

Translation Purposes Determine Everything? Appellation Translation in Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs Based on Corpus Method

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Abstract

This study employs the skopos theory to analyze the translation methods used for appellations in Northern Shaanxi folk songs, a prominent genre in Chinese folk songs. The skopos theory emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting the purpose of a translation, as it ultimately shapes the translation process and outcome. The English translations by Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin are used to create a bilingual Chinese-English parallel corpus using a corpus technique. Additionally, to help the corpus software retrieve important statistics, the appellations and translation methods are manually annotated with the pertinent software. This study identifies seven primary categories of appellations, including those related to love, characters, laborers, family, mythology, allusions, and Buddhist figures. It explores the translation methods applied to each category, revealing that Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin creatively adapt these appellations to convey their essence and significance to English-speaking readers while adhering to the skopos theory's principles. This article contributes valuable insights into the translation of Northern Shaanxi folk songs, transcending cultural boundaries and enhancing cross-cultural understanding.

Keywords: translation purpose, appellation translation, Northern Shaanxi folk songs, skopos theory, corpus method

1. Introduction

As a critical tool in international communication, translation plays a crucial role in bridging the divide between different cultures and languages. Northern Shaanxi folk songs hold a prominent position in Chinese national classics, encapsulating the profound essence of Chinese culture. These folk songs, considered the cornerstone of both national literature and literary translation, are of utmost importance and are prominently featured in the collection of national cultural classics. Therefore, the translation and research of Northern Shaanxi folk songs, originating from the Northern Shaanxi region, including Yulin City and certain areas of Yan'an City, hold immense importance in promoting Chinese national classics and intangible culture.

The translation of Northern Shaanxi folk songs covers various activities such as song dubbing and lyrics translation. This article, however, focuses exclusively on the translation of song lyrics. Over the years, numerous Northern Shaanxi folk songs have been translated into different languages, demonstrating their international appeal. Examples of these translations include "The East Is Red" in English, "Blue Flowers" in Japanese, and "My Teardrops Drip into the Sand Bush" in Italian, among others. In recognition of its significance, in June 2008, the Northern Shaanxi folk song was selected to be included in the second batch of China's National Intangible Cultural Heritage List, representing the rich tradition of Chinese folk songs. To further promote Northern Shaanxi folk songs on an international scale and introduce them through a new linguistic form, Shaanxi Province initiated the "Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs Translation Project" in September 2009. The project's objectives include the dissemination of Northern Shaanxi folk songs overseas, as well as the exploration of fresh avenues for introducing these songs to a global audience. Consequently, the translation and introduction of Northern Shaanxi folk songs have witnessed remarkable attention and development, owing to the support and assistance provided by national policies and local governments.

The successful organization of the inaugural and subsequent "National Symposium on Translation and Introduction of Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs" in October 2009 and December 2012 respectively, further contributed to the advancement of this field. As a result, in 2009, significant progress was witnessed in the domain of translation studies concerning Northern Shaanxi folk songs. This pivotal year marked a notable advancement in research within this field. In the realm of translation research, the focus has shifted from primarily exploring choice of translation strategies, methodologies, and procedures (P. Wang, 2010) to covering a broader range of topics such as translation of dialects (X. Wang, 2015), cultural imagery (L. Li, 2016) and metaphors (Zhang, 2021) in Northern Shaanxi folk songs. Despite this expansion, there remains a limited body of research on the translation of appellations in Northern Shaanxi folk songs, which this paper aims to address.

In general, studies on appellations predominantly center around topics such as definition, classification, interlingual conversion, and translation strategies. However, the majority of existing research primarily focuses on the linguistic symbols, leading to a focus on the text itself. There is a lack of research that considers the involvement of human translators in the translation process or explores the dynamic behavior of translators as intentional agents (Tang, 2020). Therefore, grounded in the theoretical framework of skopos theory, this article begins by categorizing appellations found in Northern Shaanxi folk songs, drawing from relevant research. Subsequently, using the self-built parallel corpus, this study comprehensively discusses translation methods influenced by specific translation goals.

2. Literature Review

In the field of appellation research, there are plenty of interpretations and definitions available. Mo (2008) suggests that appellation terms in various cultures represent the diverse social relationships between individuals and the roles they fulfill within society. In light of these observations, several studies have endeavored to categorize appellations by utilizing different definitions as a basis. Criomhthain (1985) points out that appellations comprise a wide range of elements, including greetings and farewells, titles, names in a general sense, pronouns, the concept of self and others, verb agreement, and names in various other contexts. Furthermore, as Chen (2005) states, there are two distinct systems of appellation: the appellation system and the non-appellation system. These systems likely reflect different approaches to naming and addressing individuals, indicating the complexity and significance of appellations in interpersonal communication and societal structures. As a consequence, the appellations that many scholars focus on can be broadly classified into two categories: familial appellations, which pertain to family relationships, and social appellations, which involve broader social connections and roles. In this study, “appellation” refers to the names and titles assigned to characters in Northern Shaanxi folk songs. These appellations carry cultural and symbolic significance, signifying various social relationships and the roles individuals play within society.

