

A Study on the English Translation of Sacrificial Language in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence

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Abstract:

Romance of the Three Kingdoms, a treasure of Chinese classical literature, holds profound cultural significance. Its English translation thus plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication. Sacrificial rituals are not merely expressions of reverence and prayer towards ancestors and deities, but also a reinforcement of national spirit and cultural identity. Reflecting the Chinese worldview and values, they are an indispensable part of the nation's heritage. Guided by the theory of Functional Equivalence, this paper investigates the translation of sacrificial language in the novel. Through a comparative analysis of key sacrificial scenes and their two English renditions by Moss Roberts and C. H. Brewitt-Taylor, this study reveals the distinct effects achieved in cross-cultural translation. The findings indicate that the two translators adopted different strategies, each with its own merits and drawbacks. Moss Roberts tends to employ literal translation or add annotations, which excels in disseminating the intricacies of Chinese sacrificial culture, enabling target readers to gain a comprehensive and profound understanding. In contrast, Brewitt-Taylor's translation is more concise, prioritizing the narrative flow and rhythm of the original. He uses succinct yet culturally resonant vocabulary to convey the source text's meaning, making his version more accessible to a broader readership. This study of sacrificial language translation enhances our understanding of the differences between Chinese and English languages and cultures, offering valuable insights for translation practice. It also serves as a reference for translating similar cultural elements in other literary works, thereby contributing to the global dissemination of China's excellent traditional culture.

Keywords:

Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Functional Equivalence, Sacrificial Language

1. Introduction

Romance of the Three Kingdoms, as one of the four great classical novels of China, is widely beloved by readers both at home and abroad for its grand historical backdrop, rich character portrayals, and thrilling plot lines. In the context of globalization, translating this classic work into English is of great significance for disseminating excellent traditional Chinese culture and enhancing cultural exchanges between China and other countries. This paper focuses on the sacrificial language in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and explores its English translation from the perspective of functional equivalence, aiming to provide a new perspective for the study of English translation of Chinese classical literature. Sacrificial language holds important cultural and symbolic significance in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, reflecting not only the religious beliefs and ceremonial systems of ancient society but also the personality traits and inner emotions of the characters. However, due to differences in cultural backgrounds, linguistic expressions, and religious beliefs between Chinese and English, the translation of sacrificial language becomes a challenging aspect of the translation process. How to achieve an English translation of sacrificial language while respecting the original text has become a focal point for translators and researchers. The theory of functional equivalence thinks that translation should strive to achieve functional equivalence between the target and source languages, allowing the target language readers to have a reading experience similar to that of the source language readers. The significance of this study lies in the in-depth analysis of the English translation of sacrificial language in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, making it better serve cultural exchanges between China and other countries. Additionally, it can provide reference for the translation of sacrificial language in other classical literary works.

2. Introduction to Functional Equivalence Theory

In 1969, the American linguist and translation scholar Eugene A. Nida proposed the influential Functional Equivalence Theory. Developing his own translation framework from a practical standpoint, Nida established a theory that would become a classic in the field. He argued that due to the significant formal and cultural disparities between languages, “formal equivalence” is often unattainable. In contrast, “dynamic equivalence” seeks to find the closest and most natural equivalent in the target language to reproduce the message of the source text [1]. Nida’s Functional Equivalence Theory can be understood through several key principles: First, the conveyance of information. The ultimate goal of translation is to enable target-language readers to comprehend and appreciate the original text in a manner similar to source-language readers. Thus, translation transcends mere word substitution; it is an act of cross-cultural communication. Second, the conveyance of the original’s spirit and style. The core of translation lies in transmitting the meaning and essence of the source text, not in adhering to a literal, word-for-word rendering. This requires translators to deeply understand the original author’s intent, emotions, and cultural context to find the most appropriate expression in the target language. Third, linguistic fluency. The translation must conform fully to the norms and conventions of the target language, ensuring it reads naturally. Fourth, reader response. As the ultimate recipients of the translation, readers are central to this theory. Translators must consider the cultural background, knowledge level, and reading habits of the target audience to ensure the translation is both accessible and meaningful to them [2]. Nida emphasized that translation should first reproduce the meaning of the original

text in the most natural way possible, followed by its style. *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, as a literary work that carries and disseminates national culture, reflects a nation's unique customs, traditions, values, aesthetic tastes, and ways of thinking. Therefore, the Functional Equivalence Theory, being a reader-oriented and effect-oriented framework, is particularly suitable for guiding its translation. This theory demands that translators be not only bilingually proficient but also biculturally aware to produce translations that are both faithful to the source and well-adapted to the target linguistic and cultural environment. Its practical value is immense, especially for translation tasks involving substantial cultural differences and complex language structures.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Research Status in China

