

A Comparative Study of Ironic Language Translation in Two English Translations of *Kong Yi Ji* from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

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ABSTRACT: The short novel *Kong Yiji*, written by the esteemed litterateur Lu Xun, serves as the second vernacular novel following his work "A Madman's Diary." In this book, Lu Xun employs satire to not only depict social reality through irony but also satirize it from the perspective of others. Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory, considered a fundamental principle in human communication, introduces cognitive pragmatics and emphasizes natural language communication and cognition.

This paper conducts a comparative analysis of the satire found in Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's translation of Lu Xun's novel *Kong Yiji* with that of Julia Lovell, a British translator and sinologist. It is observed that within the framework of relevance theory, different translators make strategic choices based on their distinct translation purposes and target audiences.

KEYWORDS: relevance theory, *Kong Yiji*, satire, translation

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I. INTRODUCTION

Lu Xun's *Kong Yiji* is a highly representative short story in the history of modern Chinese literature, and is considered one of the most satirical works in his collection. Through the portrayal of *Kong Yiji*, Lu Xun exposes the profound impact of the feudal imperial examination system on the Chinese intellectual class. The story criticizes the hypocrisy, self-deception, and pedantry often associated with scholars, making *Kong Yiji* a classic in Chinese literary history. As Zhu Shoutong, head of the Chinese Department at the University of Macau, remarked: "Through decades of inclusion in school textbooks and other means, *Kong Yiji* has entered the hearts of most Chinese people, deeply influenced the ideological views of generations and quietly transformed the spirit of many." This observation highlights not only the significance of the story in education and cultural dissemination but also its profound impact on Chinese societal thought and cultural values.

In recent years, the term "Kong Yiji's long gown" has become a trending topic online, sparking renewed discussions and reflections on the character of *Kong Yiji*. This phenomenon demonstrates that *Kong Yiji*, despite being a work from the early 20th century, still enjoys high levels of public interest and cultural relevance. The character has transcended the literary text, becoming a symbol in social and cultural discourse. This enduring interest indicates that Lu Xun's use of satire to depict the character's personal tragedy and societal issues has resonated across time, leaving a lasting and far-reaching impact on subsequent generations.

As one of Lu Xun's representative works, *Kong Yiji* employs a large number of sentences imbued with satirical meaning. These satirical expressions not only help characterize *Kong Yiji* but also reflect the author's critique of the imperial examination system and its detrimental effects. In the process of translating *Kong Yiji* into English, one major challenge for translators lies in how to effectively convey this deep sense of satire. Satirical language often contains not only literal meanings but also rich cultural connotations and emotional undertones. Therefore, during translation, translators must balance fidelity to the original text with the target reader's comprehension, aiming to preserve the satirical effect without causing misinterpretation.

This paper examines the English translations of *Kong Yiji* by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, as well as by British sinologist Julia Lovell. Using Relevance Theory as the analytical framework, we will conduct a detailed comparative analysis of the satirical language in these two translations. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang are renowned Chinese translators known for their faithful and fluent translation style, especially in the translation of classical Chinese literature into English. Julia Lovell, on the other hand, is a distinguished British sinologist and translator who has translated the works of many contemporary Chinese writers, including Lu Xun and Eileen Chang. Her translation of *The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun* was published by Penguin Classics and has received widespread acclaim.

Guided by Relevance Theory, this paper will delve into the strategies employed by the translators in handling satirical language, evaluating whether these strategies effectively convey the original satirical intent. We will also explore the reasons behind the translators' choices and the cultural considerations underlying these decisions. By comparing the two different translations, this study aims to reveal the approaches used in handling cultural differences and linguistic features in the English translation of Kong Yiji, and to better understand the similarities and differences in conveying the satirical effect of the original text. Additionally, this analysis seeks to shed light on how these choices impact the target readers' understanding and reception of the work.