In translation studies, there have indeed been numerous studies focused on the translation of appellations in Chinese novels, such as “A Dream of Red Mansions” (J. Ma, 2012), “Outlaws of the Marsh” (Zhang & Chen, 2014), “The Romance of the Three Kingdoms” (Wang & Xiao, 2020), and others. These studies have contributed to our understanding of translating appellations within the context of Chinese literature. However, it is worth noting that comparatively less attention has been given to the translation of appellations in Chinese folk songs in recent research. This presents an interesting and relatively unexplored area for further investigation, as the translation of appellations in folk songs carries its own unique set of challenges and cultural implications. By addressing this research gap, we can deepen our understanding of the translation of appellations across a diverse range of Chinese text types.

The translation of appellations involves the application of various theories to enhance our understanding of this complex process. Relevance theory, as explored by S. Li (2009), adaptation theory, as discussed by Wang and Chen (2014), and translation memetics, as examined by Liu (2021), are among the theories used to study appellation translation. And Y. Ma (2011) approached the translation of appellations in movie subtitles from the perspective of the skopos theory. These theoretical frameworks offer theoretical insights into translating appellations in Northern Shaanxi folk songs.

Regarding research methodology, scholars in the topic of appellation translation frequently use qualitative ways to explain and analyze significant concerns. However, in recent years, mixed methodology has gained popularity. Researchers such as Yan (2011), Sun (2021), and others have made use of corpus methodologies, which combine qualitative and quantitative methods, to investigate appellation translation. These approaches offer valuable insights by examining a large amount of authentic language data in a systematic manner.

In conclusion, upon analyzing research content, theoretical frameworks, and the research methodology utilized in the current study, it becomes evident that there is a gap in the existing body of knowledge regarding the translation of appellations in the context of Chinese folk songs. While there have been extensive studies on appellation translation in various fields, such as Chinese novels or movie subtitles, there is a lack of research specifically focusing on the translation of appellations in Northern Shaanxi folk songs. By addressing this gap, this study can shed light on the methods and translation purposes involved in translating appellations in the context of Northern Shaanxi folk songs, thus enriching the field of translation research.

3. Theoretical Framework

Translation is a deliberate and planned activity that entails a complex web of interconnected variables. In this process, various elements such as the original text, translated text, author of the original text, translator, reader, and publishing house, among others, all come into play. It is crucial to understand that the interplay of different factors, including the translation’s goals, affects the final product.

The term “skopos” originates from the Greek language and refers to the concept of “objective” or “purpose” in translation. Reiss and Vermeer (2014) first introduced this term and proposed that translations and their respective purposes vary from one another. According to their perspective, it is necessary for translators to establish a skopos or purpose before embarking on any translation task. The notion of skopos represents a communication goal or purpose that serves as a guiding principle for the translator in their interaction with the text in an interpersonal and intercultural context (Nord, 2018/1997: 19-25). Indeed, the objective of translation shares a fundamental similarity with that of any other human endeavor. Just as individuals undertake various tasks with specific goals in mind, the purpose of translation is to fulfill a particular objective or purpose (Schäffner, 1998).

Skopos theory has revolutionized the way people perceive and comprehend translation, becoming a fundamental component of the German Functional School’s translation theory. According to this idea, translation has a purpose and that goal determines the strategies and methods that are used (Liao, Li, & Liu, 2022). Skopos theory introduces three fundamental rules that serve as guidelines for

translation tasks: the skopos rule, the coherence rule, and the fidelity rule. These rules are meant to guarantee that translations are completed correctly and effectively in accordance with their intended goal. The skopos rule emphasizes the importance of the translator’s purpose or intention. The coherence rule highlights the significance of maintaining coherence and cohesion in the translated text. The fidelity rule, on the other hand, focuses on faithfulness to the source text. By considering these three rules, translators can navigate the translation process effectively. However, in skopos theory, the principle of skopos holds a central and fundamental position in the translation process.

Northern Shaanxi folk songs are known for their distinctive appellations, deeply rooted in the local culture. This study uses skopos theory to examine how translators deal with the peculiarities of these appellations. In particular, it looks into the methods translators use to localize the appellations, making sure they achieve their goals of introducing the source text to the intended readers. By shedding light on the effective translation of the culturally significant elements in Northern Shaanxi folk songs, this research contributes to our understanding of cross-cultural communication and the preservation of cultural heritage within an academic framework.

