



Corpus – Based Study on the Translation Methods of the Figures of Speech in *Zhuang’s Folk Songs of Napo*

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Authors’ contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The figures of speech in *Zhuang’s Folk Songs of Napo* exhibit distinct cultural characteristics compared to mainstream Chinese folk songs or Western literary traditions, and their translation requires careful attention not only to the figures of speech but also to the effective transmission of Zhuang culture. Based on a self-built bilingual corpus, this paper examines the translation methods of figures of speech in the English translations of *Zhuang’s Folk Songs of Napo*. The study reveals that translators predominantly use literal translation to preserve the cultural features of figures of speech while also incorporating free translation and imitation to align with the target language and cultural norms. By analyzing the figures of speech in *Zhuang’s Folk Songs of Napo*, this study

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explores their unique cultural characteristics and the challenges in the translation, contributing to a better understanding of Zhuang culture among the target readers and fostering cultural exchange and dissemination.

Keywords: Corpus; Zhuang's folk songs of Napo; figures of speech; translation methods.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a cultural treasure of the Zhuang ethnic group, who primarily reside in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China, the Zhuang's folk songs of Napo were included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage lists in 2006. Napo County is known for its picturesque landscapes, rich cultural traditions, and diverse ethnic communities. The Zhuang people, the largest ethnic group in China, have a vibrant cultural heritage featuring unique customs, festivals, and artistic expressions. The folk songs vividly capture the daily life, folk beliefs, historical legends and rich spiritual world of the Zhuang people. In *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo*, figures of speech are particularly abundant and distinctive; they enhance the expressiveness and emotional impact of the songs because they reflect the unique mindset and cultural concepts of the Zhuang people. However, translating these figures of speech is challenging due to their artistic nuances, cultural connotations, and emotional depth embedded within the original texts, which often resist literal translation. Translators must balance preserving original meaning with appealing to the target audience, which raises questions about the effectiveness of methods like literal, free, and imitation translation, each with its pros and cons. This study, based on a self-built bilingual corpus, focuses on the figures of speech and their English translations in the first half of *Songs of Love Flowers* from *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo (Chinese-English Version)*. It aims to explore the translation methods of these figures of speech in the English version, providing insights that can benefit the translation of these songs and other ethnic literary works.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Corpus translation studies refer to research that is grounded in corpora, using authentic bilingual or translation corpora as the object of study, and employing data statistics and theoretical analysis as research methods. It systematically analyzes the essence, process, and phenomena of translation based on linguistic, literary, cultural, and translation theories [1].

Mona Baker[2] theoretically demonstrated the importance of corpora in translation studies, laying the foundation for corpus-based translation studies. Later on, Baker [3] pioneered a new field by broadening the scope of corpus-based translation studies' research directions, especially in the study of translator style. It was not until 2006 that the number of corpus-based translation studies in China gradually increased with a relatively broad range of research areas, including reviews, studies on the construction and application of translation corpora, research on linguistic features of translation, translator style, and pragmatic translation studies.

Huang and Wang [4], after analyzing the three phases of corpus translation studies over the previous thirty years and the current cutting-edge developments in this field, pointed out that corpus translation studies have entered a stage of interdisciplinary development supported by the diversified translation "big data". Wang and Xu [5] constructed a corpus involving finance, economics, business administration, and international business to examine the impacts of business subjects, business genres, and neural machine translation technology on the readability level of students' business translation. Huang and Li [6], based on a bilingual corpus, investigated the differences in translator styles in *On Cold Damage* and found that the translators' choices are closely related to the translation environment and translation philosophies of the translators in their respective eras. In summary, corpus translation studies have evolved into a diverse and interdisciplinary field, offering new perspectives and opportunities for future studies.

The Zhuang folk songs are rich in both content and form, holding significant literary research value. In recent years, Luo and Sun [7] innovatively proposed drawing on the poetic formatting techniques of American Romantic poet Walt Whitman to enrich the "aesthetic form" of the Zhuang folk songs. Song and Zhang [8] conducted a study on translation strategies of Guangxi Zhuang folk songs from an intercultural perspective and found that domestication should be adopted in the early stage of culture promotion followed by a balanced approach of both foreignization and domestication in order to

introduce Chinese culture. Shi [9] and Fu [10] conducted in-depth studies on the English translation of *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo* from eco-translatology and conceptual metaphor theory respectively.

