



**CULTURE-RELATED SEMANTIC LOSSES IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS
OF TRAVEL GUIDES**

By

CHEN SHIYUE

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2024

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
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January 2024

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Amidst China's focus on cultural export and the backdrop of economic globalization, the tourism sector emerges as a strategic channel for cultural dissemination. Translating Chinese culture-specific items in travel guides becomes pivotal in bridging the gaps between different cultures and facilitating cross-cultural understanding. Despite the growing demand for accurate translation, tourism translation faces criticism for struggling to preserve intricate cultural connotations and contextual elements from the source text. A lack of research exists to address cultural connotation losses and their implications for semantic accuracy in translating Chinese culture-specific items into English. This research aims to address this gap and investigates culturally related semantic losses in the English translation of Chinese travel guides published by Lonely Planet, focusing on the destinations of Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan. It aims to achieve the following: 1) the types of cultural connotation losses in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides; 2) the culturally related semantic losses, with particular reference to cultural connotations losses that result in partial or complete semantic

losses; 3) the macro-level translation method of the identified micro-level translation procedures impact on the culturally related semantic losses; and 4) the factors that caused these culturally related semantic losses.

The current research adopts a qualitative-descriptive approach, with strategic inclusion of percentage numbers to reinforce qualitative findings. This inclusion serves to quantitatively reinforce key observations and enhance the robustness of the research. The analysis focuses on 500 collected culture-specific items in their English-translated versions, employing Nababan et al.'s (2012) translation quality assessment, Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignisation, and Baker's (1992) typology of losses. The data were purposefully sampled using maximum variation sampling to address the research questions, followed by content analysis.

The findings identified seven types of cultural connotations losses. Specifically, these pertained to historical background, rhetorical devices, religious information, local customs, cuisine, poetry and literary works, and architectural features. In addition, certain cultural connotations loss resulted in both partial and complete semantic losses, with partial semantic loss being dominant. Moreover, the findings uncovered the prevalence of macro-level translation method foreignization, indicating a prioritisation by the translators in preserving the cultural elements of the source text. Within the micro-level translation procedures, meanwhile, literal translation, transliteration, and literal translation plus transliteration were found to be the dominant modes. Factors contributing to culturally related semantic losses were also evaluated, such as semantic complexity, differences in meaning, lack of lexicalization, and the translators' inappropriate choice of equivalents.

The present study is significant within translation studies because it illuminates the distinctive types of cultural connotations losses generated by translating culture-specific items, with reference to the travel guides. The findings offer valuable insights for translators and researchers, enhancing understanding of the intricacies of translating cultural connotations. The comprehensive typology developed in this study can inform future translation practice and lay the groundwork for further research. Finally, the present study emphasises the importance of cultural accuracy and linguistic richness, contributing to the ongoing development of cross-cultural communication.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KEHILANGAN SEMANTIK BERKAITAN BUDAYA DALAM
TERJEMAHAN BAHASA INGGERIS PANDUAN PELANCONGAN**

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Dalam lensa China terhadap eksportasi budaya dan latar belakang globalisasi ekonomi, sektor pelancongan muncul sebagai saluran strategik bagi penyebaran budaya. Penterjemahan unsur budaya China dalam buku panduan pelancongan menjadi sangat penting dalam usaha menghubungkan antara budaya yang berbeza dan memudahkan pemahaman silang budaya. Meskipun ada permintaan yang tinggi untuk terjemahan yang tepat, terjemahan dalam bidang pelancongan mendapat kritikan kerana kesulitannya semasa menterjemahkan elemen-elemen konotasi budaya dan kontekstual yang rumit dari teks sumber. Tidak ada penelitian yang cukup untuk mengatasi kehilangan konotasi budaya dan kesannya terhadap ketepatan semantik dalam menerjemahkan unsur budaya China ke dalam bahasa Inggeris. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengatasi kekangan ini dan menganalisis kehilangan makna semantik yang berkaitan dengan budaya dalam terjemahan bahasa Inggeris dari buku panduan pelancongan berbahasa China yang diterbitkan oleh Lonely Planet, dengan fokus pada destinasi terpilih iaitu Beijing, Shanghai, dan Sichuan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti: 1) jenis kehilangan konotasi budaya dalam terjemahan bahasa Inggeris dari

