

A Study on the English Translation of Pingnan Folk Culture from the Perspective of Translation Shift Theory

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Abstract

Rooted in the regional cultural soil of southeastern Guangxi, Pingnan folk culture integrates the diverse characteristics of the Hakka, Yao and other ethnic groups, forming a cultural system that boasts both uniqueness and inheritance. Terms and texts of this culture, bearing strong regional cultural connotations, encounter the dilemma of balancing linguistic form and cultural meaning in cross-cultural translation. The Translation Shifts Theory proposed by British linguist J.C. Catford, with a focus on linguistic levels and categories, provides a systematic analytical framework for addressing translation adaptation issues in culture-loaded texts. From the perspective of this theory, this paper adopts literature research, case analysis and comparative research methods. It classifies Pingnan folk culture into three categories—material folk culture, social folk culture and belief folk culture—and systematically explores the applicability of Translation Shifts Theory in translating Pingnan folk culture. By examining the specific application paths of level shifts and category shifts in translating folk terms and texts, this study aims to resolve the core contradiction between "formal constraints" and "meaning loss" in the translation of regional folk culture. Based on this, the paper constructs a translation framework of "level adaptation - category reconstruction - meaning conservation". It proposes targeted translation strategies and verifies their feasibility with specific cases. The research intends to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the cross-cultural communication of Pingnan folk culture, and contribute to the "going global" of Chinese regional folk culture.

Keywords

Translation Shifts Theory; Pingnan folk culture; Cross-cultural translation; Level shifts; Category shifts.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Pingnan County, located in southeastern Guangxi and under the jurisdiction of Guigang City, is one of the important birthplaces of regional culture in southeastern Guangxi. Over the long term, relying on its unique geographical location and the characteristics of multi-ethnic settlements, Pingnan has nurtured a rich and diverse array of folk culture. This culture covers multiple dimensions, including material folk culture (e.g., Pingnan rice noodle making craftsmanship, Da'an fire-fighting water tank), social folk culture (e.g., Hakka wedding customs, Yao Panwang Festival rituals) and belief folk culture (e.g., Shigong Opera, fire-walking ritual). As important carriers of the spiritual life of the Pingnan people, these folk cultures are also an integral part of excellent traditional Chinese culture, embodying unique regional values, ways of thinking and life wisdom.

With the advancement of the cultural power strategy and the increasing frequency of cross-cultural exchanges, the overseas communication of regional folk culture has become a key part

of the cultural "going global" initiative. As the core medium of cross-cultural communication, translation directly determines whether Pingnan folk culture can be accurately understood and accepted by English audiences. However, terms and texts related to Pingnan folk culture possess distinct regional specificity and cultural embeddedness. Inherent differences between Chinese and English in linguistic levels, grammatical structures, and semantic categories often lead to rigid expressions, cultural meaning loss, and irregular term use in translation—all of which seriously undermine the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication.

Catford's Translation Shifts Theory breaks through the limitations of traditional "literal equivalence" translation. Starting from the levels and categories within the linguistic system, it explores linguistic form adjustments to achieve meaning equivalence in translation, providing a precise analytical tool for translating culture-loaded texts.

At present, this theory has been widely applied in literary translation, term translation, external publicity text translation and other fields. Yet, systematic research targeting the specific regional folk culture of Pingnan remains scarce. Against this backdrop, this paper focuses on the translation of Pingnan folk culture from the perspective of Translation Shifts Theory, constructs adaptive translation strategies, fills the gap in research on the translation of regional folk culture, and provides practical paths for the overseas communication of Pingnan folk culture.

1.2. Research Significance

1.2.1. Theoretical Significance

This paper combines Translation Shifts Theory with the translation of Pingnan regional folk culture, thereby enriching the application scenarios and research dimensions of the theory in the field of specific regional folk culture. Existing studies mostly focus on the application of Translation Shifts Theory in general texts or mainstream cultural texts, with few exploring its theoretical adaptability to the folk culture of ethnic minority regions.

By analyzing the linguistic representation and cultural connotation of Pingnan folk culture, this paper explores the application rules of level shifts and category shifts in regional folk texts. It further improves the application system of Translation Shifts Theory in cross-cultural translation, and provides a new theoretical perspective and analytical framework for regional folk culture translation research.

1.2.2. Practical Significance

Targeting specific types of Pingnan folk culture, this paper proposes targeted translation strategies and case optimization plans based on Translation Shifts Theory. These can directly guide practical work such as the translation of external publicity texts for Pingnan folk culture, the English translation of intangible cultural heritage application materials, tourism publicity text translation and the compilation of folk culture dictionaries.

It effectively resolves linguistic adaptation issues in translation, reduces cultural information loss, and enhances the effectiveness of overseas communication of Pingnan folk culture. Meanwhile, it can provide reference for the cross-cultural translation of other regional folk cultures, contributing to the global communication of Chinese regional folk culture.