However, despite these significant contributions, the research focusing specifically on the English translation of *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo* remains relatively limited, with even fewer studies dedicated to the translation of the figures of speech. Therefore, this paper explores the translation of the figure of speech in the book, aiming to advance the understanding of translation while preserving the distinctive cultural elements of the Zhuang heritage.

In the study of figures of speech, Chen [11] categorized them into three major types: those in word and sentence structure, imagery, and semantics. The first type includes parallelism, antithesis, repetition, rhetorical questions, apostrophe, and so on. The second encompasses metaphor, synecdoche, allegory, and personification; and the third covers euphemism, irony, hyperbole, and pun.

Repetition emphasizes emotions or ideas through repeated words or phrases. Parallelism uses similar structures and tones to enhance expressiveness. Antithesis focuses on formal symmetry, unlike contrast, which highlights content opposition. A rhetorical question guides readers' thoughts without expecting an answer, while apostrophe directly addresses an absent figure or object. Contrast highlights distinctive features by comparing opposing elements.

In English, the broad term for metaphorical expressions is "metaphor," which refers to the transfer of meaning. It can be further categorized into simile (explicit comparison), metaphor (implicit comparison as opposed to simile), synecdoche, and metonymy [12]. Synecdoche involves substituting the name of one thing with the name of another closely related or similar thing, rather than directly stating what is meant. Personification attributes human traits to non-human entities, while hyperbole exaggerates to emphasize a point [11].

3. RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS

This study selects the figures of speech of the first half of the *Songs of Love Flowers* from *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo (Chinese-English Version)* [13]—specifically, sections titled *Buying Flower Seeds in Village Fair*, *Praying for Rain*,

Breeding Flower Seeds, *Chopping Trees from the Hill*, *Enclosing Garden with Hedge*, and *Growing Flowers*—and their English translations as the research subject.

Based on the above classification, this paper studies the figures of speech in *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo (Chinese-English Version)*, including repetition, antithesis, parallelism, metaphor, hyperbole, rhetorical question, apostrophe, personification, synecdoche and contrast.

The FYCAT translation platform, an intelligent assisted translation system, is applied to create a bilingual corpus containing 2,323 parallel text pairs. Subsequently, the Qualitative Coder annotation system developed by Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) was employed to manually annotate the figures of speech in the texts, including metaphor, repetition, rhetorical question, antithesis, personification, and others [11], aiming to comprehensively capture the linguistic charm of the original text. Based on this annotation, the translation methods for each figure of speech were statistically analyzed.

According to Table 1, the source text contains a total of 1,776 cases of figures of speech. Among these, repetition, antithesis, and parallelism are relatively high, with a total of 1,308 occurrences, accounting for 73.7%. This is followed by metaphor, hyperbole, rhetorical question, and apostrophe, with 376 instances, making up 21.2%. The use of personification, synecdoche, and contrast is less frequent, accounting for 5.2%.

Regarding translation methods for figures of speech, there are significant differences in the frequency of use of literal translation, free translation, imitation, variation translation, and recreation. Literal translation is used most frequently, with a total of 1,127 instances, accounting for 63.5%. This is followed by free translation and imitation, with a combined total of 647 instances, representing 36.4%. The methods of variation translation and recreation are used the least, with only 2 occurrences.

According to these results, the high frequency of literal translation suggests that the translator primarily adopted a foreignization strategy, in which the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader towards him [14], striving to stay faithful to the original text and reflect its rhetorical characteristics and cultural connotations as much as possible. Additionally, the flexible application

Table 1. Figures of Speech Translation in Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo

	Literal translation		Free translation		Imitation		Variation translation		Recreation		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Repetition	491	43.6	170	31.7	34	30.9	1	100	0	0	696	39.2
Antithesis	316	28.0	109	20.3	28	25.5	0	0	0	0	453	25.5
Parallelism	82	7.3	77	14.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	159	9.0
Metaphor	62	5.5	44	8.2	10	9.1	0	0	0	0	116	6.5
Hyperbole	45	4.0	45	8.4	4	3.6	0	0	0	0	94	5.2
Rhetorical question	44	3.9	35	6.5	10	9.1	0	0	1	100	90	5.1
Apostrophe	28	2.5	29	5.4	19	17.3	0	0	0	0	76	4.3
Personification	22	2.0	20	3.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	2.4
Synecdoche	20	1.8	3	0.6	2	1.8	0	0	0	0	25	1.4
Contrast	17	1.5	5	0.9	3	2.7	0	0	0	0	25	1.4
Total	1127	63.5	537	30.2	110	6.2	1	0.01	1	0.01	1776	100

The percentages (%) represent the ratio of each figure of speech translated by a method to the total occurrences of that method (figure of speech/method total × 100).

of free translation, imitation, and other translation methods can partially meet the target readers' requirements for understanding the cultural background and emotional nuances of the original text.