As a classic of Chinese literature, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* has always held a significant position within Chinese academia. In recent years, with the continuous enrichment of research methods and the rise of interdisciplinary studies, scholarly perspectives on the novel have become increasingly diverse. In the domain of translation studies, Chinese scholars have conducted in-depth analyses of its English translations. For instance, [3] Xu Duo explored the complementary relationship between different English versions and their varied forms and functions. Chen Xiaoli and Zhang Zhiqian investigated the translation of chapter titles in two major English editions [4]. From a corpus-based approach, Liu Aijun employed quantitative methods to analyze translators' styles, thereby revealing differences between translations more scientifically [5]. In terms of media and communication, Zhu Jun examined the cross-media dissemination of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and its cultural significance [6]. In terms of research methodology, Kong Delu employed machine learning techniques to conduct a comparative study of the styles of different translations of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, offering new perspectives and approaches for translation studies [7].

3.2. Research Status Abroad

Overseas researchers often approach the novel from different perspectives and methodologies compared to their Chinese counterparts. Some scholars have undertaken hypotheses and discussions regarding the retranslation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [8]. The novel's rich content has led to diverse studies. For example, some scholars have analyzed the conveyance of military cultural connotations in Moss Roberts' translation [9]. Others have researched the English translation of its chapter titles from a functionalist perspective [10]. In character studies, the complex personas in the novel have prompted explorations into their psychological dimensions, such as an analysis of the characterizations of Cao Cao and Yuan Shao through the lens of Yuan's defeat at the Battle of Guandu [11]. In recent years, intertextuality has emerged as a popular theoretical framework, with scholars like Peng W studying intertextual elements in the English translations [12]. These studies not only enrich the literary interpretation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* but also provide new perspectives and methods for its international research, fostering innovation in related literary theories.

4. Case Study Analysis

The English translation of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* plays a key role in introducing Chinese classic literature to a wider audience. Nida suggests that translation should recreate the message of the original text in the target language in the most natural way possible, first by conveying the meaning, and then the style [2]. In recent years, while many scholars have focused on the study of the novel's English translation, few have taken its sacrificial language as a starting point. Therefore, this paper, based on the Functional Equivalence theory and the translations by Moss Roberts and C. H. Brewitt-Taylor, explores the translation of the sacrificial language within the text.

(1) 飞曰：“吾庄后有一桃园，花开正盛；明日当于园中祭告天地，我三人结为兄弟，协力同心，然后可图大事。”

Moss Roberts: “There’s a peach garden behind my farm,” said Zhang Fei. “The flowers are in full bloom. Tomorrow let us offer sacrifice there to Heaven and earth, and pledge to combine our strength and purpose as sworn brothers. Then we’ll plan our course of action.”

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: Said Fei, “The peach trees in the orchard behind the house are just in full flower. Tomorrow we will institute a sacrifice there and solemnly declare our intention before Heaven and Earth. And we three will swear brotherhood and unity of aims and sentiments, thus will we enter upon our great task.”

Analysis: The sacrificial rite performed in the Peach Garden reflects the traditional practice of sworn allegiance and illustrates the collective mindset and cultural perceptions of ancient Chinese society [13]. Roberts employs “offer sacrifice” to render “祭告,” a direct expression that conveys the core act of making an offering to Heaven and Earth. However, this phrasing may not fully capture the ceremonial gravity inherent in the Chinese term “祭告,” which encompasses not only sacrifice but also a formal declaration or supplication—a nuance not strongly emphasized in Roberts' version. In contrast, Brewitt-Taylor's translation is more detailed and precise. His use of “institute a sacrifice” for “祭告” is significant, as “institute” implies “to establish” or “to initiate,” thereby highlighting the formality and ritualistic nature of the event. Furthermore, his addition of “solemnly declare our intention” accurately conveys the declarative aspect central to “祭告.” This makes his rendition closer to the original text's cultural connotations and emotional tone. Thus, Brewitt-Taylor's approach more effectively conveys the culturally specific act of “祭告天地,” better preserving its ritualistic and cultural significance.

