

# A Study on the Countermeasures of English Translation of Khampa Folk Literature under the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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**Abstract:** *Khampa folk literature is a kind of literary form transmitted orally in the Khampa region, reflecting the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people and expressing their aesthetic concepts and artistic interests. In the context of “telling the Chinese story”, how to translate Khampa folk literature into English is an urgent issue to be discussed. The translation theory proposed by Hans Vermeer, the skopos theory advocates that the focus of translation is on other factors, not language itself, and translators should adopt different translation strategies according to different translation purposes. In the author’s view, when translating Khampa folk literature, the translator should mainly focus on the readers, reflect the style and advantages of the target language, and enhance the mutual exchange between the cultures of the world’s ethnic groups.*

**Keywords:** *Khampa folk literature; translating into English; skopos theory; mutual exchange*

## 1. Introduction

“Kang” refers to Khampa region, and “Ba” means people in this region. The Khampa region is located in the western part of Sichuan Province and the southeast of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, vast in size. There are 18 counties under the jurisdiction of Ganzi Prefecture in Sichuan Province (Ganzi Compilation Committee, 1997). The folklore produced here is colorful and nutritious. Folklore, originally means “the wisdom and knowledge of the people”(Wan Jianzhong, 5), a kind of literature created orally by people in the Khampa region and continuously circulated among the general public, reflecting the people’s thoughts and feelings, expressing their aesthetic concepts and artistic interests, and popular among the Zang people. It mainly includes Khampa folklore, folk epics, folk tales, songs, proverbs, riddles and other literary styles, and is the “comprehensive oral history” of the Zang people in Khampa. At present, the scope and depth of the study of Khampa folk literature need to be further strengthened, and the skopos theory advocates that translators should adopt different translation responses according to different translation purposes, so as to determine the translation strategies, methods, and techniques to be used in the English translation of Khampa folk literature.

## 2. Researches on Khampa Folk Literature

The “treasures” in Zang people’s folk tales in Khampa have strong regional and ethnic characteristics and contain the rich imagination and wisdom of the Khampa people. The Khampa region is dominated by a semi-pastoral and semi-agricultural production life, with a dichotomy between folk and official, an emphasis on ethical values such as kindness, benevolence, repayment, and diligence, a strong nature worship due to religion and witchcraft, etc. (Zhu Maoqing, 64-68). The unique worldview and beliefs of the Khampa people determine the duality of the narrative structure of Khampa folk tales: a combination between a pure plot narrative structure, and a culturally significant environmental narrative structure. The characters, events, and scenes form the basic plot development, which is the first layer of the narrative. The animism is deeply rooted in the narrative structure, involving supernatural forces emerge with the different spaces the protagonist reaches. The supernaturalization of the natural environment prompts the personification of nature, and the story is highly dependent on the humanistic nature of nature and humanity, the deeper level of the narrative (Wang Yuanming, 1-6). The belief in God is the most important component of Zang people’s beliefs, with three aspects: the deification of nature, the naturalization of God, and the dichotomy of nature and God. (Pu Huajun, 102-107). Many of the Zang people’s folk tales in Khampa involve love-marriage content, which depicts the evil and good human nature, such as the invasion of a third person to show

the possessiveness, a show of human evil nature, the belief in the myth of love, and a show of devoting to love (Zhao Chunrong, 79-82). The unique natural and humanistic environment of the Khampa region makes the Khampa sacred mountain stories contain many culturally loaded words. The mistranslation of culturally loaded words in the process of English translation will increase the difficulty of understanding the target culture. The worship of sacred mountains is very common in Khampa region, and almost every mountain peak is guarded by a mountain god. It is difficult to find words that correspond to the names of these sacred mountains with Buddhist connotations in the target language during the translation process. For this reason, we need to use Zang people's phonetic transcription. Secondly, Sanskrit phonetic translation is also practical. Thirdly, free translation plus transliteration of Sanskrit names (Feng Jing, 106-108).

