



A Corpus-based Study of Translation Approaches and Strategies on Culture-loaded Words in Literatures: A Case Study of *Jiutu* and Its English Version

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Abstract

This study aims at probing into the investigation of the applications of translation approaches and strategies by the translator for rendering Chinese culture-loaded words in the English translation of novel *Jiutu* by means of the corpus-based approach. The author launches a source text – oriented research with mixed method of quantitative and qualitative in his research. According to the statistics of annotated culture-loaded words and their English versions in the selected bilingual chapters in the two self-built monolingual corpora, the translation approaches and strategies that the translator employed are uncovered. There are totally 9 TMs employed by the translator in the target text. However, 8 TMs except adding are used alone by the translator in TT. Besides, it can be concluded from above data analysis that the most preference of the translator's TM in many cases is literal translation and equivalence is his second choice. Additionally, a qualitative analysis is also conducted, attempting to explore translator's possible motivations of using such methods and strategies for translation based on polysystem theory and translator's invisibility from two out-of-corpus aspects: social and cultural contexts as well as target readerships. This research is in the hope of offering references for the field of corpus-based studies of literary translation on translation methods and strategies.

Keywords

Corpus, Literary Translation, Translation Methods and Strategies, Culture-loaded Words

1. Introduction

Jiutu is the masterpiece of Liu Yichang, a famous Hong Kong writer in 1960s. This work of fiction is known as "the first stream-of-consciousness novel" in the history of modern and contemporary Chinese literature. The original has been republished several times since last century in Chinese-speaking areas and translated in various foreign languages as well. The latest reprinted version is published by *People's Literature Publishing House* in 2018 and its latest English version *The Drunkard* is translated by Charlotte Chun-lam You and published by *The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press* in 2020. These two latest versions are chosen for the current study.

With the development of corpus linguistics, the literary studies are contained into the field of corpus-based studies as well. There are a large number of corpus-based studies of literary translation nowadays. With the assistance of the computing analysis tool, and through the identification and statistics of linguistic parameters in the literary

texts, the obtained research results would be more objective, comprehensive, rationale and credible.

2. Research Background

There are continuous studies of culture-loaded words and numerous definitions of this term are proposed by researchers nowadays. According to Liao, culture-loaded words can symbolize the words, phrases and idioms of the specific things in a culture and reflect directly the unique activity ways that are gradually accumulated by a nation in a long historical process and different from other nations' (Liao Qiyi, 2000). From Hu's perspective of culture-loaded words, which can directly or indirectly reflect the national culture by the distinctive ways or structure of sentences or expressions, including the information about the peculiar culture in a nation; besides, they own the indication of profound and deep national culture (Hu, W., 1999). Lado defines this term that they are lexical terms that have similar original meaning in one language and another foreign language but are different in the connotative aspect (Lado, R., 1972). Furthermore, Wang's definition of culture-loaded words is that the words that a specific language uses to show the reflections of a country or nation's history, culture, folk custom, etc. which load the obvious nationally cultural characteristics as well (Wang, D., 1998). In Newmark's opinion, culture-loaded words are that a nation or country uses its own language to demonstrate its particular expression meanings; and these words also have close links to the way of life in a country or nation (Newmark, P., 1998). In addition, Baker proposes that culture-loaded words are created by source language culture which is a completely new concept for the target language culture and culture-sensitive, which means that these words or concepts are related to the culture of the source language (Baker, M., 2000). Wang and He point out that culture-loaded words can serve as the representation of typical and true cultural information in a language, as well as the reflection of the social life in a nation. From their understanding, this kind of term contains cultural specialties, idioms, allusions, and figurative expressions (Wang, J. & He, L., 2014). Additionally, according to their classification, culture-loaded words are classified into two categories: exclusive national vocabulary and common vocabulary and idioms with the connotation of national culture. Similarly, Lin and Yang also think that culture-loaded words can be seen as a kind of cultural word, idioms or expressions that have a distinctive meaning, which derives from its certain national culture (Lin, Y. & Yang, Q., 2015).

