Loss, Gain, and Equivalence in the
Translation of Culture-loaded Words in
To Live: A Novel

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ABSTRACT

Translating Culture-loaded Words from Chinese to English presents profound challenges due to their intrinsic cultural specificities. This study critically examines these challenges within To Live: A Novel, employing a novel text analysis methodology based on Bassnett's (2013) and Jakobson's (2012) definitions of loss, gain, and equivalence in translation. Our findings reveal distinctive patterns of loss and gain that are not unique to the narrative style and cultural context of the novel but also offer broader insights into the dynamics of cultural translation. Despite the expertise of skilled translators in Chinese culture, achieving complete equivalence remains elusive, underlining significant discrepancies that persist in cross-cultural contexts. The study explains these complex translation dynamics and detailed strategies to enhance cultural fidelity and equivalence in such translations. The findings can assist in bridging the cultural gaps in English translation of Chinese novels more effectively and have some implications for Chinese literary translators.

Key Words: Culture-loaded Words; Equivalence in translation; Gain in translation; Loss in translation.

INTRODUCTION

Translating literary works deeply rooted in specific cultural contexts poses significant challenges to translators (Goh et al., 2022). These challenges are evident in the English translation of Yu Hua's acclaimed novel, *To Live: A Novel* (活着) [Huózhe]. Set against the tumultuous backdrop of 20th-century China, encompassing events from the Civil War to the Cultural Revolution, the novel portrays profound human and cultural complexities through the life of Xu Fugui (Seo et al., 2022). These historical and cultural depths add layers of complexity to the translation process, demanding acute sensitivity to the nuances of Culture-loaded Words.

The task of translating *To Live: A Novel* into English was undertaken by American scholar Michael Berry, resulting in the sole official version that has significantly resonated across diverse audiences (Zu & Xu, 2017). This translation highlights the intricate interplay of loss, gain, and equivalence, containing numerous Culture-loaded Words. The rich Culture-loaded Words in translation between China and the Western world challenge the translator's ability to convey the original's richness and cultural nuances (Lau, et al., 2022; Oudad & Azmi, 2023).

Understanding how Culture-loaded Words are translated is crucial in the realm of translation studies (Sun, 2022). These words often carry the essence of societal norms, historical contexts, and philosophical ideologies inherent to their source culture, underscoring the translator's role as a cultural mediator (Chai et al., 2022; Pian & Chen, 2022; Zhang, 2022). Despite the critical acclaim and widespread study of Yu Hua's *To Live: A Novel,* significant gaps remain in the scholarly understanding of its translation (B. Zhao, 2022). While effective in reaching a global audience, the English translation by Michael Berry presents a unique opportunity to analyze how Culture-loaded Words are handled. These words, imbued with deep cultural, historical, and ideological meanings, pose substantial challenges in translation, particularly when transferring nuanced connotations from Chinese to English without loss of meaning (Yao, 2023).

By analyzing the translation of Culture-loaded Words in *To Live: A Novel,* the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between language and culture (Zhang, 2022). It sheds light on the translator's role as an intercultural mediator and the strategies employed to maintain the integrity of the original text while making it accessible and relatable to a foreign audience (Wang, 2020).

Furthermore, the insights gained from this study have broader implications for the translation of other Chinese literary works, providing a framework that can be used to evaluate and improve translation practices in a global context. The findings from this research can inform translation training programs, enhancing the curriculum with practical examples of handling complex translations. Ultimately, the study fosters greater appreciation and understanding of Chinese literature globally, promoting a richer cultural exchange and dialogue between East and West. By providing a detailed analysis of *To Live: A Novel*, this research underscores the crucial role of translation in fostering cultural understanding and appreciation (Wang, 2020). Future research could explore comparative translation studies of *To Live: A Novel* in other languages or extend similar analyses to other works by Yu Hua, broadening our comprehension of intercultural literary translation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation has emerged as a multifaceted and dynamic field, drawing increasing attention from scholars, particularly since Bassnett introduced the "cultural turn" in Western academic discourse in 2013. Translators are tasked with navigating the delicate balance of equivalence, loss, and gain—a balance that becomes critical when dealing with texts like Yu Hua's *To Live: A Novel* which is replete with Culture-loaded Words that embody the societal, historical, and philosophical underpinnings of their source culture.

