

Leisure Culture in the English Works of Lin Yutang: An Analysis of *The Importance of Living*

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Abstract: As a famous bilingual writer in China, Lin Yutang's English works are full of Chinese characteristics. His English creation and translation are interwoven, showing a unique personal style. Lin Yutang introduces his unique concept of leisure culture in his works, allowing Western readers to have a deeper understanding of Chinese leisure culture. This paper focuses on his English work *The Importance of Living*, which is about leisure culture, and analyzes the process and ideas of Lin Yutang's translation of Chinese leisure culture. Lin Yutang's unique interpretation of leisure culture is shown in the introduction to the everyday life of the Chinese people. This paper focuses on Lin Yutang's translation and creative approach to the transmission of Chinese leisure culture through cross-cultural writing.

Keywords: Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People*, Leisure culture

1. Introduction

Leisure culture, as a multi-level and diversified concept, has extensive influence in contemporary society. It covers the variety of activities, experiences and thought patterns that people engage in in spare time. Leisure culture plays an important role in the society, which not only provides individuals with the opportunity to release pressure and rejuvenate, but also has a profound impact on the society. Leisure culture is one of the manifestations of social cohesion, through the sharing of leisure activities, the bonds between communities are stronger. Leisure culture is also a part of social values and cultural carrying the expression of social identity to some extent.

Leisure culture has been widely expressed in literary works. Through literature, people can deeply explore the connotation of leisure and reveal the emotions, thoughts and experiences of individuals in leisure. Lin Yutang's English works may show a unique understanding of leisure culture. Through his works, people can glimpse the diversified embodiment of leisure in literature. The relationship between leisure culture and society is not only in the theoretical level, but also in social practice. Social leisure activities and cultural festivals, such as book fairs, art exhibitions, concerts, etc., are the concrete manifestations of leisure culture in society. These activities not only promote the spread of culture, but also create a shared leisure experience for the society. Through the in-depth discussion of the definition of leisure culture and its role in society, it can provide a theoretical basis for further study of the expression and influence of leisure culture in Lin Yutang's English works.

Leisure culture has undergone constant evolution throughout history. In early societies, leisure activities may have been limited by class and social status, while as society developed, leisure became a way of life for a wider range of people. The industrial revolution and the advance of modernization have provided more opportunities and forms for leisure culture, thus making it an indispensable part of social life.

Western researchers believe that the word "leisure" originates from the old French "leisir", which means the free time and free activities after people get rid of productive labor. In modern society, it is regarded as a form of "entertainment, rest and play", but leisure is not regarded as a form of life. Lin Yutang believes that leisure is an important form of life, not a simple pastime.

Of course, the original meaning of the concept of "leisure" has practically been forgotten in today's leisure-less culture of "total work": in order to win our way to a real understanding of leisure, we must confront the contradiction that rises from our overemphasis on the world of work.^[1]

Leisure not only satisfies people's entertainment needs, but also satisfies higher forms of spiritual needs. Leisure is the ideal and culture of satisfying spiritual freedom and building spiritual space. Lin

Yutang shows his unique views in introducing Chinese leisure culture to Western readers.

2. The works of Lin Yutang

“Ideology is pervasively present in language, that fact ought to mean that the ideological nature of language should be one of the major themes of modern social science.”^[2]In Lin Yutang's works, we can see that his ideology is different from that of contemporary writers, and he embodies the values of integrating Chinese and Western ideas. Lin Yutang called for social reform and transformation through his criticism of traditional Chinese ideas and social phenomena. He offered critical views on issues such as bureaucracy, the education system, and moral values, emphasizing the adverse effects of these issues on the country and its people.

Lin Yutang is a famous bilingual writer in China. He studied in many countries in his early days and was deeply influenced by foreign culture. He was also influenced by the mainstream of traditional Chinese thought. Lin Yutang was born in 1895 into a family of traditional scholars in Fujian Province, China. His father, was a writer and educator. This background provided him with a good learning environment and cultural edification. Lin Yutang received a traditional cultural education in classical Chinese literature and philosophy. This laid the foundation for the insights he would later display in literature and philosophy. Lin went to the United States in 1912 to study at Yale University. During his time in the United States, he was exposed to Western culture and ideology, and had a profound impact on ideas such as freedom, individual independence, and modernization. His experiences in the United States provided new perspectives for his later literary creation. Lin Yutang's special growth and cultural background also contributed to the style of his later works.