unsur budaya China dalam buku panduan perlancongan Lonely Planet; 2) kehilangan makna semantik yang berkaitan dengan budaya, dengan rujukan khusus pada kehilangan konotasi budaya yang menghasilkan kehilangan semantik separuh atau lengkap; 3) kaedah terjemahan peringkat makro dari prosedur terjemahan peringkat mikro yang diklasifikasikan memberi kesan kepada kehilangan semantik yang berkaitan dengan budaya; dan 4) faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kehilangan makna semantik yang berkaitan dengan budaya.

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, dan peratusan digunakan untuk menyokong hasil kajian. Sebanyak 500 unsur budaya terjemahan ke dalam bahasa Inggeris telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan teori kualiti terjemahan Nababan et al. (2012), domestikasi dan foreignisasi oleh Venuti (1995), dan tipologi kehilangan (Baker, 1992). Data dipilih berdasarkan kepada sampel variasi maksimum untuk menjawab objektif kajian, diikuti oleh analisis kandungan.

Hasil kajian telah mengklasifikasikan tujuh jenis kehilangan konotasi budaya. Secara khususnya, ianya berkaitan dengan latar belakang sejarah, perangkat retorik, penerangan tentang unsur keagamaan, adat istiadat lokal, kulinari, puisi, dan karya sastera, serta aspek kejuruteraan. Selain itu, beberapa kehilangan konotasi budaya menyebabkan kehilangan makna semantik separuh dan lengkap, dengan dominasi kehilangan makna semantik separuh. Selain itu, hasil kajian menemukan kaedah terjemahan foreignisasi peringkat makro, menunjukkan fokus penterjemah dalam melestarikan elemen budaya teks sumber. Dalam prosedur terjemahan peringkat mikro pula, terjemahan harfiah, transliterasi, dan terjemahan harfiah dengan transliterasi adalah sangat dominan. Faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada

kehilangan makna semantik yang berkaitan dengan budaya juga dikenal pasti, contohnya seperti kerumitan semantik, perbezaan makna, kekurangan leksikaliti, dan pilihan persamaan yang tidak tepat oleh penerjemah.

Kajian ini sangat penting dalam bidang terjemahan kerana ianya merangkumi jenis kehilangan konotasi budaya yang dihasilkan dari penterjemahan unsur budaya, dengan rujukan kepada buku panduan perlancongan. Hasil kajian memberikan impak yang tinggi kepada penerjemah dan pengkaji, meningkatkan pemahaman tentang cabaran dalam proses terjemahkan konotasi budaya. Tipologi komprehensif yang terdapat dalam penelitian ini memberikan tapak untuk praktik terjemahan di masa depan dan merintis jalan untuk penelitian kajian yang lebih lanjut. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini menekankan pentingnya ketepatan budaya dan kekayaan linguistik, yang secara langsung menyumbang kepada pengembangan komunikasi silang budaya.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSI	Culture-Specific Items
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, theoretical framework, scope and limitation of the study, definitions of key terms and conceptual framework of this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

With the rapid development of globalization and the acceleration of international travel, cross-border tourism is on the rise (Wei et al., 2022). China is one of the most popular destinations in the world, drawing a sizable number of foreign visitors each year to see its numerous monuments and scenic areas (Wang & Meng, 2023). The accession of China to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 was a turning point, provoking a gradual and purposeful evolution in the field of inbound tourism. Simultaneously, however, the Chinese government perceived that economic initiatives are perhaps necessary but insufficient drivers of tourism (Weaver et al., 2020). A purely economic approach is, in fact, unsustainable. As a result, China's "go global" strategy has gradually expanded beyond the economy to include culturally motivated tourism (Liu et al., 2022). This expansive effort was a success. Beijing 2008 refers to the 2008 Summer Olympics, officially known as the XXIX Olympiad Games, took place in Beijing, China. Subsequently, Chinese culture has experienced a growing global impact. Hosting the Olympic Games in China was particularly advantageous for its tourism industry.

