Data Analysis Process

The actual process of data analysis in this paper takes the following steps:

Firstly, all twenty FCIs in Chinese in Chapter 64 are displayed in a table with their corresponding page numbers in the book;

Secondly, there will be one separated table for each idiom listing its Chinese pinyin, word-for-word translation¹ (WT), literal meaning (LM), RM, PM, Yu's translation (YT) and Jenner's translation (JT) with their page numbers. The list of pinyin and WT is only for reference purpose. LM here differs from RM. Due to the inherently connotative nature of FCIs, their RMs have largely deviated from their LMs. PM here means the meaning after taking its context into account.

Thirdly, if necessary, a brief explanation of the idiom is introduced to give some background information of the idiom.

Fourthly, the detailed comparative analysis is developed between Yu's and Jenner's translation at both RM and PM levels. The strengths and weaknesses of their translations are elicited based on the analysis of their translation strategies, to what extent the CIs and meanings expressed and effects.

¹ Word-for-word translation transfers SL grammar and word order, as well as the primary meanings of all the SL words, into the translation. (Newmark, 1988, p.69)

Fifthly, further critical comment is made from the perspective of the CU of idioms.

Sixthly, if possible, alternative translations are given guided by the principle of preserving the exoticism as well as the prime meaning(s).

Finally, grounded on the above analysis of all twenty idioms, results and findings are concluded based on the summary of the analysis including the CU degree of each idiom before and being translated, translation strategies adopted by Yu and Jenner, meanings or CIs they fail to express, and suggested translations.

In some cases, the idiom is not complex and the middle five steps might be incorporated in one paragraph. Since LU is not the focus of the paper, linguistic matters such as rhyme, the tense and word class of the word are not mentioned. Below is a sample comparative analysis of one randomly selected FCI in Chapter 64.

3.2 Case Study

Below is an example of the actual data analysis process that will be followed in Chapter 4.

Table 3-1 Basic Information about the Example FCI

Idiom	班门弄斧 (<i>ban men nong fu</i>) (p.2118)
-------	--

WT	Ban door wield axe (Ban refers to Lu Ban, the ancient master carpenter)
LM	wield the axe before Lu Ban' door
RM	display one's learning or parade one's skill in the presence of an expert
PM	Tripitaka uses it to show his modesty before the others
YT	swinging the axe before the Carpenter God (p.230)
JT	a beginner trying to show off in front of experts (p.2119)

WT: word-for-word translation

LM: literal meaning

RM: referential meaning

PM: pragmatic meaning

YT: Yu's translation

JT: Jenner's translation

In China, Lu Ban is the most prominent ancient master carpenter called the Carpenter God by people. And axe (*fu*) is a major tool for carpenter. This idiom is, quite often in derogatory sense, used to figuratively describe a situation when one person overestimates his/her own abilities and shows off his/her skills in front of an expert. Whereas in this context, Tripitaka uses it to show his modesty before the others, which is the prime meaning needed to be expressed in the TT.

It is obvious that YT adopts foreignization strategy and replaces "Lu Ban" with "Carpenter God" in order to show the connotation behind *ban* meanwhile maintaining

the CIs, axe and carpenter. However, firstly, the image of Lu Ban disappears thereby and the target readers lose a chance to know a Chinese historical figure. Secondly, the RM of this idiom is not clearly represented and its PM is lost. Moreover, *Nong fu* here means “hold and use an axe”, so “swing” fails to convey the exact LM here.

On the contrary, JT employs domestication which basically expresses its PM as well as RM by describing himself as “a beginner” to show his modesty. And the negative effect is that JT totally removes any traces of the cultural features of the idiom, which “perfectly” displays the CU of cultural elements.

With this idiom, CU indeed exists. Lu Ban is a Chinese figure and is unfamiliar to English readers. In addition, there is no correspondingly functional relation between Lu Ban and axe that can be found in English. All of this inevitably leads to a high degree of CU. The two translators try different ways to reduce it but do not succeed. Then guided by the principle of preserving the exoticism as well as the prime meaning, another two translations are suggested as following in order to reduce the degree of CU:

1. LT plus annotation

“wielding the axe before Lu Ban” plus annotation “Lu Ban is an ancient Chinese master carpenter, the idiom is used by Tripitaka here to show his modesty by describing his behavior as trying to show off in front of experts.”

2. LT plus paraphrase

“just a beginner trying to show off in front of experts like one wielding the axe before the master carpenter, Lu Ban.”

Both methods aim to introduce Lu Ban to English readers, establish the functional relation between Lu Ban and axe in English, and then convey the connotation of the idiom. The former combines LT with annotation by which it expresses the RM and PM of the idiom outside the text. The latter combines LT with paraphrase to do the similar thing within the text. Both translations are given at the discretion of the writer of this paper guided by the principle mentioned previously. And similar suggested translations are also given in Chapter 4. Of course, they are far from perfect. Further studies and better methods are to be developed to improve it.

Below is a table concluding the CU degree of the idiom before being translated, strategies used by Yu and Jenner, meaning(s) or CI unexpressed, the changes of CU degrees after being translated by them, and the translation methods used by the writer of the paper aiming to further reduce the CU degree guided by the principle of the paper.

