

Translation and Interpretation of Two Tujia Folk Songs: *Plucking Stalks and Door to Door in the Same Street*

Wei Ying¹, Chen Kaiju^{2,3,*}

¹Business English Study, International Business English School, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

²Center of Business Culture and Philosophy of Culture, Institute of Hermeneutics, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

³Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Guangzhou, China

Email address:

1482083452@qq.com (Wei Ying), 200010931@oamail.gdufs.edu.cn (Chen Kaiju)

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: Enshi, a region where Tujia nationality have lived for generations, has bred rich ethnic cultural resources. As the main form of Tujia people's expressing their emotion and recording the changes of the times, folk songs perform a remarkable social and entertainment function in Tujia people's daily life. This article explores the translation and interpretation of Enshi Tujia folk songs "*Plucking Stalks*" and "*Door to Door in the Same Street*". Translations of the two folk songs are guided by Susan Bassnett's cultural translation theory with some translation strategies flexibly employed. Then, respective interpretation from a cultural perspective is presented. Love relationships between young men and women in the two songs are gradually revealed. Both songs extol that young men and women should fall in love at their most beautiful age. Furthermore, the interpretation of the first song offers us a window into the division of labour between men and women in traditional Chinese society, and the functions of lining words appearing in the second song are also carefully analyzed. At last, challenges and countermeasures in the translation process are discussed. This study of Tujia folk songs gives expression to the living status and language habits of Tujia people, and is expected to facilitate the understanding of the spiritual and cultural pursuits of Tujia nationality.

Keywords: Tujia Nationality, Folk Songs, Lining Words

1. Introduction

Each culture has certain qualities characterizing the nation's spiritual life accumulated over time, embodied in specific traditions and values. However, in the heyday of globalization, many features of ethnic group life get to lose their ethnic characteristics, and only art, especially musical art, remains national while retaining ethnic identity even under the influence of foreign cultures [1]. Native songs, native words, and native nature paintings are a preferred starting point to appreciate national and world cultural values [2-4]. Considering the narrowing of national specificity in culture, folk songs today are instrumental in strengthening national identity [5-6]. Folk songs are a form of art inextricably linked to life, created spontaneously and transmitted orally by

peasants living in the lower strata of agrarian civilization, according to their living environment, way of life, and feelings of their production practices. There are a wealth of minority cultures in China, and Tujia folk songs, with great cultural and artistic value, are one of the most representative and vibrant art forms in traditional Chinese culture. Tujia folk songs are rich in content and diverse in variety, including labor songs that show the labor scenes of Tujia ancestors, political songs that reflect the characteristics of the times, love songs that praise marriage and love, and ritual songs that present a strong flavor of life.

Tujia nationality, the eighth largest ethnic group of China, is an integral part of China's minorities with a population of more than eight million, the vast majority of whom inhabit central and southwest China, and Enshi Tujia people live

mainly in the high mountainous regions of the Wuling Mountains. Enshi, located in southwestern Hubei province, is home to 29 ethnic groups, including Tujia, Miao, Han, and Hui, etc. Varied eating habits, ceremonies, costumes, and folk legends make Enshi a colorful region. The relatively closed geographical and language environment shapes Enshi Tujia people's personality of active striving and struggling. Moreover, it also forms a folk-custom cultural circle with the Tujia style [7]. Singing and dancing are among the numerous accomplishments of the Tujia people. The moment people hear music coming out of their mouths, people will be shocked — it is loud and engaging. Apart from heavy work, Tujia ancestors, living in the mountains for a long time, had gotten used to entertaining themselves by singing, during which their behaviors were vividly presented. As well as a reflection of the social life and ethnic customs of Tujia people in different times, Enshi Tujia folk songs offer a window into the image, psychology, and personality characteristics of the nationality. Folk songs have lasted for thousands of years in Tujia people's life, and have developed together with Chinese national culture to the present day. However, during such an era of accelerating globalization, many minority cultures are losing their national characteristics or fading away due to inadequate attention and protection. Therefore, it is of great significance to preserve and promote our minority cultures under this context.