Culture-loaded Words are a key concept in translation studies, characterized by their deep ties to the specific cultural, historical, and societal contexts of their source languages (Kanan et al., 2022). These words often challenge translators due to their complex connotations and the absence of direct equivalents in target languages (Kuan et al., 2019). Extensive research has highlighted the complexity of translating Culture-loaded Words. Liu (2023) highlights the lexical gap challenge, noting that these words have often no direct equivalents in the target language, which underscores the complexity of translating such terms without loss of meaning or cultural depth. Zhu and Yin (2023) emphasize the symbolic nature of Culture-loaded Words, representing unique cultural activities or historical accumulations specific to a particular community or nation. Chang and Yongliang (2023) point out that Culture-loaded Words can often lead to misunderstandings when translated, as they embody cultural phenomena that may not be easily comprehensible to those outside the source culture. K. Yu (2020) discusses the functional role of these words in literary texts, serving as vessels for conveying deep cultural values, and connecting the source culture with the target culture in meaningful ways.

This study revolves around the dynamics of loss, gain, and equivalence in translation. Ma (2023) delved into the unique challenges presented by Chinese Culture-loaded Words, which reflect China's rich heritage and are fraught with potential for both loss and gain in their translation. Zhao and Li (2021) provide insight into the practical aspects of translating idiomatic expressions from Chinese literature, highlighting the delicate balance translators must maintain between literal accuracy and cultural relevance. The study of Culture-loaded Words in translation, particularly within the Chinese-English context, highlights the intricate dance of loss and gain inherent in the process (Oudad & Azmi, 2023). Achieving complete equivalence is often unattainable; instead, the translator's task is to minimize loss while maximizing cultural transmission and understanding (Wijaya et al., 2020).

The theoretical framework of this study is informed by the works of Bassnett and Jakobson regarding the concepts of loss, gain, and equivalence in translation studies. Bassnett (2013) characterizes loss in translation as a situation where the translator, because of the translation process, can sometimes enhance or clarify the source language text. Conversely, she defines gain in translation as the process of enriching or clarifying the source language text during the act of translation itself. Her definitions of loss and gain have been influential in the field. Bassnett's theory provides a practical framework for analyzing the translational dynamics of loss and gain, which are prevalent in the translation of *To Live: A Novel.* It helps in identifying how certain cultural nuances are either preserved, transformed, or possibly enhanced in the English version, contributing to a richer understanding of the translation as an act of cultural negotiation.

Jakobson (2012) emphasizes that ordinarily there is "no full equivalence between code units." His perspective is rooted in the idea that cross-linguistic differences primarily revolve around obligatory grammatical and lexical forms. Jakobson's emphasis on equivalence—while traditionally focused on linguistic aspects—can be expanded in this study to include cultural

equivalence. This broader application of his theory can drive a more nuanced analysis of how the cultural and historical elements of the novel are translated, assessing whether the translated text maintains the intended impact of the original.

This study will combine Bassnett and Jakobson's theories of loss, gain, and equivalence in translation to explore the English translation of the Chinese novel *To Live: A Novel* by Yu Hua. This literature review establishes the academic groundwork for analyzing the translation of *To Live: A Novel* showcasing how the translation of Culture-loaded Words involves a complex interplay of loss, gain, and equivalence.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative, product-oriented approach focusing on the translation of Culture-loaded Words. The core methodology employed is qualitative content analysis, which involves an in-depth text analysis of both the source text and its English translation. This method is particularly suited to explore how specific words, phrases, clauses, and sentences carry cultural meanings and how these are translated (Pratama et al., 2021), allowing for a nuanced understanding of loss, gain, and equivalence in translation.

To ensure a focused and relevant analysis, the study utilizes purposive sampling to select instances of Culture-loaded Words within the novel. A total of 20 Culture-loaded Words and phrases will be selected from both the original and translated texts, following the example of Niu et al. (2024), who also used 20 samples in similar research. This sample size is chosen to provide a comprehensive view of the translation strategies employed while remaining manageable for detailed analysis. This sampling method allows for the intentional selection of elements that are most pertinent to understanding the cultural nuances embedded in the text.

The data collection process involves a meticulous reading of both the source text and its English translation to identify all relevant instances of Culture-loaded Words. These identified segments form the basis of our subsequent analysis, where each instance will be examined to assess how effectively the translation captures the original's cultural essence.

The analysis focuses on:
1) Loss: Determining what cultural nuances, if any, were lost in translation.
2) Gain: Identifying any additional meanings or enhancements provided by the translation.
3) Equivalence: Evaluating how well the translation maintains the original's cultural connotations.

To enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings, several strategies were employed:
1) Member Checks: Feedback was sought from experts in Chinese literature and translation studies to validate the interpretations of the Culture-loaded Words identified in the study.
2) Thick Descriptions: Providing detailed descriptions of the context and the elements analyzed helps to convey the study's findings' validity and applicability.

