



Translation Variation and Dissemination of Chinese Folk Culture in Lin Yutang’s English Version of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*

LI Jiayu^{[a],*}; LI Yixuan^[b]

^[a]Associate Professor, School of Foreign Language Studies, Hefei University of Technology, Hefei, Anhui, China.

^[b]Bachelor Student, School of Foreign Language Studies, Hefei University of Technology, Hefei, Anhui, China.

*Corresponding author.

Supported by the Anhui Province Postgraduate Teaching-Research-Enhancing Project (Grant No. 2022JYJXGGYJ062, awarded to Jiayu Li).

Received 7 February 2025; accepted 25 March 2025
 Published online 26 April 2025

Abstract

Lin Yutang (1895-1976) is a great Chinese writer, translator and philosopher of New Taoism. He had studied and worked in foreign countries such as the United States, France and Germany, and got a doctoral degree in linguistics with his deep cross-understanding of Chinese and Western languages and cultures. His English version of the Chinese classic *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* which was written by Shen Fu in Qing Dynasty has got the highest number of reprints so far, indicating the charm and value of his translation and dissemination. Based on translation variation and dissemination proposed by Chinese scholar Huang Zhonglian, this paper makes a thorough case analysis of Chinese folk culture in Lin’s English version from lexical, syntactic and cultural ritual levels. At lexical level, many words are unique to China, and it is difficult to find complete equivalents in English, so amplification, deletion and adaptation are mainly adopted. At syntactic level, Chinese and English have significant differences in sentence structure and information arrangement, especially in Old Chinese, so amplification and edition are mainly employed. At cultural ritual level, many festivals and customs have unique and profound ritual activities. Amplification and adaptation are mainly used to reduce comprehension barriers and burdens. It’s hoped that this study can provide a new perspective for English translation and dissemination

of Chinese culture of the similar text both in translation theory and practice.

Key words: Translation variation and dissemination; *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*; Lin Yutang’s English version; Chinese folk culture

Li, J. Y., & Li. Y. X. (2025). Translation Variation and Dissemination of Chinese Folk Culture in Lin Yutang’s English Version of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 30(2), 11-20. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/13777>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13777>

1. INTRODUCTION

The autobiographical prose *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* was written by Shen Fu in Old Chinese in Qing Dynasty. The whole book was originally divided into six chapters, namely “Wedded Bliss”, “The Little Pleasures of Life”, “Sorrow”, “The Joys of Travel”, “Experience” and “The Way of Life” (Lin, 2008). The book describes the leisurely but short marriage life of a young scholar, Shen Fu and his wife Yun, as well as the Chinese folk culture of that time with simple but vivid language. Although Shen Fu and his wife Yun lived a lean life, they were optimistic and open-minded toward life. They supported each other and made their ordinary lives enjoyable and full of artistic charm. It is hailed as the pinnacle of Chinese prose with its unique narrative style, profound ideological content, and genuine emotional expression (He, 2023). Its writing style is tranquil and leisurely, rich in traditional Chinese aesthetic taste, and the values conveyed in the book also have traditional cultural connotations. It has had a profound impact on the development of Chinese literature and culture which is regarded as one model of the classics of ancient Chinese prose.

The original book has been translated into multiple languages, and in 1935, Lin Yutang first translated it into

English and promoted it to Western countries. In addition, there are two other English versions done by Shirley M. Black (1960), Bai Lun and Jiang Suhui (1983). However, Lin Yutang's version has the highest number of reprints so far, indicating the charm and value of his translation and dissemination. Lin Yutang (1895-1976) was born in Longxi County, Fujian Province of China. He had studied and worked in foreign countries such as the United States, France, and Germany, and got doctoral degree in linguistics. He has had a deep cross-understanding of Chinese and Western languages and cultures, with a profound cultural literacy and outstanding achievements in both Chinese-English and English-Chinese writing and translating due to his unique cultural background and outstanding talent (Gong, 2023). His English translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* began with adore and strived for the dissemination of Chinese culture to the world. He believes that "Different and diverse cultures can be completely complementary and integrated (Li, 2007)". As is said in preface to Lin Yutang's translation: "Yun, I think, is one of the loveliest women in Chinese literature. She is not the most beautiful, for the author, her husband, does not make that claim, and yet who can deny that she is the loveliest? She is just one of those charming women one sometimes sees in the homes of one's friends, so happy with their husbands that one cannot fall in love with them. Her life, in the words of Su Tunpo, 'was like a spring dream which vanishes without a trace' (Lin, 2008)"

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the high literary classic status of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, its original text and English translation are undoubtedly of great significance for disseminating excellent Chinese literature and promoting the integration of Eastern and Western cultures. It has won great interest and fascination of both Western and Chinese scholars, but essentially comparative studies of English versions done by Chinese and English scholars are more productive and significant internationally and domestically.