To make our colorful national culture better communicate with the world, achieve two-way exchanges between people from different countries, and better survive and develop in different cognitive contexts, the importance of cultural dissemination with translation as the medium must be fully recognized. Our country has put in an enormous amount of time and effort to organize translations of Chinese works in the hope of promoting Chinese culture to the world. For all that, translated works flourish in traditional Chinese cultural classics, such as the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*, or the more influential classical novels and modern novels. At the same time, translations of Chinese folk songs and folk culture are facing an imbalance, with very few achievements in the dissemination of folk culture appearing in the domestic market and foreign media. Compared with the import volume of foreign masterpieces and so on, China's traditional cultural output is so small, not to mention the folk songs as part of it. As a small step of preserving and promoting Tujia folk culture, this article focuses on cultural studies of two Tujia folk songs *Plucking Stalks* and *Door to Door in the Same Street*. Both contain rich and unique cultural connotations, present the love relationship between young men and women and celebrate the beauty of love. Hopefully, this study could do something for the inheritance of the essence of Tujia folk songs as national culture, and give expression to the living status, spiritual and cultural pursuits of the Tujia people. It is a simple act of preserving the Tujia folk songs before time could completely bury and erase them for the next generation to have a glimpse of a collection of cultural heritage.

2. Related Studies on the Translation of Chinese Folk Songs

2.1. Folk Songs

Folk songs are one of the important carriers of folk music, directly reflecting the history, social labor, customs, love and marriage, and daily life of a nation. They are an affectionate companion in people's lives, a helper in labor work, a weapon in social struggle, a tool for the exchange of feelings, the dissemination of knowledge, and entertainment and recreation, as well as a valuable source of information about the culture, history, society and folklore of a people. Especially among ethnic minorities with a short written history, folk songs are more like historical books. Wang Hongyin suggested in his *Chinese Folk Songs and Their English Translation* that "Folk songs are the source of national literature and also of literary translation" and that "Translations of folk songs can be incorporated into the treasure house of national cultural classics" [8]. The earliest recorded translation of Chinese folk songs into English can be traced to 1804, when John Barrow, then secretary to the first British ambassador to China, translated "Jasmine Flower"¹ into English in his book "Travels in China". Hitherto, the English translation of Chinese folk songs has been in existence for 217 years.

2.2. The Translation of Chinese Folk Songs

During the translation process, how to reproduce the connotation and style of folk songs in another language form is a problem that every translator cannot overlook. According to Gou Bin [9], "The translation of folk songs is a special kind of music and literature translation involving many interdisciplinary disciplines with strong professionalism and technicality. The particularity of folk songs lies in the fact that they are a vocal art with a deep ethnic and regional character in which music and dialects intertwine. The translation of folk songs is an attempt to translate the lyrics into another language and to enable them to be sung again with the original music with the same effect as the original song and, at the same time, the melody of the music generated in the dialect identity remains unchanged". The foundation for a culture to go global is that the content it promotes can be understood by the audience, and the translation is truly effective only if the content can be accepted and read by readers in the target language. The translation of Tujia folk songs is both artistic and literary, comparable to the translation of poetry, and is even more demanding in that in terms of rhythm it needs to be matched with the melody, and in meaning with the original words. Du Zhengming held the view that lyrics translation is strategically different from general poetry translation. In the translating process, particular attention should be paid to the contradiction of preserving the meaning of the original text and the harmonious rhythm of the translated text [10].

1 The fragrance of jasmine wafts abroad: The first Chinese Folk Song "Jasmine Flower" spread abroad. [EB/ OL]. <http://www.myscore.org/162.htm>.