Nevertheless, the road to success for China's inbound tourism market was not smooth. The 2008 financial crisis, the economic dispute with the USA since 2018, and the Covid-19 outbreak are three "body blows" that have impeded globalization and hindered China's tourism development (Wang et al., 2023, p. 1). In all these situations, China's tourism department provided directives for the industry to "let Chinese culture go global" (Zhang, 2023). China's allure for tourists lies in its natural landscapes and the captivating cultural meanings hidden within its majestic sceneries (Cui, 2016; Ru & Fang, 2023). Consequently, the translation of tourism materials, which showcases these cultural meanings in diverse cultural settings, serves as a valuable template for other developing economies and offers profound insights into the field of translation studies.

According to Smith (2015), the primary motivation for inbound tourists was the allure of history and culture. Tourism is fundamentally a cultural experience (Bryce et al., 2013), and effective cross-cultural communication must be aware of cultural differences. Furthermore, Sulaiman (2014) and Sulaiman & Wilson (2018) emphasized the importance of privileging cultural sensibilities in target texts over literal lexical content to achieve effective communication in tourism promotional materials.

Tourism is inherently a cross-cultural phenomenon, and one of the main motivations for people to travel is to experience foreign cultures (Liu, 2020). Translating tourism materials requires confronting the non-equivalent issues in the target language (Jiangbo & Ying, 2010; Turzynski-Azimi, 2021). Numerous important models have been introduced to resolve these difficulties, concentrating on "cultural words"

(Newmark, 1988, p. 82), “culture-specific items” (Aixelá, 1996, p. 56), “culture bumps” (Leppihalme, 1997, p. 3), “culturemes” (Katan, 2009, p. 79), “realia” (Leppihalme, 2011, p. 126), and “extralinguistic cultural references” (Pedersen, 2011, p. 41).

According to Katan, translators need “to transfer the terms and concepts in the source text abroad with minimum loss” (2009, p. 79). Despite the crucial role played by culture-specific items in tourism materials, the substandard quality of tourism translation continues to be a subject of scholarly debate, as indicated by the abundance of studies criticizing the semantic accuracy of culture-specific items embedded with cultural connotations in translation related to tourism materials (Anholt, 2000; Federici, 2007; Pierini, 2007; Agorni, 2012; Katan, 2012; Hogg et al., 2014; Sulaiman, 2014, 2016; Sulaiman & Wilson, 2018).

Newmark (1981) defined translation as “a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message in one language by the same message in another language” (p. 7). With culture-specific items, however, this is frequently seen unachievable, as the underlying meanings of these terms are often closely tied to a particular cultural context (Terestyényi, 2011; Farahani & Mokhtari, 2016; Afrouz, 2021). Many scholars state that culture-specific items are contingent upon cultural context (Zsuzsa, 2000; Vermes, 2004; Pellatt et al., 2014; Zhang, 2021) and suggest that any textual element in the source culture carrying connotative meanings has the potential to become a culture-specific item.