4. Method

Baker (1995) identified three primary types of corpora that have been widely utilized in translation research and instruction: parallel corpora, multilingual corpora, and comparable corpora. Parallel corpora consist of texts in multiple languages that are aligned at a sentence or phrase level, allowing for direct comparisons between the source and target texts. Such corpora are valuable for investigating translation processes, analyzing translation choices, and exploring patterns of language transfer. In this section, we will develop the Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs Parallel Corpus (NSFSPC) with the inclusion of appropriate tagging to investigate the statistics of appellations and appellation translation methods in Northern Shaanxi folk songs.

4.1 Corpora Selection Criteria

This section emphasizes the importance of several criteria for constructing the NSFSPC:

- Full-text selection: Considering the brevity of Northern Shaanxi folk songs, it is crucial to select potential corpora in their entirety to ensure an adequate number of texts.
- Translator expertise: To ensure the quality of the chosen corpus, it is necessary to involve experienced linguists or translators in the selection process.
- Selection from published works: To maintain transparency and credibility, the corpora for the NSFSPC should be sourced from already-published works.

By adhering to these criteria, the construction of the NSFSPC will uphold the integrity and validity of the corpus, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the appellations and appellation translation methods in Northern Shaanxi folk songs.

4.2 Corpora Resource

The construction of the NSFSPC involved the comprehensive selection of songs featured in the works of both Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin to serve as the corpus. Specifically, the collection “Voice from the Northwest-Folk Songs of Northern Shaanxi”, published in 2009 by the Culture and Art Publication House, contains 105 songs that were carefully chosen and translated by Wang Hongyin. In 2021, Nankai University Press published “Lyrics of Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs: Translation and Exegesis” by Wang Zhanbin, which includes translations of 88 songs. Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin are highly respected figures in the translation industry in China, known for their expertise and contributions to translation theory and practice. The extensive experience and qualifications of two translators serve as a testament to their ability to ensure the high caliber of their translations.

4.3 The Structure of the NSFSPC

After pre-processing, the corpora in the NSFSPC are saved as *.txt format files since most corpus retrieval software on PCs supports plain text files. Therefore, the formation of the NSFSPC consists of three sub-corpora: the Chinese monolingual corpus, the English monolingual corpus, and the Chinese-English parallel corpus. Wang Hongyin’s texts are saved under the names “cn1_1~cn1_105” and “en1_1~en1_105”, while Wang Zhanbin’s files are named “cn2_1~cn2_88” and their English translations are “en2_1~en2_88”. During the construction process, some corpus tools are utilized, including EditPlus, SegmentAnt, CorpusWordParser, TreeTagger, and WordSmith. SegmentAnt is used to automatically segment Chinese texts, while TreeTagger is used for English texts. In addition, ParaConc is employed to achieve parallel alignment at the sentence level. In Table 1, a WordSmith summary of the NSFSPC information, such as file size, tokens, types, and TTR, is provided.

Table 1. WordSmith Summary of the NSFSPC Report

language	songs	file size	tokens	types	TTR (%)
Chinese	193	90,134	11,848	2,707	26.17
English	193	100,227	19,280	2,535	13.15

The NSFSPC dataset consists of a total of 193 songs in both Chinese and English languages. Notably, the English version of the Northern Shaanxi folk songs has a larger file size, measuring 100,227, compared to the Chinese texts, which have a file size of 90,134. Within the corpus data system, the term “Type” is employed to distinguish between different words, while “Token” refers to all unique word forms present in the dataset. Assessing a text’s lexical density is often done using the type-token ratio (TTR) (Liang, Li & Xu, 2010), and Wang,

Qin, Xiao and Hu (2021) discovered that an increase in the TTR leads to a broader vocabulary range or greater variety in the text, and vice versa. Through its comprehensive collection of relevant data, the NSFSPC offers valuable resources for conducting appellation translation within the context of Northern Shaanxi folk songs, making it an ideal choice for scholars and researchers interested in this field of study.

4.4 Annotation of Appellation and Translation Methods in the NSFSPC

This article suggests a general classification of the appellation used in Northern Shaanxi folk songs based on the thematic portrayal of the characters in the songs, drawing on the body of extant literature. The identified types include appellation for laborers, love appellation, appellation for myths & legends, appellation for Buddhist figures, family appellation, appellation for specific characters, and appellation for allusion. Through the process of translation, the reader of the target text (TT) can gain deeper insights into these songs by exploring the characteristics conveyed through these varied appellations. To facilitate the retrieval of necessary statistics by the corpus software, this article manually annotates the appellations using EditPlus software. The primary tagset is presented in Table 2 to provide a clear overview.

