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## **ADAPTIVE TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR CULTURE-LOADED TERMS IN *CHRONICLE OF A BLOOD MERCHANT*: A THREE- DIMENSIONAL ECO-TRANSLATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract.** In the context of globalization, the effective transmission of culture through translation has become a pressing concern, particularly in literary works where culture-loaded terms present significant challenges. This study investigates the translation strategies applied to culture-loaded terms in *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* by Yu Hua, focusing on the English version translated by Andrew F. Jones. Based on eco-translatology's "three-dimensional" transformation theory—including linguistic, communicative, and cultural dimensions—this study explores the following question: How does the translator employ adaptive translation strategies for different categories of culture-loaded terms in *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* to achieve dynamic balance across the three dimensions? A qualitative analysis of eight representative examples, categorized according to Nida's classification of culture-loaded terms, reveals that different translation methods such as literal translation, free translation, and explanatory paraphrasing are selectively employed to negotiate cultural specificity. While the translator demonstrates a strong tendency toward communicative effectiveness and linguistic fluency, some cultural depth is inevitably compromised. The study argues for a more integrated approach to strategy selection under eco-translatology, one that maintains cultural integrity without undermining readability. Through analysis, this study reveals translators' strategic preferences across different culture-loaded terms and examines their implications for cultural transmission, offering insights into the balance of linguistic, communicative and cultural dimensions.

**Keywords:** Chinese literature; culture-loaded terms; eco-translatology; literary translation; Yu Hua.

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## Introduction

In the context of accelerating globalization, China's increasing global influence has led to a significant shift in translation paradigms—from "translating the world" to "translating China" (Huang, 2018). This transformation reflects not only China's enhanced national power but also presents a critical mission for contemporary Chinese translators. Literary translation, as a vital medium for cultural transmission, has gained prominence in this process, particularly in conveying China's rich cultural heritage to international audiences.

Translation plays a fundamental role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and fostering mutual understanding between different societies (Venuti, 1995). However, the translation of culture-loaded terms presents unique challenges, as these terms are deeply embedded in the source culture's context and often lack direct equivalents in the target language (Nida, 1964). This complexity demands a delicate balance between linguistic accuracy and cultural authenticity.

Among contemporary Chinese literature, Yu Hua's works stand as significant vehicles for cultural transmission. Yu Hua (1960-present), a representative of avant-garde literature, has produced influential works including *To Live*, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, and *Brothers*. *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, first published in Harvest (1995) (Ma, 2019), was acclaimed as one of the "10 Most Influential Works of the 1990s" by China's leading critics and literary editors (Song, 2013). The novel's international edition, translated by Andrew F. Jones, has received widespread recognition across more than 40 countries. Critics have particularly praised its portrayal of Chinese family life during turbulent times, noting its blend of profound affection and dark humor (Jiang, 2010).

The novel serves as a profound reflection of Chinese society's transformations and individual destinies (Wang, 2021), embodying rich cultural connotations through its distinctive literary style and abundant culture-loaded terms. Previous research has identified significant challenges in translating such terms in Yu Hua's works, as exemplified by Zhao's (2022) analysis of voice transformation in *To Live*. *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* presents similar

challenges, containing numerous culture-loaded terms that require careful consideration in translation.

To address these translation challenges systematically, this study employs eco-translatology, a theoretical framework developed by Hu (2008). This approach conceptualizes translation within an ecological framework, examining the interrelationships between textual ecosystems, translation environments, and translator adaptation. Comprehensive perspectives of eco-translatology make it particularly suitable for analyzing the translation of culture-loaded terms, as it considers linguistic, communicative and cultural dimensions of translation.

This study examines translation strategies for culture-loaded terms in the English translation of *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* through the “three-dimensional” transformation framework of eco-translatology. Specifically, it explores how translators employ different strategies across various categories of culture-loaded terms and identifies patterns in their adaptive selections across linguistic, communicative, and cultural dimensions. By analyzing specific examples and evaluating their effectiveness across linguistic, communicative, cultural dimensions, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on cultural translation strategies and provide practical insights for translating Chinese literature in a global context.

## **Literature Review**

### **Overview of Translation Studies on Yu Hua’s work**

Research on the translation of Yu Hua’s works has evolved significantly over the past decades, encompassing various analytical perspectives and methodological approaches. This section presents a systematic review of existing scholarship, focusing on translation analyses and challenges.

### ***Analysis of Yu Hua’s Translated Works***

Scholarly examination of Yu Hua’s translated works has demonstrated increasing sophistication in methodology and scope. The field has witnessed

substantial development in translation study's methodology, from early explorations of basic translation principles to more nuanced analyses of cultural transfer and reader reception. Research in translation studies has primarily concentrated on study methodologies and theoretical frameworks (Jiang, 2024; Liu, 2014; Sun & Han, 2021; Wang, 2022; Zhou & He, 2024), and international dissemination patterns (Jiang, 2024). These studies have collectively contributed to a deeper understanding of how Yu Hua's works traverse linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Regarding *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* specifically, scholars have approached the text from various analytical angles. Wang (2022) conducted an in-depth analysis through communicative translation and semantic translation frameworks, revealing the intricate balance between maintaining semantic fidelity and achieving effective cross-cultural communication. Building on this foundation, Zhu & Wu (2022) examined its translation strategies from the perspective of fidelity principle, particularly focusing on how cultural elements and narrative style are preserved in translation.