1.3. Research Status

Domestic research on the translation of folk culture has always taken cross-cultural communication as its core objective, forming a research framework underpinned by multiple theories and covering diverse scenarios. Scholars have drawn practically valuable conclusions based on their distinctive theoretical perspectives and specific research objects.

Han Yuwei (2025) adopted a cross-cultural translation theory approach, focusing on core culture-loaded words in Shandong folk culture such as etiquette customs and festival traditions.

She proposed strategies including supplementary translation, explanatory translation and linguistic reconstruction, arguing that these methods can balance translation accuracy and cultural adaptability to achieve equivalent transmission of cultural connotations.

Hu Yufeng (2025) approached the subject from a communication studies perspective, using Lasswell's 5W Model as the theoretical basis and Chinese intangible cultural heritage (ICH) folk culture as the research carrier. She established the translation principles of "prioritizing communication effects" and "centering on audience needs", pointing out that strategies such as literal plus transliteration, supplementary translation, free translation and conversion can align with the thinking patterns and aesthetic preferences of target-language audiences, thus addressing the translation challenges posed by culture-loaded words

Based on the theory of knowledge translation studies, Yu Qiangfu and Zhu Kangli (2025) conducted a case study on the subtitles of the film *Song of the Phoenix*. Drawing on the cultural classification systems proposed by Wu Bing'an and Eugene Nida, they categorized folk culture-loaded words into four types: material, linguistic, social and religious. Using "truthfulness, goodness and beauty" as the evaluation criteria, they found that existing translations can mostly achieve semantic restoration and audience-oriented consideration, but lack in conveying the "heterogeneous beauty" of the culture. They suggested that a balanced approach between cultural fidelity and audience acceptability can be achieved through the application of diversified translation strategies.

Zhang Feng (2024) employed a multimodal discourse analysis framework and took the bilingual subtitles of the TV series *Minning Town* as the research object. He argued that in the overseas communication of folk culture, the meaning of culture-loaded words can be conveyed through the combination of multimodal elements and domestication strategies at the cultural level; at the contextual level, attention should be paid to the communicative functions of various modalities; at the content level, non-critical information can be omitted while visual and auditory modalities can be used to supplement meaning; at the expressive level, presenting one line of subtitles in each language is more conducive to the audience's instantaneous reading.

Guided by Skopos Theory, Chen Haimeng and Xue Yi (2024) conducted a comparative analysis of excellent translated versions of folk culture publicity texts. They emphasized that translation strategies should be determined by the intended purpose of the target text, advocating the adoption of compensatory strategies and explanatory translation methods to explore the profound connotations of folk culture. By adhering to the "function and fidelity" principle, these strategies can help achieve the informative, expressive and persuasive functions of publicity texts. In addition, other scholars have relied on theories such as Functional Equivalence Theory and Intercultural Communication Studies, emphasizing that folk culture translation should move beyond literal equivalence, respect cultural differences, and avoid cultural distortion through the flexible combination of domestication and foreignization strategies.

These studies have enriched the research system of folk culture translation from multiple dimensions including theoretical construction, strategy exploration and scenario application. They provide solid theoretical support and practical approaches for the international dissemination of Chinese folk culture, and lay a foundation for future research to deepen in the directions of interdisciplinary integration, attention to niche folk cultures, and the construction of specialized corpora.

1.4. Research Methods and Innovations

1.4.1. Research Methods

This paper adopts three research methods. First, the literature research method: it systematically sorts out relevant literatures on Translation Shifts Theory, cross-cultural translation theory and folk culture research, laying a solid theoretical foundation for the study.

Second, the case analysis method: it selects typical cases from the three categories of Pingnan folk culture (material, social, belief) and analyzes their translation difficulties and linguistic adaptation issues in combination with Translation Shifts Theory. Third, the comparative research method: it compares case translations under different shift strategies to verify the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed strategies.

1.4.2. Research Innovations

The innovations of this paper are mainly reflected in two aspects. First, the innovation of research object: it focuses on the specific regional folk culture of Pingnan, filling the gap in translation research in this field.

Second, the innovation of research path: based on Translation Shifts Theory, it constructs a translation framework of "level adaptation - category reconstruction - meaning conservation". It realizes the in-depth integration of theory and practice with specific cases, providing an operable strategy system for regional folk culture translation.

2. Theoretical Overview

Mu Lei, a renowned Chinese translator, argues that the translation shift is not only one of the most important translation methods but also one of the most fundamental steps in translation practice. J.C. Catford's Translation Shifts Theory, a representative achievement of the "linguistic turn" in translation studies in the 1960s, is systematically presented in his work *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965). Based on structural linguistics, this theory defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" (Catford, 1965:21), focusing on equivalence and deviation at the level of linguistic form during the translation process. It is the first theoretical framework that systematically analyzes translation practice from a linguistic perspective.