Internationally, here is a book review, which comments on Canadian translator Graham Sanders' translation of *Six Records of a Life Adrift* (Hill, 2012). The other three papers are all authored by Chinese scholars. Wang (2009) compares the translations of Lin Yutang, and of Bai Lun and Jiang Suhui to explore the issue of translation conversion in the implementation mode of the speech acts. Lu (2010) compares the translations of Lin Yutang, Shirley Blake, and Bai Lun and Jiang Suhui, and points out that the cultural and aesthetic views of translators have influenced their translation practices. Guan (2014) analyzes translation variation in Lin Yutang's translation by comparing it with the translations of Bai Lun and Jiang Suhui.

Domestically, there were almost no relevant papers published in academic journals before 1999. Since the reprint of Lin Yutang's English translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* in 1999, it has received widespread attention from scholars. They began to reclaim his identity as a translator. By studying his translation thoughts and practices, especially his English translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, they explored his outstanding contributions to cultural dissemination between China and the West mainly from four aspects: comprehensive review, translator research, translation strategy research, and comparative study of translations.

Firstly, when it comes to comprehensive review, many scholars have evaluated Lin Yutang's English translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, concluding its merits and its shortcomings. Dong Hui (2002) points out that Lin Yutang's translation is "precise and authentic in selecting characters and words; sentence translation is based on sentences, with a high perspective and overall grasp; translation expression is both trustworthy and beautiful; language and culture are comprehensively considered. In short, Lin's translation can be regarded as a classic translation of ancient Chinese literature, and its translation strategies and methods can still be used for reference today". Li Yuliang (2005) points out that Lin's translation also has shortcomings. Of course, some of Lin's mistakes are inevitable, while others are strategic. He concludes that "This paper is not so much about picking on 'mistakes', but rather seeking some universal translation principles from the translation practices of masters. It is these issues that have helped promote the development of translation research, while also allowing us to know where to go and where to stop."

Secondly, when it comes to translator research, most of the papers have studied the translator's subjectivity reflected in the English translation from different perspectives, involving the influence of subjective factors such as the translator's cultural and life attitude, ideology, feminist consciousness, and translation principles on the choice of translation strategies and methods. Within the core concepts of prejudice and fusion of perspectives in hermeneutics, Yang Liu (2007) analyzes the agency of translators in translation and then considers the specific role of Lin Yutang's translator subjectivity according to Steiner's four steps of translation interpretive, namely trust, intrusion, absorption and compensation.

Thirdly, when it comes to translation strategy, most papers have made case studies with the guidance of translation theory. Li Hongmei (2007), based on German "teleology", studies the importance of the choice of translation strategies in Lin Yutang's version and argues that his wise choice of translation strategies is an important factor in his great success. He alternates between literal translation and free translation, domestication and foreignization, semantic translation,

and communicative translation, making the translation much easier to understand and deeply loved by the target readers.

Fourthly, when it comes to comparative studies of translations, specific translation strategies, cultural expressions and language styles are compared. Within cultural presupposition in postcolonial theory, Li Tuwang (2007) compares different discourse structures and cultural strategies of Lin Yutang's and Shirley Blake's translations, examining depreciation, infiltration, and assimilation of the dominant Western culture towards the weaker Eastern culture in translation.

So, from the perspectives of the previous studies, we can see that foreign and domestic researches are mainly involved in translation strategies and cultural aesthetic preferences of translators comprehensively, without focus on a certain cultural element and its dissemination. Therefore, based on Huang Zhonglian's theory of translation variation and dissemination, this paper studies the translation of Chinese folk culture in Lin Yutang's English version to see how to better promote translation variation and dissemination of Chinese culture to the world.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF TRANSLATION VARIATION AND DISSEMINATION

3.1 Development of Theory of Translation Variation and Dissemination

Translation variation and dissemination is a comprehensive translation theory proposed by Chinese scholar Professor Huang Zhonglian based on analyzing and summarizing various translation variations. It reveals the essence of translation variation to promote translation dissemination. It includes seven means of amplification, deletion, edition, narration, contraction, combination and adaptation, from which eleven modes of translation are derived. Compared with traditional translation theories, the theory of variation and dissemination emphasizes flexible handling of textual materials rather than rigid translation. It requires translators to do translation that is more acceptable to readers from the perspective of the receiver.

Huang Zhonglian's research achievements are mainly included into two books: *On Translation Variation* (Huang, 2000) and *Translation Variation Theory* (Huang, 2002). The former involves practical operations, emphasizing how to perform translation variation. The latter is a continuation of his previous book, which explores the theoretical basis of variation translation that is to promote translation dissemination. So translation variation and dissemination always co-work together to enhance understanding and communication of the people of the

world. In his works, Professor Huang divides translation into two types based on the residual degree of the original text: complete translation and variational translation. As he defines in his book *Translation Variation Theory*: "Translation variation is a kind of translating activity to absorb the certain content from the original text with appropriate variation like supplement, deletion, summarization, edition, combination, reduction and remodeling to meet the specific demands of the readers (Huang, 2002)."