In conclusion, the translation of Khampa folk literature should not only take into account the understanding of cultural load words, the methods and techniques usually used in English translation, but also the development of the times and the acceptability and translatability of the target language, so that the translation can better serve as a bridge of cultural exchange.

### 3. Skopos Theory

In the late 1970s, Hans Vermeer's skopos theory became popular (Nord, 2012: 26), considered to be "the general framework of translation theory" (Nord, 2012: 27). In 1984, Vermeer and Reiss published *A Framework for a General Theory of Translation*, which marked the formation of skopos theory. Hans Vermeer argued that translation should be free from the linguistic dimension and that translation is not an essentially simple linguistic process. This philosophy gave rise to a paradigm shift from a linguistic orientation to a functional and sociocultural orientation, with translation focusing on other factors other than language itself, for example culture, target audience and intertextual factors. Katharina Reiss, Vermeer's teacher, suggests that the ideal translation should be a comprehensive communicative translation, equivalent to the source text in terms of content, form and function, giving priority in practice to the functional features of the translation: the informational function—the message conveyed by the language itself, the expressive function—the emotional function of the language, and the pragmatic function—the function of the language acting on the receiver" (Chen Yajie, 79). Therefore, the basic ideas of translation skopos theory are: Firstly, translators should adopt different translation strategies according to different translation purposes, for example, deciding which contents of the original text can be deleted and which can be retained according to the translation purpose. For example, the ultimate goal and function of the English translation of movie titles is to let the readers of the target language understand the main content of the film immediately and stimulate the desire of the audience, and the purpose of translation determines the whole translation behavior. The translation product (Translatum) does not need to have similar functional equivalence with the source text, and the translator needs to define the function of the translation product through the translation profile, which is a cross-cultural act (Green, 2012: 109). Now let's take the translation brief of the UNSW at a glance as an example:

*Table 1: Translation brief of the "UNSW at a glance" text*

<p><b>Translation brief:</b> Please translate the following passage into your LOTE. The client is the University of NSW; the translations are to be published on the UNSW website as information for prospective international students and their parents.</p> <p><b>[1]UNSW at a glance</b></p> <p>[2]The University of New South Wales is one of Australia's leading research and teaching universities.</p> <p>[3]Established in 1949, [4] it is ranked among the top 60 universities in the world, [5] renowned for the quality of its graduates and its world class research.</p>
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Target language: Indonesian

Client: the University of New South Wales

Medium: the UNSW website

Text purpose: information for prospective international students and their parents

Target reader: Indonesian. (Trisnawati, 249)

According to Vermeer, it is very clear that this translation brief is a key fundamental role in the comprehensive translation process. Having determined that the purpose of the translation is to present the University of New South Wales in detail to Indonesians, the translator is able to determine which

translation strategy to apply.

#### 4. Countermeasures for English Translation of Khampa Folk Literature

The skopos theory advocates that the purpose of translation determines the act of translation. Under the guidance of “One Belt and One Road” initiative, we should promote and deeply implement the national strategy of cultural publicity. According to Vermeer’s view, the translation brief is a key factor in the whole translation process, and the details of the translation brief of Khampa folk literature are determined as follows:

<b>Target language</b>	English
<b>Client</b>	Author himself
<b>Medium</b>	Web page or paper book
<b>Purpose of the text</b>	To inform readers who like Khampa culture
<b>Target readers</b>	Lower grade students of our college or foreign tourists

Therefore, the author believes that when translating Khampa folk literature, translators should mainly focus on the readers, reflect the style and strengths of the target language, and mainly consider the acceptability of the lower grade students or foreign tourists. When translating Khampa folk literature, the translator should take advantage of all kinds of translations, for example phonetic translation, literal translation, free translation, adapted translation, interpretation, filling-up translation, supplement translation, modified translation or several kinds of translation methods (Chen Yajie, 80). In this way, the first step of the national “One Belt, One Road” strategy can be realized, and the basic knowledge of each nationality’s culture can be enhanced quickly. However, in this process, we should not completely disregard the national cultural load of the country, and we need to go out and protect our national culture at the same time.