Catford clearly distinguishes between "textual equivalence" and "formal correspondence": the former refers to the functional equivalence achieved between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) in a specific context; the latter denotes the structural correspondence of units (such as words and phrases) in the linguistic systems of the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) (Catford, 1965:39). He points out that formal correspondence can only reach an approximate degree, while textual equivalence is the core goal of translation, and this contradiction directly gives rise to the necessity of "translation shifts".

Catford divides translation shifts into two categories: level shifts and category shifts. (1) Level shifts refer to the cross-level transformation of linguistic units between the "lexical level" and the "grammatical level", specifically manifested as the conversion of "source language lexical meaning" to "target language grammatical form" or "source language grammatical form" to "target language lexical meaning" (Zhang Meifang, 2005). Catford notes that the core of level shifts is to resolve differences in the "semantic carriers" of different languages—that is, some languages rely on vocabulary to convey meaning, while others rely on grammatical forms to fix meaning. (2) Category shifts encompass four specific forms: structural shifts (adjustment of sentence structure), class shifts (changes in part-of-speech attributes), unit shifts (changes in the hierarchy of linguistic units), and intra-system shifts (adjustment of categories within the same grammatical system) (Catford, 1965:73).

3. Linguistic Representation and Translation Shift Needs of Pingnan Folk Culture

Rooted in the Chinese linguistic system, Pingnan folk culture integrates the regional dialects of southeastern Guangxi with multi-ethnic cultural characteristics, forming unique linguistic representations. Its terms and texts exhibit distinct features at lexical, grammatical and

semantic levels, which put forward clear requirements for translation shifts. These requirements are specifically reflected in the three categories of folk culture mentioned above.

3.1. Linguistic Representation and Shift Needs of Material Folk Culture

Pingnan material folk culture includes traditional food, handicraft techniques and folk artifacts. Its core linguistic feature is "lexical concretization + implicit craft details"—that is, terms mostly revolve around specific artifacts and craft names, while implicitly containing semantic information such as craft processes, historical backgrounds and regional characteristics.

The translation shift needs of such texts mainly focus on the adaptation of lexical and grammatical levels. It is necessary to supplement implicit meanings through level shifts and optimize expression forms through category shifts.

Example 1: Pingnan rice noodle making craftsmanship(平南米粉). Its core term "Pingnan rice noodles" seems like a simple noun, but actually contains three layers of meaning: first, regional attribute (unique to Pingnan County); second, craft characteristics (traditional handmade, multiple processes); third, quality traits (smooth taste, no additives).

While these meanings can be implicitly conveyed through context in Chinese, English demands supplementary explanation via level shifts (lexical + grammatical levels) to eliminate semantic ambiguity.

3.2. Linguistic Representation and Shift Needs of Social Folk Culture

Pingnan social folk culture includes wedding customs, festivals, rituals and other practices. Its core linguistic feature is "ritualized terms + ethical semantics"—terms are mostly bound to specific ritual processes and simultaneously contain profound semantics related to social ethics, interpersonal relationships and cultural values.

The translation shift needs of such texts mainly focus on structural shifts and intra-system shifts. It is necessary to adjust sentence structures to adapt to English expression habits, and balance cultural characteristics with audience understanding through semantic system replacement.

"Nazheng" (纳征) is one of the Pingnan Hakka wedding customs. As a traditional wedding ritual term, it implies multiple ethical meanings, such as "the groom's family presenting betrothal gifts to the bride's family, establishing a marriage contract, respecting elders and forging clan alliances". Chinese expressions are concise, relying on cultural context to convey these profound meanings. In English, however, it is necessary to supplement the ritual connotation and ethical meaning through structural shifts (converting nominal terms into verbal phrases) and level shifts (from lexical to grammatical levels).

Another example is "Panwang Festival (盘王节)". The term itself implies semantics such as "Yao ancestor worship, long-drum dance performance and clan reunion". Translation needs to balance the cultural symbol of "Panwang" with the audience's understanding of the festival's essence through unit shifts (converting words into phrases) and intra-system shifts (equivalent expression of cultural concepts).

3.3. Linguistic Representation and Shift Needs of Belief Folk Culture

Pingnan belief folk culture includes Shigong Opera, fire-walking rituals, sacrificial rituals and other practices. Its core linguistic feature is "symbolic metaphor + religious semantics"—terms mostly take concrete symbols as carriers, implying profound semantics such as religious concepts, spiritual appeals and regional beliefs, and are often paired with dialect words and specific sentence patterns.