The subject of analysis in this study is the novel 活着 [Huo Zhe], authored by Yu Hua (2003), and its English translation *To Live: A Novel* by Michael Berry (2003). This novel is

selected for its rich historical and cultural depth, narrating the life journey of a protagonist who endures significant upheavals through more than half a century of social transformations in China (Zu & Xu, 2017). Given its profound Chinese cultural connotations and extensive international reach, having been translated into different languages (Yuan, 2021), this novel offers an exemplary case for examining the translation of Culture-loaded Words.

This research aims to provide detailed insight into the complex process of translating culture-laden words, offering a nuanced understanding of the interplay between language and culture in literary translation. By analyzing *To Live: A Novel,* the study not only contributes to academic knowledge but also offers practical insights that can inform future translation practices.

RESULTS

LOSS IN TRANSLATION

Loss in Translation explores the aspects of the source text that remain untranslatable or are diminished in the translation process. As highlighted by Moran (2023), such losses can stem from linguistic constraints, cultural gaps, or structural differences between languages, which are often compounded by the complex socio-political nuances embedded within the text (Khosravi Savadjani & Rostampour Maleki, 2021). This section examines specific examples from Yu Hua's *To Live: A Novel* where critical culture-loaded elements were lost in translation, affecting the narrative's authenticity and the audience's connection to the story.

Example 1:
ST: 我是徐家仅有的一根香火，我要是灭了，徐家就得断子绝孙(Yu, 2003, p.9).
TT: I'm the only flame the Xu family still has burning. If I'm extinguished, the Xu family will be finished (Yu, 2003, p.8).
Transliteration: Wǒ shì xú jiā jǐn yǒu de yī gēn xiānghuǒ, wǒ yàoshi mièle, xú jiā jiù dé du ànzǐjuésūn.

The term "断子绝孙[duànzǐjuésūn]" is indeed a culture-loaded word. In the translation, the term was rendered as "be finished," which represents loss in translation. The original Chinese idiom, "断子绝孙[duànzǐjuésūn]" conveys the idea that a family's bloodline is severed in a particular generation, with no descendants to carry on the family name or traditions. The translation "be finished" fails to capture the full cultural and historical connotations associated with this expression.

Example 2:
ST: 最风光的那次是小日本投降后，国军准备进城收复失地(Yu, 2003, p.11).
TT: The wildest time was just after the Japanese surrender, when the Nationalist troops entered the city to recover their lost territory (Yu, 2003, p.10).
Transliteration: Zuì fēngguāng dì nà cì shì xiǎo rìběn tóuxiáng hòu, guó jūn zhǔnbèi jìn chéng shōufù shīdì.

The translation of "小日本 [xiǎo rìběn]" as simply "Japanese" represents a significant loss in translation in terms of cultural sentiment and emotional nuance. The term "小日本" is a pejorative term used in Chinese to refer to Japan and its people, carrying a derogatory connotation and a sense of historical animosity, especially related to the events of World War II. This term encapsulates deep-seated resentment and diminution, which is entirely lost in the straightforward translation to "Japanese," a neutral term.

Example 3:
ST: 我赌博时也在青楼(Yu, 2003, p.13).
TT: The House of Qing was also where I usually gambled (Yu, 2003, p.11).
Transliteration: Wǒ dǔbó shí yě zài qīnglóu.

The translation of "青楼[qīnglóu]" as "The House of Qing" exemplifies a significant loss in translation, as it fails to capture the term's profound cultural and historical connotations in Chinese culture. While "青楼[qīnglóu]" originally indicated a noble residence, since the Tang and Song Dynasties, it has predominantly been referred to as a "brothel." The use of the more literal and less contextually loaded "The House of Qing" in the translation might evoke misleading imagery of an elegant or noble house rather than the intended meaning of a place of prostitution. This translation misses essential cultural layers and the societal implications associated with the term "青楼[qīnglóu]".

Example 4:
ST: 我回来的时候，村里开始搞土地改革了，我分到了五亩地，就是原先租龙二的那五亩(Yu, 2003, p.55)。
TT: In 1958 the people's communes were established. Our five mu of land all went to the commune, leaving us only a small plot of land in front of our hut (Yu, 2003, p.55).
Transliteration: Wǒ huílái de shíhòu, cūnlǐ kāishǐ gǎo tǔdì gǎigéle, wǒ fēn dàole wǔ mǔ de, jiùshì yuánxiān zū lóng èr dì nà wǔ mǔ.

In the translation of "五亩地[wǔ mǔ de]", there is a noticeable shift in the historical context that introduces a significant loss. The original text discusses the individual allocation of land during land reforms, highlighting personal ownership which was crucial to the protagonist's circumstances. However, the translation changes this context to the establishment of people's communes in 1958, suggesting communal rather than individual ownership. This not only misrepresents the specific historical event—the land reforms meant to redistribute land to individual peasants—but also alters the emotional and socio-economic implications for the protagonist. This shift from personal to communal land ownership conflates distinct historical phases and obscures the narrative of personal struggle and adaptation to political changes in the novel. Therefore, this translation loses the nuanced portrayal of personal gain and the protagonist's direct relationship with the land, which is central to understanding his story and the broader socio-political landscape of the era.