4. ANALYSIS OF FIGURES OF SPEECH IN ZHUANG'S FOLK SONGS OF NAPO

This section analyzes the figures of speech in *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo* from three dimensions, including figures of speech in word and structure, figures of speech in imagery, and figures of speech in semantics. The analyses illustrate how they enhance the emotional depth and imagery of the lyrics and the challenges translators face in conveying these elements while preserving the essence of Zhuang culture.

4.1 Figures of Speech in Word and Sentence Structure

4.1.1 Repetition, parallelism, and antithesis

In *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo*, figures of speech of repetition, parallelism and antithesis are widely and skillfully employed. Particularly through the repetitive singing of structurally consistent lines, a unique rhythm and melody are constructed, demonstrating a high level of artistic expression. This fixed and distinctive style of expression not only makes the song melodic but also deeply embodies the profound feelings of the Zhuang people.

Example 1

慢在堂上列祖师, Farewell to ancestors at the ancestral tablets in the hall,
慢在神台曾祖父。 And the grand-father behind the altar.
慢在堂上列祖师, Farewell to ancestors at the ancestral tablets in the hall,
慢在神台曾祖父。 And the grand-father behind the altar.
慢在右台列祖宗, Farewell to forefathers on the right,
慢在左台圣花婆。 And the grandmothers on the left.
慢在右台列祖宗, Farewell to forefathers on the right,
慢在左台圣花婆。 And grandmothers on the left.

In the above example, repetition, parallelism, and antithesis are vividly used to depict the scene where the characters slowly bid farewell to their home and every corner of their village before setting out to buy flower seeds. It expresses their deep affection for their ancestors, family, and village.

Repetition is evident in the recurring sentences, which emphasize the gradual and respectful farewell, enhancing the sentimentality of the lyrics. Parallelism is shown in the balanced structure of each couplet with similar syntactic structures and equal syllables, contributing to the rhythmic and harmonious quality of the song. Antithesis is present in the paired phrases with similar syntactic structures, exhibiting a formal balance that contributes to the aesthetic symmetry of the verse.

The word "慢" (slowly) in the lyrics signifies a gradual farewell, where each part of the home and village is bid goodbye one by one. Although the word "慢" is not directly translated in the English version, the essence of a gradual farewell, by adopting free translation, is conveyed through repetition, parallelism, and antithesis. This method not only enriches the layers of the lyrics but also profoundly reveals the emotional connotations of the Zhuang culture.

4.1.2 Rhetorical question

In songs, rhetorical questions enhance emotion and musical expressiveness. By repeatedly posing questions, it evokes resonance with the audience and encourages dialogue and communication in the antiphonal singing between singers. The concept of the song is highlighted by rhetorical questions, which also give the lyrics additional rhythm and force.

Example 2

何日等得天开门, When will the Heaven open its gate?
何时天上降春雨。 When comes the spring rain to this state?
何日天下雨, We're longing for some rain,
何日天降露。 We're looking forward to the dew.
天公不下雨咋办, What if no rain would fall?
我俩咋个好。 How can we find a way?

This section of the folk song uses series of rhetorical questions to convey the singers' urgent longing for rain and their helplessness. The

English translation remains largely faithful to the original text, preserving the structure and emotional expression of the rhetorical question. In the translation of “何日天下雨，何日天降露。(We're longing for some rain, We're looking forward to the dew.)”, imitation is employed and rhetorical questions are rendered as declarative sentences. It strengthens the certainty of emotional expression although this changes the interrogative structure of the original text. Compared to the ambiguity and uncertainty of rhetorical questions, the declarative sentences clearly express the singers' longing for rain and dew, demonstrating a steadfast belief and hope. In addition to avoiding the repetition of rhetorical questions, the translation method of imitation makes the emotional expression more vivid and powerful, enhancing the text's fluency and readability.