### ***Translation Challenges in Yu Hua's Works***

Translating Yu Hua's literary works involves complex challenges at the intersection of language, culture, and ideology. Scholars have long recognized persistent cross-cultural communication barriers (Guo, 2010; Jiang, 2024; Li et al., 2022), yet efforts to systematically categorize these difficulties remain crucial to advancing translation practice. One such early and influential attempt is Liu's (2014) five-fold framework, which identifies core issues including the selection and implementation of translation strategies, sensitivity to ideological shifts, value divergences across cultures, and the representation of literary aesthetics.

The relationship between these challenges is notably dynamic and complex. Strategy selection directly influences methodological choices, while evolving ideological contexts can quickly render established translation approaches less effective. Cultural issues and dialect translation have emerged as particularly significant challenges (Wang, 2022; Wang & Quan, 2017), requiring translators to balance authenticity with accessibility. Yang (2019)

provided valuable insights through documenting actual translation experiences, highlighting specific challenges in translating seemingly simple but culturally loaded language, making concise expressions meaningful to target readers, maintaining narrative logical structures, and preserving emotional depth within simple language constructs.

More recent scholarships have expanded this understanding further. Studies have emphasized the importance of maintaining stylistic consistency across translations while preserving cultural nuances (Yu, 2024), managing varying levels of cultural acceptance in different target audiences (Zhao, 2020), and addressing emerging contemporary translation issues (Zhou & He, 2024). These challenges become particularly acute when dealing with culturally specific elements and historical references that may lack direct equivalents in target languages.

## **Culture-Loaded Terms**

This section examines culture-loaded terms in translation, focusing on their definitions, classifications, and the translation challenges they present. It provides the conceptual background necessary for analyzing these culture-loaded terms in Yu Hua's literary works.

### ***Definition and Classification***

In 1996, Spanish translator Javier Franco Aixelá introduced the concept of culture-loaded terms in Western countries (Aixelá, 1996/1999). He argued that culture-loaded terms are textual elements that create translation challenges due to cultural differences between source and target languages, either because they do not exist in the target culture or because they carry different cultural connotations or functions. (Aixelá, 1996/1999, p. 58) Drawing on the comparison between source and target languages, Mona Baker (2018) defined culture-loaded terms as terms that are present in the source language and may lack direct equivalents in the target language. These words can be specific or abstract and may pertain to religious beliefs, social customs, or culinary traditions (Baker, 2018, p. 19-20). According to Newmark's view

(1988), culture-loaded terms are linguistic expressions that embody the distinctive ways of life and manifestations peculiar to a specific language community, reflecting cultural concepts that may lack equivalent representation in other language systems (Newmark, 1988, p. 94).

Different scholars have different classifications of culture-loaded terms. Nida (1945) classifies culture-loaded terms into five types: ecological, material, social, religious, and linguistic. Aixelá (1996/1999) categorizes culture-loaded terms into two main groups: proper nouns (further divided into conventional proper nouns and loaded proper names) and common expressions (encompassing objects, institutions, habits, and opinions specific to different cultures). Adapting Nida's classifications, Newmark (1988) classified culture-loaded terms into five categories: ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs, activities, procedures and concepts, and gestures and habits. Among these, the influential and commonly employed method is to draw on Nida's classification of culture-loaded terms. Therefore, this study chooses Nida's classification of culture-loaded to conduct an analysis.

### ***Challenges in Translating Culture-Loaded Terms***

Currently, the translation of culture-loaded terms poses some difficulties: 1. lack of accuracy (Li & Zhao, 2013; Wang & Yang, 2015); 2. cultural difference (Hao, 2015; Wang, 2011); 3. political issues; 4. lack of systematism and consistency (Li & Zhao, 2013). All these have affected the quality of foreign publicity and hindered Chinese culture "going global". The status quo points to one fact: the translation of culture-loaded terms calls for further study.

The translation of culture-loaded terms distinguishes between macro-level strategies and micro-level methods. At the macro level, Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignization represent fundamental approaches, while Toury (1995) highlights the influence of translation norms on strategy selection. At the micro level, translators employ various methods: Newmark's (1988) literal and free translation and Baker's (2018) addition and omission, and Nida's (1964) dynamic equivalence. These methods can be flexibly combined

to serve the translator's chosen overall strategy when handling culture-loaded terms.

These established models offer important analytical tools for specific translation contexts. As a complementary approach, eco-translatology presents an integrative framework where strategy use is seen as adaptive behavior across linguistic, communicative and cultural dimensions. It views strategies as "the translator's selection of translation strategies or translation methods to adapt to the translational eco-environment" (Hu, 2020b, p. 248). This shift justifies re-examining classical strategies through a dynamic, multi-dimensional lens in translating culture-loaded terms.

## **Eco-Translatology Framework**

The eco-translatological approach represents a significant paradigm shift in translation studies, offering a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding translation processes and outcomes. This section examines the development and application of eco-translatology in contemporary translation studies.

### ***Theoretical Foundation and Development***

The eco-translatological framework, rooted in ecological principles within translation studies (Wang, 2004), was further advanced through Professor Hu's pioneering work in developing the Translation Adaptation and Selection Theory (Hu, 2003) and the subsequent "three-dimensional" transformation framework (Hu, 2011). This theoretical system has gained increasing recognition for its holistic approach to translation analysis.

Recent applications of eco-translatology have demonstrated its versatility across various translation domains, including subtitle translation (Cao et al., 2022), political document translation (Li, 2024), and literary translation analysis (Zhang & Umeanowai, 2023). This broad application spectrum has both enriched the theoretical framework and provided practical insights for different translation contexts.