Combining the translation of folk song lyrics with cultural dissemination prevailing these days would also mean a lot for the exchange of our precious minority cultures with the world. It's necessary to view the present situation and development of Chinese folk songs from the perspective of communication science and explore the communication laws of music to endow the dissemination of Chinese folk songs with contemporary characteristics [11]. It's also possible to explain the inheritance and evolution of Chinese folk songs in terms of natural spreading and technical spreading, and analysis can be made of the development and changes in the way contemporary folk songs are transmitted [12]. Moreover, translating folk song lyrics to the point of cultural facsimile based on the functionalist approach is also prevalent. The three elements of meaning, manner, and style that the original language is intended to convey could be accurately reproduced from a cultural semantic perspective [13]. To achieve the goal of cultural facsimile, the translator should take into account the intention of the original author, the purpose of the translator, the level of the target language readers, and many other aspects, that is, to seek common ground while reserving differences to convey the key cultural implications of the original text and reproduce the cultural charm carried by the original language. The translation of folk songs is a synthesis of various knowledge from the humanities, social sciences to natural sciences, and Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence put forward in *The Theory and Practice of Translation* could be employed to achieve functional equivalence between the two languages [14].

According to Susan Basnett's cultural translation theory, the translator should not constrain himself to the form of the original text, but try to explore the cultural connotations contained in the lyrics so that the target text could perform the same functions in its culture as the source text, thus achieving the equivalence of cultural functions. Basnett holds that the equivalence in translation is not the pursuit of exact equivalence between the source language and the target one, but equivalence of cultural functions. The cultural functional equivalence is divided by Basnett into three themes: Firstly, in the translating process, the translator must clearly understand the cultural correlations between the two languages, and consider whether the translation is compatible with the language environment and cultural background in which it is located; Besides, the translator cannot only pursue linguistic correspondence between the two languages but should manage to achieve their equivalence in culture; Moreover, whether the cultural functions of the two languages are compatible will exert a great influence on whether the audience in both sides will feel the same way and whether they can resonate to each other. Based on the views above, this paper, guided by Susan Basnett's cultural translation theory, flexibly uses some strategies to translate the two Tujia folk songs.

3. Translations and Interpretations of the Two Folk Songs

In this part, translations of the two songs *Plucking Stalks* and *Door to Door in the Same Street* are presented first, and then respective interpretations are provided for better understanding of the songs.

3.1. *Plucking Stalks*²

Chinese Version

qiācāitāi
掐菜苔
jiēzài yā nà gè hòuyuán nā qiā
姐在呀那个后园哪掐
yācāitāiyā
呀菜苔呀
shānshàng dǎ xià nà lián huā lǐ lǐ
山上打下那莲花溜溜
ér méi huā lǐ lǐ ér
儿梅花溜溜儿
sì jì huā ér kāi yā shí yā shí
四季花儿开呀石呀石
tóu ér lái yā
头儿来呀
yáng liǔ ē r qīng qīng
杨柳儿青青
guā zǐ luò huā shēng shēng
瓜子落花生
qīng cài luò bō yīn yīn
青菜萝卜荫荫
luó bō qié chéng dūn dūn
萝卜切成墩墩
dīng zhēn jìn shì kēng kēng
顶针尽是坑坑
āi āi yào qí zāi hǎo guài āi yā
哎哎哟奇哉好怪哉呀

English Translation

Plucking Stalks

The girl's (ah) plucking (ah)
stalks (ah) in the backyard (ah).

Lotus petals and plum blossoms
in hills fell shiny'n sheeny.

With seasonal flowers blooming,
when's the stone³ coming?

Willows are thriving.

Seeds'n groundnuts are ready.

Greens'n radish leaves tasty.

Radishes are well diced.

The thimble's full of pits.

Ooh ooh yo! Amusing!
Amazing!