The translation shift needs of such texts are the most complex. It is necessary to combine multiple methods such as level shifts, structural shifts and class shifts to realize the dual transfer of symbolic meaning and religious connotation.

As a core belief folk term, "Shigong Opera (师公戏)" not only refers to a specific form of folk religious opera, but also implies religious semantics such as "the integration of Taoism, Buddhism and local beliefs, human-god communication, blessing and exorcism". Moreover, the term "Shigong" is a regional dialect word with dual semantic identities: "performer and clergyman".

Translation requires supplementing semantic connotation through level shifts (phonological transliteration + lexical annotation) and class shifts (converting nouns into nominal phrases). At the same time, it is necessary to convert the implicit logic of Chinese into the explicit logic of English through structural shifts. Another example is "fire-walking ritual (过火炼)". Centered on the concrete action of "walking barefoot on fire", this term implies the belief semantics of "purifying the body and mind, warding off evil spirits and revering gods". Translation needs to balance the representation of the action and the belief connotation through unit shifts (converting phrases into clauses) and intra-system shifts.

4. Core Dilemmas in Pingnan Folk Culture Translation from the Perspective of Translation Shifts Theory

From the perspective of Translation Shifts Theory, the core contradiction in the translation of Pingnan folk culture stems from the differences in linguistic levels and category rules between Chinese and English. This gives rise to such dilemmas as unbalanced level adaptation, improper category shifts, and disconnection between cultural meaning and linguistic form in translation. The specific manifestations are as follows:

4.1. Lack of Level Shifts and Insufficient Implicit Semantic Transfer

A large number of semantic elements in Pingnan folk culture terms and texts are implicit at the lexical level and within the context. However, English emphasizes explicit semantic expression. If translators lack awareness of level shifts and only perform literal translation within the same level, it will lead to insufficient transfer of implicit semantics and even semantic distortion.

Translating "Panwang Festival (盘王节)" literally as "Panwang Festival" only achieves a single phonological-level shift (without cross-level supplementation). It fails to supplement implicit semantics such as "Yao ancestor worship and festival rituals" through level shifts from lexical to grammatical levels. English audiences can only recognize the proper noun but cannot understand the festival's connotation.

Another example is translating "fire-walking ritual" literally as "fire-walking ritual", which only achieves lexical correspondence. It fails to convey the belief semantics of "warding off evil spirits and purifying the body and mind" through supplementary shifts at the semantic level, leading audiences to misunderstand it as a simple action ritual. In addition, translating "Nazheng" literally as "gift giving" only achieves class shifts at the lexical level, without supplementing implicit semantics such as "wedding ritual and clan alliance" through level shifts at the grammatical level, resulting in serious semantic simplification.

4.2. Improper Category Shifts and Poor Linguistic Form Adaptability

The differences between Chinese and English in grammatical structures, lexical categories and expression units require translators to make targeted category shifts. Improper shift methods—such as incomplete structural adjustment, unreasonable class shifts and chaotic unit levels—will lead to rigid language, loose logic and inconsistency with English expression habits. Translating "Pingnan rice noodle making craftsmanship" literally as "Pingnan rice noodles production technique" retains the Chinese pre-modifier structure without structural shifts and unit shifts, resulting in lengthy and obscure English translation. At the same time, it does not

conduct class shifts, implicitly containing the adjectival semantics of "handmade", which fails to convey the craft characteristics.

Another example is translating "Shigong Opera integrates Taoism, Buddhism and local folk beliefs" as "Shigong Opera integrates Taoism, Buddhism and local folk beliefs". This only achieves simple sentence structure correspondence without structural shifts (such as converting active voice to passive voice or adjusting clauses), leading to unclear semantic logic and failure to reflect the religious function of Shigong Opera. In addition, translating "Nianli is a unique clan festival in Pingnan" as "Nianli is a unique clan festival in Pingnan" lacks intra-system shifts. The semantic scope of "Nianli" is not completely consistent with the English word "festival", failing to reflect its core characteristics of being a "clan sacrifice and parade feast".

4.3. Single Shift Strategy and Imbalance Between Culture and Form

Translating Pingnan folk culture requires balancing the preservation of cultural characteristics and the adaptation of linguistic forms. However, some translators only adopt a single shift strategy: they either overemphasize formal equivalence while ignoring cultural meaning, or one-sidedly pursue cultural preservation while neglecting language fluency, resulting in an imbalance between the two.

Translating "Da'an water tank (大安校水柜)" as "Da'an water tank for fire fighting" overemphasizes structural shifts and unit shifts, pursuing linguistic fluency at the expense of cultural connotations such as "Qing Dynasty history, clan cohesion and festival parades", leading to the loss of cultural characteristics. On the contrary, translating "Shigong Opera" as "Shigongxi" only performs phonological transliteration without any category shifts or level shifts. While preserving the cultural symbol, it makes it impossible for English audiences to understand its essence, resulting in poor linguistic adaptability. Such a single shift strategy produces translations that are either "culturally distorted" or "obscure", failing to achieve the core goal of cross-cultural communication.