Table 2. Appellation Tagset in the NSFSPC

N.	Type	Tagset
1	appellation for laborers	/_LDRW
2	love appellation	/_AQRW
3	appellation for myths & legends	/_SHRW
4	appellation for Buddhist figures	/_FJRW
5	family appellation	/_JRRW
6	appellation for the specific characters	/_TDRW
7	appellation for allusion	/_DGRW

Regarding each tagset, the markers, such as /_LDRW, /_AQRW, /_SHRW, and so forth, are established through a meticulous process that hinges on the phonetic attributes of individual characters discovered within Northern Shaanxi folk songs. The initial character of their Chinese *Pinyin* is extracted and employed in the formation of their respective tag names. The researcher has delineated three principal methods for translating the aforementioned seven appellations, namely, literal translation (/_LT), free translation (/_FT), and omission (/_OM). These translation approaches are further represented by tags enclosed within the bracketed tagset. AntConc is a valuable tool for obtaining the necessary statistics for research purposes using the aforementioned tagsets. Figure 1 illustrates the interface of AntConc, which enables users to access and search for any type of appellations in the NSFSPC.

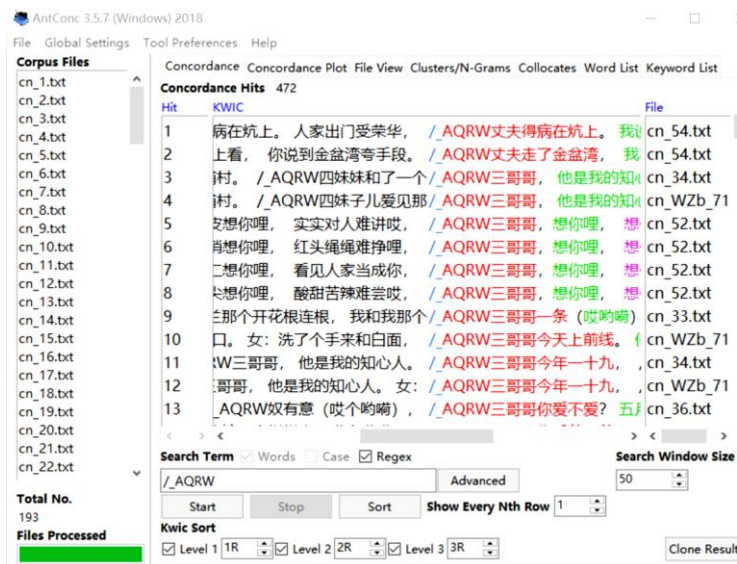


Figure 1. The Search Interface of AntConc for Retrieving Appellations in the NSFSPC

If researchers aim to retrieve data or contextual information related to the term “love appellation”, as depicted in Figure 1, the initial step involves opening all files in the NSFSPC. Subsequently, within the AntConc application, they should enter the corresponding tag, “/_AQRW”, into the search box. It is essential to note that the “Regex” option must be selected prior to starting the search process. After the completion of the search process, the results will be displayed in a window. Within this window, the concordance hits will represent the total occurrences of “love appellation” in the corpus. And the target corpora and their respective contexts will be highlighted in different colors. The search procedure for the appellation translation method is analogous, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

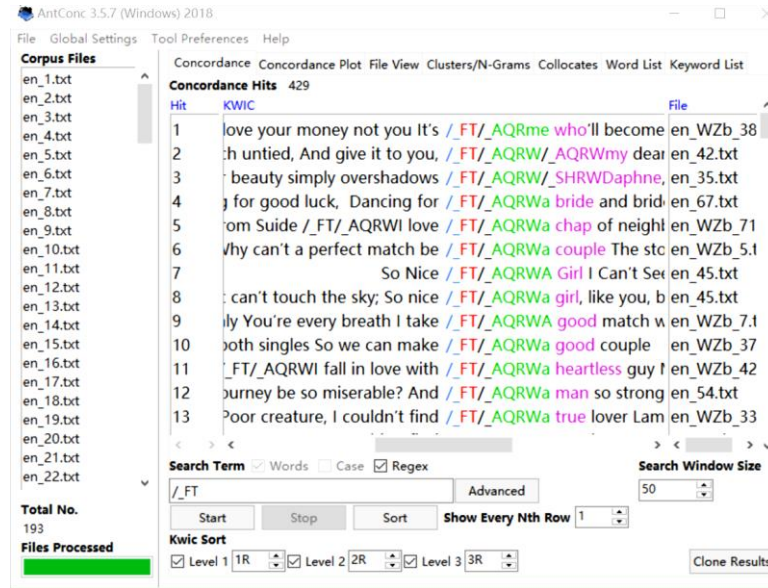


Figure 2. The Search Interface of AntConc for Retrieving Appellation Translation Methods in the NSFSPC

Figure 2 illustrates the search interface for the free translation method using the search term “/_FT”, highlighted in red. The green tagset indicates that a significant portion of “love appellations” within the NSFSPC were translated freely. Indeed, the comparison and analysis of the source text and the target text can be facilitated using ParaConc. The self-built NSFSPC could offer useful statistics to back up research findings and assist researchers in swiftly locating the required cases.