Based on Huang's definition, it can be seen that translation variation and dissemination is a holistic translation method that is different from micro-translation strategies. The concept of translation variation has undergone a series of evolutions: from the accumulation of translation quantity to the accumulation of translation quality; from perception of translation to acceptance of translation variation. In a broad sense, this concept indicates that the important value of translation depends on the assimilation of foreign cultures. This new theory has driven further development in translation and dissemination. It expands the space for information transmission. The theory of translation variation and dissemination is not a compromise in methodology, but a conceptual innovation that lays an effective foundation for future translation.

As a local translation practice theory, it has shown strong vitality since its inception. Scholars have conducted more in-depth research and practice, and made the development of this theory gradually mature. In 1997, Professor Huang Zhonglian first proposed the concept of translation variants and referred to it as "translation variation". In his published book *Translation Variation Theory* (2002), he studied translation variation from three levels: the phenomenological level, the regulative level and the principled level, and firstly provided a relatively clear and comprehensive explanation of the theory of translation variation and dissemination. After the establishment of the basic framework of translation variation and dissemination, some scholars have explored its application in multiple fields, further verifying the diversity and applicability of the theory.

On the one hand, research on translation variation and dissemination has begun to develop towards disciplinary and methodological research. Huang Shunhong (2005) thinks that functionalist translation theory's teleology and loyalty principle can explain feasibility and moderation of translation variation and dissemination, providing strong theoretical foundation for translation variation and dissemination. Wei Jiahai (2008) thinks that subversiveness of feminist translation and flexibility in translation variation and dissemination constitutes a dialogue relationship, both of which are rebellions against loyalty. The power discourse held by translators in translation can achieve the reconstruction

of discourse power in the translated text. On the other hand, translation variation and dissemination has also been developed in interdisciplinary research. Liu Qingyuan (2005) discusses the influence of situational orientation on translation strategies in discourse translation from the perspective of discourse linguistics and analyzes the reasons and rationality of translation variation and dissemination from three aspects: field, mode, and tenor. In addition, pragmatic theories such as relevance theory and language adaptation theory can also provide new perspectives for translation variation and dissemination, explaining the rationality and method application. Some scholars have combined aesthetics with translation variation and dissemination. Pan Weimin (2005) explores the necessity, aesthetic basis, and degree of translation variation and dissemination in scenic spot translation from the perspective of differences in Chinese and Western languages and scripts.

3.2 Key Notions of Translation Variation and Dissemination

The translation variation and dissemination theory takes "translation variation" as the core term, distinguishing between complete translation and variational translation. It categorizes and systematizes sporadic methods of variational translation, revealing the essence, elements, means, methods, units, and values of translation variation. Huang Zhonglian points out that the most obvious difference between complete translation and variational translation is "variation", where "variation" refers to flexibility. Flexibility is adaptability, not limited to the conventions of complete translation. He believes that implementing translation variation can increase the readability and accuracy of the translated text, making it more in line with national and cultural conditions, enhancing the linguistic and cultural dissemination of the translation, and improving the aesthetic quality of the text.

The translation variation and dissemination theory holds that the supply-demand contradiction between the original work and the target language readers, as well as the form and meaning contradiction between the content of the original work and the form of the target language, are the fundamental drivers of translation variation. The key to solving these two contradictions lies in the translator's targeted selection of adaptation strategies based on the special needs of specific readers under specific conditions to enhance translation dissemination. There are seven means in the translation variation and dissemination, namely, amplification, deletion, edition, narration, contraction, combination and adaptation. The division of seven means is determined by comparing the amount of information retained in the variational

translation with the amount of information conveyed in the complete translation. Assuming that the amount of variable translation information is "a" and the amount of complete translation information is "b" (Huang, 2000), their relationship can be illustrated as follows:

1) Amplification ($a > b$)

This indicates that the amount of information in the variational translation is greater than that in the complete translation, which means that the variational translation has led to an increase in information based on the original work. The ways of amplification can be divided into three types: exposition, comment and writing.

(1) Exposition

It refers to the interpretation of a certain part of the original work in the translation, including interpreting allusions, interpreting ancient texts as modern ones, interpreting word or text meanings, and explaining difficult points. The overall reason for exposition is that the target language readers do not have a good understanding of certain content in the received information, which may have been outdated or overly specialized. Without explanation, it is not enough to ensure smooth communication of information.

(2) Comment

It is the process of commenting or expressing opinions on the translated content, including evaluation, introduction and analysis. The purpose of adding comments is to enable readers to have a deeper understanding of the translated content and its value.

(3) Writing

It refers to adding content related to the translated part during translation. According to spatial location, Huang divided it into three types: pre-writing, post-writing, and inter-writing. Pre-writing usually involves explaining the background and laying the groundwork for the later translation content. Post-writing usually involves adding and supplementing the previously translated content. Inter-writing is generally a continuation of the previous and the following, cleverly embedded, to supplement the content of the translation and increase the amount of information.