##### 4.1 Vocabulary Features of Khampa Folk Literature and Countermeasures of English Translation

Most of the Khampa folk literature is recited orally, and then it is mainly compiled by the collecting groups in different parts of Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, based on the voice records of oral narrators. For example, the mythical story of “How do the earth and people take shape” was told by an illiterate man named Pengcuo Randeng in Khampa dialect, translated by Renqing, the director of the Xiangcheng Cultural Center, and recorded and compiled by the 86th class collection team of the Chinese Department of Sichuan University. Therefore, the vocabulary of Khampa folk literature is mostly colloquial, simple and easy to be transmitted orally, so when translating into English, we should also use the corresponding general words or minimize the use of multi-syllable words.

##### 4.1.1. Common Vocabulary Translation

In the process of translation, we should try to choose simple mono-syllabic words and mainly use the free translation method, focusing on the translation that conveys the meaning of the original. For example, “Long time ago, there was no living creature in the world”. “In a desolate place was a sea”. “In ancient times, flood was very serious”. The translator should take into account the exact meaning of the words in the specific context, consider their different collocations, adopt a flexible approach and choose the appropriate and accurate translation to help the readers better understand the original text, avoiding excessive repetition, and damaging reading interest.

##### 4.1.2. Translation of Culturally Loaded Words

Considering that the target readers are junior students or foreign tourists, the “Wenshu Buddha, Guanyin Buddha, Jingangshou Buddha” is directly translated as Gods, which is “a cross-cultural use of equivalent words to express the cultural information of the source language” (Chen Yajie, 80). For example, “During the king Songzan Ganbu’s reign, the God was welcomed to Xizang. After the God was consecrated, he emitted ten thousand rays of light from his body and told the people that he was a warrior who saved all beings from demons. Then, he disappeared”. It is easier to be understood and accepted by English readers or listeners because it conforms to the language habits and cultural atmosphere of English. It can achieve the purpose of cultural communication without losing the cultural connotation behind the source language, so that our junior students can experience the basic charm of translation.

## 4.2 Syntactic Features of Khampa Folk Literature and Countermeasures for English Translation

### 4.2.1. Information Reorganization

“Chinese language emphasizes the combination of meaning, to convey the spirit, and sentences are often loosely structured, lacking morphological links between sentence components, and the combination of each component relies mostly on semantic coherence and context(Li Hongxia, 87). For example, “It was so bustling when he came to the front square of the royal city. “How dare you commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit! Now put him to death”. The translator must understand the original text accurately and dig deeper into the relationship between the elements of the original sentence, and reorganize the source language through juxtaposition, division and subordination to highlight the invisible relationship of the sentence. The original sentences are all subjectless, so the English translation must make up for the omitted subject in order to make the target sentence complete. At the same time, a large number of narrative components are omitted, and only the spirit of the sentence is translated, and the original sentence is re-constructed, to make it clearer and more focused.

### 4.2.2. Avoid Repetition

Sometimes there are more repetitive words in Khampa folk literature, which need to be streamlined when translating into English, and especially the large number of repetitions of names and personal pronouns need to be avoided by using English connectives, participial phrases, etc. For example, “In a pastoral area there once was a girl called Agong Gonglu, very skillful at weaving and attended mindfully by three older brothers”. The woman can be replaced by personal pronouns such as she and her, and the sister this word does not need to appear many times, so as to minimize unnecessary semantic repetition and convey the meaning of the original text briefly.

## 5. Conclusion

Skopos theory is an important theory in functional translation theory. Based on the skopos theory, this paper analyzes the current research and English translation status of Khampa folk literature and proposes that the purpose of the translation method chosen should be considered in the process of English translation. In translating Khampa folk literature, the translator should mainly focus on the readers, reflect the style and advantages of the target language, and mainly consider the acceptability of our junior students or foreign general tourists. We should use multiple translation means, for example phonetic translation, literal translation, free translation, interpretation, conversion or several translation methods, so as to serve the national strategy of propaganda and protect our national culture at the same time.

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