4.1.3 Apostrophe

The apostrophe allows the author or speaker to fully express strong emotions, creating an emotional resonance with the reader or listener. In folk songs, the apostrophe is primarily reflected in the direct use of words of address such as “妹”, “哥”, “娘”, and “郎”, which are particularly common in Zhuang mountain songs. These terms are often used between men and women to express affection. The use of apostrophes makes the folk songs more colloquial and grounded in everyday life, highlighting the cultural characteristics of the Zhuang people.

Example 3

来啊妹来啊， Come on, come with me!
既然得相会。 Since here we meet.
随哥一起来， I'll go with you,
既然得相会。 As by chance I meet you.

This example depicts a joyful scene where the singers meet before their scheduled flower seed purchase. The use of apostrophes adds a sense of intimacy to the dialogue, making the exchange appear natural and casual, reflecting the lighthearted and pleasant interaction between the two individuals. In the translation, the terms “妹” and “哥” are translated as “I” and “you” respectively. While this maintains the rhetorical effect of apostrophe, it somewhat diminishes the emotional impact and weakens the cultural distinctiveness of the original text.

4.1.4 Contrast

Contrast makes the characteristics of the opposing elements more pronounced and guides the readers to appreciate the differences between them. In folk songs, contrast makes the lyrics more expressive and vivid, allowing readers to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the intended imagery.

Example 4

凤凰兴奋飞上天， Phoenixes are excited to fly to the sky,
乌鸡欲配难高翔。 Crows aren't qualified to fly high.
凤凰随风落田坝， Phoenixes will land with the wind,
想与乌鸡结成双。 Wishing to make pairs with the crows.

This example contrasts the phoenix and the crow, with the former symbolizing ideals and prosperous life, while the latter represents poverty and harsh realities. Through this contrast, the female singer's desire to overcome life's difficulties with the male singer is highlighted, expressing her hope for the future and her unwavering commitment to him. By literal translation, the translation successfully preserves the original imagery and the contrast, effectively capturing the emotions and cultural background present in the source text.

4.2 Figures of Speech in Imagery

In this section, the figures of speech related to imagery in the work will be explored. By analyzing metaphor, synecdoche, and personification, the author aims to reveal how these figures of speech convey emotions and cultural significance, as well as their contribution to the overall aesthetic and meaning of the songs.

4.2.1 Metaphor

Folk songs frequently use flowers as metaphors for the singers' lives, feelings, and actions, with tasks like purchasing, growing, and caring for flowers serving as examples. The linguistic expressiveness of folk songs is enhanced by this metaphorical approach, which also deeply conveys the singers' inner world and life aspirations, enhancing the aesthetic and artistic value of the lyrics.

Example 5

可惜墙脚四方木， As clumsy as a square timber,
欲来留连栽花朵。 How could I grow the flower?
可惜墙角四方木， As clumsy as a square timber,
若哥念起就栽花。 You can grow it if you desire.

In this segment of the folk song, metaphors are used to depict the characters' personalities and emotions. "墙脚四方木(the square timber in the corner)" symbolizes rigidity and lack of movement, reflecting the male singer's clumsiness and self-deprecating nature. On the other hand, "flower" denotes beauty and rarity, representing the uniqueness and value of the female, admired and yearned by the other. Through these metaphors, the folk song vividly portrays the male's emotional struggles and the idealized image of the female, adding depth and liveliness to their relationship.

4.2.2 Synecdoche

Through synecdoche, folk songs can express complex emotions and ideas using more poetic and symbolic language. This enhances the cultural depth and artistic quality of the lyrics, making them more expressive in meaning.

Example 6

边种咱边看， I'm growing flowers while watching,
请守金身等待哥。 Please keep your integrity for my returning.
哥种妹讨看， You grow flowers I'd enjoy,
妹守金身等郎哥。 I'll keep my integrity for you.

This example uses synecdoche by substituting a concrete object for an abstract concept. Here, "金身" is a concrete object, typically implying strength and durability, to replace the abstract concept of steadfast and unchanging loyalty. This choice further emphasizes the singer's enduring desire and unwavering commitment to their relationship. In the translation, it is rendered as "integrity" by free translation, attempting to convey the symbolic meaning of loyalty. However, "integrity" may focus more on moral honesty and uprightness rather than emotional steadfastness. Therefore, the term "loyalty," which specifically denotes fidelity to a person, especially in emotional or relational contexts, would more accurately reflect the cultural and emotional

connotations of "金身".