4.4. Ununified Term Shifts and Insufficient Communication Standardization

Pingnan folk culture terms lack unified translation shift standards. Different translators adopt different shift methods, leading to multiple translations of the same term and undermining the standardization and consistency of cultural communication.

"Pingnan rice noodles" has multiple translations, such as "Pingnan Rice Noodles", "Handmade Pingnan Rice Vermicelli" and "Pingnan Local Rice Noodles", each adopting different methods including unit shifts, class shifts and structural shifts, resulting in chaotic translations. The translations of "Nianli" are even more diverse, including "Nianli Festival", "Clan Ritual of Nianli" and "Local Festival of Pingnan", with inconsistent shift strategies that fail to form a unified communication consensus. The root cause of this inconsistency lies in the lack of systematic guidance based on Translation Shifts Theory, as translators only consider shifts from a single dimension rather than forming a coordinated and consistent shift standard.

5. Construction of Pingnan Folk Culture Translation Strategies from the Perspective of Translation Shifts Theory

Based on the linguistic representation, translation shift needs and core dilemmas of Pingnan folk culture, and guided by Catford's Translation Shifts Theory, this paper constructs a translation framework of "level adaptation - category reconstruction - meaning conservation". It proposes four core strategies: coordinated level shifts, multi-dimensional category shifts, integrated shift strategies and unified term shifts, all aimed at achieving linguistic form adaptation, complete cultural meaning retention and optimized communication effects.

5.1. Coordinated Level Shifts Strategy: Supplementing Implicit Semantics

The coordinated level shifts strategy refers to combining cross-level shifts among phonological, lexical, grammatical and semantic levels to make the implicit cultural meaning, historical background and semantic connotation of the source language explicit. Its core lies in achieving complete meaning transfer through the coordination of "phonological/lexical level + grammatical/semantic level". This strategy is suitable for text types with high requirements for semantic accuracy, such as academic texts, intangible cultural heritage application materials and folk culture dictionaries.

Specific applications include three combination forms. First, phonological and lexical shifts: retaining cultural symbols through transliteration and supplementing semantics with lexical annotations. Second, lexical and grammatical shifts: supplementing implicit meanings at the lexical level through grammatical forms such as attributive clauses, appositives and participial structures. Third, grammatical and semantic shifts: conveying deep semantics and pragmatic functions through sentence structure adjustment.

"Panwang Festival" is translated as "Panwang Festival (an ancestor-worshipping festival of the Yao people in Pingnan, featuring long-drum dancing and ritual sacrifices)". This adopts coordinated shifts of "phonological transliteration, lexical annotation and grammatical clause". It not only retains the cultural symbol of "Panwang", but also supplements the festival's ethnic attribute, core rituals and cultural connotation through grammatical attributive clauses, completing the transfer of implicit semantics.

"Fire-walking ritual" is translated as "Fire-walking Ritual, a traditional belief practice of the Hakka and Yao people in Pingnan where participants walk barefoot on burning charcoal to purify their minds and ward off evils". It adopts coordinated shifts of "lexical + grammatical + semantic levels". Through appositives and attributive clauses, it makes the implicit ethnic attribute, ritual process and belief semantics explicit, achieving meaning conservation.

5.2. Multi-dimensional Category Shifts Strategy: Optimizing Linguistic Form

The multi-dimensional category shifts strategy integrates four types of category shifts—structural shifts, class shifts, unit shifts and intra-system shifts—and makes targeted adjustments according to the linguistic differences between Chinese and English. Its core is to enhance the linguistic fluency and adaptability of the translation through coordinated multi-dimensional shifts. This strategy is suitable for text types focusing on communication effects, such as tourism publicity texts, external publicity essays and video subtitles.

Specific application paths are as follows. First, structural shifts: adjusting word order (postpositive attributives, adverbial position optimization) and sentence types (active to passive voice, clause merging/splitting) to adapt to English grammatical rules. Second, class shifts: changing lexical parts of speech or grammatical categories (nouns to verbs, adjectives to adverbs) according to collocation habits to optimize semantic expression. Third, unit shifts: adjusting linguistic expression units (words to phrases, sentences to clauses) to improve text fluency. Fourth, intra-system shifts: selecting the closest equivalent in the target language within the same semantic system (such as equivalent replacement of cultural concepts) to balance cultural characteristics and audience understanding.

"Pingnan rice noodle making craftsmanship" is translated as "The Handmade Production Technique of Pingnan Rice Noodles". It adopts "structural shifts (postpositive attributives) + class shifts (converting the adjective 'handmade' into an attributive adjective) + unit shifts (phrase optimization)". It converts the Chinese pre-modifier structure into the English post-modifier structure, clarifies the term attribute and optimizes expression fluency.