(2) 次日，于桃园中，备下乌牛白马祭礼等项。

Moss Roberts: The next day the three men had a black bull, a white horse, and other offerings brought to the peach garden. (Horse sacrifice may have had non-Han origins. In his commentary to the *SJ*, Takigawa Kametard notes: “The Xiongnu killed horses to offer to Heaven; the Rong and Di [peoples] did so too. The Qin followed the custom of the Western Rong [in making such sacrifices].” *SJ*, “Feng shan shu,” p. 8. The sacrifice of a white horse (*baima*) is mentioned by Wang Ling, an opponent of Empress Lü's plan to supplant the Liu: “Empress LU took control of the government [in 187 B. C.]. She proposed establishing members of her clan as kings and asked the counsel of Prime Minister of the Right Wang Ling. Wang Lingsaid, ‘The Supreme Emperor [Liu Bang] slaughtered a white horse and made a general covenant stating that if anyone who was not a member of the Liu clan

became king, the whole empire must attack him. If you now make members of the Lüclan kings, you will violate this binding covenant” ; see *SJ*, **Lü hou benji,” p. 10. In the opening of the Yuan(or early Ming) drama devoted to the formation of the brotherhood, *Taoyuan jieyi*, the horse is sacrificed to Heaven, the ox to earth. During Luo Guanzhong's lifetime there was an anti-Mongol rebel league called the Red Scarves; this group performed horse and ox sacrifices.)

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: Next day they prepared the sacrifices, a black ox, a white horse, and wine for libation.

Analysis: This section examines the translation of the culturally specific term “乌牛白马祭礼.” Moss Roberts employs a literal translation for the term itself but enhances it with a detailed footnote explaining the historical and cultural significance of the “horse sacrifice.” Given the specific historical background of this phrase, Roberts' strategy of annotating particular cultural elements enables readers to better comprehend this aspect of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. These annotations help target-language readers achieve a cultural response and understanding closer to that of source-language readers, grasping the cultural weight of the sacrificial act. According to Shi Yanfang, drawing upon Functional Equivalence theory, the ultimate goal of translation is to enable the target audience's comprehension of the translation to be substantially equivalent to the original audience's comprehension of the source text [14]. While a literal translation alone may not fully convey the original's cultural form, supplementing it with footnotes can significantly achieve functional equivalence. In comparison, Brewitt-Taylor's translation, though concise, does not provide this level of cultural explanation.

(3) 祭罢天地，复宰牛设酒，聚乡中勇士，得三百余人，就桃园中痛饮一醉。

Moss Roberts: After the ceremonies they butchered the bull and spread forth a feast in the peach garden for the three hundred local youths they had recruited;

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: This solemn ceremony performed, they slew other oxen and made a feast to which they invited the villagers. Three hundred joined them, and all feasted and drank deep in the Peach Garden.

Analysis: Qiu Zhanhong emphasizes that Functional Equivalence is a receptor-oriented theory, focusing primarily on the target language and its readers [15]. According to this principle, a translator must consider not only linguistic factors but also cultural ones. In Brewitt-Taylor's translation, the phrase “solemn ceremony” effectively conveys the gravity inherent in Chinese sacrificial rituals. Furthermore, his translation strives to preserve the narrative style and rhythm of the original text. For instance, his use of the past participle “performed” maintains a syntactic structure that aligns closely with the source text, a choice that can be seen as better adhering to the principle of Functional Equivalence by prioritizing a natural target-language expression that mirrors the original's form.

(4) 于太庙基上，草创殿屋三间，请众诸侯立列圣神位，宰太牢祀之。祭毕，皆散。

Moss Roberts: Where the royal ancestral temple had stood Sun Jian had three crude halls built and then invited the lords to set up the tablets of the deceased emperors and to perform the grand sacrifice of three animals. After the ceremony all dispersed. (The bull, the sheep, and the pig. According to the *Liji*, **Yue ling,” the sacrifice was to petition for a son for the emperor, who participated personally; see *Ci yuan*(Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1979-83), s.v. *gao mei* (p. 3481) and

tailao(p. 702). Sun Jian's act is are minder that no success or to Emperor Ling had been universally accepted.)