To sum up, all the above-mentioned scholars agree that culture-loaded words are the symbolization and representation of long history, custom, social conditions, people's way of life and other typical characteristics in a particular nation by employing its uniquely featural language expressions. Besides, some of them, like Hu, Lado and Newmark, emphasize that these words can also bear some much deeper cultural connotations. Therefore, it can be found clearly that culture-loaded words are specific and profound in the cultural dimension.

Apart from that, "idioms" were mentioned in Liao, Wang and He, and Lin and Yang's classification category. Moreover, in Lin and Yang's definition of idioms, they are the words with special implications and associative meanings, which are all original from this nation's unique culture, social and environmental circumstances (Lin, Y. & Yang, Q., 2015). It is quite similar to the illustrations of culture-loaded words. Therefore, based on the above analysis, there is no doubt that idioms can be regarded as one of the culture-loaded words.

The employment of translation methods and strategies is one of the research perspectives in the field of corpus-based studies of literary translation as well. Lots of researchers have currently focused on this field of research, some of whom started out researching the translation methods and strategies applied in vocabulary translation. In addition, there are a large amount of cultural-loaded words, such as idioms, slangs, dialects, etc. are commonly and widely used in Chinese literatures to reflect as well as manifest the regional cultural features. When converting Chinese novels into English, culture-loaded words (CLWs) must need to be expressed during the process of interlingual translation and intercultural communication. In the level of lexis, characteristic words in the originals are selected as a kind of research object for the exploration of translation approaches and strategies (Hu Kaibao & Li Yi, 2021, p. 114).

Some researchers select the translations of featural Chinese kinship and social address terms as the lexical research objects. On the basis of corpus model, Yan investigates all the matriarchal kinship address terms in the first 56 chapters of the two English versions of Cao Xueqin's *The Story of the Stone* respectively by David Hawkes and H. B. Joly. According to the result, it can be found that on the one hand, Joly's translation uses more formal words while Hawkes prefers various colloquial nicknames; on the other hand, Joly faithfully renders the Chinese titles whereas Hawkes flexibly chooses different translation approaches for complying with English readers' expression habitus (Yan Yidan, 2011a). Furthermore, Wang conducts the comparative analysis of the expressions of social

address terms in the English translation of Mo Yan's *Sandalwood Death* by Howard Goldblatt based on self-built parallel corpus. In accordance with the statistics in the corpus model, honorific and humble terms most exist in the fiction, which are the research focuses of the author as well. According to textual analysis, it can be found that there are flexible applications of translation methods and strategies in Goldblatt's work. The uses of foreignization, domestication, literal translation, liberal translation, rewriting, adding, etc. by him all depend on different contexts. The translator's behaviors are for the sake of not only the maintenance of Chinese linguistic features and cultural connotations, but also the consideration of target readers' language habits (Wang Kun, 2018).

Apart from the above type of characteristic lexis, the studies of culture-loaded words or culture-specific words have also made great progress. From the contrasts of high-frequent cultural words in five English versions of *Lunyu* based on C-E parallel corpus of *Lunyu*, Fan discovers that the five translators adopt different strategies – interpretation, philosophical illustration, authentic textual and narrative structure, faithful reproduction of original form – for explication, which is due to the different translators' respective purposes, readers' understanding, as well as the differences of two languages' contexts. The author also proposes his translation strategy – the combination of liberal translation, pinyin, Chinese character – to render traditional Chinese philosophical concepts, which would promote the external communication and acceptance of Chinese cultures (Fan Min, 2017). Moreover, Ding and Wang study Goldblatt's translation strategies on cultural color expressions in Mo Yan's novels on the basis of corpora of Mo Yan's six novels and their English translations by Goldblatt. The result shows that Goldblatt mainly adopts domestication with a bit appropriate foreignization to convert Mo Yan's cultural color vocabulary into English for successfully transferring the original meanings to the target readers. Besides, it is noted as well that Goldblatt seldom uses omission when translating four-character color words, which reflect his recognition and insistence of Faithfulness principle (Ding, R. R. & Wang, L. X., 2017). Additionally, based on C-E parallel corpus of Lu Xun's *New Year's Sacrifice*, Yang compares and analyzes the English translations of typical culture-specific expressions – ecological culture-specific words, material culture-specific words, social culture-specific words, religious culture-specific words, linguistic culture-specific words – in the novel, who finds out that the conceptual and connotative meanings are remained the most in Yang Xianyi's translation, however Julia Lovell's translations are inadequate in this aspect. Similar with Lovell, Edgar Snow translate the culture-specific terms into Christian terms instead of restoring the original Chinese connotations (Yang Jianding, 2018).