Furthermore, Wiersema (2004) highlights the significance of cultural context in translation and states each culture-specific item is generated within the context of a particular culture and displays values, attitudes, and practices that are unique to that culture. The most significant challenge in cross-cultural translation lies in effectively rendering the culture-specific items within modified cultural contexts (Turzynski-Azimi, 2021; Amenador & Wang, 2022), which requires meeting the expectations of potential consumers by fulfilling a specific need (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019), all while navigating the inherent cultural differences that exist among people from various cultures (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2018). Scholars found that cultural connotation losses happen when translators render culture-specific elements inappropriately (Abdelaal & Md Rashid, 2015; Mohar, 2021; Oudad & Azmi, 2023). For instance, in Chinese culture, the dragon is the nation's totem because it is associated with strength, dignity, and respect (Zhu & Ilsinger, 2021). In Western culture, however, the dragon is regarded as a mythological creature of ill omen and represents human nature's destructive and greedy aspects (Yuan, 2015). Inadequate handling of culture-specific items in translation can result in the loss of essential cultural connotations and semantic meanings. This may result in reader confusion and a loss of enthusiasm for the targeted destination.

Cultural connotations are significant in travel guides for three primary reasons. Firstly, previous studies proved that tourist attractions typically include cultural connotations embedded in culture-specific items, such as those of historical background (James, 2002; Yang, 2010), local customs (Lu & Fang, 2012; Sobirova, 2020), or religion (Yang, 2010; Wang et al., 2016; Zeng, 2019; Li et al., 2022), to fulfill the communicative function and deliver informative content in tourism translation (Pierini,

2007; Napu & Ngiu 2020). Secondly, the presentation of cultural connotations in culture-specific items is a prerequisite for a communicative function (Agorni, 2012), as many culture-specific items are used at tourist attractions to generate exotic flavours and appeal to potential tourists (Liu, 2020). Finally, studies on the factors and motivations influencing inbound travellers highlight that most are attracted to local culture and immerse themselves in its diverse cultural experiences (Kwek & Lee, 2010; Whang et al., 2016).

Previous studies presented robust evidence on cultural connotations' essential role in the translation of culture-specific items in the context of tourism materials. Studies have examined cultural connotations losses in tourism materials in different languages translation. James (2002) found the loss of cultural connotations in historical background impeded the understanding of target readers. Moreover, Yang (2010) agreed with James' (2002) view and further clarified the time period and historical notables were rooted in the source language's culture. Yang (2010, p. 172) state that the time-relevant knowledge was a "natural association" for the original readers but a distinct ease for the intended reader.

In such a situation, the time-relevant term would become a meaningless concept in the target language, regardless of how rich its implicit meaning is or how much connection it may have for the source audience. This ambiguity remains in the translation and constitutes a loss in the cultural connotations of historical background. In addition, Yang (2010) also found that cultural connotations losses in religious information. It has been one of the greatest important social phenomena through which human history and culture may be explored. Therefore, the present study aimed to fill these gaps and

explore the culturally related semantic losses in the Chinese culture-specific items English translation on tourism materials.

1.2 Problem Statement

In 2021, the World Travel and Tourism Council projected sustained economic growth and employment opportunities through tourism in the coming decade. Scholars and policymakers assert that the global dissemination of China's cultural heritage is a key driver behind the nation's tourism expansion into foreign markets (Airey & Chong, 2011; Telfer & Sharpley, 2015). Fueled by both government incentives and business imperatives (Backaler, 2014), China's inbound tourism industry has gleaned insights from global tourism publishers. As a prominent publisher of travel information globally, Lonely Planet exemplifies China's efforts to establish a robust presence in the international tourism market (Su, 2010; Yu & Xu, 2016). By 2021, twenty-five travel guides featuring various Chinese destinations had been published, encompassing diverse provinces and cities. According to the 2021 China Inbound Tourism Development Report, tourists arriving in China show a preference for cities characterized by high internationalization and abundant historical and cultural resources. Prominent choices include Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan (China Inbound Tourism Development Report, 2021). Beijing and Shanghai, recognized as leading international metropolises, embody diverse cultural, historical, and socio-economic aspects (Fan et al., 2019; Lyu et al., 2021). Conversely, Sichuan stands out with its distinctive cultural panorama, marked by a rich culinary legacy, natural beauty, and historical significance.