4.2.3 Personification

In folk songs, personification is used to endow natural elements like flowers, trees, and phoenixes with human feelings and actions. This technique enhances the expressiveness and emotional depth of the lyrics, making the imagery more vivid and engaging.

Example 7

凤凰从根站满梢， Phoenixes are standing from root to top,
它愿我俩发爱财。 Hope that we could reap the fruit of love.
凤凰挤满花丛中， Phoenixes hustle and bustle among flowers,
生怕别人先发财。 Fear that others may make fortune first.

This example depicts the busy state of phoenixes and the hope for booming flowers, expressing the singers' strong desire for a fulfilling love and a happy future. The humanized portrayal of the phoenix provides emotional depth to the natural elements in the song, enhancing the theme interpretation. The translation preserves the personification by giving the phoenix human feelings and behaviors.

The phrase "hustle and bustle" aptly captures the phoenix's energetic movement amidst the flowers, reinforcing the personification effect and maintaining the vivid imagery of the original text.

4.3 Figures of Speech in Semantics

In the study of the corpus, figures of speech in semantics are relatively sparse, with hyperbole being the primary focus. Hyperbole evokes rich imagination and highlighting the essence and characteristics of the subject. In folk songs, hyperbole enhances expressiveness and dramatic effect, adding emotional depth and cultural symbolism to the narrative. This makes the lyrics more compelling and memorable.

Example 8:

扬鞭跨上马， We jump onto the horses with a whip,
流连几千里。 For thousands of miles the horse gallop.
十坡并作一坡驰， Over ten hills the horses gallop,

十隘归作一隘闯， And through ten passes it wouldn't stop,
流连回到嗅故地。 After a long journey we return home.

In this example, the couple hurries home across a vast distance after acquiring flower seeds. The sentences “流连几千里” (For thousands of miles the horse gallop) and “十坡并作一坡驰，十隘归作一隘闯” (Over ten hills the horses gallop, And through ten passes it wouldn't stop) use hyperbole to emphasize the vast distance and the difficulty of the journey, reflecting the couple's persistence and determination, while also adding dramatic and emotional depth to the narrative. The translation retains some of the hyperbole of the original text, as in "Over ten hills the horses gallop," which effectively captures the image of the horses galloping over multiple hills. However, "over ten hills" falls short of expressing the exaggerated effect of “并作一坡” (combined into one hill), which heightens the impression of the hardship of the journey and the exertion of the persons on it.

5. TRANSLATION METHODS OF FIGURES OF SPEECH IN ZHUANG'S FOLK SONGS OF NAPO

According to the statistics, repetition, and antithesis overwhelmingly dominate in terms of frequency in the translation of *Zhuang's folk songs of Napo*. As such, these two figures of speech will feature prominently in the analysis of literal, free, and imitation translation methods. Their prevalence provides valuable insights into the strategies used to handle these figures of speech, while other figures of speech offer additional perspectives on the diversity of translation methods.

5.1 Literal Translation

Literal translation is a method that aims to preserve both the content and form of the original text [15]. By using literal translation, the translation retains the expression and context of the source language while conveying similar meanings and effects in the target language. This approach maintains the form and content of the lyrics while preserving the figures of speech in the original text.

Example 9

放符十二张， Praying with the twelfth magic figures,

窗窗都开毕， Every window is now open,
门门都开尽。 Each door is now open.
放符十二张， Praying with the twelfth magic figures,
窗窗都开毕， Every window has been opened,
门门都开尽。 Each door has been opened.

This excerpt depicts a scene where the couple, after buying flower seeds, invites a priest to perform rituals with the twelfth magic figures to pray for rain to nurture the seeds. The literal translation was adopted in the repetition and antithesis. For the repetition, while the original Chinese text remains the same, the English translation introduces a shift in tense from the simple present (*is*) to the present perfect (*has been*), effectively reflecting the passage and change of time and enriching the semantic depth. For the antithesis “窗窗都开毕，门门都开尽”，the “each” and “every” emphasize individual items, and the alliteration (each/every) combined with the rhyme (open/opened) preserves the phonetic beauty of the original text, ensuring a harmonious balance between form and content.

Example 10

花种吐芽长得齐， The flower buds are growing evenly,
美似仙女下凡间。 They're beautiful as the fairies.