5. Result and Discussion

This part is dedicated to the presentation and in-depth examination of the research results. The distribution of appellations in Northern Shaanxi folk songs as well as the translation methods that were wisely used are both closely examined in this phase.

5.1 Searching Result

Based on the NSFSPC, the results indicate that, a total of at least 663 searches were conducted on the seven appellations included in the analysis. Among these, the books of Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin were found to have the highest number of instances, with 385 and 278 occurrences, respectively. The comprehensive findings are presented in Table 3, which provides a detailed overview of the results.

Table 3. Distribution of Appellations in the NSFSPC

N.	Type	Frequency		Total	Percentage
		Wang Hongyin	Wang Zhanbin		
1	love appellation	286	186	472	71%
2	appellation for the specific character	45	48	93	14%
3	appellation for laborers	25	22	47	7%
4	family appellation	13	18	31	5%
5	appellation for myths & legends	11	3	14	2%
6	appellation for allusion	4	1	5	1%
7	appellation for Buddhist figures	1	0	1	0
	Total	385	278	663	

As per Table 3, “love” stands out as the most frequently searched appellation, with 472 queries, constituting 71% of the NSFSPC dataset searches. This prevalence is primarily due to the prominence of love themes in nearly 80% of Northern Shaanxi folk songs. Notably, the terms “哥哥” and “妹妹” are commonly used to refer to protagonists in these love songs (Long, 2011, p. 23). Moreover, a specific character appellation appears 93 times, making up about 14% of the dataset. The remaining five appellation types are less common, ranging from 0% to 7%. This data sheds light on appellation popularity and distribution in Northern Shaanxi folk songs within the NSFSPC dataset.

Cultural differences among different countries are often concealed within the appellation itself, as it signifies the identification, social position, personal relationship, and emotional preferences of the two participants engaged in a conversation (Yi & Shen, 2021). Consequently, reproducing these appellations from Northern Shaanxi folk songs in the target text poses a challenging task for translators. According to Cong and Li (2013), various translation procedures, including addition, deletion, replacement, and rewriting, can be flexibly employed to achieve pragmatic equivalence in the translation of appellations. Table 4 displays the final outcomes of the appellation translation methods applied in the NSFSPC dataset.

Table 4. Distribution of Appellation Translation Methods in the NSFSPC

Translation method	Frequency		Total
	Wang Hongyin	Wang Zhanbin	
free translation	274	155	429
literal translation	84	69	153
omission	30	55	85

The most commonly used approach, as indicated in Table 4, is free translation, which was employed by both Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin in 274 and 155 instances, respectively, resulting in a total of 429 occurrences. Additionally, literal translation was used 153 times, while omission was observed 85 times. In the subsequent discussion section, examples will be provided to aid readers in comprehending how the translator utilized these methods to translate the seven appellations, as well as how the translator’s objectives influenced the translation process.

5.2 Discussion

In terms of themes and content, Northern Shaanxi folk songs encompass a wide range, incorporating songs that revolve around labor, historical themes of revolution, love, and many others. Consequently, a diverse array of characters emerges, each assigned a unique name or appellation that aligns with the specific theme they represent. Regarding the primary goals of translating Northern Shaanxi folk songs, both Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin share a common aspiration: to present this genre of folk songs as an invaluable intangible heritage to the global reader. To further illuminate their perspective, let us consider the words of the researchers themselves:

Although I may not possess a deep understanding of music as a non-musician, I am still capable of making a meaningful contribution to the preservation and promotion of the Northern Shaanxi folk songs that I hold dear. As an individual fluent in English, my ability lies in the realm of translation and dissemination of these traditional songs (H. Wang, 2009, p. 3).

As a translator, I consider it my responsibility to render these songs accessible to readers beyond China’s borders, thereby facilitating the global dissemination of Chinese culture. As an ardent enthusiast of folk songs, my fervent aspiration is to exert my utmost efforts in sharing Chinese narratives and fostering the proliferation of Chinese culture. Hailing from Northern Shaanxi myself, I perceive it as an inherent obligation to preserve and transmit the folk songs of my region for future generations (Z. Wang, 2021, p. 3).

The purpose of a translation profoundly shapes the selection of translation methods, offering translators significant flexibility. It necessitates a deliberate choice of a specific translation approach. These purpose-driven factors collectively wield a substantial influence on the translator’s decision-making, as highlighted by Z. Wang (2011). The decision between a “free” or “faithful” translation hinges on the skopos, or purpose, of a given translation endeavor, which is determined by its intended application. In this context, translators assume a pivotal role, emphasizing the imperative to transparently communicate the underlying motivation behind their translation work (Jabir, 2006). The subsequent sections will provide an analysis of three translation methods employed in the translation of appellations found in Northern Shaanxi folk songs. These methods include free translation, literal translation, and omission, and each will be examined with illustrative examples.