For the purpose of facilitating comparison, the CU degree is classified into four levels: high, middle, low and zero. This classification is based on the theory proposed by

Snell-Hornby (see section 2.2.2) that the higher degree to which the text is embedded in its own specific culture, the higher the CU. Therefore, high CU level indicates that both the CI and its functional relation with the RM are highly cultural related which hardly find the equivalent in English; middle CU level represents that the CI of the idiom is loosely cultural related but its functional relation with the RM is, so there is no need to make hard effort on explaining the CI which makes its translation CI much easier than the former case; low CU level typifies low level cultural-related CI and close functional relation that can be found in English; zero CU level means no cultural elements involved.

As for the changes of CU degrees after translations, according to Ke's theory and the writer's view (see subsection 2.4.3), three conditions are proposed: no change, increase and decrease. The CU level does not change when the convey of the prime meaning(s) or CI(s) of the idiom corresponds to its CU level; increases when either prime meaning(s) or/and CI(s) of the idiom should be conveyed in terms of its CU level, however, not conveyed somehow; decreases when both the prime meaning(s) and the CI(s) are successfully conveyed into the TT.

Table 3-2 Analysis Summary of the Example FCI

Idiom	CUD before translation	Translation Strategy		Meaning(s) or CI Unexpressed		Change of CUD		ST1	ST2
		YT	JT	YT	JT	YT	JT		

班门弄斧	H	F	D	RM & PM	CI	→	→	LT+A	LT+P
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CUD: CU degree

CI: cultural image

YT: Yu's translation

JT: Jenner's translation

ST1: suggested translation 1

ST2: suggested translation 2

H: high

F: foreignization

D: domestication

RM: referential meaning

PM: pragmatic meaning

→: no change

LT: literal translation

A: annotation

P: paraphrase

3.3 Chapter Review

In this chapter the reasons of choosing FCIs in *Xi You Ji* as the major corpus of this study have been given first. Then, the procedures of this study in examining the CU of the FCI and its degree from the perspectives of both RM level and PM level are described. Finally, the sample analysis is given to demonstrate the actual process of

analysis.

Chapter 4 Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, detailed and in-depth comparative analysis of selected FCIs in *Xi You Ji* at both RM and PM levels are made to examine the CU in translation, its degrees and relativity followed by suggested alternative translations. Finally, findings are concluded based on the summary of the analysis.

4.1 Idiom Analysis

Firstly, all twenty FCIs in Chinese in Chapter 64 are displayed in Table 4-1 in order of appearance with their page numbers (P.) in the book.

Table 4-1 Selected FCIs

Idiom	P.	Idiom	P.	Idiom	P.	Idiom	P.	Idiom	P.
大吹大打	2100	一望无际	2102	郁郁苍苍	2102	马不停蹄	2106	杳无人烟	2106
相顾失色	2108	饱经霜雪	2112	戛玉敲金	2112	洗心涤虑	2114	班门弄斧	2118
全始全终	2118	阳春白雪	2120	百尺竿头	2120	茅塞顿开	2122	渭川千亩	2122
满面春风	2126	锦心绣口	2126	暴躁如雷	2128	好言好语	2128	倚玉偎香	2128

Next is the analysis process as illustrated in Chapter 3. All twenty idioms will be

analysed one by one in order of appearance.

Table 4-2 *da chui da da*

Idiom	大吹大打 (<i>da chui da da</i>)
WT	big blow big beat
LM	blow trumpets and beat drums loudly
RM	N/A
PM	N/A
YT	sonorous sounds of pipes and drums (p.220)
JT	loud music (p.2101)

N/A: not available

This idiom is normally used to describe a scene in which people blow trumpets, beat drums or play other music instruments loudly to create a festival atmosphere.

YT adopts foreignization, while JT chooses domestication. No RM and PM exist in this idiom and CIs are not visible. However, there is still low level CU. Although the CIs “trumpet” and “drum” are hidden in this idiom, they are implied by *chui* and *da*. And they are actually the real subjects of this idiom and will immediately come into a Chinese’s mind when he/she sees this idiom. So if possible, making them explicit to English readers would completely express its meaning and introduce Chinese cultural characteristics to them. In addition, “sonorous” outdoes “loud” in modifying the

music in that “loud music” refers to the music producing much noise which is not the real meaning represented by the idiom. Based on the analysis above, YT basically succeeds in translating this idiom and is much more desirable than JT.

Table 4-3 *yi wang wu ji*

Idiom	一望无际 (<i>yi wang wu ji</i>)
WT	one look no edge
LM	stretch as far as the eye can see
RM	N/A
PM	N/A
YT	what he saw was an endless stretch (p.221)
JT	saw it stretching away endlessly (p.2103)

In this idiom, CU does not appear as well as RM and PM.

Both YT and JT choose foreignization and basically convey the meaning but in an unnatural way. Since no cultural issue is concerned in this idiom, there is no need to translate it so literally. Just using domestication and paraphrase to express its LM is enough. Therefore, the suggested translation is: stretch as far as the eye can see.