Example 11

皇帝府中常观花， The Emperor enjoys flowers in his palace,
仙在天上常欣赏。 Gods admire flowers in the heaven.

In Example 10, metaphor is used to compare flowers to fairies. The literal translation preserves the form and content of the original text, with the simile marker “似” translated as “as” and the tenor “仙女” as “the fairies,” maintaining the original imagery and metaphor. However, “仙女” and “fairies,” while both referring to supernatural female figures, differ in cultural background, and symbolic meaning in Chinese and English contexts. “仙女” often reflects ideals and virtues in Chinese traditional culture, whereas “fairies” convey mystery and changeability in Western culture. When translating, it is essential to choose the most appropriate expression based on context and cultural background to ensure that readers can understand and appreciate the cultural nuances.

In Example 11, the sentence is of parallelism with a similar structure, balanced content, and coordinated rhythm. By using literal translation, the original structure and cultural elements are preserved, successfully reproducing the parallelism of the original text. This approach ensures that the translation remains faithful to the original while retaining cultural imagery.

5.2 Free Translation

Free translation includes paraphrase and idiomatic translation. Paraphrase involves providing an interpretive explanation of the original text, while idiomatic translation replaces original phrases with idiomatic expressions from the target language [15].

In Example 1, where repetition, parallelism, and antithesis are employed, the translator used the paraphrase method. The phrase “慢在” implies a gradual farewell, which is not translated word-for-word but explained as “Farewell to” to convey a sense of departure. Additionally, “慢在堂上列祖师” (Farewell to ancestors at the ancestral tablets in the hall) also employs paraphrase translation to clarify “堂上” (hall) as a traditional family space used for ancestor tablets and ceremonies. This explanation effectively communicates the original’s cultural and emotional nuances, making the translation both linguistically and culturally appropriate for the target audience.

Example 12

哥来说妹一两句，	I wanna have words
with you,	
提示娘妹一两题。	And some tips to
	prompt you.
哥说妹哪句，	What do you wanna talk with
me?	
使妹惊骇魂魄乱。	Don't you shock me or
	terrify me.

After the three figures of speech above, hyperbole accounts for 8.4% of the free translation. In this case, “使妹惊骇魂魄乱” employs hyperbole to enhance the extreme emotional state by amplifying the sense of shock and chaos. The translation uses “shock me” and “terrify me” to paraphrase the original text, omitting the specific depiction of the mental confusion implied by “魂魄乱.” While it captures the basic emotional response, it may not fully convey the exaggerative effect in the original text. The English expression tends to directly communicate shock and fear, potentially lacking

the original’s dramatic hyperbole.

Example 13

蓝朵是英台，	The blue one reminds Zhu
Yingtai of a love canon,	
红朵是山伯。	The red one may be Liang
	Shanbo of the legend.

Metaphor accounts for 8.2% of the free translation. This case features two layers of metaphor: first, the blue and red flowers are metaphorically compared to Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, renowned figures from a famous Chinese love legend. Second, Liang and Zhu are used to metaphorically represent the singers, reflecting not only an admiration for the classic love story but also their idealistic expectations for their relationship. In the English translation, the core metaphorical meanings are conveyed by the terms “reminds” and “may be”, while the additions of “a love canon” and “the legend” provide cultural context.

In Example 3 of the apostrophe, terms like “妹” (sister) and “哥” (brother) are translated through idiomatic translation, with personal pronouns “I” and “You” being used instead. While this choice impacts the conveying of emotion and cultural distinctiveness, a literal translation like “sister” and “brother” might cause cultural misconceptions regarding familial relationships due to cultural differences. Therefore, using “I” and “You” helps mitigate potential cultural misunderstandings while maintaining the translation’s fluency and naturalness.

5.3 Imitation

Imitation involves translating without adhering strictly to the details of the original text, including its vocabulary and syntactic structure[15]. This method may involve reducing or condensing the text to convey the core idea or key information, or expanding the translation to include additional information not present in the original text. In the imitation method, repetition and antithesis account for 30.9% and 25.5% respectively, followed by apostrophes of 17.3%.

Example 14

俩丁来哥讲，	I have errands for you both,
俩伊来哥说。	You can do them as I want.
俩丁来哥讲，	He has errands for you both,
俩伊来哥说。	You can do them as he wants.

