

Research on challenges and optimization strategies of translating culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture from the perspective of eco-translatology

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore the translation challenges of culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture from the perspective of eco-translatology and propose corresponding optimization strategies. As an integral part of Chinese culture, northern Shaanxi folk culture, with its unique linguistic style and rich cultural connotations, faces numerous difficulties in translation. By analyzing the characteristics and translation challenges of culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture within the theoretical framework of eco-translatology, this study proposes strategies to enhance translation quality and facilitate cultural exchange, providing valuable insights for the international dissemination of northern Shaanxi folk culture.

Key words: eco-translatology; northern Shaanxi folk culture; culture-loaded terms; translation challenges; optimization strategies

1 Introduction to eco-translatology

Eco-translatology, a translation theory pioneered by Professor Hu Gengshen, represents a significant contribution to Chinese translation studies in the context of globalization. It integrates global perspectives with local characteristics and combines subjective cognition with the objective environment, aiming to establish a theoretical framework for the harmonious coexistence of translators and their translation eco-environment. Within this framework, translation is viewed as a process of active adaptation and strategic selection by the translator, striving to achieve a delicate balance between the source text and the translated text, the author and the translator, the reader and the translator, and the target culture and the translator.

Since 2001, Professor Hu has examined translation through the lens of ecology, introducing Darwin's principles of "adaptation and selection" into translation studies, thereby ushering in a new era for eco-translatology. In his book *Translation as Adaptation and Selection*, he systematically explains how the evolutionary mechanism of adaptation and selection can be applied to translation practices, proposing key concepts such as the "translation eco-environment", "three-dimensional transformation", and "translator-centeredness", and offering new pathways for translation research. With further research, eco-translatology has evolved into a well-developed theoretical system and demonstrated strong practical

guidance. It encourages translators to approach the translation process with a more comprehensive and dynamic perspective, continually refining strategies to produce high-quality translations that are faithful to the original text while aligning with the target culture [1].

2 Characteristics and translation challenges of culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture

2.1 Characteristics of culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture

Culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture, as a concentrated reflection of regional cultural essence, are deeply rooted in the unique geographical environment, long-standing historical traditions, and rich lifestyles of northern Shaanxi. These terms, such as "yaodong", "xintianyou", and "Ansai yaogu", not only serve as iconic symbols of northern Shaanxi culture but also profoundly reflect the customs and spiritual world of its people. Rich in meaning, these terms not only depict tangible objects but also convey deeper cultural implications and emotional connections to the local community [2]. Additionally, they exhibit distinct oral characteristics and dialectal nuances, requiring careful consideration of their uniqueness and complexity during translation to accurately convey their profound cultural connotations.

2.2 Translation challenges of culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture

2.2.1 Conveying cultural connotations

One major challenge in translating culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture lies in accurately conveying their rich cultural connotations. These terms are not mere linguistic symbols but also encapsulate the region's historical heritage, religious beliefs, and customs. Translators must have a deep understanding of northern Shaanxi's culture to grasp the cultural essence behind each term. Taking "yaogu" as an example, it is not just the name of a musical instrument but also a symbol of the enthusiasm and resilience of the people of northern Shaanxi. Simply translating it as "drum" or "waist drum" fails to capture its cultural depth. To address this, translators can delve into its historical connections, social context, and emotional significance and adopt strategies such as adding explanatory text for translation. For instance, it could be translated as "the waist drum, a traditional percussion instrument in northern Shaanxi, symbolizing the enthusiasm and perseverance of the local people". This approach ensures that target readers can fully appreciate its cultural richness and unique charm.

2.2.2 Preserving dialectal features

Culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture often contain a wealth of dialectal elements, which are distinctive markers of the region's cultural identity. These dialectal expressions, while integral to the culture, present a challenge for translators: how to retain the unique flavor of the dialect while ensuring clarity for target readers. Literal translation may cause comprehension barriers, while excessive paraphrasing risks erasing the original dialectal charm. Taking "gelao" as an example, it is a dialectal term in northern Shaanxi that specifically refers to a small, remote corner. Translating it simply as "corner" or "nook" strips away its regional essence. Translators must strike a delicate balance between preservation and adaptation, ensuring that the term's unique flavor is retained while accurately conveying its meaning. This approach allows readers to appreciate the subtlety and richness of northern Shaanxi culture.

2.2.3 Grasping semantic layers

Translating culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture requires accurately capturing their multilayered meanings, which is a significant challenge. These terms often carry both literal meanings and profound cultural symbolism. Translators must thoroughly analyze their semantic content and cultural connotations to balance both aspects in translation. Taking "yaodong" as an example, it not only refers to "cave" but also symbolizes the traditional lifestyle of northern Shaanxi people, embodying deep ties to the land and historical memories. To fully convey its literal and symbolic

meanings, it can be translated as "cave dwelling, a traditional residence in northern Shaanxi with rich cultural and historical significance".