There is existing research on a new angle of featural lexis: ingenuous information Chinese vocabulary, such as Li and Ge, Liu, Ge, and Zhuang, as well as Yuan and Ge, whose respective investigations on translation approaches on ingenuous information in *Lunyu*, Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and *Change* on the basis of corresponding parallel corpora models. The employments of translation methods on such Chinese lexis are mainly literal translation, transliteration, liberal translation, replacing translation, omission, and combing translation through their studies. However, for the target readers' convenient understanding and acceptance, different approaches account for different proportions in English versions, depending on the translators' viewpoints and purposes, as well as target language's cultural contexts (Li Guangwei & Ge Lingling, 2018; Liu Bin, Ge Lingling, & Zhuang Yali, 2015; Yuan Yanling & Ge Lingling, 2019).

In conclusion, in view of the previous research, the applications of translation approaches and strategies on featural words can be studied from address terms, culture-loaded words, culture-specific words, and even ingenuous information words, by means of the corpus-based approaches. Therefore, the existing studies provide the feasibility of the current research.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 The Goals of the Research

This study aims to probe into the employments of translation approaches on featural Chinese lexis, in particular, culture-loaded words in the literatures by means of the corpus-based approach. The author launches a source text-oriented research with the self-built parallel corpus model in his study, in the hope of finding out the translation methods applied by the translator for rendering CLWs in his English version of the novel.

The mixed method of quantitative and qualitative is used in the current study. The quantitative analysis is applied for the statistics of translation approaches on CLWs, and the qualitative analysis is used for the probable motivations that the translator chooses such methods.

3.2 Research Questions

Based on the above illustrations, there are two research questions proposed for the current study:

1. What translation approaches are applied to the translations of culture-loaded words and what is the most common used approach?
2. What might be the motivations for the translator to use such approaches in his work?

This study will start the relevant investigations based on the above two research questions.

3.3 Chosen Materials

In this study, two of the chapters: 8 and 9 in *Jiutu* and their corresponding chapters in English version *The Drunkard* are selected as the research objects. Since the concentration of this study is CLWs, all CLWs and their translations in the two chapters are identified as the research data for the discovery of the employed translation approaches.

3.4 The Classification of Culture-loaded Words

The categories of culture-loaded words in the novel are as the following figure shows:

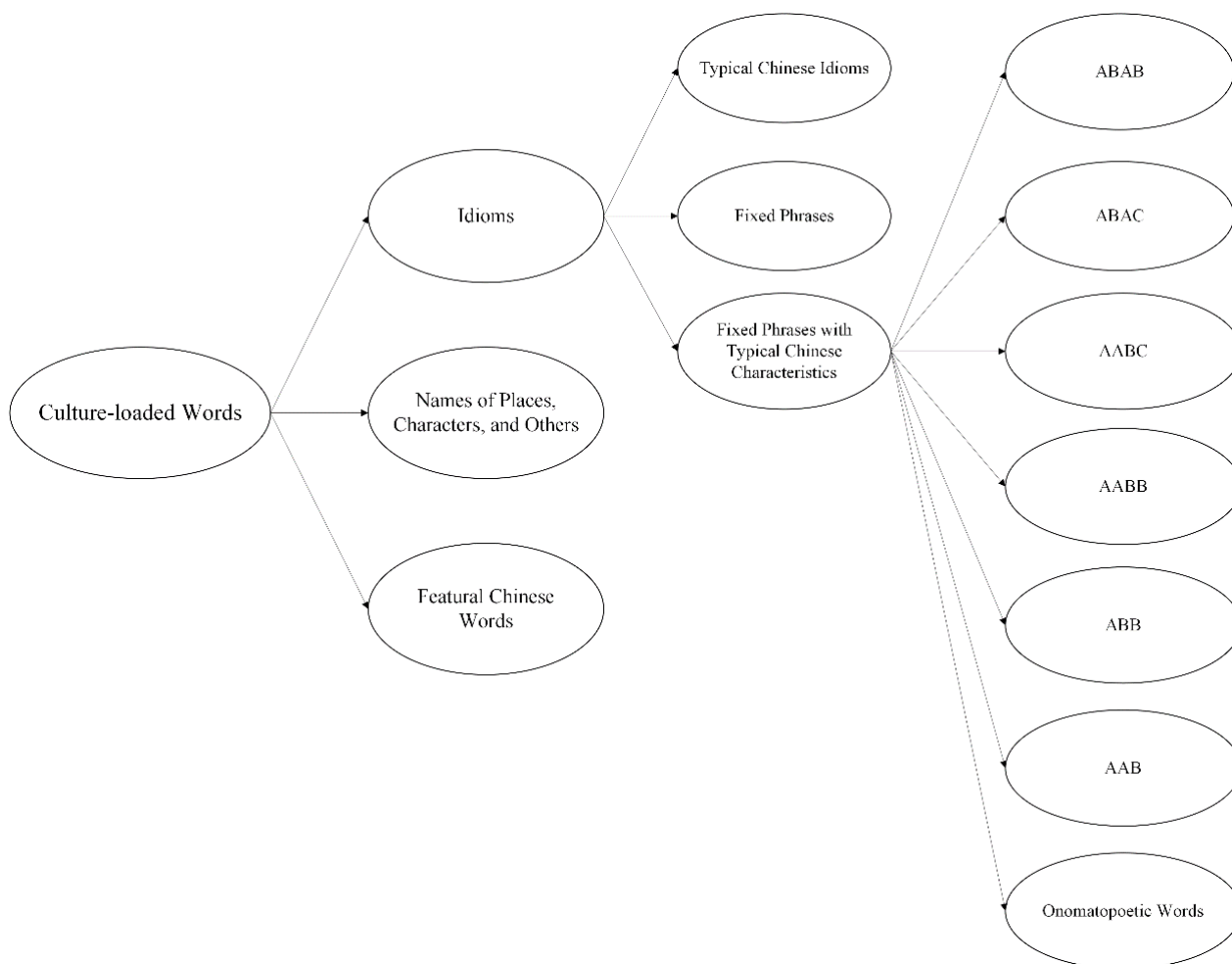


Figure 1. The Classification of CLWs.

According to computer statistics and manual proofreading, there are 162 CLWs and 160 corresponding translations in total in the selected two chapters of original and English version; the words appearing several times are simply be counted as one time and single word form.

For the convenience of manual annotations and the reduction of annotation mistakes, the abbreviations of all annotated tags of CLWs are adopted. All the words appearing several times are simply annotated once in the place where they first appear. The abbreviations of corresponding translation methods are demonstrated as follow:

Table 1. The Abbreviations of Classified CLWs

Term	Abbreviation
Culture-loaded Words	clw
Culture-loaded Words-idioms	clw1
Culture-loaded words-idioms-typical Chinese idioms	clw1a
Culture-loaded words-idioms-phrases with typical Chinese characteristics	clw1b
Culture-loaded words-idioms-phrases with fixed phrases	clw1c
Culture-loaded words-names of places & characters & other things	clw2
Culture-loaded words-Chinese featural words	clw3