"Nazheng is an important part of Hakka wedding customs" is translated as "Betrothal gift presentation, an important part of the Hakka wedding customs in Pingnan, refers to the practice

where the groom's family presents gifts to the bride's family to confirm the marriage". This adopts "structural shifts (subject-verb-object adjustment) + class shifts (nouns to nominal phrases) + unit shifts (sentence splitting)". It converts the concise Chinese sentence structure into a logically clear English complex sentence, and uses "betrothal gift presentation" as an equivalent replacement for "Nazheng" through intra-system shifts to convey the core semantics.

5.3. Integrated Shift Strategies: Balancing Culture and Form

The integrated shift strategy refers to the coordinated use of level shifts and category shifts. It supplements implicit semantics and preserves cultural characteristics through level shifts, while optimizing linguistic form and enhancing adaptability through category shifts. Its core is to achieve a three-dimensional balance of "cultural preservation - form adaptation - meaning conservation". This strategy is suitable for most Pingnan folk culture texts, especially those with both cultural and communicative functions, such as tourism publicity and external publicity materials.

"Shigong Opera is a folk religious opera integrating multiple beliefs in Pingnan" is translated as "Shigong Opera, a folk religious opera in Pingnan that integrates Taoism, Buddhism and local folk beliefs, serves as a bridge between humans and gods in traditional rituals". It adopts "level shifts (phonological transliteration + lexical annotation + semantic supplement) + category shifts (structural shifts + unit shifts)". It not only retains the cultural symbol of "Shigong Opera", but also supplements cultural connotation through attributive clauses and optimizes fluency through sentence structure adjustment, achieving a balance between culture and form.

"During Nianli, villages in Pingnan hold clan sacrifice and parade activities" is translated as "During Nianli Festival (a unique clan festival in Pingnan), villages hold grand clan worship rituals and parades to pray for good fortune". It adopts "level shifts (phonological transliteration + lexical annotation) + category shifts (intra-system shifts + structural shifts)". It preserves the cultural specificity of "Nianli", and helps English audiences understand the festival's core activities and cultural connotation through equivalent shifts and sentence structure adjustment.

5.4. Unified Term Shifts Strategy: Standardizing Cross-cultural Communication

Based on Translation Shifts Theory and the connotation of Pingnan folk culture, this paper establishes unified term translation shift standards, clarifying the shift methods, level collocations and category selections for various terms to avoid chaotic translations.

The specific principles are as follows. First, give priority to the combination of "coordinated level shifts + core category shifts" to balance cultural characteristics and linguistic adaptation. Second, unify shift types and expression forms for the same folk concept, clarifying the level shift path and category shift method of terms. Third, adjust shift details according to text types: detailed shifts for academic texts to ensure complete semantics, and concise shifts for publicity texts to highlight key points.

Example: Suggestions for unified translation shifts of core Pingnan folk terms

Pingnan rice noodles: Pingnan Rice Noodles (phonological transliteration + lexical qualification, class shift: nominal phrase optimization)

Panwang Festival: Panwang Festival (Yao people's ancestor-worshipping festival) (phonological transliteration + grammatical supplement, structural shift: appositive clause)

Shigong Opera: Shigong Opera (folk religious opera for blessing and exorcism) (phonological transliteration + semantic supplement, unit shift: word to phrase)

Nianli: Nianli Festival (clan festival with worship and parade) (phonological transliteration + lexical annotation, intra-system shift: semantic equivalence)

Fire-walking ritual: Fire-walking Ritual (belief practice for purification) (lexical literal translation + semantic supplement, class shift: nominal phrase)

Da'an water tank: Da'an Water Tank (traditional fire-fighting tool and clan symbol) (phonological transliteration + grammatical supplement, structural shift: postpositive attributive)

6. Case Analysis: Practical Optimization of Pingnan Folk Culture Text Translation

6.1. Translation Optimization of Academic Text Excerpt

To verify the feasibility of the above translation strategies, this paper selects three typical types of Pingnan folk culture texts—academic text excerpts, tourism publicity texts and intangible cultural heritage application text excerpts. It conducts translation analysis and optimization in combination with Translation Shifts Theory, and compares the effects of original and optimized translations to demonstrate the application value of the strategies.