2) Deletion ($a < b$)

It indicates that the amount of translation variation information is less than the amount of complete translation information, which means that translation variation leads to a decrease in information. Deletion refers to the removal of information content from the original work that the translator perceives as unnecessary to the reader, and in the process of variational translation, it manifests as a selection of the original work. The purpose of deletion is to see the big picture from the small and fully demonstrate the value of useful information.

3) Edition ($a \leq b$)

This indicates that the amount of translated information is approximately equal to or less than the amount of fully

translated information, indicating that the original work has been edited with reduced or unchanged information. Editing refers to the act of organizing the content of an original work to make it more refined. It includes compiling, layout and composing. The purpose of editing the original text is to make the main idea more prominent, the structure and logic more compact and consistent.

4) Narration ($a \approx b$)

Narration means that the amount of information conveyed after the translation is roughly equivalent to the original work. Narration is writing or speaking the original content in the target language, which can also be paraphrasing or retelling. Based on the content of the original work, narration changes the expression form of the original work, using narrative language to convey the content.

5) Contraction ($a \ll b$)

Contraction refers to compression, which is a more concise act of compressing the original work in the translated language than narration. It reduces the amount of information from large to small, far less than the original work.

6) Combination ($a \in b$)

Combination refers to the method of combining two or more parts of the same type or with logical relationships in the original work. The related parts may be sentences, sentence groups, paragraphs, chapters or even books.

7) Adaptation ($a \curvearrowright b$)

Adaptation refers to making significant changes to the original work, altering the content or form, including change and replace, change and compile, change and create. The amount of information after adaptation is similar to that in the complete translation, indicating that the information in the original work is equivalent after the translation variation.

4. CASE STUDIES OF CHINESE FOLK CULTURE IN LIN'S ENGLISH VERSION

As an ancient civilization with a history of over five thousand years, China's traditional culture is vast, profound, and has a long history. As the cornerstone of Chinese culture, Chinese folk culture has distinguished characteristics and significance, which encompasses a wide range of historical and cultural connotations. Folk culture refers to the general term for the customs and living culture of the people, and also refers to the customs and living habits created, shared, and inherited by the people living in a country, ethnic group, or region. It is a series of material and spiritual cultural phenomena formed in the production and life process of ordinary people, with universality, inheritance, and variability (Zhong, 2008). Folk culture includes many aspects, including material aspects such as production tools, clothing, beverages and food, folk crafts and transportation, as well as social

aspects such as social etiquette and festival customs. It also includes decorative patterns and symbolic elements with spiritual and cultural significance. However, cultural exchange is often affected by differences between China and the West in the process of translation and dissemination since Chinese folk culture has diverse forms, and is mostly unique to Chinese people. Here, three aspects of lexical, syntactic and unique cultural rituals will be illustrated with case studies in Lin's English version as Source Text (ST), Target Text (TT) and Analysis.

4.1 Variation and Dissemination at Lexical Level

Every country and nation has its unique cultural history. Chinese folk culture contains a large number of unique Chinese vocabulary, making it difficult to find a completely equivalent word in English. Exploring translation variation and dissemination of folk culture from a lexical perspective helps to better promote Chinese characteristic culture and facilitate cultural exchange.

4.1.1 Amplification

There are many unique Chinese vocabulary in folk culture that Western readers are not familiar with. Therefore, in the English translation, Lin Yutang adopted amplification to increase the information content of the original work, so that Western readers can better understand the connotations of specific words in Chinese culture.

Example 1:

ST: 时吾父稼夫公在会稽幕府，专役相迓，受业于武林赵省斋先生门下。

TT: At this time, my father Chiafu was in the service of the Kueich'i district government, and he sent a special messenger to bring me there, **for it should be noted that, during this time**, I was under the tutorship of Chao Shengtsai of Wulin [**Hangchou**].

Analysis: In this sentence, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by amplifying two more explanatory expressions of inversions “for it should be noted that, during this time” and “Hangchou”, which makes Western readers better understand the inner logical relationship and the coming departure of the newly wedded couple.

Example 2:

ST: 头巾既揭，相视嫣然。

TT: When her **bridal veil** was lifted, we looked at each other and smiled.

Analysis: Traditionally, “头巾 (Tou Jin)” is one of the wedding customs of the Han nationality, referring to a large red silk cloth that the bride wears on her head during the wedding. It is also known as “红盖头 (Hong Gaitou)” and has a meaning of warding off evil and praying for prosperity. It is a symbol of the bride's identity at the wedding. Translating it as a “veil” reflects its gentle and beautiful characteristics. At the same time, Lin added the word “bridal” in translation variation and dissemination, explaining its specificity in ritual function and effectively avoiding misunderstandings and cultural differences.