In the example, repetition, antithesis, and apostrophe are employed. The core meaning of the original text is to deliver instructions, requiring the "boys" (丁) and "girls" (伊) to complete tasks according to the singers' requirements. The translation uses imitation, not strictly adhering to the original vocabulary and syntactic structure. Instead, it employs terms like "errands" and "as I want" to convey the core meaning of the original text. This approach aligns better with English expression habits, making the translation both faithful to the original meaning and more natural and clear in English.

Example 15

道师护命多完好, The priest protects your life intact,
麽师佑魂稳又牢。 The master blesses your soul in peace.

In the example, the terms "道师" and "麽师" refer to individuals performing different religious rituals, each with rich cultural connotations. The translation does not adhere strictly to literal translation or transliteration. Instead, it uses "priest" and "master" to convey the general meaning, omitting the specific religious connotations of the original text. This approach avoids the difficulty of accurately conveying the unique religious roles specific to the Chinese context in English.

Additionally, in the sentence "麽师佑魂稳又牢", "稳又牢" emphasizes the firmness and strength of protection, the translation "in peace" simplifies the expression, omitting the detailed nuance of "稳又牢." This reduction ensures that the translation aligns more closely with the target language's expression habits. Additionally, the choice of "intact" and "in peace" adds rhythm to the sentence, and improves the sentence's overall readability and poetic beauty.

In Example 5, the line "可惜墙脚四方木, 欲来留连栽花朵" is translated as "As clumsy as a square timber, How could I grow the flower?" with the imitation method employed. The source text "可惜" (expressing regret) is omitted in the translation. Instead, the adjective "clumsy" is added to describe "墙脚四方木" (square timber), compensating for the lost sense of regret by emphasizing the singer's clumsiness and self-deprecation. This addition helps English readers better grasp the metaphorical meaning that was not explicitly conveyed in the original text.

5.4 Variation Translation

Variation translation involves deviations from the original content or main idea. In real-world translation situations, this method may be employed to achieve specific objectives or to cater to the particular needs of the target audience[15].

Example 16:

围花只盼结种子, I hope to get seeds by growing flowers,
有朝结情像别个。 I envy those lovers could be together.

In the example, the phrase "有朝结情像别个" conveys a sense of appreciation and a desire to enjoy a beautiful love like others do. Variation translation is employed by using the term "envy", which introduces a similar but not entirely equivalent sentiment. "Envy" typically conveys dissatisfaction or jealousy, with a certain degree of negative connotation. By employing the variation translation, the neutral hope and admiration in the source text are transformed into a more emotionally charged expression with a potential conflict. This adjustment aims to resonate more deeply with the target audience, yet it may alter some of the subtle emotional nuances present in the original text.

5.5 Recreation

Recreation refers to a method in which the translator abandons the original meaning and form to achieve a specific translation purpose and creatively reworks the original text[15].

Example 17

放符第八张, Praying with the eighth magic figure,
到处充满太阳光, The sun is shining all round,
我俩何为好。 But still no rain can be found.

In the original text, "我俩何为好" literally means "What should we do?" and expresses the singers' confusion and helplessness when praying for rain without success. The translation employs recreation by abandoning the original form and meaning, capturing the original text's mood, emotion, and cultural context. Instead of directly translating it as "What should we do?", the translation creates the meaning of "But still no rain can be found," focusing on the specific

situation of lacking rain. Although the translation does not preserve the exact question form, it indirectly conveys similar feelings of helplessness and confusion through the description of the absence of rain. By using the recreation method, the translator reinterprets the original text while retaining its core emotion and essence. Although the translation does not match the original text's literal meaning exactly, it effectively captures the core emotional impact and cultural adaptability of the original text in the target language.

6. CONCLUSION

Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo, with its distinct ethnic and cultural characteristics and rich figures of speech, offers a profound insight into the spiritual world of the Zhuang people. Based on a bilingual corpus, this study focuses on the figures of speech in *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo* and their English translations to investigate the translation methods employed. The study reveals that literal translation effectively preserves the cultural features and figures of speech of the source text, allowing readers to directly experience the original's essence. Meanwhile, the flexible use of free translation and imitation methods can effectively adjust the translation to align with the target language's conventions, addressing potential cultural understanding barriers that literal translation may encounter. The combined use of these methods not only maintains the authenticity of the folk songs but also enhances their acceptance in the target language's cultural context, providing valuable references for the translation of *Zhuang's Folk Songs of Napo* and other ethnic literary works.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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