5.2.1 Free Translation

Free translation, which is also referred to as “paraphrase” or “dynamic equivalence”, is a method of translation where the translator is given more latitude to convey the meaning of the source text in a way that is more idiomatic, natural, and culturally appropriate in the target language, even if that means deviating from the literal words and structure of the original text. To ensure clarity and prevent confusion for readers of the translated text, when it comes to Chinese-specific terms of endearment like “哥哥” (older brother) and “妹妹” (younger sister), Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin predominantly employ the free translation approach. Several examples in Table 5 illustrate the effectiveness of this approach:

Table 5. Illustrative Examples of Free Translation Employed in Love Appellations

N.	ST	TT	Corpora Source
1	就看见二妹子好人才。 妹子呀哥哥我看你来。	And I found you are such a nice girl, That I come to see you .	cn1_29
2	你有情来奴有意 (哎个哟嘴), 三哥哥你爱不爱?	We do fall so deep in love, my honey. That you love me deep, don’t you say?	cn1_36
3	哥哥早就把你看中了	That I ’ve settled on you. Do you mind?	cn1_38
4	妹妹我, 妹妹我解下一个荷包来, 送给情郎哥哥戴。	And I, I take out a pouch untied, And give it to you, my dear .	cn1_42
5	哥哥你打工走, 小妹妹我在心里愁。	You ’re going to town, I ’m so much worried.	cn1_98
6	一把把拉住妹妹的手, 你哭成个泪人人怎叫哥哥走。 妹妹哟哥哥呦!	Hold your hand and dry your tears , How could I leave you alone, dear? My sweetie ,	cn2_5 cn2_6
7	天上的星星成对对, 人人都有个干妹妹。 男: 叫一声妹子你不要哭, 哥哥起身引你哩。	The stars appear in pairs, But I’m a single for years. Male: Don’t cry please, my dear , I ’ll take you along together.	cn2_15

8	哥哥走来妹妹瞭	I can't bear to see you go.	cn2_30
9	哥走天涯拉上妹妹的手。	Please bring me with you wherever you go.	cn2_59
10	四妹子儿爱见那三哥哥	I love a chap of neighbor.	cn2_71

In Table 5, the majority of the love appellations are replaced with pronouns such as “I” and “you”. However, when directly translating Chinese love appellations like “哥哥” (brother) and “妹妹” (sister) into English, it can potentially result in misunderstandings for the intended readership. In Chinese culture, the terms “哥哥” and “妹妹” used in love songs have a nuanced meaning that differs from the concept of siblings in English society. These terms symbolize a close and affectionate relationship between a man and a woman who are romantically involved with each other. It is important to approach the translation of these terms with care, taking into account their cultural connotations and avoiding a literal interpretation that equates them to sibling relationships in English. According to Jiang and Yue (2017), when the process of translating the source text (ST) into the target text (TT) makes it more challenging for the intended reader to comprehend and accept, it is advisable to consider adapting the material for the target language instead of persisting with a less significant form of deviation.

Hence, in order to accurately convey the expression of love in Northern Shaanxi folk songs, it is essential to employ a free translation method. In terms of specific techniques, aside from substitution, both translators also employed the skill of transforming love-related appellations into alternative expressions such as “my dear”, “my girl/boy”, “my sweetheart”, “my honey”, “dear”, “my lover”, “my darling”, “my beauty”, and so on.

When it comes to the various appellations used to describe myths and legends, which often highlight the distinctions between Chinese and English cultures, translators often rely on free translation to convey meaning with greater flexibility and creativity. This allows them to capture the essence of the original text while adapting it to the target language. For instance,

Example 1

ST:

小妹妹(那个)人样(哟)

(哎哥的妹子哟) 赛(哟)天仙。(cn1_35)

TT:

With fair face and twinkling eyes, my dear,

Your beauty simply overshadows **Daphne, the fair**.

In Chinese mythology, “九天仙女” or “天仙” collectively refer to celestial maidens, young and beautiful, residing in the heavens. They are often presented as ethereal beings with divine qualities. In Example 1, “天仙” was translated as “Daphne”, the daughter of the river god in Greek mythology, significantly enhancing the communication of the love theme (H. Wang, 2009, p. 81). The addition of “the fair” serves as a compensatory explanation for the target reader, clarifying that “天仙” is an appellation used to highlight the beloved girl's beauty to that of the fair in the source song.

Example 2

ST: 一头绣的洞宾戏牡丹。(cn1_54)

TT: I embroidered **Eros playing with a peony**.