3.5 The Classification of Translation Approaches

Some specific translation methods (TM(s)) and strategies (TS(s)) are chosen as the theoretical framework of the current study. The two general translation strategies identified by Vinay and Darbelnet are direct translation and oblique translation (Munday, 2016, p. 88) are chosen for this research; moreover, since it is highly possible that the above two strategies would not be applicable to all approaches applied in CLWs translations in this fiction, another TS: miscellaneous is added for handling the special cases. Totally 9 TMs are combined and selected from not only Vinay and Darbelnet's theories (Munday, J., 2016, pp. 89-91), but also Liu Miqing's theory of translation methodology (Liu Miqing, 2012, pp. 191-234). The categories are shown in detail as follow:

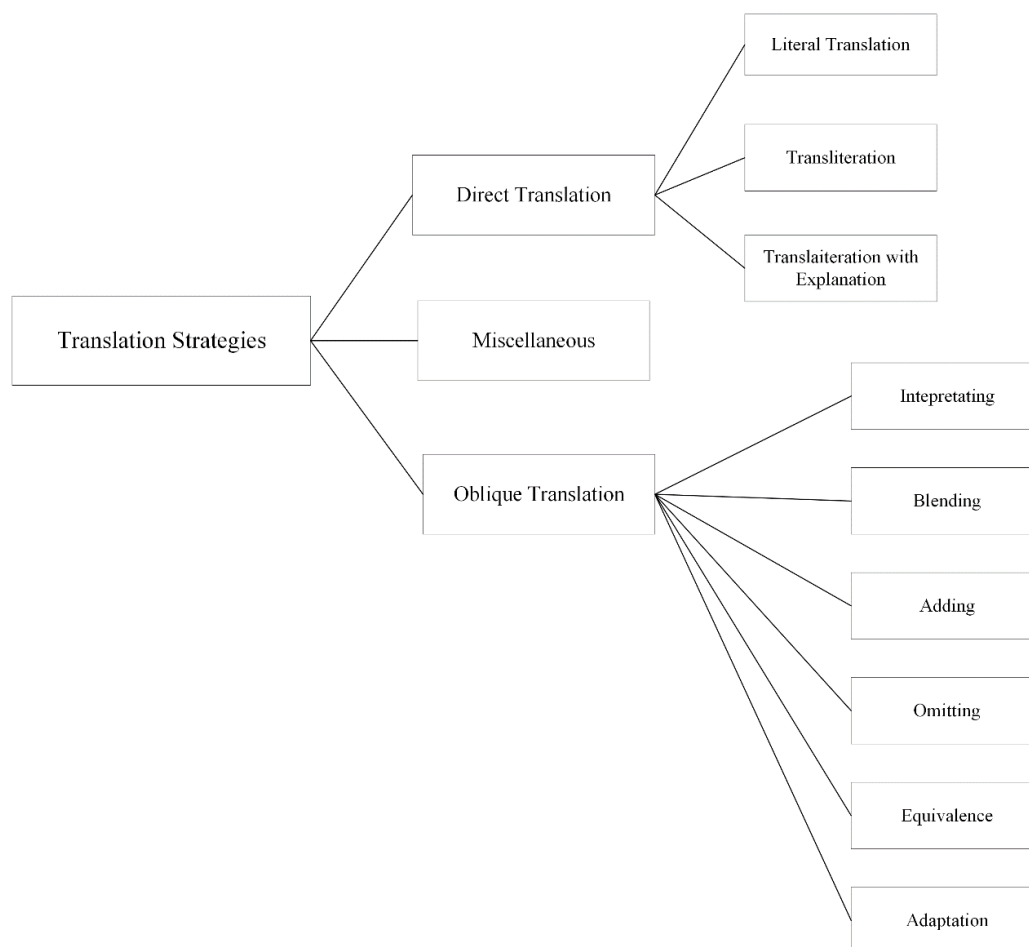


Figure 2. The Classification of Translation Strategies and Approaches.