3.1.1. *Love Relationship Between Young Men and Women*

This song typically depicts a scene in which a young girl, in the stage of the onset of puberty, is plucking stalks in the backyard and is longing to see her beloved from whom she can't take her mind. "Yangchun" in March⁴, when stalks are most fresh and tender, young girls would go to the backyard to pluck them back for cooking. In late spring, the weather is getting warmer and there is more rain. The willows are burgeoning, and a multitude of flowers on the mountain are in full blossom, filling the air with fragrance. With spring rain beating on the flowers and the wind blowing, the ground is full of brilliant fallen flowers, a feeling of romance naturally comes out. Seeing this picture, the feeling of love may secretly ripple in the boys' and girls' hearts. Lining words "lotus petals" and "plum blossoms" are employed to refer to the flower-like girl, very lively. How about the boy? The line "when is the stone coming?" is actually a description of the psychological activities of the girl. "Stone" here is used to allude to the girl's beloved one, since the boy normally shares the strong and tough features of a stone. After an appreciation

2 The stalk is a major food product of Flowering Chinese cabbage, which is a subspecies of Chinese cabbage originally from Southern China that is now planted throughout the country, due to increasing consumer demand.

3 The stone symbolizes the girl's beloved.

4 March of the lunar calendar, the last month of spring. It's a season when diverse pretty flowers fall everywhere after the spring rain and spring wind.

of the charming sight in front of her, the girl is eager for her sweetheart to come.

The next three lines describe what has been going on in the girl's mind. She is planning to do some preparations for entertaining her special one whom she has been mooning over. Sunflower/Melon seeds and groundnuts, traditional Chinese snacks for guests, will be prepared first, "When he comes, we could eat and talk." Vegetables are really common foods, however, if served with radish leaves, they would become an appetizing dish, "Vegetable and radish leaves will be washed in advance so that I could cook for him immediately after talk." Moreover, the girl would cut radishes into dices and plans to stew them with meat, which will undoubtedly make a mouthwatering main course. You may think that there is nothing special about braising meat with radishes, but this dish is actually a delicacy in the isolated and backward village. The deep-seated love of the girl is not hard to be seen from such detailed preparation. Then, the lyrics "The thimble is full of pits" present us a picture of the girl engrossing herself in needlework. When sewing, women generally wear a thimble to protect themselves from getting hurt. Unfortunately, it's still inevitable for their hands to be pierced. A girl's affection for her beloved is revealed in every stitch and curve. The last sentence tells of the girl's surprise and bewilderment at how come she has been thinking of the boy all day, "So weird, how can I think about this all day long?" It seems that the spring breeze has blown the girl's heart.

Influenced by traditional Chinese culture, men and women tend to express their love in an implicit manner. Nevertheless, you can tell at a glance how much the girl loves and misses the boy after the picture of her preparing hearty food and sewing clothes and insoles for him is presented in front of you. It's actually more impressive than speech that any use of words seems to be a bit redundant.

3.1.2. The Division of Labor Between Men and Women

In traditional Chinese society, men take the role of managing external affairs and women internal, that is, men are responsible for making money and socializing outside the house, while women take care of the family from children, parents to housework. Today, with the acceleration of social evolution, there have been impressive changes in the division between men and women, yet the traditional pattern in rural areas is still prevalent. When the matchmaker introduces a man and a woman to each other, the parents of the two families will take their son or daughter to meet for the first time followed up with some aspects of observations. There are quite a few household skills to be examined, among which the ability of the woman to sew and cook is highly valued. The man's parents will even taste the woman's cooking at the dinner table, check whether the family's livestock is full or growling out of hunger, so as to have a knowledge that whether she is virtuous or not.

People in those days were generally poor, and it was too extravagant to buy or make new clothes. Traditionally, except for major festivals when there might be a suit of new clothes, clothes worn at other times are normally patched. Therefore, if

some parts of the clothes are torn and not mended in time, they may be worn out within a few days, if mended in time, the life span of the clothes may fortunately be extended. This may be a good explanation for why the housewife's ability to sew is of such great significance. In social interaction or in public space, if any of the family member appears with a ragged dirty look, the housewife will be embarrassed. While if the child suffers from starvation or can't afford to go to school, the father's face will definitely be lost.