2.2.4 Reproducing linguistic style

Reproducing the unique linguistic style of culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture is essential in translation. These terms often carry strong colloquial and folk characteristics, requiring translators to skillfully retain the original flavor. For example, "xintianyou", a form of northern Shaanxi folk song, is known for its free-spirited and powerful style. Translation should balance literal accuracy with stylistic expression, ensuring that the name is conveyed clearly while capturing its distinctive linguistic features, and allowing readers to fully appreciate the unique charm of northern Shaanxi folk culture [3].

2.2.5 Bridging cultural differences

Bridging cultural differences is a major challenge in translating culture-loaded terms of northern Shaanxi folk culture. These terms are deeply rooted in a specific cultural context and may differ significantly from the target language culture. Translators must have a thorough understanding of both cultures and skillfully apply strategies to eliminate comprehension barriers. For example, "yangduzi shoujin", a traditional accessory from northern Shaanxi, may be unfamiliar to those outside the culture. Translating it as "a distinctive headscarf from northern Shaanxi, named for its resemblance to a goat's stomach" preserves its cultural uniqueness while facilitating cross-cultural understanding, enabling target readers to embrace this cultural element.

3 Optimization strategies for translating culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture from the perspective of eco-translatology

3.1 Application of eco-translatology theory

From the eco-translatology perspective, translating culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture is a dynamic process requiring integration of linguistic, cultural, and communicative elements from both source and target contexts. Translators must explore the region's geography, history, and customs to accurately convey cultural connotations while considering the target audience's cultural preferences to ensure resonance. Following eco-translatology principles, translators should strive for linguistic integration, cultural continuity, and communicative harmony. For example, when translating "Ansai yaogu", the translator should highlight its geographical roots (Loess Plateau), historical role (boosting morale in battles), and social function (festive celebrations). A combination of literal translation, explanation, and cultural equivalence ensures balance between cultural preservation and effective communication.

3.2 In-depth exploration and conveyance of cultural connotations

Guided by eco-translatology, translating the cultural connotations of northern Shaanxi culture-loaded terms requires both linguistic skill and a deep understanding of the region's folk culture. Translators should use strategies like annotations and cultural explanations to build bridges of understanding for readers. Cultural adaptability, including equivalence and creative transformation, ensures effective cross-language transmission of meaning. For example, translating "jianzhi" requires conveying its cultural symbolism of good fortune and protection against evil [4]. A translation like "paper cutting, an age-old craft in northern Shaanxi, imbued with symbols of fortune and protection against evil" allows readers to appreciate its cultural essence and value.

3.3 Moderate retention and adaptation of dialectal features

Translating northern Shaanxi dialectal terms poses the challenge of balancing regional flavor with effective communication. For example, "langonghan", a dialect term for migrant laborers, carries strong cultural connotations. Translators can preserve its essence by using culturally equivalent expressions or detailed explanations, such as "in

northern Shaanxi dialect, langonghan denotes a migrant laborer seeking work opportunities away from home". This approach ensures that readers not only grasp the cultural flavor behind the term but also understand its precise meaning. By moderately preserving and effectively adapting dialectal features, this strategy bridges linguistic and cultural gaps, fostering deeper cultural exchange and understanding.

3.4 Comprehensive grasp and conveyance of semantic layers

Culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture often carry multiple layers of meaning, requiring translators to fully grasp and accurately convey their semantic nuances to target readers. This involves understanding not only the literal meaning but also the cultural symbolism and emotional undertones behind the terms. Translators can use various strategies, such as combining literal and free translation or employing additions and omissions, to effectively convey these layers of meaning. Additionally, maintaining the semantic coherence and logic of the original text is crucial for ensuring accuracy and readability. For instance, when translating "youpomian", a regional specialty, the translation should reflect both its preparation method (pouring hot oil over noodles) and its cultural connotations (warmth and generosity). A concise translation could be "oil-splashed noodles, a northern Shaanxi specialty embodying warmth and generosity".

3.5 Reproduction and creation of linguistic style

From the perspective of eco-translatology, translating the linguistic style of northern Shaanxi culture-loaded terms requires blending the original's local flavor with the norms of the target language. Translators must capture the colloquial and rhetorical features of northern Shaanxi folk language while adapting the style to suit the target audience and ensure authenticity and accessibility. For instance, when translating northern Shaanxi folk songs like *The East is Red*, translators can draw on the ballad traditions of the target language. By rephrasing colloquial expressions, preserving rhetorical elements, and creatively using rhythm and rhyme, the translation can remain true to the original while gaining artistic vitality. This approach ensures that northern Shaanxi's cultural charm can transcend linguistic boundaries and resonate with global readers.

4 Conclusion

From the perspective of eco-translatology, translating culture-loaded terms in northern Shaanxi folk culture is not only a process of linguistic conversion but also a bridge for cultural exchange and inheritance. By deeply exploring cultural connotations, moderately preserving dialectal features, fully grasping semantic layers, and skillfully reproducing linguistic style, translators can bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, promoting the international dissemination and understanding of northern Shaanxi folk culture. In the future, with continued advancements in translation research and practice, the translation of these terms will become more precise and vivid, contributing to the global promotion of Chinese culture.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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