Since 1928, Lin Yutang began to participate in hosting a column, and he has always insisted on writing little critic articles. Most of the subjects of the articles are selected from daily life and small things around them, and the contents of the articles are presented in a humorous way. Unlike other writers of his time, Lin Yutang's articles mostly start from the trifles of life and advocate a relaxed style.

Lin Yutang is a Chinese writer, translator, and cultural critic, best known for his contributions to the field of English literature. His works, covering novels, essays, cultural criticism and translations, are considered to be one of the Bridges of cultural exchange between China and the West in the early to mid-20th century. Lin Yutang's works had a profound influence on Western readers in the mid-20th century, and he built a bridge between Chinese and Western cultures through his unique literary style and deep understanding of Eastern culture. His status in the field of literature is reflected in his contribution to the dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures and his unique interpretation of the wisdom of life.

Lin Yutang's works often reveal the absurdity of life and the comicality of society through humor and irony. This relaxed style makes his works more approachable and readers more receptive to his ideas. In *My Country and My People*, Lin Yutang criticizes Western countries by telling about China. Much of Lin's criticism is directed at the West, but he delivers it in a roundabout way that leaves Western readers unoffended.

Many of Lin's English works deal with leisure culture, such as *The Importance of Living*, one of Lin's most famous works, published in 1937. The book explores all aspects of life with humor and wit, emphasizing the importance of leisure, freedom, and pleasure. Lin Yutang has a very positive attitude towards leisure in the book, believing that leisure is an important part of life. Published in 1963, *The Pleasures of a Nonconformist* is a collection of essays by Lin Yutang that contains his insights on literature, philosophy, and free thinking. Although not a work that specifically explores the subject of leisure, the ideas and perspectives in the book are related to leisure. In this book, Lin Yutang explores the importance of understanding in interpersonal relationships, cultural exchanges, and life. Although not directly concerned with leisure, the book's discussion of relationships and cultural understanding is relevant to leisure because leisure is often associated with social and cultural exchange. These works show Lin's unique insight into leisure culture, in which he appeals to people to pursue leisure and pleasure in life through humor and profound analysis in accessible language. In the in-depth study, we can further analyze the specific depiction of leisure in these works and the unique characteristics of Lin Yutang's English writing. In this thesis, the author mainly chooses the content of *The Importance of Living* as the research focus.

3. Leisure in Content

In Lin Yutang's opinion, he advocated that composition should be as leisurely and casual as chatting, and the conversation should be mixed with leisure and personal thinking. A writer can only be in such a "leisurely" state to ensure the independence of self-spirit and not be interfered by the outside. This relaxed philosophy of "leisure mood" is reflected in Lin Yutang's articles. He talks about anything and everything at will, and also shows a "loose and free" style in the writing process.

In *The Importance of Living*, Lin Yutang showed readers the poetic feelings of Chinese people towards life and advocated that people enjoy life leisurely. The book deals with human nature, animal nature, human feelings, but also talks about the enjoyment of life, life, family, nature and culture. In this book, Lin Yutang explains his own thoughts and Chinese philosophy in a conversational tone. But Lin Yutang did not use theoretical discourse to explain his "leisure" style, and we can see from his articles that although the author did not talk about leisure, but reflected leisure everywhere. This book is about the importance of life, that is, how to enjoy life. The book talks about how Chinese people view mountains and play with water, taste tea, drink wine, listen to the sound of rain and snow, and raise flowers and birds. As much as half of the book is devoted to the philosophy of "enjoyment" and "leisure", and from the fifth chapter, Lin Yutang systematically introduces the Chinese experience of "leisure" and how the Chinese people implement "leisure" in all aspects of life. "a state of mind, a good intention, a complaint, a secret feeling, can be heard from the pen." Just as Lin Yutang said, the state of mind can be reflected in the author's pen, and we can see from his works that Lin Yutang has a deep understanding of "leisure".