### **"Three-Dimensional" Transformation**

"Three-dimensional transformation" in eco-translatology refers to the coordinated adaptation across linguistic, communicative and cultural dimensions, guided by the principles of multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive selection (Hu, 2020a). These dimensions are interdependent and collectively constitute the ecological environment in which translators operate.

The linguistic dimension involves the restructuring of language elements to ensure clarity and stylistic appropriateness. The cultural dimension focuses on the accurate conveyance of cultural connotations, requiring sensitivity to both source and target cultures. The communicative dimension concerns the intended function and reception of the translation, aiming to preserve pragmatic intent (Hu, 2020a). As these dimensions interact dynamically, three-dimensional transformation becomes an integrative process that balances form, meaning, and function to achieve ecological equivalence.

Within this framework, translation strategies serve not as isolated techniques but as adaptive tools that enable transformation across dimensions. Different strategies are context-sensitive responses to ecological constraints (Hu, 2020b, p. 247). They function to achieve dynamic balance rather than mechanical equivalence (Hu, 2020a, p. 136), allowing for a flexible and purpose-driven approach to the translation of culture-loaded terms. This ecological perspective on translation strategies provides a valuable framework for analyzing how culture-loaded terms are handled in literary translation.

In conclusion, this study employs the three-dimensional transformation framework of eco-translatology to assess translation strategies for culture-loaded terms in Yu Hua's *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*. Translation choices are evaluated across linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions, demonstrating that effective translation necessitates adaptive selection—prioritizing the most relevant dimension for each context while preserving the overall textual ecology. Drawing on Nida's (1945) classification, this analysis excludes ecological terms due to their cross-cultural commonality and instead concentrates on the remaining four categories—material, social, linguistic, and religious culture-loaded terms. Through comparative textual analysis of the source text (ST) and target text (TT), this research investigates



how adaptive strategies address the unique challenges of translating culturally specific elements, balancing cultural specificity with communicative efficacy within an integrated theoretical framework.

### **Analysis of Translation of Culture-Loaded Terms from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology**

This study selects eight culture-loaded terms from *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* based on the following considerations. Written in 1995, the novel portrays China's social transformation from the 1950s to the 1980s. The selected terms reflect this sociohistorical context and are crucial for international readers to grasp the temporal and cultural setting. Through Xu Sanguan's perspective, the narrative depicts grassroots life using plain yet culturally embedded language. These terms are not only vital for plot development and character portrayal but also serve as representative cases of different aspects of social and cultural life.

Therefore, this section analyzes the translation of these culture-loaded terms by first explicating their cultural significance in the source context, then identifying the translation strategies employed, and finally evaluating these strategies through the three-dimensional transformation model of eco-translatology—linguistic, communicative, and cultural. Alternative strategies are also considered to highlight the trade-offs between readability and cultural representation.

### **Material Culture-Loaded Terms**

Material culture-loaded terms represent tangible cultural elements that reflect the physical manifestations of society, including artifacts, tools, clothing, food, and architectural features (Newmark, 1988, p. 97–98). In *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, such terms are particularly prevalent in descriptions of daily life and social activities, serving as crucial vehicles for conveying the authentic atmosphere of mid-20th-century China.

Example 1

ST: “Nǐ shì shuō Huáng Càn Càn de? Nà shì huángjīnguā; pángbiān de, nà lǜyōuyōu de shì lǎotàipóguā.” (你是说黄灿灿的？那是黄金瓜；旁边的，那绿油油的是老太婆瓜。)[Are you talking about the golden yellow one? That’s the golden melon; the bright green one beside it is the old-lady melon.]。 (Yu, 2013, p. 18)

TT: “Do you mean those shiny yellow ones? Those are Goldens. The glossy green ones to the side are Old Lady melons.” (Yu, 2003, p. 18)

Analysis: In the ST, the terms “黄金瓜” (huángjīnguā) and “老太婆瓜” (lǎotàipóguā) refer to regionally specific melon varieties in Chinese agricultural traditions. “黄金瓜”, literally “golden melon”, was historically recognized as one of Shanghai’s four famous melon varieties in the mid-20th century, while “老太婆瓜”, colloquially named “old lady melon”, refers to the Huzhou melon variety, traditionally valued for its soft texture considered suitable for elderly consumption. The translation of these terms is particularly challenging as they embody local agricultural knowledge and regional cultural identity that have no direct equivalents in English-speaking cultures. In the English translation, they are rendered as “Goldens” and “Old Lady melons” respectively, adopting a literal translation strategy that preserves the basic semantic meaning while adapting to target language conventions.

From an eco-translatological perspective, this strategy realizes the linguistic dimension through semantic transparency and naturalness. The communicative dimension is also served, as the terms remain intelligible and contextually appropriate. Meanwhile, the cultural dimension is simplified, since the historical background and regional specificity of the melons are not made explicit.

**Table 1**  
*Comparison of Different Translation Methods in Three Dimensions*

| Alternative Strategy | Example Translation       | Analysis   |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Literal Translation  | Goldens / Old Lady Melons | Maintains linguistic fluency; reduces cultural specificity |

| Alternative Strategy         | Example Translation  | Analysis   |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Functional Description       | Yellow specialty melons and soft green melons for the elderly                          | Enhances readability; extends text length                  |
| Transliteration + Annotation | Huangjingua (a prized Shanghai melon variety) / Laotaipegua (traditional Huzhou melon) | Preserves cultural integrity; creates textual intervention |

The chosen approach represents a compromise that favors readability and narrative coherence over cultural detail—a decision aligned with the novel's primary function as literary entertainment rather than cultural documentation. It also contributes to what Venuti (1995) terms “domestication”, where cultural differences are minimized to enhance readability for target audiences. A more balanced approach might incorporate brief contextual clues that hint at the cultural significance without disrupting narrative flow, thereby preserving some cultural depth while maintaining readability.