4.1.2 Deletion

Due to the significant cultural differences in folk culture between the East and the West, Western readers may find it difficult to understand when reading. Therefore, for some unique vocabulary that cannot accurately convey the cultural original meaning after explanation, deletion is an effective way to optimize the fluency of the original work and appreciate its beauty. To achieve coherence within the discourse, Lin employed deletion in translation.

Example 3:

ST: 余在洞房与伴娘对酌，拇战辄北，大醉而卧。

TT: I was playing the finger-guessing game with the bride's companion in the bridal chamber and, being a loser all the time, I fell asleep drunk like a fish.

Analysis: “拇战 (Mu Zhan)”, also known as “划拳 (Hua Quan)” in daily life, is a traditional game widely popular in various dinner gathering scenes in Chinese traditional culture. The rules are simple and passed down to people from generation to generation. It is named “拇战” for the thumb is commonly used in the game. As part of China's traditional drinking culture, Lin Yutang removed its implicit cultural information in translation variation and dissemination and translated it into a more straightforward and understandable phrase, “the finger-guessing game”, to achieve discourse coherence and convey semantics better. So is the same case with “辄北 (Zhe Bei)” into “being a loser all the time”.

Example 4:

ST: 王怒余以目，掷花于地，以莲钩拨入池中。

TT: Wang looked at me in anger, threw the flowers to the ground and kicked them into the pond.

Analysis: In the sentence, “莲钩 (Lian Gou)” refers to the smaller feet that women used to be wrapped around, which is criticized as a bad custom of foot binding in ancient China. Foot binding is the cruel oppression of women in Chinese feudal society. Lin Yutang shifted the information in translation variation and dissemination into action “kicked them” by omitting the body expression “莲钩”, which makes Western readers more appreciate China's vivid language and artistic way of life instead of its negative meaning.

Example 5:

ST: 乃教以断竹为杠，缚椅为轿。

TT: I taught the people to make some bamboos into carrying poles, and tie a chair on them, which served as a makeshift.

Analysis: “轿 (Jiao)” is a special mode of transportation used by people of higher social status in ancient China, which is familiar to the Chinese people. However, for Western readers, this may be completely strange, and it is difficult to restore its image and connotation to them. Therefore, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by omitting the specific social image of “轿” and transformed it into a general physical

word “makeshift”, which is easier for western readers to understand and accept.

Example 6:

ST: 身披元青短袄，著元青长裤，管拖脚背，腰束汗巾，或红或绿。

TT: And she wore a black jacket and long black trousers coming down to the instep of the foot, set in contrast by sashes of green or red tied round her waist.

Analysis: The clothes of different eras and countries reflect different customs and social rituals. “短袄 (Duan'ao)” is a type of clothing worn by women of Han nationality in the Qing Dynasty, which is ritual and unique in ancient China that is not found in the West, and there is no complete equivalent in English. Therefore, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by shifting “短袄” as “jacket” and “汗巾 (Han Jin)” as “sashes”, which deleted the original cultural information and shifted them with clothing familiar to Western readers. As we all know that these two are different, but they have the similar functions of clothing and wearing, which are conducive to cultural exchange and dissemination.

4.1.3 Adaptation

Some folk cultural words can be translated by changing their content or form, achieving more transparent and fluent writing while conveying the basic information of the original text. Therefore, in translation, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by adopting the means of adaptation to meet the reading needs of Western readers and reduce understanding difficulties caused by cultural differences.

Example 7:

ST: 芸不善饮，强之可三杯，教以射覆为令。

TT: I taught her literary games in which the loser had to drink.

Analysis: “射覆为令 (She Fu Wei Ling)” is a game on the wine table. The rule is that one person hides something in a container for others to guess, but you can't directly say the name of the object, but use poetry or allusions to describe the object to guess, to increase the fun and cultural flavor of the game. Its essence is a guessing game, which is gradually evolved into a literary game. Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by adapting it into “literary games”, taking into account both the meaning of the original text and the language expression of the target readers.

Example 8:

ST: 又喜食虾卤瓜。

TT: Another thing she liked to eat was a kind of small pickled cucumber.

Analysis: “虾卤瓜 (Xia Lu Gua)”, also known as “臭冬瓜 (Chou Dong Gua)”, is a traditional Han Chinese flavor food in Ningbo, Zhejiang. It has a unique flavor, a wonderful aroma, and is invigorating and appetizing. It is suitable for people of all ages to have a salty taste. Eating on hot days has great effects on relieving heat,

promoting ventilation, and appetizing. Its essence is a pickled appetizer, and “pickled cucumber” is a common pickled side dish during Western dining. Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination with the adaptation technique to replace “虾卤瓜” with “a kind of small pickled cucumber”, which is more familiar to Western readers. It’s beneficial for reading coherence without affecting the understanding of the original text.

Example 9:

ST: 余生乾隆癸未冬十一月二十有二日。

TT: I was born in 1736, under the reign of Ch’ienlung, on the twenty-second day of the eleventh moon.