Lin Yutang pointed out in *The Importance of Living* that the enjoyment of life includes many kinds, but it cannot be classified as material or spiritual, because leisure can create happiness, and in happiness and enjoyment, it is difficult for us to classify leisure culture as material happiness and spiritual happiness. Therefore, this paper divides leisure culture into visible leisure and intangible leisure according to the degree of obvious or not obvious.

Lin Yutang believes that leisure is enjoyment, and enjoyment includes many things. For example, our own enjoyment, the enjoyment of family life, trees, flowers, clouds, streams, waterfalls, and the various forms of nature are enough to be enjoyment; Some of these enjoyments are easy to see, such as the enjoyment of food, a social feast or the joy of a family reunion. Or a spring excursion in warm weather. Whether it is natural scenery or leisure activities that are closely related to People's Daily life, these are obvious and can be called tangible leisure.

Some leisure is less obvious, such as the enjoyment of art, meditation, friendship, conversation, reading, etc., which are all different manifestations of spiritual communication. And we can also enjoy these invisible interactions. Lin Yutang believes that all human happiness belongs to the happiness of feeling. We get pleasure not only from tangible leisure activities, but also from the human sense of touch, hearing and sight. Lin Yutang believes that the reason why people lose the ability to enjoy the positive joys of life is because our senses are less sensitive. When discussing that feeling is an intangible enjoyment, Lin Yutang quoted different writers in the East and the West to describe happiness, which has both the same and different points, showing the unique leisure culture of the Chinese people.

The Chinese consider the living room and the courtyard to be a whole, and think that "family house" means a dwelling house, where there is a well, a field for rearing poultry, and a few trees. The Chinese concept of architecture shows a different leisure culture. Lin Yutang said that the Chinese "garden" is different from the English "garden". The Chinese garden is used to grow vegetables and fruits, carry fruit trees and take advantage of the shade of trees, not just a place for tending flowers and plants. Lin Yutang explains the different concepts of home in China and the West by using the method of comparison between China and the West. Lin Yutang also shows his unique insight into Chinese architectural culture in his translation. There is reality in the imaginary, and there is emptiness in the real. It appears three times in the article, describing the layout of Chinese architecture and showing the beauty of Chinese architecture.

Tea in China is regarded as the treasure of elegant hermits. Tea must be quiet, a person can only taste the taste of tea in a refreshed and calm state. China has the custom of drinking tea since ancient times, and tea drinking has become a leisure culture. Tea can bring people the feeling of color, sound and fragrance, most of the Chinese tea is clear with slight yellow, good tea has a subtle fragrance. In *The Importance of Living*, Lin Yutang deals with the preparation and drinking of tea, and even tea sets. In discussing the importance of the pleasure of cooking tea versus the pleasure of drinking tea, Lin uses

an analogy to show that the pleasure of eating melon seeds is as important as the preparation of tea.

The Chinese people call calligraphy and painting the artistic level of calligraphy can be compared with painting, and painting contains the stroke of calligraphy. Lin Yutang believes that all art contains its charm, Chinese art and nature harmony, more elegant. In *My Country and My People*, Lin Yutang makes a comparison between Chinese art and Western art, comparing Chinese art to Apollo, the god of beauty, and Western art to Onisias, the tyrant. The beauty of Chinese calligraphy and painting comes from the natural rhythm and form of animal limbs or the charm of plants, such as plum blossoms. The excellence of calligraphy and painting comes from the close relationship between its appearance and nature. Chinese calligraphers and painters come into direct contact with scenery and incorporate its charm into their works.