II. Theoretical Framework

Relevance Theory

In their 1995 work *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Sperber and Wilson proposed the theory of relevance from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, which is a new theory in the field of pragmatics. They argue that both human verbal and non-verbal communication are cognitive activities and emphasize the process of explicit reasoning in communication. In communicative activities, the speaker expresses their communicative intentions through 'explicitness,' while the listener identifies the speaker's intentions through 'inference' in conjunction with the context^[1].

Relevance is an indispensable core element in all communicative activities. Even in some utterances that appear to lack any relevance on the surface, there may still be deep, underlying connections. These implicit connections are not always obvious and require the listener to employ reasoning, association, background knowledge, and other cognitive strategies to identify and understand them. This process of inferential recognition is not only a common phenomenon in language communication but also reflects the complexity and subtlety of human cognition. The theory of relevance sheds light on this aspect, providing crucial theoretical support for our understanding of the nature of linguistic communication and the challenges in translation practice. Hence, "relevance is not a simple binary concept but rather a matter of degree"^[2].

Relevance Theory and Translation

The relevance theory is closely related to translation. It emphasizes the creation of context, while the translation process is accompanied by cultural exchange. Within the framework of relevance theory, translation can achieve deeper levels of communication, truly embodying the principles of 'faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance' in translation^[3].

In 1991, Ernst-August Gutt, a student of Sperber and Wilson, published 'Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context,' in which he introduced the 'Relevance Theory of Translation' for the first time. He argued that relevance theory has strong explanatory power for translation and suggested that 'the Relevance Theory of Translation accomplishes the task of dynamic equivalence by identifying communicative intentions'^[4]. **Error!**
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Satirical Language

The satirical language, a gem in literary rhetoric, typically employs an array of techniques such as metaphor and exaggeration to conduct profound and incisive exposure and criticism of people or matters. It resembles a sharp dagger, precisely delineating those adversarial or backward subjects through satire, leaving their ugly aspects exposed. Satire often encompasses a unique linguistic allure. It can transform any expression, be it jest or wrath, into a literary piece, being both humorous and caustic, enabling people to feel the force of criticism within laughter. The semantic implications often artfully simulate authenticity, rendering the entire expression perplexing and fraught with elusive connotations, which precisely constitutes the source of potential misunderstandings associated with irony^[5].

Lu Xun, this eminent literary luminary and thinker, at a significant juncture in his life, resolutely forsook the path of medicine and ventured into literary creation. He avowed that the purpose of his novel-writing was not merely for the pursuit of art but rather for the amelioration of life and the awakening of the populace. Consequently, his creative inspiration flowed like an unceasing spring, continuously drawn from the unfortunate masses at the grassroots of society. His aim was to, through the might of words, disclose the various misery and injustices of society and arouse profound concern for change.

To fulfill this noble objective, Lu Xun employed a multiplicity of artistic approaches in his literary works, endowing them with both depth and vividness. Among them, his novel *Kong Yiji* distinguishes itself with its distinctive artistic charm and has emerged as a classic in the annals of Chinese literature. The most salient feature of this work lies in its ingenious utilization of contrast and ironic techniques, which etch the character of Kong Yiji with remarkable depth.

Kong Yiji, an intellectual figure from the bygone society, was both a scholar deeply fettered by feudal culture and a tragic individual unable to sustain himself and ultimately reduced to a victim of society. Through the character of Kong Yiji, Lu Xun profoundly revealed the tragic fate of intellectuals in the old society and the

devastation and distortion of human nature inflicted by feudal culture. Simultaneously, through his satirical strokes, he forcefully criticized those insensitive and apathetic onlookers, further highlighting the callousness and injustice of society.

III. *Kong Yiji*

Kong Yiji is a short story written by Lu Xun and one of his masterpieces. The novel is set in Shanghai during the late Qing Dynasty in China, and through the story of the main character, *Kong Yiji*, it shows the tragic fate of the characters at the bottom of society and the sadness of human nature.