Table 4-4 *yu yu cang cang*

Idiom	郁郁苍苍 (<i>yu yu cang cang</i>)
-------	---------------------------------

WT	lush lush green green
LM	lush and green
RM	N/A
PM	N/A
YT	In fresh dark green (p.221)
JT	Luxuriant ... and green (p.2103)

Since there is no specific cultural image and concept in this idiom, no CU is concerned with it. Furthermore, neither RM nor PM is involved which makes its translation much easier.

YT chooses domestication and partially conveys its meaning. There are two sections of meaning in this idiom and one is *yu* (lush), the other *cang* (green). YT translates *cang* into “dark green” which is different from “green” but also acceptable here. The problem of YT is that it uses the word “fresh” to express the meaning of “lush”, which is not proper enough. On the contrary, JT adopts foreignization to make it in accordance with the original idiom both in formal structure and meaning expression enabling it a perfect translation to a maximum degree.

Table 4-5 *ma bu ting ti*

Idiom	马不停蹄 (<i>ma bu ting ti</i>)
WT	horse not stop hoof

LM	horse keeps running without a stop
RM	N/A
PM	N/A
YT	the horse not stopping its trotting (p.223)
JT	without stopping (p.2107)

In Chinese, this idiom is usually used to describe the situation where something is going on or someone is making a hurried journey without a stop and has no relation to horse. However, it indeed refers to a horse and only has LM here in consideration of its context.

YT chooses foreignization and basically conveys its LM, but makes the translation unnatural to some extent. In fact, *ti* (hoof) here is not an important CI without special cultural connotation and can be ignored. In contrast, JT adopts domestication but reproduces its RM instead of LM and loses the major CI “horse” at all.

For this idiom, the degree of CU is low, but neither one does well in translating it. In fact, foreignization and LT can express its CI and LM pretty well. And the suggested translation is: horse keeps running without a stop.

Table 4-6 *yao wu ren yan*

Idiom	杳无人烟 (<i>yao wu ren yan</i>)
-------	--------------------------------

WT	remote no human smoke
LM	remote, and no human and smoke presented
RM	remote and desolate
PM	N/A
YT	There's not even a trace of humans (p.223)
JT	is deserted (p.2107)

In this idiom, *yan* (smoke) refers to cooking smoke. And in Chinese, *ren yan* (human and smoke) indicates signs of human presence or habitation. This idiom is mainly used to describe the remoteness and desolation of a place where there is not even a trace of humans. And there is no PM concerned here.

The CU level is not high. Both translators choose domestication but neither of them conveys the CI *yan* and the meaning of “remote”. The suggested translations are as follows:

1. LT plus annotation

“remote and there is no human and smoke” plus “in Chinese, *ren yan* (human and smoke) normally indicates signs of human presence or habitation, and ‘smoke’ here is cooking smoke.”

2. LT plus paraphrase

“remote and without cooking smoke or other signs of human presence”

Table 4-7 *xiang gu shi se*

Idiom	相顾失色 (<i>xiang gu shi se</i>)
WT	each other look lose colour
LM	look at each other and their faces lose colour
RM	stare at each other in terror
PM	stare at each other in consternation
YT	stared at each other, paling with consternation (p.224)
JT	stared at each other, pale with shock (p.2109)

This idiom is usually used to describe the situation where people are so terrified they stare at each other with their faces turning pale. However, in this context, there is more sense of “dismay at something unexpected” than “terror”.

There is no CI in this idiom and so no CU concerned. Both translators choose foreignization to translate it, but YT is more successful than JT for “consternation” is more proper than “shock” considering the context of the idiom.

Table 4-8 *bao jing shuang xue*

Idiom	饱经霜雪 (<i>bao jing shuang xue</i>)
WT	fully experience frost snow

LM	have fully experienced frost and snow
RM	have experienced the hardships of life
PM	N/A
YT	I've borne frost and snow (p.226)
JT	have seen much frost and snow (p.2121)

CU is not obvious in this idiom. Both translators adopt foreignization. In Chinese, people compare “frost and snow” to “hardship of life”. Similarly, English speakers use “storms” to indicate the same meaning. Though “frost and snow” is perhaps a little unnatural for them, they know that it is negative and associated with unpleasant or difficult weather, so they could guess the meaning without too much difficulty. Both Yu and Jenner relatively succeed in keeping both CIs and prime meaning unchanged.

Table 4-9 *jia yu qiao jin*

Idiom	戛玉敲金 (<i>jia yu qiao jin</i>)
WT	tap jade beat gold (literally, <i>jia</i> and <i>qiao</i> have similar meaning)
LM	lightly beat jade and gold
RM	sonorous and pleasant tone
PM	A tree spirit uses it to show his graceful style
YT	Make noble rhymes (p.226)
JT	Lightly beating the jade and the gold (p.2113)

In Chinese, people always use jade or/and gold to describe the nobleness of people or things in certain context. In this idiom, a tree spirit uses it to show his graceful style in consideration of its context.