Conversation is also another form of leisure, because conversation is different from talking. The conversation attitude is more leisurely and the chat style is more trivial and casual. Speaking, on the other hand, shows a serious attitude, mostly involving business. Lin Yutang explains the genre, time and place of the conversation respectively. There are many kinds of topics, from ancient times to the present, from the middle to the outside, such as foxes, flies, the eccentric temper of the English people, the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, the book stalls by the Seine, the lovers in the garment shops, the anecdotes of heads of state, politicians and soldiers, the methods of storing Buddha hands, and so on. The content of these conversations is the same as that of a good popular article because the emotions are real and the topics are rich. Lin also contrasted the content of the conversation with the declarations of politicians, which, while showing a more noble spirit, always had an air of avoidance. Not only is the language difficult to understand, but the content of the topic is always general.

4. Leisure in Style

Lin Yutang's English works are usually full of humor and wit, and he is good at expressing his views in an engaging way with a light and humorous tone. This makes it easier for readers to immerse themselves in his words and adds a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere to his literary works. As Lin Yutang has a profound background of Chinese and Western culture, his English writing often shows a unique cross-cultural perspective. He can skillfully integrate Chinese and Western cultures together and present a colorful cultural picture for readers through comparison and association. Lin Yutang's writing is concise and clear, and he is good at expressing complex ideas with concise language. His ability to convey profound ideas in a simple and understandable way has made his work appealing to all kinds of readers. Lin Yutang's works often focus on humanity, life and emotions. Through his observations and reflections on the common experience of mankind, he expresses a deep understanding of human nature, which gives universal value to his works. As can be seen from his works, Lin emphasizes the importance of leisure, free thinking and individual pursuit of happiness. This echoes his concern in leisure culture and reflects his unique views on the ideal of life. These characteristics together constitute Lin Yutang's unique style of English writing, and provide a basis for further analysis of his leisure culture and English writing characteristics. In the research, we can dig deeply into the details of his language use and expression in his works through specific text analysis.

Lin Yutang wanted to keep a distance from the disturbing reality of life with the help of "leisure" philosophy, and wanted to transform life with "beautiful" literature and art. The leisure that Lin Yutang said is the expression of literature close to life and close to human feelings, he advocated that writing articles should be as leisurely and casual as chatting, and the conversation should be mixed with leisure and personal thinking. Lin Yutang combines humor, spirit and leisure to form the creation theory of "leisure as the style".

5. Characteristics of Lin Yutang's writing

As Lin Yutang is a Chinese writer, there are some translation characteristics in his English. Because he needs to translate a certain dialect of Chinese into English for English readers to understand. In the content related to leisure culture, Lin Yutang uses a variety of writing methods and translation methods to express the importance of leisure culture. Although the book *The Art of Life* contains a lot of philosophical content, Lin Yutang uses popular and concrete language to express profound philosophy. His language does not contain many of the abstract forms found in English, such as abstract nouns. Instead, use plain language with rhetorical devices or use examples to illustrate. Lin Yutang's leisure

style is not only reflected in the content level, but also reflected in the style level. The expression of the text is neither ostentatious nor dull, but humorous with solemn, rigorous with leisure. This section will analyze the characteristics of Lin Yutang's writing and translation in the art of life.

6. Translation Methods

As a talented translator and writer, Lin Yutang uses many translation methods and writing techniques in *The Importance of Living*, and the next section will select three major ones for introduction.

6.1 Interpretation

Lin Yutang's writing is usually smooth and lively. He is good at using rich vocabulary and vivid expression, so that readers can easily understand and resonate. This characteristic is also reflected in *My Country and My People*, where he conveys his views on the Chinese nation and people through clear language. Lin Yutang's vocabulary is wide and varied, and he can flexibly use the rich English vocabulary, which makes his writing more lively and interesting.

In Lin Yutang's narration of Chinese leisure culture, there are some words that can only be distinguished from subtle differences in the Chinese context. For the translation of these words, Lin Yutang first transliterated them word-for-word and then added English explanations, so that readers can distinguish them.