The Introduction of *Kong Yiji*

Lu Xun's early 20th-century short novel *Kong Yiji* (孔乙己) takes place at the conclusion of China's Late Qing Dynasty, a time of social unrest and turmoil marked by governmental chaos, stark social inconsistencies, and the suffering of the populace. One of the most sophisticated and internationalized cities in China at the time, Shanghai, is where the narrative is set. There, social stratification is evident, the difference between the rich and the poor is large, and the people at the bottom of the social scale lead difficult lives.

Lu Xun's literary creation has always been characterized by a strong sense of social responsibility and a critical spirit. He hoped to reveal the shortcomings of society, call for reforms, and arouse people's thoughts and reflections through his literary works, so works such as *Kong Yiji* also contain such ideological tendencies and literary pursuits of his.

Lu Xun's writing techniques are colorful and ever-changing. Since its publication, *Kong Yi Ji* has received widespread attention and has been translated into English by a number of scholars and translators. Including the earliest translation by Lu Xun's friend Zhao Erxun (Evan King) in 1922, Lu Xun's work began to be more widely translated into English by the 1940s. In *Selections from World Literature*, Ding Ling translated the novel, entitled *Kong Yiji*. This version allowed *Kong Yiji* to become more familiar to Western readers. This version made *Kong Yiji* more widely known to Western readers, followed by the later translations by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang and the translation by the British sinologist Julia Lovell, which is the one chosen for this article.

Ironic Languages in *Kong Yiji*

Kong Yiji is a quintessential character created by Lu Xun in his story *Kong Yiji*, symbolizing a scholar who was shackled by the feudal imperial examination system and unable to achieve self-sufficiency. Throughout his life, *Kong Yiji* pursues fame and fortune but fails to pass the imperial examination and ultimately finds himself marginalized by society to become a poor and destitute intellectual. Although he holds the status of a scholar and possesses a small amount of knowledge, he never transforms it into practical skills for earning a living. Instead, he remains bound by the constraints of the examination system, leading a life of hardship and forced to survive by copying texts for a pittance.

Lu Xun's meticulous portrayal of *Kong Yiji* brings his satirical art to a pinnacle. *Kong Yiji* often considers himself superior. He not only refuses to associate with the lower-class laborers and even looking down upon other nobodies but also regards himself as above them. However, his sense of superiority is, in reality, full of pedantry and self-deception, making him both laughable and pitiable. In Lu Xun's depiction, *Kong Yiji's* "nobility" is, in essence, a tragic attachment to the feudal examination system, which has become the source of his disconnection from reality. He lives in a self-created illusion, firmly believing that achieving fame and success will one day restore his dignity and social standing; yet, for him, such a hope is nothing more than a mirage.

In terms of character, *Kong Yiji* does have kindness, occasionally sharing knowledge with children and even explaining the meaning of words to others. However, Lu Xun's portrayal is imbued with irony: this kindness does not stem from genuine compassion but rather from a desire to showcase his "learning"—a means of consoling his fragile sense of self-worth. *Kong Yiji's* kindness is less about goodwill and more about a showy vanity that underscores his tragic nature. Through the character of *Kong Yiji*, Lu Xun critiques the alienation wrought by the feudal examination system, satirizing the hollow pride in "knowledge" that holds no real substance. *Kong Yiji* ultimately becomes a victim of the feudal system and a symbol of its tragic consequences.

The author conveys satirical meaning from multiple angles in his portrayal of *Kong Yiji*.

As reflected in the text, *Kong Yiji's* sense of superiority is a key aspect of his character. For example, despite lacking formal education, he considers himself above others and prefers to keep to himself. Though he is often starving, he refuses to part with his tattered long gown and takes pride in his knowledge of a few obscure and useless characters. He even feels superior simply because he considers himself a "learned man." When others mock him, he tries to defend himself by saying: "How can you tarnish someone's reputation out of thin air?" and when someone asked him: "Do you really know how to read?" He, however, displayed a look of disdain, unwilling to argue. Meanwhile, he clings to the moral principle of "君子固穷"^[6]. (despite living in poverty, one must maintain the demeanor of a gentleman)

Such as *Kong Yiji's* pedantic and laughable nature, for instance, when he didn't answer but instead said to the shopkeeper, "Warm two bowls of wine, and a dish of fennel beans," and then placed nine coins on the

counter. They deliberately shouted loudly, "You must have stolen something again!" Kong Yiji widened his eyes and said, "How can you tarnish someone's reputation out of thin air..." Kong Yiji's words are distinctive; he often argues over the most obvious facts, frequently using formal, antiquated expressions, which leave a strong impression. When he gave fennel beans to the children, he had a classic line: "不多不多! 多乎哉? 不多也。"^[7] These pedantic phrases reflect his narrow, outdated character.