#### Example 2

ST: Xǔ Sānguān jǔqǐ shǒu shàng nà fù zǎo jiù pòlàn le de shǒutào, tā de shǒu yī yáobǎi, nà shǒutào shàng de duànxiàn hé yī jié yī jié de duàntóu jiù xiàng bōlànggǔ yīyàng huàngdàng qǐlái, Xǔ Sānguān shuō: “Zhè fù shǒutào dài le sān nián duō le.” (许三观举起手上那副早就破烂了的手套，他的手一摇摆，那手套上的断线和一截一截的断头就像拨浪鼓一样晃荡起来，许三观说：“这副手套戴了三年多了。”) [Xu Sanguan raised the worn-out gloves in his hand. As he waved his hand, the broken threads and loose ends on the gloves swayed like a rattle drum. Xu Sanguan said, “I’ve worn these gloves for more than three years.”] (Yu, 2013, p. 42)

TT: Xu Sanguan lifted up his hands to show them his tattered old gloves. When he waved his hands, loose threads swung back and forth like so many pendulums from the places where they’d already worn through. “I’ve worn this pair for three years now.” (Yu, 2003, p. 43)

Analysis: The term “拨浪鼓” (bōlànggǔ) refers to a traditional Chinese folk rattle drum, often associated with children, vendors, and festivals. Structurally, it consists of a small double-sided drum with two beads attached

to strings, which strike the drum as it is rotated. In this scene, it serves as a vivid metaphor for the dangling threads of Xu Sanguan’s tattered gloves, blending visual description with cultural resonance. The translation challenge lies in conveying both its physical attributes and rich cultural associations when used metaphorically in the text to describe the dangling threads of Xu Sanguan’s tattered gloves. In the English translation, “拨浪鼓” is rendered as “pendulums”, a shift from literal to free translation. While the metaphor is retained, the cultural specificity is replaced with a more general visual reference.

From the eco-translatological perspective, this strategy strengthens the linguistic and communicative dimensions: it ensures readability and allows target readers to grasp the intended image without requiring cultural knowledge. However, the cultural dimension is downplayed, as the term’s folk connotations are not conveyed.

**Table 2**  
*Comparison of Different Translation Methods in Three Dimensions*

| Alternative Strategy          | Example Translation             | Ecological Impact  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Free Translation              | pendulums                       | Ensures target language fluency; diminishes cultural markers |
| Functional Equivalence        | rattling back and forth         | Focuses on sensory experience; sacrifices object specificity |
| Transliteration + Explanation | Chinese rattle-drums (bolanggu) | Preserves cultural reference; sacrifices sensory experience  |

The chosen approach represents a compromise that favors immediate visual comprehension and narrative fluency over cultural authenticity—a decision aligned with the novel’s primary function as an engaging narrative rather than a cultural exposition. Although “pendulums” lacks cultural equivalence, it preserves narrative tone and visual clarity. In contexts where cultural representation is prioritized, such as literary anthologies or annotated editions, a literal rendering supplemented by brief explanation may offer a more ecologically balanced alternative.

## Social Culture-Loaded Terms

Social culture-loaded terms encompass expressions that reflect interpersonal relationships, social hierarchies, customs, and behavioral norms deeply embedded in Chinese society (Newmark, 1988, p. 98–99). In *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, such terms frequently appear in familial interactions, community relationships, and social rituals, playing a vital role in portraying the complex social fabric of Chinese society.

### Example 3

ST: Tā zài dàjiē shàng de xíngzǒu, shǐ tā de piàoliang xiàng chuānguò zhè zuò chéngzhèn de héliú yīyàng bèi rénmen suǒ shúxī, zài zhèlǐ rénmen dōu jiào tā Yóutiáo Xīshī... “Nǐmen kàn, Yóutiáo Xīshī zǒuguò lái le.”... “Yóutiáo Xīshī zǒu dào bùdiàn lǐ qù le, tā tiāntiān dōu yào qù bùdiàn mǎi piàoliang de huābù.” (她在大街上的行走，使她的漂亮像穿过这座城镇的河流一样被人们所熟悉，在这里人们都叫她油条西施..... “你们看，油条西施走过来了。”..... “油条西施走到布店里去了，她天天都要去布店买漂亮的花布。”) [Her walks along the street made her beauty as familiar to people as the river flowing through the town. Here, people called her the Youtiao Beauty... “Look, the Youtiao Beauty is coming.”... “The Youtiao Beauty has gone into the fabric shop. She goes there every day to buy pretty printed cloth.”] (Yu, 2013, p. 21)

TT: Her strolls through the streets made everyone feel as if her pretty face were as familiar as the stream that flowed across town. And almost everyone in town knew her as the Fried Dough Queen. “Look, there goes the Fried Dough Queen. Did you see the Fried Dough Queen go into the fabric shop? She buys some pretty new pattern practically every day.” (Yu, 2003, p. 21)

Analysis: The term “油条西施” combines “油条” (Yóutiáo), a common Chinese breakfast item, with “西施” (Xīshī), one of the Four Beauties in ancient China. Applied to Xu Yulan, this nickname blends everyday culinary reference with classical aesthetics, reflecting both her occupation and beauty. The term “西施” carries significant literary and historical connotations beyond mere physical beauty. Therefore, the term’s complexity lies in “西施”, which carries both beauty and historical-literary significance. The translation faces two challenges: conveying this dual meaning of “西施” and finding an English

equivalent for “油条”. In the English translation, the term is rendered as “Fried Dough Queen,” a strategy best described as free translation with cultural substitution. This choice preserves occupational identity and public prominence but omits the classical reference to feminine beauty embedded in “Xishi.”