Example 5:

ST: 他对你们进行白色统治，他欺压你们，你们要起来反抗，要砸断他的狗腿(Yu, 2003, p.125).

TT: He's been making you live through a white terror, oppressing and belittling you. (Yu, 2003, p.107).

Transliteration: Tā duì nǐmen jìnxíng báisè tǒngzhì, tā qīyā nǐmen, nǐmen yào qǐlái fǎnkàng, yào zá duàn tā de gǒu tuǐ.

The translation of "白色统治[báisè tǒngzhì]" to "white terror" demonstrates a significant loss in translation due to the shift in historical and contextual implications. The original term "白色统治[báisè tǒngzhì]" conveys a sense of oppressive rule or dominance that is broad and not specifically tied to violent political repression. The choice to translate this as "white terror" introduces a very specific historical and violent connotation that alters the original term's broader meaning. The original phrase allows for a more nuanced interpretation of authoritarian control, which could be symbolic or real and does not necessarily involve terror. The translation narrows this down to a term laden with historical violence, potentially misguiding the reader about the nature of the oppression described.

Example 6:
ST: 我带他进去坐下，花了九分钱买了一碗小面(Yu, 2003, p.142).
TT: I brought him in and paid nine fen for a small bowl (Yu, 2003, P122).
Transliteration: Wǒ dàizhe tā jìnqù zuò xià, huāle jiǔ fēn qián mǎile yī wǎn miàn.

The translation of "九分钱[jiǔ fēn qián]" as "nine fens" primarily maintains linguistic accuracy but may represent a loss in cultural translation. The term "fen", although correct and specific, could potentially fail to communicate the full significance of the economic context to readers not familiar with Chinese currency. This might diminish the reader's understanding of the characters' economic environment and the narrative's deeper socio-economic layers. Therefore, while the translation is technically correct, it may lack providing the necessary cultural resonance and contextual background that would make the economic nuances of the story more accessible and impactful for an international audience. This scenario exemplifies the challenges translators face when handling terms deeply rooted in specific cultural or economic contexts, where maintaining both linguistic and cultural integrity can be particularly demanding.

Example 7:
ST: 我却怎么都睡不着，心里七上八下的(Yu, 2003, p.108).
TT: I, on the other hand, was terrified and couldn't get to sleep no matter how hard I tried. (Yu, 2003, p.92).
Transliteration: Wǒ què zěnme dōu shuì bùzháo, xīnlǐ qī shàng bā xià de.

This translation represents a loss in terms of the direct emotional nuance of "七上八下 [qī shàng bā xià de]", as the broader, more nuanced sense of agitation is narrowed down to intense fear. While it maintains the general idea of emotional unrest and its impact on sleep, the specific cultural flavor and lighter, yet still serious tone of "七上八下 [qī shàng bā xià de]" is somewhat lost in translation. This example shows how cultural nuances embedded in idiomatic expressions

can be challenging to translate directly while maintaining their original breadth of meaning. The translator opts for a more familiar emotional expression in English that conveys a strong disturbance, possibly to ensure the emotional impact resonates clearly with an English-speaking audience, albeit at the cost of the subtlety of the original idiom.

In conclusion, the exploration of Loss in Translation within Yu Hua's *To Live: A Novel* reveals significant challenges faced by translators in preserving the novel's intricate cultural and historical context. Despite efforts to maintain linguistic accuracy, the translation occasionally falls short in conveying the depth of the original expressions and idioms, leading to a potential disconnect for readers unfamiliar with the source culture. These examples underscore the delicate balance required to retain the nuanced essence of the original while making it accessible to a global audience.

GAIN IN TRANSLATION

In the Gain in Translation section, we explore how the translation process can enhance the target text by adding contextual clarity or explanatory notes that the original audience might take for granted. Such gains often address gaps in cultural knowledge or linguistic differences that could otherwise hinder comprehension (Oudad & Azmi, 2023). This section discusses instances where the English translation of *To Live: A Novel* by Yu Hua enriches the reader's experience by providing deeper insights into the narrative, making the cultural contexts more accessible and the literary nuances more appreciable to an international audience.

Example 8:
ST: 我念过几年私塾 (Yu, 2003, P.9).
TT: I studied for a few years at an old-style private school (Yu, 2003, p. 7).
Transliteration: Wǒ niànguò jǐ nián sīshú.