There is also the bullying and humiliation from his fellow scholars who had passed the imperial exams; the mocking from the shop's patrons; the confinement imposed by Confucian thought; and the indifference of society, all of which are deeply ironic.

IV. Comparative Analysis

This section will analyze the English translations of *Kong Yiji* by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, as well as the translation by Blue Shi-ling, through the lens of relevance theory. The main focus of this analysis will be to compare and contrast selected satirical passages from *Kong Yiji* across these different translations.

Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, both highly esteemed Chinese translators, have played a pivotal role in introducing classic Chinese literature to English-speaking audiences. Their collaborative translations include complete works such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* and *The Scholars*, two of China's most significant historical novels. These translations have received widespread acclaim internationally, helping to shape the perception of Chinese literary classics in the West. In 1981, Yang Xianyi and his wife, Gladys Yang, co-translated Lu Xun's famous collection *Call to Arms*, which included the vernacular novel *Kong Yiji*. Their translation is notable for maintaining the integrity of Lu Xun's original style while making the text accessible to foreign readers.

Julia Lovell, a renowned British sinologist, translator, and columnist, is another significant figure in the translation of Chinese literature. She has translated works by notable Chinese authors such as Lu Xun and Zhang Ailing into English, receiving widespread praise from Western readers. Julia Lovell once commented that "Lu Xun is the Chinese writer who embodies the spirit of both Dickens and Joyce^[8]," a reflection of the complexity and depth she sees in his work. Her translation of *The Complete Novels of Lu Xun* was published by Penguin Books, a major British publisher, and was included in the prestigious Penguin Classics series. This translation was groundbreaking in that it provided the first complete English rendering of all 33 of Lu Xun's novels, offering Western readers an extensive introduction to one of China's most influential literary figures^[9].

By comparing these translations of *Kong Yiji*, this section will examine how each translator handles the satirical nature of the text. Through the application of relevance theory, we will explore how the translators' choices reflect their understanding of the cultural, social, and linguistic nuances in Lu Xun's original work. Special attention will be paid to how satire, irony, and humor are conveyed differently in the translations and how these differences may impact readers' interpretation of the text. In doing so, we will gain insights into the challenges of translating cultural and linguistic nuances while maintaining the integrity and tone of the original work.

The following examples will use "Translation 1" to represent the version by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, and "Translation 2" to represent the version by Julia Lovell.

Example 1:

Original text: 他对人说话，总是满口之乎者也，教人半懂不懂的。

Translation 1: He used so many archaisms in his speech, it was impossible to understand half he said.

Translation 2: His speech was so dusty with classical constructions you could barely understand him.

‘之乎者也’ is a way of speaking commonly used by educated individuals in ancient Chinese feudal society to demonstrate their scholarly cultivation. In this context, the phrase reflects the pedantic nature of Kong Yiji through his frequent use of classical Chinese words. Both the Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang version and the Julia Lovell version chose not to use a foreignization translation approach, but instead opted for domestication, translating ‘之乎者也’ as ‘archaism’ and ‘classical constructions.’ These two translations focus strictly on interpreting the content of the original text. While they still carry an implied sense of satire, foreign readers are unable to make a direct connection with the specific phrase ‘之乎者也’ and thus fail to achieve the best relevance. To maintain its association, it should be translated as ‘Zhi, Hu, Zhe, Ye,’ with a footnote to explain the phrase, which would more effectively convey its relevance.