Obviously, JT chooses foreignization but only preserves the CIs without expressing any RM and PM of it. In contrast, YT adopts domestication this time to basically reproduce its PM but at the cost of the CIs.

There is no doubt that the CU degree of this idiom is high because neither “jade” nor “gold” has the connotation of “nobleness” in English. The two translators use opposite strategies, and no one achieves in preserving the CIs and their connotations at the same time. As to the suggested translation, annotation is preferred to paraphrase given that this idiom is quoted in a poem that normally requires a short and concise expression in form. Therefore, the following translation is suggested:

1. LT plus annotation

“lightly beating the jade and the gold” plus “jade or/and gold stands for nobleness in Chinese. The spirit uses them here to show his graceful style.”

Table 4-10 *xi xin di lü*

Idiom	洗心涤虑 (<i>xi xin di lü</i>)
-------	------------------------------

WT	wash mind clean concern
LM	wash mind and clean concern
RM	get rid of any selfish ideas and personal considerations
PM	N/A
YT	The cleansing of the mind and the purgation of desires (p.227)
JT	washing the mind and cleansing it of care (p.2115)

No CU is involved for there is no CI. And the only difficulty lies in accurately comprehending the meanings of *xin* and *lǜ* and then finding the appropriate words to translate them. Both translators choose foreignization to basically convey its RM. However, YT is more satisfying than JT in words collection. Specifically, both “cleanse” and “purgation” have the sense of “to make morally pure” which is very close to the meaning expressed by the idiom and much better than “wash” that is too literal. Moreover, though *lǜ* literally means “concern” or “care”, it actually refers to “selfish ideas and personal considerations” in this idiom. So “desire” can better express the meaning than “care”.

The tenth idiom “班门弄斧” has already been analysed in Chapter 3 and will not be repeated here.

Table 4-11 *quan shi quan zhong*

Idiom	全始全终 (<i>quan shi quan zhong</i>)
-------	-------------------------------------

WT	complete beginning complete ending
LM	complete beginning and complete ending
RM	finish what was started
PM	N/A
YT	finish the work they started (p.230)
JT	take things through to the end (p.2119)

There is no CI in this idiom and thus no CU concerned. So the major task is only to convey the RM of it properly, which has been successfully achieved by both translators through domestication.

Table 4-12 *yang chun bai xue*

Idiom	阳春白雪 (<i>yang chun bai xue</i>)
WT	sun spring white snow
LM	Spring Snow (a melody of the elite in the State of Chu)
RM	highbrow art and literature
PM	highbrow poem
YT	the most sublime poetry (p.231)
JT	Superb poems have a noble spirit (p.2121)

This idiom is originally the name of a melody of the elite in the State of Chu and later evolved into the RM of “highbrow art and literature.” In this context, it is used by a

tree spirit to praise the poems by Tripitaka.

Both translators choose domestication and successfully convey its PM but at the cost of its unique CI at the same time. There is not much difference between their translations except their word selection. In this regard, JT uses “noble spirit” that is closer to its connotation than YT’s “sublime”. Due to the specific cultural characteristic of the Spring Snow and its strong functional relation with its RM and PM, high level CU inevitably occurs in this idiom. And both translators fail to transfer the CI into English. In consideration of the principle followed by this paper, alternative translation is suggested as follows:

1. LT plus annotation

“Spring Snow” plus “it is a melody of the elite in the State of Chu. In Chinese, people use it to describe highbrow art and literature. A tree spirit borrows it to praise the poems by Tripitaka here.”

2. LT plus paraphrase

“superb poems with a noble spirit like the Spring Snow, the melody of the elite”

Table 4-13 *bai chi gan tou*

Idiom	百尺竿头 (<i>bai chi gan tou</i>)
WT	Hundred <i>chi</i> pole top

LM	The top of a hundred- <i>chi</i> pole
RM	the supernatural skill possessed by a Buddhist is in a state of extremely high attainments or high achievement in one's knowledge or career
PM	N/A
YT	the highest heights he'll strive (p.231)
JT	the top of a hundred-foot pole (p.2121)

This idiom comes from a libretto in Buddhist scripture, and its original and Buddhist meaning is that the supernatural skill possessed by a Buddhist is in a state of extremely high attainments. People later use it to figuratively describe the high achievement one has had in his/her knowledge or career. Tripitaka here uses it in a poem full of Buddhist images, and thus expresses more Buddhist connotation than unreligious one. *Chi*, a Chinese unit of length, equals one third of a metre.

YT adopts domestication to deliver its unreligious connotation but removes the traces of its Buddhist “colour” and the CI of “pole”. Furthermore, the idiom has no meaning of “highest” but “extremely high”.

In contrast, JT chooses foreignization to deliver its LM without any connotation in it, which would definitely confuse any English reader. Jenner here replaces the word *chi* with “foot” since the length of the pole is not the focus of this idiom. In fact, there is

an another idiom 百丈竿头(*bai zhang gan tou*) that has exactly the same meaning with 百尺竿头 but uses another Chinese length unit *zhang*. So there is no need to borrow it into English to make things more complicated.