Lonely Planet's travel guides have garnered significant attention in translation studies (Englund, 2012; Pan, 2015; Figueiredo & Pasquetti, 2016; Yang et al., 2017; Li, 2018; Zhan, 2018; Li, 2019; Song & Zhu, 2019; Zeng, 2019; Tang, 2022). Some studies delved into challenges associated with translating cultural-specific items, addressing issues such as accuracy in the translated version and potential misunderstandings among the target readers. For example, Englund (2012) outlined the difficulties and changes that arose while translating a portion of Lonely Planet's New Zealand travel guide from Swedish to English. Three key elements lay at the centre of the analysis, specifically, figurative expressions, cultural connotations for culture-specific items, and style. The results revealed that the cultural domain evinced the largest change. Englund (2012) suggested translation procedures like addition, omission, and adaptation to address cultural connotation losses, yet their effectiveness remains unexplored with thorough examination. In a similar vein, Figueiredo & Pasquetti (2016) identified culture-specific items, encompassing proper names, customary cuisine, and geographical designations, as among the foremost challenges in achieving culturally accurate translation. Figueiredo & Pasquetti (2016) identified inaccuracies in translation, attributing them to the absence of equivalents for culture-specific items in the target language arising from cultural differences. While acknowledging the unsatisfactory nature of the translations and their potential to cause misunderstandings, their research did not comprehensively explore the cultural connotations embedded in culture-specific items. A detailed examination of the factors influencing cultural connotations losses and semantic accuracy was lacking and is deemed necessary.

Meanwhile, Yang et al. (2017) investigated the translation of travel guides for Jamaica, as published by Lonely Planet and suggested that translators should interpret cultural

connotations in culture-specific items to maximise cross-cultural communication, a key objective in translating travel guides. This, in turn, will further stimulate the reader's enthusiasm for visiting the area in question. Yang et al. (2017) also stressed the necessity of considering the cultures of both the source and target languages to improve the accuracy of the translation. Other studies, meanwhile, have analysed Lonely Planet's travel guides from different perspectives (Zhan, 2018; Song & Zhu, 2019; Tang, 2022). The cited studies underscore challenges in translating culture-specific items, providing practical recommendations for translators. Precision in translating culture-specific items is recommended to mitigate connotation losses. However, these studies predominantly concentrate on specific instances, leaving the typology of losses relatively unexplored.

Other studies have focused on practical translating and the analysis of difficulties in the translation of the Lonely Planet's series in the particular context of the Master's thesis (Pan, 2015; Li, 2018; Li, 2019; Zeng, 2019). For these prior studies, however, the primary focus was merely on certain excerpts of travel guides, and the translation was not comprehensively examined. The data analysis was also not systematic. Pan (2015), for instance, explored challenges and strategies for translating Lonely Planet's Thailand travel guide. Pan (2015) highlighted that the background information associated with culture-specific items posed a formidable challenge in translation, primarily attributed to the linguistic proficiency limitations of the translator. Moreover, the endeavour to devise strategies for presenting cultural background, aimed at compensating for potential deficiencies in the reader's cultural knowledge, posed a particularly challenging task, as such information can easily be lost in literal translation (Pan, 2015). Nevertheless, this study provided a singular exemplification

to underscore the significance of cultural connotations such as historical background information, indicating a limited scope in demonstrating the broader applicability.

Previous studies have considered the translation of travel guides originally written in English, while relatively scant attention has been paid to English as a target language. To alleviate this gap, some Chinese academics have undertaken research on the translation of travel guides from Chinese to English (Guo, 2017; Sun, 2017; Meng, 2019; Zou, 2020; Li, 2021; Tan, 2021). For example, Li (2021) examined the culture-specific items translation in Dali travel guide and advocated the adoption of transliteration plus explanation in effectively conveying the cultural connotations embedded with the source language and mitigating the culturally related semantic losses. However, this study limited itself on only two examples (三月街 and 三道茶), the narrow focus on these specific instances raises the need for a more extensive examination across a broader range of cultural-specific items in travel guides to ensure the applicability and generalizability of the proposed translation approach. Further research encompassing diverse examples is warranted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and solutions in translating cultural-specific items within the broader context of travel guide translations.