Example 1

SL:平南师公戏是桂东南地区独特的民间宗教戏曲，融合道教、佛教与地方民间信仰，主要在祭祀、祈福、驱邪等仪式中表演。师公戏的唱词多为平南方言，蕴含丰富的道教经文与民间传说，动作模仿神灵姿态，服饰与道具具有鲜明的宗教象征意义，是平南民俗文化的重要载体。

TL:Pingnan Shigong Opera is a unique folk religious opera in southeastern Guangxi, combining Taoism, Buddhism and local folk beliefs. It is mainly performed in rituals such as sacrifice, blessing and exorcism. The lyrics of Shigong Opera are mostly in Pingnan dialect, containing rich Taoist scriptures and folk legends. The movements imitate the gestures of gods, and the costumes and props have distinct religious symbolic meanings. It is an important carrier of Pingnan folk culture.

The original translation adopts a single shift strategy, only achieving simple sentence structure correspondence without targeted level shifts and category shifts. It fails to supplement the religious function and cultural connotation of Shigong Opera through level shifts, resulting in ambiguous semantics for "folk religious opera" and "religious symbolic meanings". Additionally, it lacks structural shifts and unit shifts, leading to loose sentence structure and insufficient logical connection. The class shifts are also improper: "sacrifice, blessing and exorcism" are all in nominal form, which does not match the verbal semantics of the original text, resulting in incomplete semantic transfer. So the optimized translation should be:

Shigong Opera in Pingnan, a unique folk religious opera in southeastern Guangxi, integrates Taoism, Buddhism and local folk beliefs. It is mainly performed in rituals for deity sacrifice, blessing and exorcism, serving as a medium connecting humans and gods in traditional folk beliefs. Its lyrics, mostly in Pingnan dialect, carry abundant Taoist scriptures and local folk legends. Its movements imitate the gestures of gods to express reverence, and its costumes and props (such as Taoist robes and ritual scepters) symbolize the identity and power of gods. As an important carrier of Pingnan folk culture, it inherits the regional cultural traditions and spiritual connotations of southeastern Guangxi.

Coordinated level shifts are adopted: "Shigong Opera" is retained through phonological transliteration, semantics are supplemented through grammatical appositives and attributive clauses, and the religious function is clarified at the semantic level. Multi-dimensional category shifts are also employed: structural shifts (adjusting word order and merging clauses) enhance logical clarity; class shifts (converting the noun "sacrifice" into the prepositional phrase "for deity sacrifice") match the verbal semantics of the original text; unit shifts (converting words into phrases) supplement details about costumes and props. These integrated strategies supplement implicit semantics and optimize linguistic form, complying with academic text norms.

6.2. Translation Optimization of Tourism Publicity Text

Example 2

SL:平南年例，是一场穿越千年的宗族盛宴。每逢年例，各村各户张灯结彩，祭祀神灵，巡游祈福，亲朋好友欢聚一堂，共享美食，在欢声笑语中传承着平南人的家国情怀与宗族情谊。

TL:Pingnan Nianli is a thousand-year-old clan feast. During Nianli, every household decorates with lanterns and colored streamers, worships gods, parades for blessings, and relatives and friends gather to share food, inheriting the family and country feelings and clan friendship of Pingnan people in joy and laughter.

The original translation adopts a single shift strategy, only achieving simple lexical correspondence and literal sentence translation. It lacks intra-system shifts: the semantics of "Nianli" do not align with "clan feast", failing to reflect its festival attribute and ritual nature. It also retains the Chinese run-on sentence structure without structural shifts, leading to loose logic in the English translation. Moreover, the lack of level shifts results in rigid literal translations of "family and country feelings" and "clan friendship", with insufficient transfer of implicit semantics, which fails to meet the communication needs of tourism texts. So the optimized translation should be:

Pingnan Nianli Festival, a millennium-old clan celebration unique to the region, is a grand event integrating worship, parade and reunion. When Nianli comes, every household is adorned with lanterns and colored streamers. Local clans hold grand deity-worshipping rituals and parades to pray for good fortune, and relatives and friends gather to enjoy delicious local food and happy moments, embodying the Pingnan people's deep love for their hometown and strong bond with their clans.

The integrated shift strategy is adopted: level shifts (phonological transliteration of "Nianli", lexical supplement of "Festival" and semantic explanation of core activities) supplement implicit semantics; category shifts (structural shifts: splitting run-on sentences and adjusting word order; intra-system shifts: translating "clan feast" as "clan celebration" for equivalent adaptation); and class shifts (converting the adjectival phrase "张灯结彩" into the passive structure "is adorned with"). These integrated strategies preserve cultural characteristics, optimize language fluency, and enhance the attractiveness and readability of the tourism text.

6.3. Translation Optimization of Intangible Cultural Heritage Application Text Excerpt

Example 3

SL:平南米粉制作技艺是广西非物质文化遗产项目，传承千年，采用平南本地优质大米，经浸泡、磨浆、蒸制、晾晒等多道手工工序制成，口感爽滑，清香可口。该技艺不仅体现了平南人民的工匠精神，更承载着桂东南地区的饮食文化传统。

TL: The production technique of Pingnan Rice Noodles is an intangible cultural heritage project in Guangxi. With a history of thousands of years, it uses high-quality local rice in Pingnan, made through multiple handmade processes such as soaking, grinding, steaming and drying. It tastes smooth and fragrant. This technique not only reflects the craftsmanship spirit of Pingnan people, but also carries the food culture tradition of southeastern Guangxi.