The CU degree of this idiom is not so high because its cultural “colour” is not so strong as 班门弄斧 — there is no CI specific to China. However, the functional relation between “top” and the “pole” is not clear to English readers, and neither of the two translators expresses its Buddhist “colour” and meaning to make it better fit in with the Buddhist atmosphere of the poem. In this respect, neither YT nor JT does well. Similar to 戛玉敲金, this idiom is also used in a poem, so annotation is preferred to paraphrase regarding the suggested translation. Therefore, the following translation is suggested:

LT plus annotation

“the top of hundred-foot pole” plus “it comes from a libretto in Buddhist scripture, and means the supernatural skill possessed by a Buddhist is in a state of extremely high attainments.”

Table 4-14 *mao se dun kai*

Idiom	茅塞顿开 (<i>mao se dun kai</i>)
WT	grass block suddenly open
LM	road blocked by grass is suddenly clear

RM	become enlightened all of a sudden
PM	N/A
YT	opened up my mind (p.232)
JT	removed the block (p.2123)

This idiom is usually used to describe the situation where a person, whose thought had been not clear like a road being blocked by grass, becomes fully enlightened all of a sudden.

YT chooses domestication and basically conveys the RM of the idiom but removes any traces of the CI. Moreover, it fails to express the concept of “sudden” which is a key point in this idiom. JT adopts foreignization but makes more serious mistakes than YT. It only reproduces partial LM of the idiom without any mention of “sudden”, let alone the RM. Compared with YT, JT seems meaningless to English readers.

There is a middle level CU in this idiom since no special CI occurs. Though the two translators use different strategies, neither of them completely conveys the CI and RM of it. The suggested translations are as follows:

1. LT plus annotation

“the grass-blocked road is suddenly clear” plus “this idiom is used to describe the situation where a person, whose thought had been not clear like a road being

blocked by grass, becomes fully enlightened all of a sudden.”

2. LT plus paraphrase

“the unclear mind like a road being blocked by grass suddenly becomes fully enlightened”

Table 4-15 *wei chuan qian mu*

Idiom	渭川千亩 (<i>wei chuan qian mu</i>)
WT	Wei river one-thousand <i>mu</i>
LM	one-thousand- <i>mu</i> (bamboos) along the Wei River
RM	very lush bamboos
PM	N/A
YT	fields of Wei ¹⁹ (p.232)
JT	A hundred acres of me by the Wei (p.2123)

Mu, a Chinese unit of area, equals to one sixth of an acre. Wei is “the name of a river in the modern province of Shensi. Tradition has it that its course is flanked by rows of lush bamboos on both banks” (Yu, 1980, p.443). Although the word “bamboo” does not appear in this idiom, it is actually implied by *wei chuan* (the Wei River).

YT chooses foreignization and adds a note in the end of the book. It basically conveys the CI and RM by doing so. It should be noted that, similar to *chi* in 百尺竿头, the

phrase “one-thousand *mu*” is just used to show the vastness of the bamboo area. And it is not necessary to translate it literally. So YT’s making no effort to translate it is reasonably acceptable.

JT also uses foreignization but it is worse than YT. Firstly, JT does not give any explanation as to what “the Wei” does mean. Secondly, it does not mention “bamboo” at all which is the key concept and CI in this idiom. Therefore, JT fails neither to fully transfer the CIs nor to accurately convey the RM. However, JT’s replacement of one-thousand-*mu* with “A hundred acres” is reasonably acceptable due to the same reason mentioned above.

Though the CU level of this idiom is high due to the special connotation behind *wei chuan*, Yu translates it well by adding a note to explain it. Based on his work, the following is the suggested translation:

LT plus paraphrase

“a hundred acres of lush bamboos along the Wei River”

Table 4-16 *man mian chun feng*

Idiom	满面春风 (<i>man mian chun feng</i>)
WT	full face spring wind
LM	face is full of spring wind

RM	face is radiant with joy
PM	N/A
YT	smiling broadly (p.234)
JT	face was all smiles (p.2127)

In Chinese, people always use *chun feng* (spring wind) to describe someone's smile with joy, while there is no such functional relation in English.

Both YT and JT choose domestication and successfully convey the RM but fail in presenting the CI "spring wind" in TT.

The CU degree of the idiom is middle. Both translators make no effort to reproduce the CI in their translations. In fact, it is not so hard to accomplish that. The suggested translations are as follows:

1. LT plus annotation

"face is full of spring wind" plus "In Chinese, people always use "spring wind" to describe someone's smile with joy."

2. LT plus paraphrase

"face was all spring-wind-like smiles"

Table 4-17 *jin xin xiu kou*

Idiom	锦心绣口 (<i>jin xin xiu kou</i>)
WT	brocade mind embroidery mouth
LM	brocade-like mind and embroidery-like mouth
RM	elegant thoughts and flowery speech
PM	N/A
YT	a mind of silk and a mouth of brocade (p.234)
JT	brocade from the heart or embroidery in words (p.2127)

In Chinese, people normally use brocade and embroidery to admire the beauty, elegance or glory of something. And it should be noted that *kou* actually refers to speech here instead of its normally physiological meaning.