The translation of "私塾[sīshú]" into "an old-style private school" exemplifies a gain in translation, enhancing the text by adding clarity and cultural context for non-Chinese readers. The term "私塾[sīshú]", referring to traditional Chinese private schools that focused on Confucian classics and were often run in private homes, might be unfamiliar to an international audience. By specifying "old-style private school," the translation not only clarifies the type of institution but also enriches the cultural and historical setting, offering insights into a traditional educational system that predates modern schools. This addition helps evoke a vivid image of the protagonist's educational background, providing a richer narrative experience and deeper understanding of the cultural backdrop, thus significantly enriching the reader's engagement with the story.

EXAMPLE 9:
ST: 我女人家珍当然知道我在城里这些花花绿绿的事(Yu, 2003, p.12).
TT: My wife, Jiazhen, of course, knew about my "colorful" romps in the city (Yu, 2003, p.11).
Transliteration: Wǒ què zěnme dōu shuì bùzháo, xīnlǐ qī shàng bā xià de.

The translation of "花花绿绿的事" into "colorful romps" represents a significant gain in translation by effectively capturing and adapting the idiomatic and euphemistic qualities of the

original phrase for an English-speaking audience. The term "colorful romps" succinctly conveys the playful, morally ambiguous nature of the protagonist's city escapades, maintaining the lighthearted yet critical tone used to discuss his extramarital activities. This choice not only preserves the original's nuanced implications of frivolity and superficial engagement but also enhances the readability and emotional resonance of the text. By using "romps", the translation aligns culturally and linguistically with English idiomatic expressions, making the narrative more engaging and accessible while retaining the original's vivacity and ironic undertones.

EXAMPLE 10:
ST: 黑心肠的, 你是逼我往死里跑 (Yu, 2003, p. 12).
TT: "You coldhearted bastard! You're going to be the death of me!" (Yu, 2003, p.10).
Transliteration: Hēi xīncháng de, nǐ shì bī wǒ wǎng sǐ lǐ pǎo.

The translation of "黑心肠的 [hēi xīncháng de]" as "You coldhearted bastard" effectively illustrates a gain in translation by enhancing both the literal and emotional resonance of the original phrase. The direct translation of "黑心肠的 [hēi xīncháng de]" might mean someone with a "black heart," signifying cruelty or lack of empathy. By translating this into "You coldhearted bastard!" the emotional charge and derogatory impact are intensified for English-speaking audiences. The addition of "bastard" not only captures the strong negative connotation but also amplifies the speaker's contempt and frustration, making the expression more vivid and emotionally engaging. This translation succeeds in conveying the depth of animosity and emotional distress present in the original, thus enhancing the dramatic effect and ensuring that the dialogue resonates powerfully with the reader.

Example 11:
ST: 夜里想得太多，白天就头疼，整日无精打采(Yu, 2003, p.33).
TT: At night I worried too much, and during the day my head ached. All day I had no energy to harvest the crops (Yu, 2003, p.26).
Transliteration: Yèlǐ xiǎng dé tài duō, báitiān jiù tóuténg, zhěng rì wújīngdǎcǎi.

The translation of "无精打采 [wújīngdǎcǎi]" into "had no energy to harvest the crops" exemplifies a significant gain in translation by contextualizing the protagonist's lethargy within the specific rural activities of the narrative. By detailing that the character's lack of energy directly impacted his ability to perform essential tasks like harvesting, the translation not only conveys the general emotional and physical lethargy but also ties it to a critical daily activity, enhancing the relevance and emotional depth of the description. This specific contextualization not only deepens understanding of the protagonist's struggles but also enriches the reader's engagement by linking his psychological state to the practical realities of rural life, thereby making the narrative more vivid and impactful.

Example 12:
ST: 爹, 你不是下田吧 (Yu, 2003, p. 41).
TT: Dad, aren't you going down to the field to work (Yu, 2003, p. 33)?
Transliteration: Diē, nǐ bùshì xiàtián ba.

The translation of "下田 [xiàtián]" to "going down to the field to work" effectively illustrates a gain in translation by enhancing clarity and providing necessary context for international readers. Originally conveying the simple act of heading to the fields, the addition of "to work" clarifies the nature of the activity, situating it firmly within the agricultural and labor-

intensive context of the novel's rural setting. This specificity helps non-Chinese readers understand the physical and economic environment of the characters, thereby deepening their engagement with the narrative. By adding these few words, the translation bridges a cultural gap, ensuring that the depiction of daily life is both vivid and accessible, enriching the reader's comprehension and experience of the story.

Example 13:
ST: 穿长衫的私塾先生叫我念一段书时, 是我最高兴的(Yu, 2003, p.108).
TT: When the school teacher, wearing the traditional long gown… it was my happiest moment (Yu, 2003, p.92).
Transliteration: Chuān chángshān de sīshú xiānshēng jiào wǒ niàn yīduàn shū shí, shì wǒ zuì gāoxìng de.