Analysis: Due to huge historical cultural gap and different calendar system, it is difficult for Westerners to understand Old Chinese calendar years. Adaptation is adopted in Lin’s English version to help them effectively understand them. “乾隆癸未 (Qianlong Gui Wei)”, the traditional Old Chinese calendar year is composed of the emperor’s year name, ten heavenly stems, and twelve earthly branches. If transliteration is used, it will become complex and confused, and the meaning of the original term cannot be conveyed. Therefore, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by adapting “癸未” into the internationally recognized Gregorian calendar “in 1736”, which is more in line with the target reader’s knowledge background and decreases the comprehension burdens of target readers.

4.2 Variation and Dissemination at Syntactic Level

English and Chinese are two different language systems, with significant differences in sentence structure, grammar rules and information arrangement, reflecting different ways of thinking modes hiding in the two languages. Next, we will explore translation variation and dissemination of Chinese folk culture from a syntactic perspective, to understand how Lin Yutang better compensate for cultural differences in syntactic translation and make the translation more fluent and natural.

4.2.1 Amplification

Chinese sentences have flexible structure, prominent themes and strong hidden coherence with a focus on semantic correlation. English sentences have rigorous structure and prominent subject with strict grammatical forms. Therefore, to compensate for grammar and cultural differences, while making translation more natural and providing Western readers with a better reading experience, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by adopting amplification and edition in his translation.

Example 10:

ST: 倩绘一像：一手挽红丝，一手携杖，悬姻缘簿，童颜鹤发，奔驰于非烟非雾中。

TT: It was a picture of the Old Man holding, in

one hand, a red silk thread [for the purpose of binding together the hearts of all couples] and, in the other, a walking-stick with the Book of Matrimony suspended from it.

Analysis: The famous Chinese legend “月下老人,千里姻缘一线牵 (Yue Xia Lao Ren, Qian Li Yin Yuan Yi Xian Qian)” is a traditional Chinese marriage ritual, which may be strange to the westerners. Therefore, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by amplifying a note to render the essence of the legend to help readers better understand the cultural connotations of the old man holding the red silk. The prepositional phrase “for the purpose of” was added to explain the role of the red silk, making target readers equate it to Cupid’s arrow.

Example 11:

ST: 先一日约鸿干赴寒山登高，借访他日结庐之地。

TT: I had arranged with Hungkan to go to the Hanshan Temple that day and climb high mountains [as was customary on this festival], incidentally looking for a place for retirement.

Analysis: This sentence describes the activities the author had with friends on the Double Ninth Festival. As one of the traditional Chinese festivals, the custom of climbing high mountains during the Double Ninth Festival is very popular to the Chinese. It originated from the ancient worship of mountains. However, foreign readers may feel a bit confused. Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by amplifying an attributive clause with “as” to emphasize the reason for the custom, so that western readers can better understand the meaning and experience the ritual custom.

4.2.2 Edition

Edition refers to editing the original content to make it more logical and continuous, thereby highlighting the main idea. It is often used to readjust sentence structure to make it better conform to English expressions. In Lin Yutang’s English version, he did translation variation and dissemination mainly by adding conjunctions to readjust the word order to make the sentence logic clearer. He also reorganized the sentence structure by flexibly using clauses to make it more compact.

Example 12:

ST: 于饭镬蒸透，在炉上设一铜丝架，离火半寸许，徐徐烘之；其香幽韵而无烟。

TT: She used to steam the wood first in a cauldron thoroughly, and then place it on a copper wire net over a stove, about half an inch from the fire. Under the action of the slow fire, the wood would give out a kind of subtle fragrance without any visible smoke.

Analysis: This is a description of the scene where Shen Fu’s wife Yun incensed and burned agarwood. Agarwood culture is a traditional Chinese culture, which includes evaluating techniques and appreciating the beauty of the fragrance environment. It has a long history and

profound cultural heritage and is a special cultural carrier. To help readers better understand this ritual, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by editing the original text in order through adding adverbs “first” and “then” to make the logic of the sentence much clearer.

Example 13:

ST: 又去城三十里，名曰“仁里”，有花果会。十二年一举，每举各出盆花为赛。

TT: There was a village, called the Benevolence Village, thirty li from the town, **where** they had a festival of flowers and fruit-trees every twelve years, **during which** a flower show was held.

Analysis: “花果会 (Hua Guo Hui)”, also known as “花朝会 (Hua Chao Hui)”, is a large-scale traditional agricultural custom in Jixi County, Anhui Province. It is used to pray for good weather and abundant grain, and is a folk activity that has lasted for hundreds of years. Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by editing the original text with two relative clauses “where” and “during which” to integrate the scattered clauses, which is more in line with the reading habits of English readers and makes the relationship among sentences more compact.