Example 2:

Original text: 孔乙己便涨红了脸，额上的青筋条条绽出，争辩道，“窃书不能算偷……窃书！……读书人的事，能算偷么？”

Translation 1: Then Kung would flush, the veins on his forehead standing out as he remonstrated: "Taking a book can't be considered stealing, . . . Taking a book, the affair of a scholar, can't be considered stealing!"

Translation 2: Kong's face would flush scarlet, the veins on his forehead throbbing in the heat of discomfort. 'Stealing books is no crime! Is scholarship theft?'

In this sentence, both "偷书" (stealing books) and "窃书" (pilfering books) are verbs, and although they seem to have no specific imagery or symbolic meaning on the surface, there is a distinct difference between the two words. According to the explanation in *Shuowen Jiezi*, "偷" (steal) implies an improper, hasty action, emphasizing a careless and unjust behavior, while "窃" (pilfer) refers to a more subtle, concealed act, like a bug stealing rice from a hole. Therefore, although both "偷书" and "窃书" describe the act of stealing, they differ significantly in tone and connotation.

Kong Yiji's use of these words reflects his antiquated and fallen state of mind. By using the two different terms, "偷书" and "窃书," he is essentially defending himself. Despite his actions being exposed by others, he stubbornly justifies his behavior. This defiance against gossip and the attempt to protect his own image show his rigid thinking and his disconnection from reality [10]. As a "scholar," Kong Yiji considers himself somewhat different from others, and thus he attempts to view his actions in a somewhat self-important light.

From the perspective of others, the impact of both "偷书" and "窃书" is equally severe—they are both immoral acts looked down upon by society. However, in Kong Yiji's mind, "窃书" seems to be the lighter of the two, as he associates it with a more refined and understated nature, whereas "偷书" appears crude and blatant. This subtle difference also reflects Kong Yiji's leniency toward his own actions and his adherence to traditional cultural ideas.

In the translation process, Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang translated "偷" as "steal" and "窃" as "taking a book." "Steal" clearly conveys the direct meaning of theft, while "taking a book" appears more neutral and formal. This translation approach suggests that Yang and Dai were more focused on preserving the context and nuances of the original text. Although this method doesn't emphasize the satire of the original text as much, it better maintains Kong Yiji's self-defense and his stubbornness.

On the other hand, Julia Lovell's translation renders "偷" as "crime" and "窃" as "steal." Compared to Yang and Dai's version, Julia Lovell's translation carries a heavier, more serious tone, particularly with the use of "crime," which greatly emphasizes the severity of the act. This shifts the tone away from the delicate and self-defensive nature of his speech, leading to a misalignment with the original tone. While this translation might more directly convey the negative connotation of theft, it fails to capture Kong Yiji's helplessness and his leniency toward his own actions. Overall, Yang and Dai's version reflects the original text's contextual relevance and tone differences more accurately, while Julia Lovell's translation appears overly forceful and does not preserve the subtle tone distinctions of the original text.

Example 3:

Original text: 直起身又看一看豆，自己摇头说，“不多不多！多乎哉？不多也。”于是这一群孩子都在笑声里走散了。

Translation 1: Then straightening up to look at the peas again, he would shake his head. "Not much! Verily, not much, forsooth!" Then the children would scamper off, with shouts of laughter.

Translation 2: Straightening up, he would glance back at the beans, shaking his head: 'Hardly any! Are the beans multitudinous in abundance? Multitudinous in abundance they are not.' At which his young audience would scatter hilariously.