The original translation has improper shifts, with deficiencies in both linguistic form and semantic transfer. It lacks unit shifts and structural shifts, leading to loose sentence structure and weak logical connection, which does not comply with the norms of application texts. It also lacks class shifts and level shifts: "multiple handmade processes" has ambiguous semantics, failing to convey the core characteristic of "handmade craftsmanship". Additionally, the term shift is irregular: "production technique" is a common expression that fails to reflect the

inheritance of intangible cultural heritage craftsmanship, and the implicit semantics of "craftsmanship spirit" are insufficiently conveyed. So the optimized translation should be:

The Handmade Production Technique of Pingnan Rice Noodles, an intangible cultural heritage item in Guangxi, has a history of over a thousand years. Adopting high-quality local rice in Pingnan, it undergoes seven traditional handmade processes, including soaking, grinding, filtering, steaming, slicing, drying and sorting, resulting in a product characterized by thin texture, smooth taste and natural fragrance. This time-honored technique not only embodies the rigorous craftsmanship spirit of Pingnan people—who have adhered to traditional processes and pursued excellence for generations—but also carries the food culture tradition of southeastern Guangxi, reflecting the local people's wisdom in food creation.

the term is clarified as "The Handmade Production Technique of Pingnan Rice Noodles", standardizing term expression through class shifts (qualifying "handmade") and structural shifts (postpositive attributives). Coordinated level shifts are also used: specific processes are supplemented at the lexical level, semantics are enhanced through participial structures and dashes at the grammatical level, and the deep connotation of "craftsmanship spirit" is conveyed at the semantic level. Meanwhile, unit shifts and structural shifts optimize sentence logic, making the translation comply with the professionalism and norms of intangible cultural heritage application texts and fully conveying the craftsmanship value.

7. Conclusion and Prospect

7.1. Research Conclusions

From the perspective of Catford's Translation Shifts Theory, this paper systematically analyzes the linguistic representation and translation shift needs of Pingnan folk culture, explores its core dilemmas in cross-cultural translation, constructs targeted translation strategies, and verifies the feasibility of these strategies through case analysis. The main conclusions are as follows:

First, Pingnan folk culture possesses distinct linguistic specificity and cultural load. The three categories—material, social and belief folk culture—exhibit different characteristics at lexical, grammatical and semantic levels, which put forward differentiated requirements for translation shifts. To resolve issues of linguistic adaptation and meaning transfer, the coordinated use of level shifts and category shifts is essential.

Second, the core dilemmas in Pingnan folk culture translation stem from the differences in linguistic levels and category rules between Chinese and English. They are specifically manifested as lack of level shifts, improper category shifts, single shift strategy and ununified term shifts. Systematic shift strategies are required to resolve these dilemmas and achieve a balance between linguistic form and cultural meaning.

Third, the four constructed core translation strategies—coordinated level shifts, multi-dimensional category shifts, integrated shift strategies and unified term shifts—can effectively address the core problems in the translation of Pingnan folk culture. Coordinated level shifts supplement implicit semantics; multi-dimensional category shifts optimize linguistic form; integrated shift strategies balance culture and form; and unified term shifts standardize communication effects. These strategies complement each other to form a complete translation system, suitable for different types of Pingnan folk culture texts.

7.2. Research Limitations

Although this paper conducts systematic research on the translation of Pingnan folk culture, it still has certain limitations. First, the research cases mainly focus on typical types of Pingnan folk culture, failing to cover all categories such as folk literature and traditional music, so the research scope needs to be further expanded.

Second, no empirical research is conducted, lacking data support on English audiences' acceptance of the translations, so the effectiveness of the strategies needs further verification. Third, the division of application scenarios for shift strategies can be further refined, with insufficient research on shift differences for different audience groups (such as academic audiences and ordinary tourists).

7.3. Research Prospect

Future research can be deepened in three aspects. First, expand the research scope to cover all categories of Pingnan folk culture, refine shift strategies in combination with different text types, and improve the translation system.

Second, conduct empirical research, collect data on English audiences' acceptance of translations through questionnaires and interviews, optimize shift strategies, and enhance practical guidance. Third, refine audience groups and linguistic scenarios, and formulate differentiated shift plans according to the cognitive habits and needs of different audiences to achieve precise communication.

Meanwhile, combined with digital technology, explore the innovative application of Translation Shifts Theory in multi-modal folk culture text translation, contributing to the global spread of Chinese regional folk culture.

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