In this context, “洞宾戏牡丹” refers to a Chinese folk narrative involving Lü Dongbing, one of the Eight Immortals. Lü's encounter with Bai Mudan, an ordinary mortal who falls in love with him, leads to their tragic separation upon the revelation of Lü's celestial status. In the source text (ST), “牡丹” represents both the female character's name and a symbol for beautiful women in Chinese culture. Wang Hongyin (2009, p. 127) argued that “Eros playing with a peony” is a suitable translation for Western readers due to Eros' role as the deity of love in Western mythology. As exemplified in instances 3 and 4, when dealing with allusive appellations during the translation process, translators also produce target texts that effectively fulfill their intended function and cater to the needs of the target readers.

Example 3

ST: 一头绣的吕布戏貂蝉。(cn1_54)

TT: And also **Cupid flirting with a beauty**, for a change.

Diao Chan, one of ancient China's renowned Four Beauties, is famously portrayed in “Romance of the Three Kingdoms” for her romantic involvement with the warrior Lü Bu, which played a pivotal role in the downfall of the despotic warlord Dong Zhuo. In Roman mythology, Cupid, akin to the Greek deity Eros, is the cherubic figure of love. Vermeer (1978, p. 100) posits that the selection of procedures and strategies in translation should primarily be guided by the intended purpose of the target text. The translator chose to replace these allusive appellations with ones from the target text culture that would be easily understood by the target readers, even though this decision sometimes led to a loss of the original text's cultural meaning. Thus the principle of skopos, out of all of them, is the fundamental element of translation and dominates all other principles, with coherence and loyalty acting as its subordinates.

Example 4

ST: 张生你(呀)你是妹妹小情人(么嗯哎哟)。(cn1_33)

TT: **Mr. Sam** is my sweetheart.

In this folk song, “张生”, originating from “The Romance of the West Chamber”, denotes the girl’s significant other or boyfriend. Notably, Zhang Sheng is an alternate name for Zhang Gong in the source narrative. The translator’s choice to translate it as “Mr. Sam” relies on homophony, with “Sam” being a derivative of “Samuel” (H. Wang, 2009, p. 77). In reality, the purpose of the translation truly determines the specific strategies, methods, and choices made by the translator, as their primary focus is to fulfill the communicative goal of the target text and meet the needs and expectations of the intended reader.

The presence of women as the main musical subjects makes up a substantial portion of the wide range of themes found in folk songs. Northern Shaanxi folk songs frequently introduce distinct female figures who possess narratives laden with highly specific symbolic significance, such as Blue Flower (蓝花花), Fengying (凤英), Zhang Caixia (张彩霞), and others (Long, 2011, p. 22), as exemplified in instance 5.

Example 5

ST:

男：叫一声**凤英**你不要哭，
三哥哥走了回来哩。(cn1_34; cn2_71)

TT:

Wang Hongyin’s version:

“Don’t cry, **my girl**,” he said.

“I leave and I will sure come back”.

Wang Zhanbin’s version:

Male: Don’t cry, **my dear**,

I’ll be back when the war is over.

This example is from the song “Sanshili Village” (The Thirty-mile Village), depicting a young woman named Fengying bidding a poignant farewell to her beloved as he joins the army. Both Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin opted to transfer the girl’s name, into “my girl” or “my dear”. As a result, the purpose serves as a driving factor that influences translators’ choices when freely translating these appellations for specific characters.

When introducing Northern Shaanxi folk songs, a significant component of China’s intangible cultural heritage, to the English-speaking world, translators frequently adopt a free translation approach, especially when dealing with appellations rich in distinct cultural connotations. These appellations often pertain to themes of love, myths and legends, Buddhism, allusions, as well as the specific characters. Based on their translation purposes, translators produce target texts that are appropriate, coherent, and effective in achieving their communicative goals. During this process, their primary focus is to ensure that their translations are readily accepted by the target readers.

5.2.2 Literal Translation

Literal translation, often known as “word-for-word” or “direct” translation, is a method where a translator accurately reproduces the source text in the target language, with few changes to sentence structure or word choice. When it comes to translating appellations such as personal names, occupational titles, or family names in Northern Shaanxi folk songs, translators consistently employ a literal translation method. It’s crucial to be able to employ the appropriate method for each circumstance in translation process. For example,

Example 6

ST:

吃一嘴黄连吃一嘴糖，
王贵娶了**李香香**。(cn1_90)

TT:

Sweet tastes sweeter after something bitter;

When **Wang Gui** finally married **Li Xiangxiang**.

This example is from the song “Marriage of Freedom”, a segment of Li Ji’s epic poem “Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang”, telling a compelling love story. Wang Hongyin’s translation introduces the target text (TT) reader to the narrative with authentic representations of the characters’ names from the source text (ST). After reading the song’s translation, the intended text reader would be curious to learn more about the background of the song. Thus, with more readers from outside being able to understand Northern Shaanxi folk songs, the translator’s intention will be further realized.