The translation of "长衫" into "traditional long gown" offers a clear gain in translation by providing additional context and enhancing the cultural and historical accuracy for non-Chinese readers. This translation enriches the imagery and understanding of the traditional attire worn by the schoolteacher, emphasizing its cultural significance within a specific historical period. By describing the garment as "traditional," the translation helps international readers visualize the attire and understand its role as a marker of status and profession in Chinese culture, particularly among scholars and officials. This detail not only clarifies the setting but also enriches the narrative by deepening the cultural portrayal, making the scene more accessible and engaging for a global audience. The choice to specify "traditional long gown" effectively bridges cultural gaps, ensuring that readers can appreciate the cultural nuances integral to understanding the character's social context and the story's environment.

Example 14:
ST: 二喜提着一瓶黄酒, 咧着嘴笑个不停 (Yu, 2003, p. 130).
TT: Erxi was carrying a bottle of yellow rice wine and couldn't stop smiling (Yu, 2003, p. 112).
Transliteration: Èr xǐ tízhe yī píng huángjiǔ, liězhe zuǐ xiào gè bù tíng.

The translation of "黄酒 [huángjiǔ]" as "yellow rice wine" represents a significant gain in translation, providing clarity and enhancing cultural understanding for an international audience. This choice adds specificity by clarifying that the beverage is made from rice, distinguishing it from other types of wine, and aligning it with similar beverages like Japanese sake, which may be more familiar to non-Chinese readers. This specificity not only aids in visualizing the scene— where Erxi carries a bottle with evident cultural significance—but also enriches the reader's cultural comprehension, making the narrative more accessible and relatable. By describing "黄酒 [huángjiǔ]" more precisely, the translation bridges a cultural gap, ensuring that the story's settings and character actions are vividly conveyed and better appreciated.

In conclusion, the analysis of Gain in Translation reveals how strategic enhancements in the translation of *To Live: A Novel* have benefitted the target audience. By incorporating elements that contextualize cultural references and clarify historical settings, the translator has successfully bridged cultural divides, thus broadened the novel's appeal and deepened its impact. These gains not only improve understanding but also enrich the reader's engagement with the

text, demonstrating the positive potential of translation to add value beyond mere linguistic conversion. This approach highlights the translator's role not just as a language converter but as a cultural mediator who actively contributes to the text's reception in a new linguistic and cultural milieu.

<div align="center">EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION</div>

In Equivalence in Translation, the focus shifts to the translator's ability to maintain a balance between the original and the target texts in terms of meaning, tone, and cultural context. Achieving equivalence is a core objective in translation studies, aiming to ensure that the translation adheres as closely as possible to the source text while being naturally integrated into the target language (Oneţ & Ciocoi-Pop, 2023). This section evaluates how the translation of *To Live: A Novel* manages to preserve the original's emotional depth and cultural nuances, ensuring that the translated text resonates with similar impacts as intended by the author.

Example 15:
ST: 她编着草鞋为我唱了一支《十月怀胎》(Yu, 2003, p.5)
TT: As she weaved a pair of straw sandals, she sang Ten Month Pregnancy for me (Yu, 2003, p.5).
Transliteration: Tā biānzhe cǎoxié wèi wǒ chàngle yī zhī "shí yuè huáitāi" .

The translation of "草鞋[cǎoxié]" as "a pair of straw sandals" achieves equivalence in translation, effectively conveying both the literal object and its cultural context. The original term "草鞋[cǎoxié]" refers to traditional Chinese footwear made from straw, commonly worn in rural areas. By translating this as "straw sandals," the translation not only accurately describes the physical item but also retains the rustic, traditional quality associated with the object. This careful attention to detail preserves cultural authenticity and historical accuracy, making the scene vivid and relatable while maintaining the original text's integrity.

EXAMPLE 16:
ST: 私塾先生说我是朽木不可雕也 (Yu, 2003, p.9)
TT: My teacher used to say I was a rotten piece of wood that could not be carved (Yu, 2003, p.7).
Transliteration: Sīshú xiānshēng shuō wǒ shì xiǔmù bùkě diāo yě.

The translation of the Chinese idiom "朽木不可雕也 [xiǔmù bùkě diāo yě]" into "a rotten piece of wood that could not be carved" effectively achieves equivalence in translation, preserving both the literal and metaphorical essence of the original expression. This idiom is traditionally used to describe someone deemed incapable of improvement. By translating it as "a rotten piece of wood that could not be carved," the translation retains the original metaphor and communicates the notion of inherent unchangeability, allowing English-speaking readers to fully appreciate the teacher's disparaging judgment.