**Table 3**  
*Comparison of Different Translation Methods in Three Dimensions*

| Alternative Strategy         | Example Translation   | Ecological Impact   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Cultural Substitution        | Fried Dough Queen   | Adapts to target language conventions; neutralizes historical reference |
| Descriptive Translation      | the beautiful fried dough vendor                                | Clarifies meaning; loses cultural naming convention                     |
| Transliteration + Annotation | Youtiao Xi Shi (named after one of China’s Four Great Beauties) | Maintains cultural allusion; challenges comprehension                   |

From the eco-translatological perspective, the translation performs effectively in the linguistic and communicative dimensions, offering target readers a vivid and idiomatic expression. However, it weakens the cultural dimension, particularly by removing the intertextual resonance and aesthetic significance tied to “西施.” This omission results in a flattened character image, stripping away the culturally coded femininity and elegance present in the source term.

This strategy reflects what Hu (2020a) describes as “adaptive selection,” privileging readability and fluency over cultural specificity. However, given the richness of the source metaphor, alternative strategies may offer different benefits. As Liao (2000) argues, transliteration with annotation helps preserve the cultural essence of the original while enhancing the expressive range of the target language, which can be especially relevant for culturally-loaded terms like “Xi Shi” with significant historical connotations (Liao, 2000,

p. 239). This highlights the need to balance fluency with cultural representation when translating metaphorical expressions.

Example 4

ST: Xǔ Yùlán xīnxiǎng shì shéi lái le, zěnmé huì yǒu zhème duō rén, tā jiù zǒu dào ménkǒu yī kàn, kàndào shì Fāng Tiějiàng tāmen, Xǔ Yùlán de liǎn yīxiàzi bái le, tā duì Xǔ Sānguān shuō: “Tāmen shì lái chāojiā de.” (许玉兰心想事谁来了, 怎么会有这么多人, 她就走到门口一看, 看到是方铁匠他们, 许玉兰的脸一下子白了, 她对许三观说“他们是来抄家的。”) [Xu Yulan wondered who had come and why there were so many people. When she went to the door and saw it was Blacksmith Fang and the others, her face suddenly turned pale. She said to Xu Sanguan, “They’ve come to confiscate our property.”] (Yu, 2013, p. 70–71)

TT: Xu Yulan, wondering who all these people might be, walked to the door to see. When she saw that it was Blacksmith Fang, her face went white and she said to her husband, “They’ve come to confiscate our things.” (Yu, 2003, p. 71)

Analysis: The term “抄家”(chāojiā) refers to politically motivated home raids and property confiscation during the Cultural Revolution period. Beyond its literal meaning, it carries deep socio-historical trauma in Chinese context. In the novel, this weight is conveyed through contextual elements that highlight fear and social disruption. A major translation challenge lies in conveying the term’s historical dimension—its immediate recognition among Chinese readers as a marker of a specific historical period. The translation strategy employed can be classified as generalization with functional equivalence, prioritizing narrative coherence over cultural-historical specificity. The translator relies on surrounding context—Xu Yulan’s pale face and evident fear—to communicate the severity without explicitly marking the term’s historical significance.

From the eco-translatological perspective, this translation shows selective adaptation across different dimensions. The linguistic dimension achieves basic comprehensibility, while the communicative dimension successfully conveys the immediate narrative function—expressing the character’s fear and the action’s coercive nature. However, the cultural dimension experiences some reduction, as the specific historical-political weight of “抄家” is not fully captured.

**Table 4**  
*Comparison of Different Translation Methods in Three Dimensions*

| Alternative Strategy          | Example Translation   | Ecological Impact   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Generalization                | confiscate our things   | Simplifies for readability; removes historical context        |
| Functional Translation        | raid our home and seize everything                                      | Conveys severity of action; generalizes political specificity |
| Transliteration + Explanation | conduct a chaojia (political house raid during the Cultural Revolution) | Preserves historical context; interrupts narrative flow       |

The translation emphasizes narrative immersion and minimizes explicit cultural-historical references, relying on contextual cues rather than terminology to convey political undertones.

The translation of “抄家” demonstrates how translators navigate between cultural marking and narrative integration, representing an ecologically appropriate choice that maintains emotional coherence while allowing political dimensions to emerge through the unfolding story rather than explicit lexical signaling.

**Linguistic Culture-Loaded Terms**

Linguistic culture-loaded terms encompass expressions related to unique linguistic features, idioms, proverbs, colloquialisms, and other language-specific elements that are distinctive to the society (Liu & Qin, 2024). In *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, these terms appear frequently in character interactions and narrative descriptions, serving as critical elements in the story’s cultural backdrop.