The ability to sew is one of the basic qualities for young girls, for needlework is a part of the essential housework to the family members as well as to the future boyfriend or husband, because she must make several pairs of shoes for her boyfriend before marriage: insoles and seasonal shoes—cotton-padded shoes in winter and cloth shoes in other seasons. These are the most basic expressions of affection that a girl can have for her sweetheart. "The thimble is full of pits" here is a symbolic use, because any piece of sewing work is so time-consuming, which is a result of enduring effort and time invested. When doing this work, the girl is absorbed. Maybe the clothes or insoles are also embroidered with a blooming peony, a flying magpie⁵, and even a pair of mandarin ducks⁶. So the work itself shows her devotion, her tenderness, her emotional sustenance, and even her hope that his beloved could appreciate her intentions and hurry to marry her home.

3.2. Door to Door in the Same Street

Chinese Version

duiménduìhù ài duì tiáojiē

对门对户对条街

duiménduìhù ài duì tiáojiē ā yē

对门对户哎对条街啊也

lángmén āi yē duì dào ā yē

郎门哎也对到啊也

jiě yī āi mén yē kāi yē

姐衣哎门也开也

duiménduìhù ài duì tiáojiē yē

对门对户哎对条街也

lángmén duì dào jiě mén kāi yē

郎门对到姐门开也

zǎochén dào ài láng xǐ liǎn luó āi

早晨对到哎郎洗脸罗哎

wǎnshàng ài duì dào yē jiě tuō xié yē

晚上哎对到也姐脱鞋也

láng xǐ liǎn lái yē jiě tuō xié yē

郎洗脸来也姐脱鞋也

nǐ hé bù ā hé bù ā

你何不啊 何不啊

hé bù bān zài yā yī gè wū lǐ lái yē

何不搬在呀一个屋里来也

duiménduìhù ài duì tiáojiē ā yī yē

对门对户哎对条街啊衣也

lángmén duì dào jiě yī āi mén yē kāi yē

郎门对到姐衣哎门也开也

English Translation

Door to Door in the Same Street

We live door to door in the same street (ah-yeah).

My door is wide open (ah-yeah).

Till you (yeah) open yours (yeah).

We live door to door in the same street (yeah).

My door's open till yours too (yeah).

You see me washing face at dawn (lo-ai).

I see you taking off shoes at night (yeah).

Me washing face (yeah), your shoes off (yeah).

Why not (ah), why not come (ah).

Why not come (ah) and live together (lai-yeah).

We live door to door in the same street (ah-yeah).

My door's open till you (yeah) open yours (yeah).

5 Peony and magpie have auspicious implications in Chinese traditional culture.

6 Since mandarin ducks always appear in pairs, they are considered a symbol of happy and unswerving love by Chinese.

zǎochénduìdào ài lǎng x liǎnlúo ài
早晨对到哎郎洗脸罗哎

wǎnshàng ài duìdào yě jiě tuō xié yě
晚上哎对到也姐脱鞋也

lǎng x liǎnlái yě jiě tuō xié yě
郎洗脸来也姐脱鞋也

nǐ hé bù ā hé bù ā
你何不啊 何不啊

hé bù bān zài yā yī gè wū lǐ lái yě
何不搬在呀一个屋里来也

duì mén duì hù ài duì tiáo jiē ā yī yě
对门对户哎对条街啊衣也

lǎng mén duì dào jiě yī tǎ ài mén yě kāi yě
郎门对到姐衣哎门也开也

You see me washing face at dawn (lo-ai).

I see you taking off shoes at night (yeah).

Me washing face (yeah), your shoes off (yeah).

Why not (ah), why not come (ah).

Why not come (ah) and live together (lai-yeah).

We live door to door in the same street (ah-yeah).

My door is open till you (yeah) open yours (yeah).

3.2.1. Love Relationship Between Young Men and Women

Traditionally, people living in small towns in the mountains are small businessmen who struggle to support their families by running a store. Their houses also function as stores in which they live and make a living. They are poor since they could barely make a profit margin from their small businesses.