4.3 Variation and Dissemination at Cultural Ritual Level

There are many customs, festivals, or images in Chinese folk culture that pose a huge challenge for translators due to their unique and profound ritual connotations. In translation, translators should fully consider the ritual background of the target language, and do translation variation and dissemination in light of the actual situation. The following section will explore how Lin Yutang preserved the original image and intertextual coherence while disseminating ritual significance to facilitate the target readers to more experience and appreciate the folk culture.

4.3.1 Amplification

The festivals and customs contained in Chinese folk culture are not just expressed in vocabulary, but also have profound ritual significance. By using the means of amplification, Western readers can better understand the profound traditional ritual connotations of China while supplementing background information and promoting cultural dissemination.

Example 14:

ST: 妇女是晚不拘大家小户皆出，结队而游，名曰“走月亮”。

TT: The women of all families, rich or poor, **came out in groups on the Mid-Autumn night**, a custom **which** was called “pacing the moonlight”.

Analysis: “走月亮 (Zou Yue Liang)” is a ritual custom with strong regional cultural characteristics, mainly popular in the Jiangsu and Zhejiang regions. It refers to the activity on Mid-Autumn Festival night when women dress up and go out together to admire the moon, play and

participate in cultural activities. This is not only an activity of entertainment, but also symbolizes people’s longing for the family reunion and a better life. They spend time with family or friends to express their appreciation for family and friendship. When translating, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by supplementing the original sentence with additional information “came out in groups on the Mid-Autumn night” to provide a detailed explanation of “走月亮”. Moreover, he used an attributive clause guided by “which” to explain that this is a custom, increasing the amount of information in the original text. The translation is smooth and natural, and readers can better understand it.

Example 15:

ST: 清明日，先生春祭扫墓，挈余同游。

TT: On the **Ch’ingming Festival**, my tutor was going to visit his ancestral grave and brought me along.

[**Footnote:** A festival which falls on any unfixed date somewhere round the middle part of the spring months. On this day people are accustomed to paying their visits to their ancestral tombs in the country.]

Analysis: “清明 (Qing Ming)”, as a traditional festival in China, has a history of more than 2500 years and is the most important sacrificial festival. However, for Western readers, this holiday is unfamiliar. When translating, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by adopting transliteration “Ch’ingming” with adding “Festival”, which indicates that it is essentially a festival. Moreover, Lin Yutang added a footnote to explain this Chinese custom in detail, indicating that the deep cultural connotation hidden behind it is to express respect and longing for dead ancestors.

4.3.2 Adaptation

Example 16:

ST: 是夜，送亲城外，返已漏三下。

TT: That night, when I came back from outside the city, whither I **had accompanied my girl cousin the bride**, it was already midnight.

Analysis: “送亲 (Song Qin)” is a long-standing wedding custom in China, in which the bride’s family selects a specific male to escort the bride to the groom’s home, reflecting the importance that the family attaches to the bride. However, there are no corresponding customs or similar practices in western countries. So Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by amplifying a more explanatory expression “had accompanied my girl cousin the bride” for “送亲”, which makes Western readers better understand the connotation of specific word in Chinese folk culture.

Example 17:

ST: 合盞后，并肩夜膳。

TT: After **the drinking of the customary twin cups between bride and groom**, we sat down together at dinner.

Analysis: “合盞 (He Jin)”, also known as “交杯酒

(Jiao Bei Jiu)", is one of the traditional Chinese wedding customs. The newlyweds raise the twin cups and drink together, which not only means sharing joys and sorrows in the future, but also indicates that the groom and bride should be harmonious, and love each other after marriage. In Lin's English version, he did translation variation and dissemination by adapting it into a more explanatory expression so that target readers can have a more intuitive understanding and reception of the ritual.

Example 18:

ST: 七月望, 俗谓之鬼节。

TT: The fifteenth of the seventh moon was **All Soul's Day**.

Analysis: "鬼节 (Gui Jie)", also known as "中元节 (Zhong Yuan Jie)", is a traditional cultural festival to respect our ancestors and be filial, including the memory of our ancestors. "All Soul's Day" is a Catholic holiday to commemorate deceased believers. According to its doctrine, the prayers of living believers help those in purgatory cleanse their souls of sin and ascend to the heaven as soon as possible. It can be seen from this that both festivals are dedicated to commemorating the deceased. If "鬼节" is translated literally as "Ghost Festival", it will go against the intended meaning of the original text and cause readers to misunderstand. Therefore, Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by adapting it into "All Soul's Day", which is not only faithful to the original text, but also better helps readers understand the meaning of the original text and convey ritual connotations.

Example 19:

ST: 或问何人, 以表弟对, 拱手而已。

TT: When people asked, I simply said he was my boy cousin, and people would merely **curtsy with their hands together** and pass on.

Analysis: "拱手 (Gong Shou)", as the most distinctive Chinese old greeting etiquette, expresses respect or gratitude to others in a humble way. It has a long history with symbol of China's reverence for etiquette. When bowing, hands should be clasped in front of the chest, and the position and posture of the hands will vary depending on the occasion and the purpose of the salute. Lin Yutang did translation variation and dissemination by adapting "拱手" into "curtsy with their hands together", which shifts the body gesture to facilitate the function of greeting the people.

5. CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of translation variation and dissemination, translators must have a strong reader orientation in their minds, and strive to narrow the differences and gaps in language expression, cultural understanding and thinking modes between the source language and the target language. Meanwhile, they

should be as flexible and sensible as possible to adopt various variations such as amplification, deletion, edition, narration, contraction, combination and adaptation to effectively do translation and dissemination. Lin Yutang, as an excellent writer, translator and philosopher of New Taoism, has a deep cross-understanding of Chinese and Western languages and cultures. His English version of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* provides a good example for our research on translation variation and dissemination of Chinese folk culture.

Specifically, at lexical level, Lin adopts amplification to add cultural background information, allowing readers to better understand the long and brilliant Chinese folk cultural traditions and the art of Chinese people's lives. He also adopts deletion to remove some cultural information implied by some profound and complex vocabulary, which is more conducive to the overall reductions of reading and understanding difficulties and burdens. Moreover, to maximize the dissemination of cultural information in folk cultural words, Lin uses adaptation to search for words with similar cultural meanings in English for better understanding by readers. At syntactic level, Lin mainly employs amplification and edition to make the translation more fluent and coherent in form and meaning. He compensates for syntactic differences by adding conjunctions and clauses or adjusting sentence structure and information arrangement. At cultural ritual level, Lin prefers amplification and adaptation to effectively convey cultural connotations and promote ritual dissemination.

In all, Lin's English version not only presents profound cultural connotations to the world, but also sets a good example in the promotion of Chinese culture going global. As the cornerstone of Chinese culture, Chinese folk culture is the embodiment of Chinese customs and social rituals which has unique value and significance to the people of the world. So Lin's English version of Chinese folk culture is of great significance in studies of both translation theory and practice. Meanwhile, the flexibility and feasibility of translation variation and dissemination does not mean that translators can freely exert themselves. Translators still need to observe appropriate translation methods and principles based on the characteristics of the text itself, otherwise, so-called flexible processing will become outlying and futile.

REFERENCES

- Dong, H. (2002). Proficient and exceptional: Appreciation of Lin Yutang's English version of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. *Journal of Xi'an Foreign Language Studies University*, (3), 11-15.
- Gong, M. (2023). Exploration of three-dimensional shifts of Lin Yutang's English version of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* from perspective of ecological translation. *Journal of Writers' World*, (4), 96-98.

- Guan, X. Z. (2014). An alternative explanation for translation variations in *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* by Lin Yutang. *Perspectives*, 22(2), 198-221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2012.722655>
- He, C. T. (2023). Domestication and foreignization of Lin Yutang's English version of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. *Journal of Modern English*, (12), 106-109.
- Hill, M. G. (2012). *Six Records of a Life Adrift*. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 75(3), 620-621.
- Huang, S. H. (2005). A study of functional translation theory and translation variation. *Journal of Nanjing Forestry University*, (4), 13-14.
- Huang, Z. L. (2000). *On translation variation*. China Translation Publishing House.
- Huang, Z. L. (2002). *Translation variation theory*. China Translation Publishing House.
- Li, H. M. (2007). *Sensible choices of translation strategies: Factors of a big success of Lin Yutang's English version of Six Chapters of a Floating Life* [Master's thesis, Shanghai University].
- Li, T. W. (2007). Cultural orientation and translation strategies: A comparative study of two English versions of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. *Journal of Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, (7), 53-55.
- Li, Y. L. (2005). Merits and demerits of Lin Yutang's English version of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. *Journal of Shandong Foreign Language Teaching*, (6), 79-83.
- Liu, Q. Y. (2005). Situational orientation in textual translation. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 26(2), 77-83.
- Lu, F. (2010). The afterlife of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*: Three English translations of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*. *Translation Review*, 80(1), 25-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07374836.2010.10524028>
- Pan, W. M. (2005). Aesthetic rationale of scenic translation variations. *Journal of Questing and Exploring*, (8), 32-35.
- Shen, F. (Author), & Lin, Y. T. (Translator). (2008). *Six chapters of a floating life* (Bilingual ed.). Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Wang, V. X. (2009). Pragmatic shifts in two translations of *Fusheng Liuji*: A descriptive study of request behaviour. *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*, 21(2), 209-234. DOI:10.1075/target.21.2.01wan
- Wei, J. H. (2008). A dialogue of translation variation and feminism translation. *Journal of Dalian Maritime University*, (3), 31-32.
- Yang, L. (2007). *On translator subjectivity from the perspective of hermeneutics: A case study of Lin Yutang's English version of Six Chapters of a Floating Life* [Master's thesis, Central South University].
- Zhong, J. W. (2008). *The history of Chinese folk culture*. People's Publishing House.