Additionally, in Northern Shaanxi folk songs, there exists a rich tapestry of characters representing a wide spectrum of occupations. A

significant number of these characters bear names directly aligned with the specific roles they fulfill. This diverse group includes individuals such as boatmen, horse herders, felt-rolling girls, sheep guards, shopkeepers, mule handlers, brother porters, animal drivers, and peasants, among others. As people's ways of life have evolved over time, the majority of labor and work practices in Northern Shaanxi have undergone significant transformations, leading to the disappearance of many labor-related appellations from everyday speech. However, it's important to remember that these names for laborers continue to hold historical significance, particularly for linguists and scholars who specialize in the study of Northern Shaanxi folk songs.

Despite the inherent cultural disparities between Chinese and Western societies and the potential existence of divergent professions, the appellations used to designate laborers in Northern Shaanxi folk songs tend to be readily comprehensible and interpretable. Upon conducting an examination of the corpus, it becomes evident that these appellations of laborers are consistently translated in a literal manner. This deliberate choice serves the purpose of enhancing the understanding of target readers, granting them insight into the historical occupational landscape prevalent in Northern Shaanxi.

Furthermore, within Northern Shaanxi folk songs, kinship appellations, or family-based appellations, also bear the stamp of regional and cultural specificity, as some of them are expressed in the Northern Shaanxi dialect. For instance, in a line from a Northern Shaanxi folk song, the phrase “*达达妈妈你好狠心*” is translated literally as “Dad and Mum! You are cruel”. “*Dàdà*” and “*māmā*” is a colloquial and informal expression used in the Northern Shaanxi dialect to refer to “father and mother”. Consequently, “Dad and Mum” is an appropriate choice for everyday conversation in this example.

5.2.3 Omission

The omission translation method, also known as “ellipsis”, involves selectively leaving out or omitting certain elements or content from the source text when translating it into the target language. This approach is used when the translator believes that certain information or details from the source text may not be relevant, necessary, or appropriate for the target reader, cultural context, or communicative purpose. Omission can occur at various levels, including the omission of words, phrases, sentences, or even entire paragraphs.

In cases where appellations were repetitive in the source text, omission was strategically used. Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin occasionally substituted those repeated appellations with pronouns or common English phrases to enhance clarity and reader comprehension. Omission enables a more flexible and appropriately contextualized rendering of these appellations in comparison to both literal translation and free translation.

6. Conclusion

This study has identified seven distinct forms of appellations within Northern Shaanxi folk songs through an analysis of a self-constructed corpus. They are love appellation, appellation for the particular character, appellation for laborers, family appellation, appellation for myths & legends, appellation for allusion, and appellation for Buddhist figures, ranked by their percentage in the Northern Shaanxi Folk Songs Parallel Corpus (NSFSPC). These seven appellations are transferred by Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin using three methods: free translation, literal translation, and omission.

Firstly, five categories of appellations, including those associated with love, myths & legends, specific individuals, allusions, and Buddhist figures, free translation emerged as the predominant method. Additionally, family and laborer appellations primarily undergo literal translation to preserve their original cultural and semantic nuances in the target language. When translating repeated appellations in Northern Shaanxi folk songs, the omission approach demonstrates to be a very adaptable choice. This flexibility improves the translation process by making it possible to convey the original content more precisely while also maximizing the target text's overall readability.

In line with the central tenet of skopos theory, “the objective determines the method”, Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin's translations were driven by the goal of introducing Northern Shaanxi folk songs to English-speaking readers. This overarching objective informed their choice of translation methods, prioritizing effective communication over strict adherence to linguistic coherence and textual integrity. Therefore, the purpose-driven translation basically emphasizes the translator's responsibility to make sure that the translated texts achieves its intended communicative aim in the given sociocultural context.

Both Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin seek to introduce Northern Shaanxi folk songs to foreign readers and promote the associated culture. Consequently, in order to improve reader engagement, fulfillment, and comprehension of the target material, they usually used free translation for those five appellations that are difficult for the target reader to understand. As a result of free translation, translators are given the freedom to imaginatively express the cultural diversity that these names represent. However, translation of appellations in Northern Shaanxi folk songs often leads to information loss, because appellations in Chinese and English languages differ significantly due to varying cultural backgrounds and specific social contexts.

In conclusion, this study has presented a fresh perspective on the appellation translation in Northern Shaanxi folk songs by employing a corpus-based approach in conjunction with skopos theory. It provides insightful information about the translation methods used by Wang Hongyin and Wang Zhanbin, shedding light on their decisions in the quest to successfully introduce this rich intangible cultural heritage to English-speaking people. However, it is essential that future study explores more aspects of the translation process than just the translation goals. Moreover, the corpus created for this study could be used to carry out other studies on translating Northern Shaanxi folk songs.

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