This song extols that young men and women should fall in love at their most beautiful age. Both the boy and the girl of this song were born and bred in this small town. They have lived door to door in the same street for so long, but were too young to think of love before. Now, however, since they are at the age of romance and marriage, their hearts inside could not forbear from concerning about each other, but they are afraid that their minds would be read by others. Although they have mutual feelings about each other, they could not express them with other people watching. They can only sneak a few glances at each other through the window or standing at the door in their respective homes. Early in the morning if opening the door to see the boy, the girl will look down shyly in two seconds, and the two dare not look at each other for a long time. Even the daily routine of washing face and taking off shoes can make both of them feel happy. The profound influence of traditional Confucian culture on the mountain people can be perceived with such creeds as “self-restraint and returning to rites” and “see no evil” being reflected in the boy’s singing as well as the unfolding of the plot. “How sweet it would be if we could live together”. The man can’t wait to marry his beloved home.

In the old days, girls in the mountains just read for two or three years aimlessly to show that they have learned a few words and have been able to write their own names. Then, they would drop out of school to help out at home, such as cleaning, cooking, selling goods, and charging customers. The same is about true for boys, after finishing primary school, they would go back to help their families. By the age of 13 to 15, they begin to experience physical development, and they will look at each other secretly out of curiosity. This is also the time for strict discipline at home. But when they are 17 or so, if parents of both sides have perceived their affection for each other, then the parents will start to communicate about this matter. Yet, after the woman’s parents have given hints of their intentions, the man’s family must ask a matchmaker to bring it to the table if they want to take it seriously. When introduced

by a matchmaker, it’s generally about creating opportunities for the two sides to be together on a certain occasion from a wedding to a funeral, etc., on which a few people including the boy and the girl are organized together to chat or play cards. Only the boy can sneak a peek at the girl, and he has to look away immediately after a few glances. Even if the eyes of the boy and the girl are full of adoration, a blatant expression will lead to their being accused of poor parenting.

3.2.2. Lining Words in Chinese Folk Songs

In colorful Chinese folk songs, lining words serving as a foil for the lyrics are really a distinctive way of expression, which add a strong expressive force and charming glamour to Chinese folk songs. In addition to the content words directly expressing the meaning of the song, lining words, composed of modal particles, pictophonetic characters, homophonic words, and appellations, are employed to endow the song with more expressive force. Most of the lining words have no direct connection with the content words, and they are not included in the basic sentence patterns. There are even many words that are still inexplicable, but once sung with content words, they will be an integral part of the entire song and raw emotions will be revealed. In a sense, lining words can bring boundless feelings even the song has come to its end. The role of lining words in Chinese folk songs is to spotlight the atmosphere, express emotions, or do a kind of foreshadowing in between the lyrics and melody. Taking phonology into consideration, the combination of words also has the requirement of rhythms and jingles. If the melody is removed, reading the lyrics alone, you may feel that the lyrics are not catchy at all, and even somewhat funny in the aesthetic sense. But once the tune is combined, it feels that they are so close to and blend in with each other, and the whole work is enriched. This aesthetics is peculiar to Chinese folk songs in art.

Every sentence in this song is distributed with lining words, all of which are modal particles. There are monosyllabic lining words “yeah and ah”, and polysyllabic ones “ah-yeah, lo-ai, lai-yeah” in this song, which are located in the middle or at the end of the sentence. Of the 19 lyrics, 15 sentences are ended with the ling word “yeah”, which has contributed to the strengthening of the end rhyme. Moreover, when inserted in a sentence, lining words can act as a word association, such as “yeah” in the third sentence, and “ah” in the ninth and tenth sentences. This is in line with the requirement that the words in a sentence are closely connected and are mutually supported. If there is no bridge in between, a feeling of no transition between words or sentences will come out, and the singer will feel that some of the words are awkward and the beauty of the whole song will surely be undermined. Besides, lining words also help to bring into full play the expressiveness of the song. As well as reinforcing the theme and enriching content words, lining words can announce the inner activities of the hero in a nuanced manner that are hard to express by content words. The whole song expresses the man’s pursuit of a love life through a narrative technique in a simple and concise style, which is unremarkable. The employment of lining words, however, has managed to reveal

the indescribable inner activities of the man at a great length.