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: On the site of the Dynastic Temple he put up a mat shed containing three apartments, and here he begged the lords to meet and replace the sacred tablets, with solemn sacrifices and prayers. This ceremony over, the others left.

Analysis: Wang Xin argues that while absolute equivalence is rarely attainable, translators should nonetheless strive for it by being as faithful as possible to the original text and minimizing informational loss [16]. In the examples cited above, both Moss Roberts and Brewitt-Taylor employed similar vocabulary in their translations. However, Moss Roberts enhanced his version by adding a cultural note explaining "three animals." This annotation assists target-language readers in better understanding the specifics of Chinese sacrificial culture, thereby aligning his translation more closely with the principle of Functional Equivalence.

(5) 又下令追寻董卓尸首，获得些零碎皮骨，以香木雕成形体，安凑停当，大设祭祀，用王者衣冠棺槨，选择吉日，迁葬郡坞。

Moss Roberts: Then they ordered Dong Zhuo's corpse recovered. Since only bits of skin and bone could be found, they ordered a sculptor to make a statue of their fallen leader out of fragrant wood. When the work was done, they dressed the statue in royal robes and placed it in a royal coffin. They chose an auspicious day and led a funeral procession to Mei.

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: Then they had sculptors engrave a statue of fragrant wood in his likeness, laid that out in proper form, and instituted a noble's sacrifices and prayers. The remains were dressed in the robes of a prince, laid in a princely coffin for burial. They selected Meiwo for his tomb and having found an auspicious day conveyed the coffin thither.

Analysis: In the example above, Moss Roberts omitted the sacrificial phrase entirely, choosing not to translate it. Brewitt-Taylor, on the other hand, rendered it as "instituted a noble's sacrifices and prayers." This translation effectively conveys the cultural connotations of the original phrase and preserves its cultural function. Furthermore, the use of the word "noble" vividly reflects the feudal rituals and hierarchical system inherent in the source text, thereby achieving cultural functional equivalence in linguistic style.

(6) 玄德与大小军士，尽皆挂孝，大设祭奠。祭毕，葬于黄河之原。将陶谦遗表，申奏朝廷。

Moss Roberts: Then he and his men donned mourning garb and completed the rituals for Tao Qian, who was interred somewhere on the plains of the Yellow River.

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: He also attended to the burial ceremonies; he and all his army dressing in mourning. After the fullest sacrifices and ceremonies, a burial place for the late Imperial Protector was found close to the source of the Yellow River.

Analysis: In the example above, Moss Roberts employs the general term "rituals" to cover both "大设祭奠" and "祭毕". This constitutes a clear instance of ellipsis, as "rituals" lacks the specific cultural meaning of "祭奠". In contrast, Brewitt-Taylor uses the phrase "the fullest sacrifices and ceremonies." Here, the word "fullest" functions similarly to his previous use of "solemn" and "noble," all of which precisely describe the nature or scale of the sacrificial rites. This lexical choice makes his translation more concrete in conveying the cultural connotations of the source text,

specifically emphasizing the grandeur implied by “大设”. Consequently, Taylor’s rendition adheres more closely to the original and better aligns with the principle of functional equivalence.

(7) 操自封为大将军、武平侯，以荀彧为侍中、尚书令，荀攸为军师，郭嘉为司马祭酒，刘晔为司空仓曹掾，

Moss Roberts: Cao Cao assumed complete authority over all benefits and penalties and had himself appointed regent-marshal and honored as lord of Wuping. His chief adviser, Xun Wenruo, was named privy counselor and executor of the Secretariat. Xun You was made military director; Guo Jia, chief of sacrifices; Liu Ye, chief of the Ministry of Public Works;

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: Cao Cao made himself Prime Minister, Regent Marshal, and Lord of Wuping. Xun Yu was made Imperial Counselor and Chair of the Secretariat; Xun You, Minister of War; Guo Jia, Minister of Rites and Religion; Liu Ye, Minister of Works;

Analysis: In the example above, “司马祭酒” is an ancient Chinese official title. Moss Roberts' translation, “chief of sacrifices,” fails to fully convey the significance and high status of this position within the ancient Chinese religious and bureaucratic hierarchy. In contrast, Brewitt-Taylor’s rendering as “Minister of Rites and Religion” more accurately reflects its substantial cultural and administrative functions. Consequently, Taylor’s version aligns more closely with the original text in terms of cultural connotation and semantic depth, thereby achieving a higher degree of functional equivalence.