Example 5  
ST: Xǔ Sānguān zài lǐwū yǎoyáqiěchǐ, xīnxiǎng zhège nǚrén  
zhēnshì yòu bèn yòu chǔn, dōu shuō jīāchǒu bùkě wàiyáng,



kěshi zhège nǚrén zhǐyào wǎng ménkǎn shàng yī zuò, shénme chǒushì dōu huì bèi hǎn chūqù. Tā zài lǐwū yǎoyáqièchǐ, tīngdào Xǔ Yùlán hái zài wàimiàn kūsù. (许三观在里屋咬牙切齿, 心想这个女人真是又笨又蠢, 都说家丑不可外扬, 可是这个女人只要往门槛上一坐, 什么丑事都会被喊出去。他在里屋咬牙切齿, 听到许玉兰还在外面哭诉。)  
[Xu Sanguan gritted his teeth in the inner room, thinking how stupid and foolish this woman was. There's a saying that family shame should not be aired in public, but this woman would broadcast all their shameful affairs as soon as she sat on the doorstep. He continued grinding his teeth as he heard Xu Yulan still crying and complaining outside.] (Yu, 2013, p. 37)

TT: Xu Sanguan stood inside the door gnashing his teeth in frustration. This woman, he was thinking to himself, is a stupid fool. You're not supposed to air your dirty laundry, and here she is sitting on the doorstep crying for the whole world to hear, and there's no telling what kind of idiocy she'll come up with next. Xu Sanguan gnashed his teeth as he listened to Xu Yulan's tearful litany. (Yu, 2003, p. 37)

Analysis: The idiom “家丑不可外扬”(jiāchǒu bùkě wàiyáng) encapsulates a traditional Chinese value that emphasizes keeping family disgrace private to protect collective honor. In this scene, the expression reflects Xu Sanguan's anger as his wife Xu Yulan publicly exposes their domestic conflicts. The phrase is culturally saturated, drawing on notions of propriety and social decorum, and functions as a moral reproach as well as a character judgment. Therefore, it presents a key translation challenge to express the original's embedded cultural attitudes toward family reputation and social harmony. In the English translation, the idiom is rendered as “air your dirty laundry,” an established metaphor in English that conveys the act of revealing personal or shameful matters in public. This is a case of idiomatic substitution via free translation, in which form is sacrificed to preserve communicative function.

From the eco-translatological perspective, the choice maintains fluency and rhetorical tone within the linguistic and communicative dimensions, aligning with the conversational style of the novel. However, the cultural dimension is partly weakened: The family-honor ideology embedded in the source idiom are not explicitly conveyed, potentially flattening the sociocultural depth of the original.

**Table 5**  
*Comparison of Different Translation Methods in Three Dimensions*

| Alternative Strategy           | Example Translation  | Ecological Impact                                      |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Idiomatic Equivalence          | air your dirty laundry   | Achieves natural expression; shifts cultural framework |
| Communicative Paraphrase       | keep family problems private   | Clarifies behavioral norm; loses rhetorical force      |
| Literal + Cultural Explanation | family shame should not be aired in public, as our tradition teaches | Retains cultural values; extends text length           |

While the idiomatic substitution conveys the intended emotional tone and pragmatic function, it represents a shift from the traditional ethical framing embedded in the original. This shift reflects a broader tendency in translation to prioritize communicative effectiveness over cultural or philosophical fidelity.

Example 6  
ST: “Yǒu yī jù lǎohuà shuō de duì, jiàn duō shí guǎng, zhè yī nián ràng wǒ zhǎng le shí suì, rén xīn gé dù pí, zhī rén zhī miàn bù zhī xīn. Dào le jīn tiān hái bù zhī dào nà zhāng dà zì bào shì shéi xiě de, nǐ píng rì lǐ xīn zhí kǒu kuài, dé zuì le rén nǐ dōu bù zhī dào, wǎng hòu nǐ kě yào shǎo shuō huà le, gǔ rén shuō yán duō bì shī...” (“有一句老话说得对，叫见多识广，这一年让我长了十岁，人心隔肚皮、知人知面不知心。到了今天还不知道那张大字报是谁写的，你平日里心直口快，得罪了人你都不知道，往后你可要少说话了，古人说言多必失……”) [“There’s a saying that’s true: experience broadens one’s knowledge. This year has aged me by ten years. You can never truly know what’s in someone’s heart. To this day, we still don’t know who wrote that big-character poster. You’re too straightforward and outspoken, offending people without even knowing it. From now on, you should talk less. As the ancients said, ‘The more one speaks, the more likely one is to err’...”] (Yu, 2013, p. 171)

TT: “There’s an old saying that still rings true. The more you see, the more you learn about the world. I think I must have aged ten years in the last few months. It’s true that ‘you can know a man’s face but not his heart.’ We still don’t know who’s responsible for that poster. Who knows? You usually don’t mince words, so you might have offended any number of

people. From now on, you better be more careful. The ancients said that the more you say, the more you lose.” (Yu, 2003, p. 173)

Analysis: The Chinese idiom “心直口快”(xīnzhí kǒukuài) refers to someone who speaks frankly and impulsively, often without regard for social consequences. While occasionally positive in tone, here it functions as a warning against indiscreet speech, reflecting cultural expectations of verbal restraint and emotional control. Therefore, the challenge in translating “心直口快” lies in balancing the need to maintain its critical tone while preserving the symmetrical structure of this four-character Chinese idiom. In the English translation, it appears as “you don’t mince words,” a fluent and idiomatic rendering. This reflects a free translation method based on idiomatic equivalence, emphasizing stylistic naturalness over cultural specificity.

From the eco-translatological perspective, the translation performs adequately in its communicative dimension, with “don’t mince words” effectively preserving the critical undertone. In terms of the linguistic dimension, the symmetrical structure inherent in the four-character Chinese idiom “心直口快” is not reflected in the translation. Regarding the cultural dimension, the Chinese original embodies the traditional cultural attitudes toward straightforwardness—a complex mixture of appreciation for honesty and subtle criticism of lacking tactfulness—which is somewhat diminished in the English rendering. However, given that the idiom’s primary function is character portrayal rather than cultural transmission, the compromise in both structural symmetry and cultural connotations can be considered a justifiable strategic choice in the translational eco-environment.