4. Challenges and Countermeasures in the Translation Process

The first essential of translation is to convey information, so the translation and the original text should be as similar as possible in content, form and style. Unfortunately, due to the differences between the two cultures, complete equivalence is hard to achieve. The following are the challenges we countered in translating the two Enshi Tujia folk songs, and also details of the countermeasures.

Chinese is a monosyllabic tonal language, where a word is a syllable, whereas English is polysyllabic. When translating English or other western languages into Chinese, there is a problem of insufficient syllables, which will make the notes miss. Correspondingly, when translating Chinese into English, there is a problem of too many syllables. Such a conflict between music and translated words is sometimes so intense that it is tough or even impossible to reconcile and resolve. For example, in *Door to Door in the Same Street*, the fifth syllable “哎” (āi) in the lyrics “对门对户哎对条街啊衣也” (duì mén duì hù duì tiáo jiē ā yī yě) was not translated for the sake of correspondence in syllables between the translation and the original, and the last two syllables “衣也” (yī yě) were translated into a syllable “yeah” with similar pronunciation. Another example, the last line of *Plucking Stalks*, “哎哎哟奇哉好怪哉呀” (āi āi yō qí zāi hǎo guài zāi yā), apart from the three modal particles at the beginning, two words “Amusing” and “Amazing” were selected for the remaining six syllables, achieving both alliteration and end rhyme. Such handling not only makes the translation harmonious and natural, in line with the rhythm of English poetry but also flexibly reproduces the emotional effect in the original text.

A distinctive linguistic feature of Tujia folk songs is the extensive use of lining words. Since the Tujia language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman languages under the Sino-Tibetan family, but Tujia nationality basically use Chinese characters. Therefore, the modal particles in the lyrics are combined with the unique lyrical expressions of Tujia nationality and the writing system of Chinese characters. The lyrics present the distinctive artistic color from melody, rhythm to dialectal characteristics, which are successfully displayed through the extensive use of lining words, particularly modal particles, reinforcing the context, sublimating the feelings, as well as enlivening the atmospheres [15]. Nevertheless, the use of these vivid modal particles is often the difficulty in faithful translation and interpretation. There are a large number of lining words in *Door to Door in the Same Street*, all of which are modal particles. Considering that the translation of lining words must convey both the message and the context, the use of transliteration is a good choice, since it enables the sense of rhythm to be directly reproduced. Moreover, to create the dynamic effect the same as the original, corresponding adjustments need to be made. For example, the modal words

“啊” (ā), “也” (yě), “啊也” (ā yě), “罗哎” (luó ài), “来也” (lái yě) in *Door to Door in the Same Street* were all transliterated phonetically and contextually as “ah”, “yeah”, “ah-yeah”, “lo-ai” and “lai-yeah”.

The third challenge in translating the two folk songs is the requirement of the lyrics to be catchy, that is, the translated version should be able to be sung along with the music by the audience of the target language, so as to meet Xu Yuanchong's “Three Beauties Principle” — preciseness in sense, beauty in sound, and accuracy in form. For instance, some words and sentences that rhyme are normally found in folk songs. To have the flavor of the original text reproduced and the song been easy to sing, a certain form of rhyme can be adopted in the translating process. And the rhymes do not necessarily have to be identical to the prosody of the original text, which is too hard to succeed, but can be changed appropriately. It's favorable for the translator to rhyme at the end of the lyrics while trying to get the meaning across [16]. For example, the second, fifth, and sixth sentences in *Plucking Stalks* have the end rhyme [i], and the third, fourth, and ninth sentences have the end rhyme [ŋ]. And all the rhymes in *Door to Door in the Same Street* are achieved through lining words, which will not be elaborated here.