(8) 遂建号仲氏，立台省等官，乘龙凤辇，祀南北郊。

Moss Roberts: Yuan Shu then established the reign period Zhong Shi and created a secretariat and other state offices. Borne in a dragon-and-phoenix carriage, he performed the imperial rituals at the northern and southern limits of the city. (The city is Shouchun. After enthronement the emperor made offerings to Heaven on the southern outskirts of the capital and to earth on the northern outskirts.)

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: Yuan Shu arrogated himself the insignia of royalty and assigned Second Glory the reign title. He set up officials with titles only given by an emperor, and rode in a chariot decorated with the dragon and phoenix, and offered sacrifices after the manner of an emperor in the north and south suburbs.

Analysis: Character analysis is a significant approach to interpreting *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, as evidenced by studies on figures like Zhuge Liang [17]. The translation of sacrificial language is therefore crucial for constructing a character's image, as seen in the depictions of Yuan Shu. In the examples describing Yuan Shu's imperial ambitions, Brewitt-Taylor translates “祀南北郊” literally as “offered sacrifices.” While this conveys the basic action, it fails to capture the full semantic richness and specific imperial context. In contrast, Moss Roberts renders it as “performed the imperial rituals,” which explicitly emphasizes that these sacrifices were an imperial prerogative. This choice aligns perfectly with the original text's description of Yuan Shu declaring himself emperor, establishing a reign title, and riding in a dragon-phoenix chariot. Furthermore, Moss Roberts enhances his translation with a footnote providing background information on the sacrificial locations. This offers target-language readers a deeper, more enriched reading experience. Consequently, it is evident that Moss Roberts’ translation, through its

precise lexical choices and scholarly annotations, achieves a higher degree of functional equivalence in portraying Yuan Shu's character.

(9) 又设祭典韦，操亲自哭而奠之，顾谓诸将曰：“吾折长子、爱侄，俱无深痛；独号泣典韦也！”。

Moss Roberts: Then he performed sacrifice for his fallen comrade, Dian Wei, personally leading the lamentations and presenting the wine. At the ceremony he turned to his commanders and said: “I have lost my eldest son and my dear nephew. But the loss of Dian Wei hurts most.”

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor : Sacrifices in honor of the dead warrior Dian Wei were instituted. Cao Cao himself led the wailing and paid due honors. Turning to his officers he said, “I have lost my first born son, but I grieve not so heavily for him as for Dian Wei. I weep for him!”

Analysis: In the example above, Moss Roberts employs the phrases “performed sacrifice” and “ceremony” to describe Cao Cao's memorial for Dian Wei. This choice effectively highlights the formal and ritualistic aspects of the event. In contrast, Brewitt-Taylor uses the construction “Sacrifices in honor of... were instituted,” which more vividly conveys Cao Cao's profound affection, respect, and grief for his fallen general. By framing the act as one of honor and formal establishment, Taylor's translation enables target-language readers to perceive more directly both Cao Cao's personal sorrow and the depth of his official commendation. This nuanced approach to conveying the emotional and honorific subtext aligns more closely with the principle of functional equivalence.

(10) 却说曹操至许都，思慕典韦，立祀祭之；

Moss Roberts: Back in the capital after being routed by Zhang Xiu, Cao Cao built a shrine to honor the memory of the late lamented warrior Dian Wei.

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: In the meantime, after the defeat at River Yu, Cao Cao had reached Xuchang where his first thought was to institute sacrifices to his beloved lost leader, Dian Wei.

Analysis: The example above pertains to the complex character of Cao Cao, whose multifaceted portrayal has been the subject of translation studies, such as Zhang Shuang's comparative analysis of his rounded character image in English versions[18]. The phrase “立祀祭之” in this context expresses Cao Cao's respect, remembrance, and mourning for the fallen hero Dian Wei. Accurately conveying this specific emotional tone and ritualistic behavior is essential in translation. Moss Roberts translates the phrase using “built a shrine” and “honor the memory.” This rendition is functionally close to the original, as the concepts of establishing a shrine and holding a commemoration effectively equate to the sacrificial behavior described in the source text, while simultaneously conveying a sense of profound respect for Dian Wei. Brewitt-Taylor, on the other hand, employs “institute sacrifices” and “his beloved lost leader” to express the original meaning, which strongly communicates Cao Cao's personal sense of longing. From the perspective of Functional Equivalence, both translations can be considered successful. They adequately convey the ritualistic and emotional dimensions of the source text and elicit a similar psychological response in the target-language reader—namely, feelings of respect and remembrance for Dian Wei—as that intended for the source-language audience.