**Table 6**  
*Comparison of Different Translation Methods in Three Dimensions*

| Alternative Strategy | Example Translation                | Ecological Impact  |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| literal translation  | straight in heart, quick in speech | Preserves source form; compromises target language fluency |

| Alternative Strategy          | Example Translation   | Ecological Impact   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Explanatory Translation       | speak too frankly without thinking of consequences              | Explicates social implications; becomes more verbose          |
| Transliteration + Explanation | have that xinzhihoukuai temperament (being honest but tactless) | Preserves cultural concept; creates linguistic foreignization |

The chosen translation “you don’t mince words” successfully preserves both the semantic content and interpersonal tone. From an eco-translatological standpoint, the strategy prioritizes narrative coherence, with the partial loss of cultural specificity representing a contextually acceptable simplification.

### Religious Culture-Loaded Terms

Religious culture-loaded terms refer to expressions that reflect the relationship between Chinese people and their religious beliefs, including religious rituals, doctrines, deities, and religious concepts specific to Chinese culture (Xiang, 2016). In Yu Hua’s work, religious culture-loaded terms play a significant role in establishing the religious context and metaphorical framework of the narrative.

Example 7

ST: “Zhè jiù jiào è yǒu è bào, shàn yǒu shàn bào. Zuò le huài shì bù kěn chéngrèn, yǐwéi biérén jiù bù zhīdào le, lǎotiānyé de yǎnjīng kě shì kàn de qīngqīngchǔchǔ...” (“这就叫恶有恶报，善有善报。做了坏事不肯承认，以为别人就不知道了，老天爷的眼睛可是看得清清楚楚...”) [“This is what we call karma - evil deeds bring evil consequences, and good deeds bring good rewards. When people do wrong but refuse to admit it, thinking others won’t know, Heaven’s eyes see everything clearly...”] (Yu, 2013, p. 145)

TT: “This is what is meant by karma. You get what you deserve. You do something bad and try to pretend that you didn’t do it, but Old Man Heaven always knows exactly what’s going on...” (Yu, 2003, p. 146)

Analysis: The phrase “恶有恶报，善有善报” (è yǒu è bào, shàn yǒu shàn bào) expresses a traditional moral view grounded in Chinese Buddhism and folk ethics: that good and evil deeds will ultimately meet with corresponding reward or punishment. It serves as a culturally resonant warning, emphasizing the inevitability of moral retribution, often personified through divine observation. Translating this Buddhist-rooted phrase faces three challenges: First, conveying its Buddhist-rooted concept of moral retribution; second, maintaining its warning function about divine justice; and third, preserving the symmetrical parallel structure that reinforces the cause-effect relationship in the original.

In the translation, the phrase is rendered through a combined strategy: cultural substitution (“karma”) and explanatory paraphrase (“you get what you deserve”). This reflects a balance between cultural retention and communicative accessibility.

From the eco-translatological perspective, the choice performs well across all three dimensions: the linguistic dimension partially preserves the original’s symmetrical structure while maintaining fluency; the communicative dimension preserves tone and function; and the cultural dimension is retained through the globally recognized concept of karma.

**Table 7**  
*Comparison of Different Translation Methods in Three Dimensions*

| Alternative Strategy              | Example Translation   | Ecological Impact  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Functional Equivalence            | you get what you deserve  | Achieves concise expression; secularizes religious concept |
| Semantic Translation              | evil deeds will be punished, good deeds rewarded                    | Maintains moral message; flattens rhetorical structure     |
| Cultural Equivalent + Explanation | karma: evil deeds bring evil returns, good deeds bring good rewards | Preserves religious framework; requires cultural knowledge |

The chosen translation strategy preserves both ethical force and cultural familiarity, making it a successful example of adaptive equivalence across linguistic, communicative and cultural boundaries.

Example 8

ST: “Wǒ mìng kǔ a, Hé Xiǎoyǒng tǎng zài yīyuàn lǐ miàn dōu kuài yào sǐ le, yīshēng jiù bù liǎo tā, chéngxī de Chén xiānsheng yě jiù bù liǎo tā, zhǐyǒu Yīlè néng jiù tā, Yīlè yàoshi shàng le wǒ jiā wūdǐng qù hǎn hún, hái néng bǎ Hé Xiǎoyǒng de hún gěi hǎn huílái, Yīlè yàoshi bù qù hǎn hún, Hé Xiǎoyǒng jiù sǐ dīng le, wǒ jiù yào zuò guǎfu le...” (“我命苦啊，何小勇躺在医院里面都快要死了，医生救不了他，城西的陈先生也救不了他，只有一乐能救他，一乐要是上了我家屋顶去喊魂，还能把何小勇的魂给喊回来，一乐要是不去喊魂，何小勇就死定了，我就要做寡妇了……”) [“Oh, how bitter my fate is! He Xiaoyong is lying in the hospital near death. The doctors can’t save him, even Mr. Chen from the west side of town can’t save him. Only Yile can save him. If Yile would go up on our roof to call back his soul, he might be able to summon He Xiaoyong’s soul back. If Yile won’t perform the soul-calling ritual, He Xiaoyong will surely die, and I’ll become a widow...”] (Yu, 2013, p. 149)

TT: “My fate is bitter, He Xiaoyong is lying in the hospital on the brink of death, and the doctors can’t do anything to help him. Mr. Chen over on the west side can’t help either, Only Yile can save him. If only Yile would climb up on our roof and call his soul back from the brink, he might live. If Yile doesn’t call back his soul, he’ll die for sure. And I’ll be left a widow.” (Yu, 2003, p. 151)