In addition, it should be noted that the meaning of the method “equivalence” here is not equal to the meaning of “equivalence” proposed by Eugene Nida. According to the illustration from Vinay and Darbelnet, this term is used to refer to cases where languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means, and it is particularly useful in translating idioms and proverbs. This term is limited in a relatively small range of use by Vinay and Darbelnet, thus in this restricted sense it should not be confused with Nida’s equivalence theory (Munday, 2016, p. 91).

Similar with the above-mentioned CLWs, the abbreviations of all annotated tags of TSs and TMs are adopted for the convenient manual annotations as well as reducing mistakes during the manual annotation process. The correspondences are as below:

Table 2. Abbreviations of Translation Methods and Strategies

Translation Method & Strategy	Abbreviation
Literal translation	lit
Transliteration	translit
Transliteration with explanation	twe
Interpretating	inte
Blending	ble
Adding	a
Omitting	o
Equivalence	equi
Adaptation	ada
Miscellaneous	mis

3.6 The Compilation of Corpora Models

The two monolingual corpora for the current study are self-built in Sketch Engine, the names of which are “The Drunkard ZH” and “The Drunkard EN” respectively. The selected two bilingual chapters are scanned into PDF version by iPhone’s scanning function and mobile app I Love PDF, and then extracted and converted into Word format by two OCR websites: ABBYY Online OCR and Chenghua OCR, as well as proofread manually afterwards. After this step, an alignment work sentence by sentence between the source text (ST) and target text (TT) in Mem-source is conducted. The two aligned files are uploaded to the corpora respectively, and then downloaded with plain text version for annotation works.

The annotation objects are the categories of CLWs as well as TMs of their translations. It should be noted here that <clw1b>Thousands of</clw1b> is the basic format of CLW category annotation in ST; <lit> Hundreds and thousands of </lit> is the basic format of TM annotation in TT.

After the completion of annotations, the two annotated files are reuploaded to another two monolingual corpora in Sketch Engine, named “The Drunkard ZH Annotated” and “The Drunkard EN Annotated”, respectively for data analysis.

4. Data Analysis

There are two figures created for the demonstrations of use number of each CLW type as well as TM and TS in ST and TT. All of them are presented as follows:

Table 3. The Use Number of Each CLW

Annotation of CLW Types	Number of Use
clw2	68
clw3	45
clw1b	24
clw1a	13
clw1c	12

Table 4. The Use Number of Each TM and TS

Annotation of TMs & TSs	Number of Use
<lit>	55
<equi>	25
<translit>	19
<inte>	18
<mis>	17
<twe>	13
<o>	12
<ada>	1

From Table 3, it can be found that *clw2* words come up most frequently in ST with 68 times, while *clw1c* words appear least frequently in the two chapters of the novel with 12 times. From Table 4, it can be noted that the greatest number of TM used in TT is literal translation and the second most commonly applied TM in the translation is equivalence, the times of which are 55 and 25 respectively; whereas adaptation is the method that employed least commonly in the two chapters, which merely appears once. Apart from that, the method adding listed above is never used alone in TT but applied in conjunction with other methods to render some CLWs. As mentioned before, this situation is collectively called Miscellaneous strategy representing the combinations of several TMs translating CLWs, thus adding would not be shown alone anymore but show up as a whole with other TMs.

However, it is worthwhile to be emphasized that although the extensive use of literal translation as well as the applications of equivalence and interpreting could be probably out of the consideration of not only the translator's faithfulness to the connotations and meanings of CLWs in ST, but also the convenience of target readers' understanding, some features of Chinese language expression are still not be presented to the target readers, which would cause the loss of source language cultures. For instance, the reduplicated word 亮晃晃 is simply rendered into *lightly*, meaning of which could be interpreted clearly indeed, but it would cause not only the loss of typical Chinese vocabulary's characteristics, but also the lack of linguistic features, especially the aesthetic of rhyme.