(11) 因即下令屯住军马，大设祭筵，吊奠典韦亡魂。操亲自拈香哭拜，三军无不感叹。祭典韦毕，方祭侄曹安民及长子曹昂，并祭阵亡军士；连那匹射死的大宛马，也都致祭。

Moss Roberts: He called a halt and spread a sacrificial feast to mourn the soul of Dian Wei. Cao Cao personally offered incense, weeping as he paid homage. The entire army was profoundly stirred. After the memorial service Cao Cao made offerings for his nephew Cao Anmin and for his son Cao Ang as well as for the soldiers who had fallen in the battle. Even the gallant Fergana horse, shot dead from under Cao, was ritually honored.

C. H. Brewitt-Taylor: Thereupon Cao Cao gave orders to halt, while he should make a great sacrifice and mourn for his lost leader. At the ceremony he himself burned incense and wailed and prostrated himself. The army was much affected by his devotion. After the sacrifices to the lost hero, he sacrificed to the names of his nephew Cao Amin and his eldest son Cao Ang, both of whom had died at the same time. He also sacrificed to his lost soldiers and even to his Dawan steed which had been killed by an arrow.

Analysis: In the aforementioned examples, the source text depicts Cao Cao's profound mourning for Dian Wei and the grand sacrificial activities held in his honor. Both Moss Roberts and Brewitt-Taylor provide generally equivalent translations for the core phrase “大设祭筵.” Roberts renders it as “spread a sacrificial feast,” while Taylor uses “make a great sacrifice.” However, their approaches diverge in translating the subsequent series of sacrificial acts. Roberts employs varied terms such as “memorial service,” “made offerings,” and “ritually honored,” which enrich the textual connotation. In contrast, Taylor consistently repeats the verb “sacrificed.” A closer examination of the source text reveals its parallel structure: “祭……，方祭……，并祭……，……也都致祭”. Taylor's strategic repetition mirrors this original form, using parallelism to powerfully convey the cumulative emotional intensity—the sense that in Cao Cao's heart, soldiers, family members, and warhorses all deserved equal remembrance and honor. In this specific regard, by replicating the stylistic force of the source text, Taylor's translation achieves a high degree of functional equivalence.

5. Conclusions

Guided by Functional Equivalence theory, this study has investigated the English translation of sacrificial language in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Through a comparative analysis of translations by Moss Roberts and C. H. Brewitt-Taylor, it has been found that each translator adopts distinct strategies, with their own respective strengths and limitations. Moss Roberts' translation prioritizes the preservation of the original text's cultural connotations, frequently employing literal translation or supplementary annotations. This approach effectively disseminates traditional Chinese sacrificial culture and customs. In contrast, Brewitt-Taylor's translation is more concise, focusing on maintaining the original narrative style and rhythm while utilizing culturally resonant vocabulary to convey the source text's information. Functional Equivalence theory has provided a crucial framework for this analysis. As Nida posits, no two languages are entirely identical; thus, this theory emphasizes achieving the closest possible functional equivalence over formal correspondence. The goal is to elicit a reading response from the target-language audience that is substantially similar to that of the original readers. This study enhances our

understanding of the differences between Chinese and English languages and cultures and offers practical guidance for translation. It also serves as a reference for translating similar cultural elements in other literary works, thereby contributing to the global dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture. However, this study has certain limitations. Given the immense length of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the analysis was confined to sacrificial language in selected chapters, inevitably overlooking a significant portion of relevant text. Future research could employ corpus methodologies to conduct a quantitative analysis of sacrificial language translations, thereby revealing differences between versions more systematically. Furthermore, investigations from a cross-cultural communication perspective could examine the cultural reception of these translations, including studies on titles, official positions, and other elements, to better facilitate the external dissemination of Chinese culture.

Conflicts of Interest

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