YT chooses foreignization but fails to make it meaningful. Because “a mind of silk” indicates a mind being made up of silk which is far from the actual meaning expressed by the idiom and also so weird to English readers. The same problem also happens to “a mouth of brocade”. In addition, there are problems with the translations of the CIs *jin* and *xiu*. Firstly, *jin* (brocade) and silk are different concepts for brocade is a thick, heavy, expensive material, often of silk, that has a raised pattern on it. Secondly, brocade cannot replace embroidery either. Yu makes conceptual mistakes here.

JT also adopts foreignization, and has the similar problem as YT's. Firstly, the expression of "from the heart" means "sincere" or "deeply felt" and has no obvious link with "thought" in English. Secondly, the wording "embroidery in words" will mislead English readers and make them feel that Tripitaka's words are exaggerated rather than flowery, because "embroidery" also means "exaggerated description or reporting of an event."

It can be seen that the degree of CU is high in this idiom due to the special cultural connotation behind the CIs. Although the two translators choose same strategy, neither of them succeeds in conveying the RM. The suggested translations are as follows:

1. LT plus annotation

"brocade-like thinking and embroidery-like speech" plus "In Chinese, people normally use brocade and embroidery to admire the beauty, elegance or glory of something. The idiom here is used to describe elegant thoughts and flowery speech of Tripitaka."

2. LT plus paraphrase

"brocade-like thinking of elegancy and embroidery-like speech of floweriness"

Table 4-18 *bao zao ru lei*

Idiom	暴躁如雷 (<i>bao zao ru lei</i>)
WT	fury irritable like thunder
LM	fury and irritable like thunder
RM	fly into a violent temper
PM	N/A
YT	grew very angry (p.235)
JT	exploded with thunderous fury (p.2129)

This idiom is used to describe a person losing his/her temper so easily and violently like a thunder's speed and violence. The connotation of *lei* here is close to its English counterpart "thunder". So there is a low level CU in this idiom, and it is relatively easy to reproduce the CI *lei* and its RM in English. Yu somehow abandons foreignization and uses domestication here which only expresses its basic meaning "very angry" but completely loses its vividness and the cultural "colour" of "thunder" in Chinese. On the contrary, Jenner does a perfect job here for "exploded" well shows the suddenness and rapidness, "thunderous" skillfully introduces "thunder" (*lei*), and "fury" corresponds to violent temper. Even though he's translation is foreignization, he makes it very natural by changing the idiom's syntactic structure and word classes.

Table 4-19 *hao yan hao yu*

Idiom	好言好语 (<i>hao yan hao yu</i>)
WT	kind words kind words (literally, <i>yan</i> and <i>yu</i> have the same meaning)

LM	kind words
RM	N/A
PM	N/A
YT	speak ... in a kindly manner (p.235)
JT	talk ... very nicely (p.2129)

Once more, there is no CI nor CU and only LM in this idiom. The meaning is very simple and easy to transfer. Both translators choose domestication and use different synonyms and word classes but successfully translate it in the same way.

Table 4-20 *yi yu wei xiang*

Idiom	倚玉偎香 (<i>yi yu wei xiang</i>)
WT	nestle jade nestle perfume
LM	nestle in jade and perfume
RM	be intimate with female
PM	N/A
YT	nestle in jade and perfume (p.235)
JT	taste the pleasures of love (p.2129)

In Chinese, *yu* is also used to praise female's complexion being very smooth and beautiful like jade in certain context. In this idiom, both *yu* (jade) and *xiang* (perfume) figuratively refers to beautiful woman. The idiom is usually used euphemistically to

indicate a sexual relationship with a female.

YT chooses foreignization and only conveys the LM and CIs without any connotation in it, which makes it meaningless to English readers. On the contrary, JT adopts domestication that basically conveys the RM but sacrifices the CIs.

Obviously, the CU level of this idiom is high since “jade” and its functional relevance to beauty is not part of English-speaking culture. Neither of the two translators succeeds in its translation. Based on these facts, the following is the suggested translation:

LT plus annotation:

“nestle in jade and perfume” plus “In Chinese, *yu* (jade) is also used to praise female’s complexion being very smooth and beautiful like jade. In this idiom, both *yu* (jade) and *xiang* (perfume) here imply beautiful woman. The idiom is usually used euphemistically to indicate a sexual relationship with a female.”

4.2 Analysis Summary and Findings

Grounded on the above analysis of all twenty idioms, results and findings are concluded based on the summary of the analysis in Table 4-21 including the CU degree of each idiom before and after being translated, translation strategies adopted by Yu and Jenner, meanings or CIs they fail to express, and suggested translations.

For the purpose of facilitating comparison and analysis, the idioms are displayed in terms of their CU levels before being translated, that is, from high level to zero level.

And LM or RM Underlined below is one that is only partially translated into the TT.

Following the table is six findings concluded based on the previous analysis and the summary in the Table 4-21.