Example 1: *For there is an evident distinction between mere talking and conversation as such. This distinction is made in the Chinese language between shuohua (speaking) and t'anhua (conversation), which implies the discourse is more chatty and leisurely and the topics of conversation are more trivial and less business-like.*^[3] (Lin Yutang, 1937:317)

Lin Yutang makes a contrast between "speaking" and "conversation" when he discusses the importance of "conversation". First of all, the two nouns are directly expressed in pinyin, and then the English explanation is added to distinguish the meaning of "speaking" and "conversation" in English, and then emphasize the casual and leisurely attitude of "conversation". Lin first presents Chinese words through direct transliteration, preserving the phonology of the original characters, which helps readers better understand the pronunciation of Chinese words. On the basis of pinyin, he added English explanations of the two words to ensure that readers can understand the specific meanings of the two words and can distinguish their subtle differences in the English context. By emphasizing the casual and relaxed attitude of "conversation" in the English interpretation, Lin emphasizes the cultural differences conveyed by the two words in the Chinese context. This helps readers better understand the rich connotations of "conversation" in Chinese culture. In the English explanation, Lin emphasized the characteristics of "conversation", that is, more casual and leisurely, rather than simply "conversation". This strategy of paying attention to subtle differences helps to convey the subtle changes of Chinese words in different contexts. This translation strategy is common in Lin's English writing, which highlights his sensitivity to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, while at the same time, through his unique translation techniques, the subtle differences in Chinese are presented in the English context.

Example 2: *Such topics as fox-spirits, flues, the strange ways of Englishmen, the difference between Oriental and Occidental culture, the bookstalls along the Seine, a nymphomaniac apprentice in a tailor shop, anecdotes of our rulers, statesmen and generals, the method of preserving "Buddha's Fingers" (a variety of citron)-these are all good and legitimate topics of conversation.*^[3] (Lin Yutang, 1937:317)

In enumerating the genre and content of "conversation", Lin Yutang adopted the method of word translation and interpretation in the translation of "Buddha hand". The bergamot here refers to the fruit bergamot, which has a special shape and a cracked top, and is named after its resemblance to the bergamot hand. Lin Yutang first translated the word "hand of Buddha" to preserve the Chinese pun, and then explained it with "citron" to let English readers understand the intention of expression. Lin Yutang uses a word translation to present the Chinese word "Buddha's Fingers", preserving the pun meaning of the word in Chinese. In Chinese, "bergamot" refers both to the shape of the fruit, bergamot, and may imply some symbolic meaning associated with Buddhism. This way of word translation helps to convey the artistic conception of the Chinese original in English. Lin uses the word "citron" immediately after the translation, providing English readers with the specific meaning of "Buddha's Fingers". In this way, he not only retains the artistic conception of the original Chinese text, but also

ensures the accurate understanding of "Buddha hand" for English readers. By introducing the word "Buddha's Fingers" as a cultural metaphor, Lin Yutang makes his works more characteristic of Chinese culture. This use of cultural metaphor adds depth to his works and provides English readers with a more comprehensive cultural experience. Lin shows his attention to the details and images of life by enumerating a variety of topics, including "Buddha's Fingers". This helps the reader to better engage with the colorful cultural scene he portrays.

6.2 Retelling

In introducing Chinese culture to Western readers, Lin mainly quotes many classical works of ancient China, which have a wide range of subjects, but are not just simple translations. He quotes Chinese classics in a way of retelling, summarizing the works of ancient writers in his own words and reinterpreting them in Lin's own understanding. Lin Yutang's method of quoting allusions is also different from other writers. He does not directly quote another writer's article or story, but adds his own understanding and interpretation. In *The Importance of Living*, he quotes ancient Chinese classical texts and chooses to tell stories when introducing them to Western readers.