EXAMPLE 16=7:

ST: 我那副模样让她信了，我娘一屁股坐到了地上，抹着眼泪说："上梁不正下梁歪啊" (Yu, 2003, p.21).

TT: The look on my face convinced her. My mother sat down on the floor and, wiping her tears, said, "If the upper beam is not straight, the lower ones will go aslant (Yu, 2003, p.17).

Transliteration: Wǒ nà fù múyàng ràng tā xìnle, wǒ niáng yī pìgu zuò dàole dìshàng, mǒ zhuó yǎnlèi shuō: "Shàng liáng bùzhèng xià liáng wāi a".

The translation of the Chinese idiom "上梁不正下梁歪 [Shàng liáng bùzhèng xià liáng wāi]" to "If the upper beam is not straight, the lower ones will go aslant" exemplifies a well-executed equivalence in translation. This idiom expresses the idea that subordinates will emulate the bad example set by their leaders. The English version maintains both the literal imagery and the metaphorical meaning of the original expression, allowing readers to grasp the cultural and moral nuances embedded in the original dialogue.

EXAMPLE 18:
ST: 也对，一口吃不成个大胖子，就一锅一锅煮吧(Yu, 2003, p.71).
TT: After all, taking one bite never made anyone fat. We'll just smelt one cauldron at a Time (Yu, 2003, p.59).
Transliteration: Yě duì, yīkǒu chī bùchéng gè dà pàngzi, jiù yī guō yīguōzhǔ ba.

The translation of the Chinese idiom "一口吃不成个大胖子 [yīkǒu chī bùchéng gè dà pàngzi]" into "taking one bite never made anyone fat" adeptly achieves equivalence in translation, capturing both the literal and metaphorical meanings of the original. This idiom suggests that significant results require time and cannot be achieved all at once. The English translation retains this concept, effectively communicating the need for patience and persistent effort in achieving substantial outcomes.

EXAMPLE 19:
ST: 村里人下地干活开始记工分了，我算是一个壮劳力，给我算十分，家珍要是不病，能算她八分，她一病只能干些轻活，也就只好算四分了(Yu, 2003, p. 78).
Transliteration:
TT: When the other villagers went down to the fields to work, they started to keep track of work points. I was considered a strong worker, so they gave me ten points. If Jiazhen hadn't gotten sick she would have had eight points, but once she got sick, she could only do light work and so had to settle for four (Yu, 2003, p. 65-66).
Transliteration: Cūnlǐ rén xiàdì gàn huó kāishǐ jì gōngfēnle, wǒ suànshì yīgè zhuàng láolì, gěi wǒ suàn shífēn, jiā zhēn yàoshi bù bìng, néng suàn tā bā fēn, tā yī bìng zhǐ nénggàn xiē qīng huó, yě jiù zhǐhǎo suàn sì fēnle

The translation of "工分 [gōngfēn]" to "work points" captures the basic functional aspect of the system but may not fully convey the rich historical and cultural significance of the term to those unfamiliar with China's People's Commune era. This translation achieves functional equivalence but slightly loses the profound cultural resonance inherent in "工分", illustrating the challenges of maintaining cultural depth while ensuring clarity.

EXAMPLE 20:
ST: 家珍那样子像是好多了，可我老怕着是不是人常说的回光返照(Yu, 2003, p.108).

TT: Jiazhen seemed so much better, but I was afraid it was that "last radiance of the setting sun (Yu, 2003, p.92).

Transliteration: Jiā zhēn nàyàng zi xiàng shì hǎoduōle, kě wǒ lǎo pàzhe shì bùshì rén cháng shuō de huíguāngfǎnzhào.

The translation of "回光返照 [huíguāngfǎnzhào]" into "the last radiance of the setting sun" is an excellent example of achieving equivalence in translation. The original Chinese phrase describes a fleeting improvement in a terminally ill patient's condition. The English rendition preserves this dual sense by translating it literally while effectively conveying the cultural and emotional undertones inherent in the term. This approach ensures that the metaphor's poignancy and symbolism are accessible and meaningful to an English-speaking audience.

Upon concluding the exploration of Equivalence in Translation for *To Live: A Novel*, it becomes evident that achieving true equivalence involves meticulous attention to linguistic details, cultural subtleties, and the emotional undertones of the original text. This section has highlighted several examples where the translation succeeds in mirroring the source material's essence, effectively maintaining its thematic and emotional integrity across cultural boundaries. Such achievements not only affirm the translator's skill but also underscore the importance of equivalence in fostering a genuine appreciation of the original narrative among readers from diverse backgrounds. These instances demonstrate the delicate art of translation where fidelity to the source material supports a universal understanding of its themes and emotions.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of loss, gain, and equivalence in the translation of *To Live: A Novel* provides valuable insights into the broader field of translation studies, particularly within the context of Chinese-English literary translation. The substantial cultural disparities between China and Western nations often pose significant challenges for translators, leading to potential losses or gains (Jiang, 2023). This section delves into specific examples from the analysis in Chapter 4 to illustrate these dynamics.