Table 4-21 Analysis Summary of the FCIs

Idiom	CUD before translation	Translation Strategy		Meaning(s) or CI Unexpressed		Change of CUD		ST1	ST2
		YT	JT	YT	JT	YT	JT		
戛玉敲金	H	D	F	RM & CI	RM & PM	→	→	LT+A	LT+P
班门弄斧	H	F	D	RM & PM	CI	→	→	LT+A	LT+P
阳春白雪	H	D	D	CI	CI	→	→	LT+A	LT+P
渭川千亩	H	F	F	N/A	RM & CI	↓	→	LT+P	N/A
锦心绣口	H	F	F	RM	RM	→	→	LT+A	LT+P
倚玉偎香	H	F	D	RM	CI	→	→	LT+A	N/A
杳无人烟	M	D	D	<u>RM</u> & CI	<u>RM</u> & CI	→	→	LT+A	LT+P
百尺竿头	M	D	F	<u>RM</u> & CI	RM	→	↑	LT+A	N/A
茅塞顿开	M	D	F	<u>RM</u> & CI	RM & CI	→	↑	LT+A	LT+P
满面春风	M	D	D	CI	CI	→	→	LT+A	LT+P
大吹大打	L	F	D	N/A	LM & CI	↓	↑	N/A	N/A
马不停蹄	L	F	D	N/A	CI	↓	→	LT	N/A

饱经霜雪	L	F	F	N/A	N/A	↓	↓	N/A	N/A
暴躁如雷	L	D	F	<u>RM</u> & CI	N/A	↑	↓	N/A	N/A
一望无际	Z	F	F	N/A	N/A	→	→	P	N/A
郁郁苍苍	Z	D	F	<u>LM</u>	N/A	↑	→	N/A	N/A
相顾失色	Z	F	F	N/A	<u>PM</u>	→	↑	N/A	N/A
洗心涤虑	Z	F	F	N/A	<u>RM</u>	→	↑	N/A	N/A
全始全终	Z	D	D	N/A	N/A	→	→	N/A	N/A
好言好语	Z	D	D	N/A	N/A	→	→	N/A	N/A

CUD: CU degree

CI: cultural image

YT: Yu's translation

JT: Jenner's translation

ST1: suggested translation 1

ST2: suggested translation 2

H: high

M: middle

L: low

Z: zero

F: foreignization

D: domestication

RM: referential meaning

PM: pragmatic meaning

→: no change

↓ : decrease

↑ : increase

LT: literal translation

A: annotation

P: paraphrase

First of all, it can be seen from the Table 4-21 that the CU degree quite differs from one idiom to another and covers all levels. Six in twenty idioms have high level CU before being translated, four middle level, four low level and six zero.

Secondly, the CU degree and relativity of the idiom is closely related to the level of cultural elements rooted in the culture which are carried by the CIs. It can be concluded as follows:

1. Idioms with high level CU all feature strong and unique CIs and connotations that heavily influence the expression of their meanings in TT but have no corresponding equivalents in TL, which poses considerable difficulty for translators. Both CIs and their RMs must be fully conveyed into the TTs, otherwise the CU will still remain high. This is due to the strong functional relation between the CI and the RM. Only conveying the CI without the RM is meaningless to the English readers, for the CI is unknown to them; only

conveying the RM without the CI does not reproduce the functional relation between the CI and the RM and thereby leads to CU. The performance of the translations by Yu and Jenner truly justifies this point and they both fail to reduce the CU level of this kind of idiom. The only exception is the translation of “渭川千亩” (see Table 4-15). YT uses foreignization and adds note to explain the CI “渭川” (*wei chuan*) thereby reduces the CU Level to low.

2. Idioms with middle level CU all carry exclusive cultural connotations behind relatively culturally neutral words, which have major influence on the meanings expression. Unlike the idiom with high CU level, this kind of idiom does not need much effort to be made on explaining the background of the CI. However, due care should be taken by translators when dealing with them for their CU levels can be artificially enhanced through underestimating the existing difficulty and negligence. Taking the translation of “百尺竿头” (see Table 4-13) as an example, its CU level is not high but JT only literally translates it and makes it meaningless to English readers thereby increases its CU level. Same problems are also can be found in the translation of idioms of low or zero CU level.

3. Idioms with low level CU all involve low level CIs and carry connotations similar to their English counterparts, or can be understood by English readers even if unnatural for them. In such cases, meanings of the idioms are much easier to be conveyed into the TTs, and thereby low level CU can be reduced to zero

compared with idioms of high or middle level CU.

Thirdly, not all CIs are of the same importance. There might be more than one CI in an idiom. If one of them plays greater role in understanding the idiom, it thus gets higher priority in translation than the other(s). For example, there are two CIs in the idiom “渭川千亩” (see Table 4-15), namely, “渭川” (*wei chuan*) and “亩” (*mu*). Through the previous analysis of this idiom, it can be seen that *Wei chuan* is obviously more important than *mu* in the comprehension of the idiom. So on the condition that the prime meaning is fully conveyed, the major task is to express *wei chuan* in the TT. And *mu* can be changed to “acre” to make things easier without impairing the prime meaning.