Analysis: The term “喊魂”(hǎn hún) refers to a traditional Taoist ritual aimed at summoning a person’s lost soul, typically performed when someone is gravely ill or unconscious. It reflects Chinese folk beliefs in the separability and mobility of the soul, and the perceived power of ritual speech to restore life force. In the narrative, this is presented not metaphorically, but as a culturally grounded and emotionally urgent intervention. The translation challenge of “喊魂” lies in capturing both its ritual dimension as a soul-summoning practice and its cultural belief that the soul can leave the body, while conveying that this is a real ritual people perform. In the English version, “喊魂” is rendered as “call his soul back,” a literal translation strategy that conveys the basic action but omits reference to its ritualistic or spiritual context.

From the eco-translatological perspective, this translation functions effectively in the linguistic and communicative dimensions through its fluent expression and narrative tension. In the cultural dimension, however, the religious and communal aspects of the ritual are only partially transmitted, potentially leading readers to interpret it as fantasy or metaphor rather than a cultural practice.

**Table 8**  
*Comparison of Different Translation Methods in Three Dimensions*

| Alternative Strategy          | Example Translation  | Ecological Impact  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Literal Translation           | call his soul back   | Maintains narrative flow; generalizes ritual specificity |
| Functional Description        | perform a life-saving spiritual ritual                       | Highlights purpose; loses cultural-religious specificity |
| Transliteration + Explanation | perform the hanhun ritual (a Taoist soul-summoning ceremony) | Preserves religious practice; adds explanatory burden    |

While functionally effective, the chosen translation simplifies a culturally significant act. In contexts where cultural transmission is prioritized, a descriptive rendering may better preserve the ritual’s symbolic and spiritual value.

**Conclusion**

This study examined the translation strategies for culture-loaded terms in Yu Hua’s *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* through the lens of eco-translatology. The findings show how the translator achieves dynamic balance across linguistic, communicative and cultural dimensions by adopting adaptive strategies tailored to contextual demands. Material culture-loaded terms are mostly rendered through literal or free translation; social terms often involve free translation with cultural substitution or generalization; linguistic terms are handled with idiomatic expressions to ensure functional equivalence; and

religious terms combine cultural substitution, paraphrase, and literal translation—though some cultural depth may be lost. These strategies embody the translator's ecological choices and adaptive transformation in a multilingual context.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. It focuses on a single work and translator, with analysis limited to eight representative examples of culture-loaded terms. The qualitative approach, while detailed, lacks quantitative data and reader reception studies. Future research could address these limitations through comparative studies of multiple translations, quantitative analysis, and empirical studies of reader response. By advocating for flexible, adaptive, and audience-sensitive translation strategies, this study aligns with the broader goal of promoting sustainable multilingualism—ensuring that diverse cultural voices are preserved while enabling effective cross-cultural communication. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of nuanced, flexible translation approaches that sustain both linguistic diversity and intercultural understanding.

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**ADAPTYVIO VERTIMO STRATEGIJOS KULTŪRINIŲ TURINIŲ  
PRISODRINTIEMS TERMINAMS KŪRINYJE „PREKIAUTOJO  
KRAUJU KRONIKA“: TRIMATĖ EKOLOGINĖ VERTIMO ANALIZĖ**

**Anotacija.** Globalizacijos kontekste veiksmingas kultūros perdavimas per vertimą tapo aktualia problema, ypač verčiant literatūrinius kūrinius, nes kultūrinio turinio prisodrinti terminai kelia didelių iššūkių. Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamos vertimo strategijos, taikomos kultūriškai reikšmingiems terminams, Yu Hua kūrinyje „Prekiautojo krauju dienorašis“, remiantis Andrew F. Joneso vertimu į anglų kalbą. Laikantis ekotranslatologijos „trijų dimensijų“ transformacijos teorijos, apimančios lingvistinę, komunikacinę ir kultūrinę dimensijas, nagrinėjamas klausimas: kaip vertėjas taiko adaptyvias vertimo strategijas skirtingoms, kultūriškai reikšmingų terminų kategorijoms „Prekiautojo krauju kronikoje“, siekdamas dinamiškos pusiausvyros tarp trijų dimensijų? Aštuonių reprezentatyvių pavyzdžių kokybinė analizė, suskirstyta pagal Nidos kultūrinių turinių prisodrintų terminų klasifikaciją, rodo: siekiant suderinti kultūrinį specifiškumą, selektyviai taikomi įvairūs vertimo metodai, tokie kaip pažodinis vertimas, laisvas vertimas ir aiškinamasis parafravimas. Nors vertėjas demonstruoja stiprią tendenciją siekti komunikacinio efektyvumo ir kalbinio sklandumo, neišvengiamai nukenčia tam tikras kultūrinis gilumas. Tyrime pateikti argumentai už labiau integruotą strategijos pasirinkimo metodą pagal ekotranslatologiją, išlaikantį kultūrinį vientisumą ir nekenkiantį skaitymui. Analizuojant išryškėjo vertėjų strateginiai prioritetai, susiję su skirtingo kultūrinio turinio prisodrintais terminais, ir jų pasekmės kultūrinei transliacijai, pateikiant įžvalgas apie kalbos, komunikacinio ir kultūrinio aspektų pusiausvyrą.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** ekotranslatologija; Yu Hu; kinų literatūra; kultūriškai įkrauti terminai; literatūros vertimas.