Loss often occurs due to cultural gaps between the source and target languages. Many Culture-loaded Words from the source text may be unfamiliar to English speakers. For instance, the term "断子绝孙" (Example 1) was translated as "be finished", which loses the original idiom's full cultural and historical connotations. The Chinese idiom conveys the idea of a family's bloodline being severed, with no descendants to carry on the family name or traditions. The translation "be finished" fails to capture this depth, illustrating a significant cultural and emotional loss.

Similarly, the translation of "小日本" (Example 2) as simply "Japanese" represents a loss in translation in terms of cultural sentiment and emotional nuance. "小日本" is a pejorative term used in Chinese to refer to Japan and its people, carrying a derogatory connotation and a sense of historical animosity, which is entirely lost in the neutral term "Japanese." These examples underscore the challenges in conveying culturally loaded sentiments and idiomatic expressions accurately.

The gain in translation often arises from the translator's efforts to compensate for potential losses and to convey the original text's meaning more accurately. For example, the translation of "私塾" as "an old-style private school" (Example 8) enhances the text by adding clarity and cultural context for non-Chinese readers. The term "私塾" refers to traditional Chinese private schools focusing on Confucian classics, which might be unfamiliar to an international audience. By specifying "old-style private school", the translation not only clarifies the type of institution but also enriches the cultural and historical setting, providing a richer narrative experience.

Another example is the translation of "花花绿绿的事" into "colorful romps" (Example 9). This translation effectively captures the idiomatic and euphemistic qualities of the original phrase, conveying the playful, morally ambiguous nature of the protagonist's city escapades. This choice enhances the readability and emotional resonance of the text, preserving the original's nuanced implications while making it accessible to English-speaking audiences.

Achieving equivalence in translation involves preserving the original text's emotional and cultural impact. The translation of "草鞋" as "a pair of straw sandals" (Example 15) achieves equivalence by effectively conveying both the literal object and its cultural context. "草鞋" refers to traditional Chinese footwear made from straw and translating it as "straw sandals" accurately describes the item while retaining its rustic, traditional quality. This translation allows readers to visualize the type of footwear and understand its significance within the rural setting of the story.

Similarly, the translation of the idiom "上梁不正下梁歪" as "If the upper beam is not straight, the lower ones will go aslant" (Example 16) maintains both the literal imagery and the metaphorical meaning of the original expression. This translation captures the structural metaphor reflecting the consequential relationship between the actions of those in authority and those under their influence, ensuring that the cultural and moral nuances embedded in the original dialogue are accessible to English-speaking readers.

These examples illustrate the complex interplay of loss, gain, and equivalence in translation. They highlight the importance of the translator's role as a cultural mediator, striving to balance fidelity to the original text with effective communication in the target language. This study underscores the need for nuanced translation strategies that respect the source material's cultural depth while making it accessible and engaging to a global audience.

By examining the translation of *To Live: A Novel*, this discussion provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges and strategies involved in literary translation. The analysis emphasizes the translator's role in bridging cultural divides, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, and preserving the emotional and cultural richness of the original work.

CONCLUSION

This study on translating Yu Hua's *To Live: A Novel* highlights the complexities of translating Culture-loaded Words between Chinese and English. Theoretical frameworks by Bassnett (2013) and Jakobson (2012) on loss, gain, and equivalence are particularly relevant, showing that complete equivalence is often unattainable due to cultural and linguistic disparities. While loss in translation often outweighs gain, strategic approaches like cultural education and annotations can mitigate these losses.

The findings align with studies by Zhang and Li (2019) and Zhao and Li (2021) on the challenges of maintaining cultural nuances and the balance between literal accuracy and cultural relevance. However, Liu and Meng (2018) suggest that complete equivalence may be more achievable in different contexts.

Future research should explore the effectiveness of various translation strategies in different cultural and linguistic settings. Comparative analyses across multiple languages could identify universal challenges and strategies. Investigating the role of cultural education and training for translators could improve translation quality. Technology and digital tools might also assist translators in cultural research and annotations.

In conclusion, this study provides insights into the dynamics of loss, gain, and equivalence in translating Culture-loaded Words, emphasizing the translator's role as a cultural mediator and the importance of strategic approaches to enhance translation fidelity. The findings contribute to translation studies and offer practical recommendations for future research and practice.

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