5. Discussion

In this part, there is a qualitative analysis for the possible motivations that the translator employed such translation approaches and strategies to render Chinese culture-loaded words, which is qualitatively conducted on the basis of polysystem theory and translator's invisibility from the following two out-of-corpus dimensions: social and cultural contexts as well as target readerships.

5.1 Social and Cultural Contexts

From Even-Zohar's perspective of polysystem theory, translation literature in a secondary position of a literary polysystem is a common circumstance. If translation literature belongs to the marginal literature, it would be hard to have an impact on the centrally located literary system but would even become a conservative factor in the polysystem, maintaining the conservative forms as well as being consistent with the literary standards of the target system. As for the translation strategies, Even-Zohar points out that it depends on the position of translation literature. If it dominates in the polysystem, the translator will be able to break the traditions without considering the modes of target literatures, adopting adequacy to make the translation closely matches the original for reproducing the original's discourse relationships; while on the contrary, the translators will demonstrate a non-adequate work (Even-Zohar, I., 1978, pp. 196-197).

In view of the point of view, it can be analyzed that since translation is in the marginal position in Anglo-American literature systems, the translator must conservatively choose literal translation most frequently, expressing the meanings and connotations of the Chinese culture-loaded words directly without making too many creativities in his work, which certainly cause the loss of the source language's linguistic features.

5.2 Target Readerships

Venuti proposes "two mutually determining phenomena, one is an illusion effect of discourse, of the translator's

own manipulation of English; the other is the practice of reading and evaluating translations that has long prevailed in the United Kingdom and the United States, among other cultures, both English and foreign-language” (Venuti, L., 1995, p. 1). Under the proficient English language manipulation of the translator, most European and American target readerships prefer “transparent” translations with high fluencies and readabilities; in his further illustrations, “the illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator’s effort to insure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning” (Venuti, L., 1995, p. 1). In fact, Venuti’s views can be understood as an accommodation to the explicit and implicit needs of the target readers. No matter domestication or foreignization, showing or hiding voice, being visible or invisible, the translator’s adoptions all depend on target readers’ feedbacks and response.

Based on the above theory, it can be deduced that since the current translation is for English target readers, most of whom are still not familiar with Chinese cultures and prefer the direct and plain meanings in this kind of literature without thinking or reflecting deeply, otherwise translation literature would be unreadable for them and further be unpopular and acceptable among the target readerships, not only for the sake of popularity on the Anglo-American book market, but also out of the consideration of the acceptance from the target readers, the translator has to compromise with the reality and simply convey the connotations of the culture-loaded words literally with abandoning the original’s linguistic cultures and characteristics, creating a new English work that seems to be originally written by the native writer. The translator’s behavior would be invisible himself in the target text and fulfill and respond the English target readerships’ requirements of readability and fluency with “illusory transparency” (Venuti, L., 1995, p. 1).

6. Conclusion

According to mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analyses of the Chinese novel *Jiutu* and its English translation *The Drunkard*, it can be uncovered from the current study that a total number of 9 TMs are applied by the translator to render CLWs in TT. However, there are 8 TMs except adding used alone by the translator in TT. Besides, it can be concluded from above data analysis that the most preference of the translator’s TM in many cases is literal translation; if some CLWs cannot be literally translated, then equivalence will be the translator’s second choice. In addition, the translator’s presumable motivations of TS and TM employments are qualitatively explored from social and cultural contexts and target readers these two external factors based on polysystem theory and translator’s invisibility. Therefore, the two research questions of the current study are solved from the above findings.

The author hopes that the current study could provide some references for the field of corpus-based studies of literary translation on translator(s), especially his or her applications of translation methods and strategies. However, due to the limitation of space, the data source is simply from two chapters of the novel. The limitation of sample size would possibly cause the non-comprehensive of the current research results. The preference(s) of the TM(s) and TS(s) of the translator may not be discovered only from two translated chapters. In the further similar corpus-based studies, the range of research objects will be expanded as much as possible to the whole literary texts for the credibility and objectivity of data analysis.

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