Fourthly, CIs are sometimes invisible in the idiom but play crucial roles in understanding their connotations. A good example is “大吹大打” (see Table 4-2) which includes the hidden CIs “trumpet or pipe” and “drum”. In this instance, it is necessary to make them visible in the TT to fully transfer the meaning of the idiom and reduce the CU level.

Fifthly, context is always crucial to the comprehension of the prime and real meaning of the idiom and must be taken into account when translating. On one hand, a great number of idioms have both LMs and RMs. Which meaning is the real meaning the idiom carries largely depends on its context, and translators should not make arbitrary

decisions without referring to its context. On the other hand, apart from holding both LM and RM, the idiom might also get PM from its context which is quite subtle and easy to be neglected by translators. All these facts require translators to pay more attention to the context of the idiom when translating.

Sixthly, both Yu and Jenner show no bias towards translation strategies in general. Even though they both adopt foreignization and try to preserve the exoticism of Chinese culture in translating the novel as a whole, they alternatively use different strategies depending on the specific occasions. In many cases, the combination of the two strategies can better accomplish the mission and preserves the CIs and connotations as well as conveys the prime meaning(s) meanwhile. And in the process of translation practice, this can be realised by combining LT with annotation or paraphrase, especially for those idioms with high or middle level CU. However, the use of this method also depends on the context of the idiom. For example, the translation of poems should be short and concise where annotation is more proper than paraphrase. Similar issues should be also taken into account in deciding whether adding annotation within or outside the text, for lengthy annotation would lead to the redundancy of the text.

4.3 Chapter Review

In this chapter, all twenty idioms are analysed one by one following the procedure illustrated in the sample analysis in Chapter 3. Then key points closely related to the

study are summarized in Table 4-21 including the CU degree of each idiom before and after being translated, translation strategies adopted by Yu and Jenner, meanings or CIs they fail to express, and suggested translations. Finally, six findings are concluded based on the summary of the analysis.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

In this chapter, research questions raised at the beginning of the paper are answered one by one based on the comparative analysis of selected FCI translations at both RM and PM level and the consequent findings in Chapter 4. In addition, implications and limitations of the study are also presented.

5.1 Research Questions Review

Based on the analysis, discussion and findings in Chapter 4, conclusion can be drawn as follows in terms of the three research questions:

Firstly, CU does exist in the translation of FCIs in *Xi You Ji* but to various degrees. For some idioms, their CU levels are very high and hardly eliminated completely, while some idioms have low level CU that can be easily reduced to zero. And some even have no CU.

Secondly, cultural elements definitely contribute to CU but also to various degrees which largely depends on the extent to which they are rooted in the SL culture and their importance in understanding and expressing the prime meanings of the idioms. The more unique they are to the SL culture, or/and the greater impact they have on RMs or PMs, the higher CU level they take on, and vice versa. For FCIs, CIs carrying strong cultural elements mostly have critical influence on the comprehension and expression of their RMs or PMs; then their prime meanings and CIs cannot be conveyed separately from each other, otherwise the cultural functional relations between them would be destroyed keeping the CU level high. On the other hand, CIs carrying weak cultural elements always have minor influence on the RMs or PMs and also easy to be conveyed into the TTs, so more effort should be made on the convey of their prime meanings.

Thirdly, the CU levels of most idioms can be reduced to various degrees by properly choosing translation strategies and techniques producing the similar response in the TT readers, such as combining LT with annotation or paraphrase. Meanwhile, other factors that may affect the result of the use of these techniques should be taken into account such as the text type.

5.2 Implications and Limitations

CU indeed exists but it is not an absolute notion, and can be reduced to some degree. To achieve this, a “translator needs not only proficiency in two languages, he must

also be at home in two cultures” (Snell-Hornby, 1988, p.42). The reason for this view is that language is “a carrier of culture” (Ngugi, 1986, p.13) and “represents the culture because the words refer to the culture” (Nida, 2001, p.27). Any wrong presupposition or ignorance about cultural elements of one language would undoubtedly lead to misreading or even seeming untranslatability that in fact could have been avoided. Of course, proficiency with a wide range of translation skills could enable translators to tackle CU in various conditions and reduce it to a minimum level. In this regard, neither of the two translators’ versions could be considered as a perfect one, which leaves much space for noticeable improvement to be made in a new English version. Furthermore, these two full-length versions in English were both translated during between 1970s and 1980s, and more than twenty years has past. With increasing cultural contact and exchange between China and the West world, mutually cultural understanding has been deepening which would contribute to the CU reduction. All these facts call for a new and improved modern version of *Xi You Ji* in English.

The limitation of this study is obvious that the space constrain only permits analysis on small scale, which significantly affects the depth of the analysis, and reduces the reliability and stringency of the findings and conclusion. Secondly, the study just concentrates on FCIs without touching on other kinds of cultural words. Thirdly, all the suggested translations are given on the discretion of the writer without detailed analysis and specific reasons provided that makes them inevitably tend to be more

subjective and less authoritative. However, the writer believes that all these facts provide much space and possibility for further studies.

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