“多乎哉？不多也” This phrase originates from *The Analects of Confucius*, specifically from the chapter *Zihan*. The context is as follows: Taizhai asked Zigong, "Is Confucius truly a sage? He seems capable of so many things!" Zigong replied, "It must be Heaven's will that he is destined to become a great sage, and to have so many talents." When Confucius heard of this, he said, "Does the Grand Steward really know about me? In my youth, I was poor, which is the reason I learned so many trivial skills. Does a true gentleman really focus on having many skills? A gentleman does not prioritize having many skills alone." The meaning expressed here is different from the original. The translation by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang is rendered as "Not much! Verily, not much, forsooth!". This translation abandons the linguistic structure of the original text and adopts a domestication strategy, making it more in line with the target original culture and easier for readers to understand. However, this approach does not fully achieve optimal relevance with the original. It is noteworthy that the translators use the archaic English adverb "forsooth", which primarily means "indeed." In this context, it functions to emphasize and intensify the tone. However, according to the English annotation, "forsooth" was originally an archaic term meaning, but in modern usage, it typically conveys irony or disbelief. Therefore, the use of "forsooth" not only reflects Kong Yiji's pedantic way of speaking but also implies a hint of irony, further highlighting the character's distinctive personality and manner of expression.

In contrast, Julia Lovell's translation reads: "Are the beans multitudinous in abundance? Multitudinous in abundance they are not." This version preserves the sentence structure of the original, striving to recreate its form and rhythm. Lovell adopts a foreignization strategy, maintaining a strong connection with the source text, especially in terms of repetition and sentence structure, which helps the reader experience the rhetorical style and tone of the original. Lovell's choice of the phrase "multitudinous in abundance" not only captures the verbose and pedantic manner of Kong Yiji's speech but also emphasizes his peculiar character traits through repetition and

exaggeration. Overall, this translation strategy, though it may require the reader to exert more effort to understand, more effectively conveys the formal beauty and rhetorical effects of the original text.

V. Implications for Translation Studies

Insights gained from applying Relevance Theory to the analysis of ironic language.

Important Insights and Implications from Applying Relevance Theory to the Analysis of Ironic Language:

1. Close Relationship Between Context and Relevance

The effectiveness of ironic language often relies on specific cultural and situational contexts. Relevance Theory emphasizes that translators need to take into account the cognitive environment of the target audience. By adjusting contextual cues, translators can help readers better recognize the ironic meaning embedded in the source text. Ignoring the construction of context and the prompts for relevance may lead to a weakened or lost ironic effect.

2. The Crucial Role of Inference in Understanding Irony

Ironic language often contains implied meanings, requiring readers to use inference to grasp the underlying irony. Relevance Theory suggests that readers seek the most relevant interpretation based on cognitive principles. In translation, translators should preserve or reconstruct the ironic logic of the original text, providing sufficient contextual clues to assist target readers in making inferences and understanding the intended irony.

3. Challenges of Cultural Relevance and Language Differences

Irony is often deeply rooted in cultural contexts, carrying distinct cultural characteristics. Relevance Theory highlights the obstacles posed by cultural differences in understanding and translating ironic language. Translators need to balance preserving the original ironic intent while applying domestication or foreignization strategies as needed, in order to reduce the barriers posed by cultural differences and ensure the intended ironic effect is conveyed to the target audience.

4. Guidance of Relevance Theory in Choosing Translation Strategies

Relevance Theory provides essential guidance for selecting translation strategies. Translators can use the principles of relevance to assess whether the target text achieves the intended communicative effect. When dealing with ironic language, translators may employ strategies such as explanatory translation or supplementary annotations, ensuring that the ironic effect is retained in the target language.

5. Practical Implications for Enhancing Reader Understanding and Acceptance

Applying Relevance Theory can help translators better understand and analyze the ironic intent of the source text, while striving to minimize the cognitive gap for target readers. This not only increases the acceptance of ironic language by the target audience but also enhances the readability and expressive impact of the translation, making the translated text closer to the style and intent of the original work.

Recommendations for translators when dealing with culturally embedded irony.

Translating Culturally Embedded Irony: Strategies and Recommendations

When translating irony with cultural context, translators face unique challenges. Irony involves not just language, but also deep cultural connotations and social understanding. To effectively handle these complexities, translators should consider the following strategies and recommendations:

1. In-depth Understanding of Cultural Background

Translators must have a thorough grasp of the cultural background and historical context of the source text. Irony often reflects specific social phenomena, customs, political satire, or historical events rooted in a particular culture. Understanding the origin and underlying social critique behind the irony is essential for accurately conveying its meaning in translation.