Example3: *Chuangtse said that he once dreamed of being a butterfly, and while he was in the dream, he felt he could flutter his wings and everything was real. but that on waking up, he realized that he was Chuangtse and Chuangtse was real. Then he thought and wondered which was really real, whether he was really Chuangtse dreaming of being a butterfly, or really a butterfly dreaming of being Chuangtse.*^[3](Lin Yutang, 1937,41)

Lin Yutang retells Chuangtse's dream by retelling a story, making the complex philosophical concept more approachable. This kind of writing helps to attract readers' interest and makes Chuangtse's ideas easier to understand for a wide range of English readers. Lin avoided multiple citations and translations of classical Chinese, and simplified the structure of the article by summarizing and paraphrasing Chuangtse's story in his own language, making it easier for readers to understand and follow. This is in line with his pursuit of clarity and conciseness in English writing. Lin Yutang uses English flexibly to express Chuangtse's idea of butterfly dream, and by using "Chuangtse" to represent Chuangtse, English readers can intuitively understand the identity of the character. This flexible use of language is in keeping with his easy to understand writing style.

6.3 Paraphrase

Lin Yutang's translation mainly uses the method of paraphrase. Many of his translations are presented through his own creation, which is different from the ordinary translation process. *Metaphor primarily addresses or shows something in a novel way about the referent topic.*^[4] However, in Lin Yutang's translation, negative words are often replaced with positive words, which is his unique translation method. Thus, the negative in the original text is transformed into a positive statement. This transition process makes the translation more close to the English context and reduces the reading burden of the reader. Despite the turn of negative expression, Lin Yutang still retains the essence of the hard work of building houses expressed in the original text in his translation. By enumerating specific building materials and work content, he conveys the meaning of tiredness and busyness in the original text, so that the translation does not lose the connotation of the original text. Lin Yutang's translation focuses on the understanding of English readers. He may consider the difficulty of English readers' understanding of negative expressions, so he avoids possible troubles by presenting positive expressions. This shows his concern for the reader's experience. Lin Yutang's translation shows his sensitivity to the context. He not only considered the expression of the original text, but also flexibly adjusted the language to make the translation more in line with the English context and easier to be accepted by English readers.

Example4: *If a wealthy lady's face does not agree with rich patterns but agrees with simple colors, and she should insist on having rich patterns, would not her dress be the enemy of her face?*^[5]

Lin Yutang likes to use paraphrase, although this is strictly different from traditional translation methods such as Amplification. Although Lin Yutang has been influenced by Western culture for many years, as a Chinese, his English always has traces of Chinese thinking. In the context of China, he was also influenced by the mainstream of traditional Chinese thought. Lin Yutang is well versed in Chinese and Western culture and fluent in both languages, so he does not translate the text or some paragraphs forcibly in the process of translation, but naturally completes the transformation smoothly in his brain. So readers will not find poor translations in Lin Yutang's articles. Lin does not translate the color

verbatim, but instead generalizes the term "red, purple, deep and brilliant" into the upper word "rich patterns" and contrasts it with the lighter colors below. The reason for this is that it makes the translation more concise and does not affect the original content in the least. Since the original quotation was in Chinese, Lin translated it into English. So in some cases he did paraphrase appropriately.

7. Conclusion

By classifying and summarizing the themes of leisure culture in Lin Yutang's English works, we not only have a glimpse of the rich and colorful leisure life in Chinese traditional culture, but also have a deep understanding of Lin Yutang's unique views on these themes. With his unique literary perspective, he presents China's leisure culture incisively and vividly, providing the world with a window to peek into the traditional Chinese lifestyle. In the research, we also deeply analyze Lin Yutang's translation and creation techniques. He creates and translates leisure culture in a variety of ways, through the clever use of pinyin, annotation, interpretation and other means, so that Chinese cultural elements can be properly conveyed in English works. This translation technique not only allows English readers to better understand Chinese culture, but also promotes the spread of Chinese leisure culture. The study of leisure culture in Lin Yutang's English works not only presents a colorful and vibrant China for us, but also builds a bridge for cross-cultural communication. Through his brushstrokes, we can more fully understand and experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture. This study provides a profound discussion on the academic value of Lin Yutang's works, and also provides a new perspective for us to understand and cherish the importance of leisure culture. All in all, the study of leisure culture in Lin Yutang's English works is not only a profound analysis of an outstanding writer, but also a precious presentation of Chinese traditional culture. This study provides us with a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding, so that Lin Yutang's literary legacy will continue to shine in cross-cultural exchanges.

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