The final challenge is to take into account the cultural connotation of the original language. Often, the derivative and connotative meaning of some words cannot be translated incisively and vividly, resulting in a certain degree of “cultural distortion”. For the culture of the source language to be accurately reproduced and the cultural differences to be eliminated, the translator should first reproduce the culture of the source language to the maximum extent. For instance, in *Plucking Stalks*, when translating the word “stone” in the third line “when's the stone coming?”, literal translation and annotation were adopted to preserve the cultural connotation of the source language. Another example is that the word “姐” (jiě) appears in both the two folk songs, which normally means “older sister” in Chinese, but in Tujia nationality, it generally refers to a young, unmarried girl, therefore, it was translated into “girl” to retain the cultural connotation of the source language. When meaning and culture cannot be taken into account at the same time, the translator can abandon the equivalence of form and reproduce the culture by changing the form of the original text. For example, the sentence “石呀石头儿来呀” (shí yā shí tóu ér lái yā) in *Plucking Stalks* is actually a declarative sentence, but if insisting on translating in the original form, the intended meaning will be difficult to convey. Therefore, a question was used to express the young girl's looking forward to the arrival of her sweetheart. Finally, if the change in form is still insufficient to express the semantics and culture of the original, creative translation can be employed to resolve the cultural differences, so as to achieve an equivalence in meaning between the source language and the target one. Examples are the words “奇” (qí) and “怪” (guài) in the last sentence of *Plucking Stalks*, which, if translated literally will be the word “strange”. However, after understanding the meaning of the whole text, we'll find that it expresses the young girl's surprise at thinking of her

beloved all day long and finding herself very funny, so the words “Amusing” and “Amazing” were selected and the exclamation mark was used to reinforce the emotion.

Ideally, translating should be a cross-cultural communication activity so as to achieve the goal of cultural dissemination. Translation should be rooted in the soil of the two cultures. During the translating process, cultural differences must be taken into full account, and ambiguities caused by cultural differences or misunderstandings due to inaccurate translations should be avoided or eliminated as much as possible. Sometimes, it is not advisable to lay too much emphasis on the exact equivalence of information, because literal translation sometimes will result in a rigid one. On the other hand, the in-depth communication between two cultures needs to be handled flexibly. The translator, an ambassador of cultural communication, can exert a certain degree of initiative to regenerate the connotation of one culture in another new cultural context, thus achieving the equivalence of meaning at the level of cultural exchange.

5. Conclusion

Minority folk songs are a valuable tool for the nationality to inherit their own culture and construct their cultural identity. Through singing songs, ethnic minorities could communicate their feelings, engage in social interaction, establish and maintain social relationships, and present their own ways of existence. Functioning on the modern stage, minority folk songs provide a foundation for the development and modernization of new forms of musical culture and can be transmitted to the descendants as a heritage. As an effective way of cross-cultural communication, Tujia folk songs in western Hubei province, essentially a cultural symbol and a form of cultural representation, may mean a lot to the current study of minority cultures, and related translations are of practical significance and inspiration in facilitating the understanding and learning of Chinese minority literature and culture. It's obligatory to introduce such a splendid national culture to the world, which will undoubtedly advance the inheritance and development of various ethnic cultures in China [17].

Yet, we would like to draw attention to the fact that the role of language within a culture and the influence of the culture on meanings of words and idioms are so pervasive that can scarcely make any text be adequately understood without careful consideration of its cultural background [18]. Be that as it may, we still have the ambition to do all we can to present the best possible English translations and interpretations of the two Enshi Tujia folk songs. Guided by Susan Bassnett's theory of cultural translation, this paper flexibly combines transliteration, literal translation, and liberal translation in the translation process, taking into account the characteristics of Enshi Tujia folk songs. While ensuring the transmission of the cultural flavor of the source language, we try to use expressions that are easily accepted by the readers of the target language, maintaining the cultural elements as far as possible without confusing the understanding of the readers, so as to

achieve the best translation and dissemination effect.

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