2. Employ Dynamic Equivalence

When a direct equivalent for an ironic expression is unavailable in the target language, translators can use dynamic equivalence. This approach focuses on preserving the ironic effect of the source text while finding expressions with similar satirical significance in the target culture, bridging the gap caused by cultural differences.

3. Use Footnotes or Annotations When Necessary

For highly culture-specific ironic expressions, direct translation may hinder comprehension. In such cases, moderate use of footnotes or annotations can provide the necessary cultural context and explain the ironic intent, enhancing the relevance and understanding for the target audience.

4. Flexibly Balance Domestication and Foreignization

Translators must decide between domestication (making the text more accessible to the target audience) and foreignization (retaining the cultural distinctiveness of the source text). Domestication helps readers easily grasp the ironic content but may lose cultural nuance; foreignization preserves cultural uniqueness but may create comprehension barriers. The translator should adapt these strategies based on the specific context, weighing the pros and cons accordingly.

5. Maintain the Tone and Style of Irony

Ironic language often carries a distinctive tone, such as humor, sarcasm, or exaggeration. When translating, special attention should be paid to retaining the original tone and style to avoid losing the ironic effect. This may require careful word choice and syntactic adjustments to recreate the ironic flavor of the source text.

6. Consider the Target Audience's Cultural Awareness and Acceptance

Translators need to assess the target audience's familiarity with the cultural background and the acceptability of ironic content. If the target audience lacks knowledge of the source culture, cultural adaptation may be necessary to prevent misunderstandings or a loss of the ironic effect due to cultural differences.

7. Align with the Author's Intent

In translating irony, it is crucial to remain faithful to the author's intent, conveying the critical spirit and social commentary behind the irony. The translator should avoid excessive interpretation or oversimplification, instead striving to faithfully reproduce the sharp critique and satire inherent in the source text.

By applying these strategies, translators can more effectively navigate the complexities of culturally embedded irony, enhancing both the readability and impact of the translation while preserving the essence of the original work.

VI. CONCLUSION

Guided by relevance theory, the translation of the satirical text in Kong Yiji requires a higher level of skill and consideration. Translators must not only accurately comprehend and convey the original Chinese expressions but also delve into and reveal the deeper, implied meanings within the text. In the original work, Lu Xun intentionally uses classical Chinese language to depict Kong Yiji's pedantic and outdated manner of speaking. This linguistic feature presents a challenge for translation: the translator needs to preserve the core meaning of the original while also recreating the distinctive form and stylistic effects of the classical language. Achieving optimal relevance in this way helps the target audience better appreciate the essence of traditional Chinese culture and Lu Xun's unique satirical style.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that in certain cases, the translator may consider using a combination of footnotes, transliteration, and free translation. Footnotes can provide necessary background information and cultural explanations, allowing the subtle nuances and cultural elements of the original text to be retained and clarified. Transliteration can preserve names, place names, and other culturally specific terms, helping readers experience the cultural atmosphere of the original. Free translation, on the other hand, ensures the readability and fluency of the translated text. By flexibly applying these diverse translation strategies, the translator can, without deviating from the original intent, best reproduce the satirical tone and linguistic style of the text. This approach enables foreign readers to grasp the humor and critique embedded in the original, understand its cultural connotations, and ultimately better disseminate Chinese culture.

Up to now, through the efforts of various translators, Lu Xun's works have achieved widespread recognition abroad. As one of the representative works of modern Chinese literature, Kong Yiji vividly portrays the complexities of Chinese society and human relationships. Its English translations play a significant role in narrating China's stories and promoting Chinese culture. Whether they are Chinese or foreign translators, they should serve as a bridge, faithfully conveying the original text while considering the target culture's acceptability and level of comprehension. Reproducing the core meaning of the original without compromising its relevance is a principle that translators must adhere to. Through such efforts, translators can help more overseas readers appreciate the depth and charm of Lu Xun's works, contributing to the international dissemination of Chinese culture.

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