Previous studies have opted to address Beijing, Hubei, Henan, Gansu, Dali, and Northeast China, among other cities and provinces in the country. However, the areas most favoured by foreign tourists evince a rich cultural and historical heritage, and they are typically internationalised already: examples include Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan (China Inbound Tourism Development Report, 2021). As regards these key destinations, the extant research on Anglophone versions of travel guides remains

insufficient. Further research is required to determine whether translations of travel guides for non-Occidental countries encounter the same difficulties. Besides that, these studies selected only one destination to explore the analysis of cultural connotations, but due to geographical differences, the cultural connotations of different destinations are diverse and different. Beijing and Shanghai, for example, are the respective political and economic centres. Sichuan, meanwhile, is recognized for its rich culinary heritage and considered one of the cradles of modern Chinese culture, encompassing the cultural heritage of Sichuan province, Chongqing city, and certain areas of Yunnan and Guizhou provinces in China. This study attempts to fill the gap by exploring the types of cultural connotations losses in culture-specific items in translated English travel guides for Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan.

According to Agorni (2012) and Hogg et al. (2014), the tourism text genre retains a rather marginal place in translation studies, even with requests from previous scholars such as Kelly (1997) and Snell-Hornby (1999) for a widespread implementation of translation theory to tourism discourses due to the “specificity of the communicative situation” (Kelly, 1997, p. 34) of the genre. There are numerous studies investigating the cultural connotation losses in culture-specific items translation in literary works, including rhetorical devices (Zahrawi, 2018), religious information (Alwazna, 2014; Zahrawi, 2018), historical and cultural background (Tiwiyanti & Retnomurti, 2017), customs and festivals (Davies, 2003; Kuleli, 2019), and cuisine (Dan, 2016; Marco, 2019). By contrast, the typologies of cultural connotation losses for culture-specific items in tourism-related materials, such as travel guides, have remained underexplored.

In addition, Terestyényi (2011) stated the substandard quality of tourism translation continues to be a subject of scholarly debate, as indicated by the abundance of studies criticizing the semantic accuracy of culture-specific items in translation related to tourism materials (Agorni, 2012; Hogg et al., 2014; Sulaiman & Wilson, 2018). Many scholars attribute the poor quality of travel guides translations to the complexity of rendering culture-specific items, which leads to a loss of semantic meaning (Anholt, 2000; Valdés, 2013; Sulaiman, 2014; Zou, 2020; Li, 2021). However, the correlation between cultural connotations losses and semantic losses is also unexplored.

Prior research in tourism translation has examined translation procedures for culture-specific items to explore their efficiency in accurately transferring cultural connotations to the target language (Ariyaningsih & Santika, 2018; Qassem et al., 2021). There were many studies focused on the investigation of macro level translation method of the identified micro translation procedures on the culture-specific items translation (Fuadi, 2016; Lin, 2021; Turzynski-Azimi, 2021; Li et al., 2022) and analysed the most prevalent translation procedures, to ascertain whether the cultural tendencies therein lie closer to the culture of the source language or the target language (Alangari, 2022; Ikawati, 2022; Reswari, 2022). However, the effects of macro level translation method of the identified micro translation procedures on cultural connotation and semantic losses in culture-specific items translation were not examined.

In addition, some scholars (Agorni, 2012; Narváez & Zambrana, 2014; Sulaiman & Wilson, 2018; Qassem et al., 2021) examined the factors for the poor quality and inaccuracy of culture-specific items translation in tourism texts. The view of some

researchers, for instance, Pierini (2007) and Jiangbo & Ying (2010), attributed that certain culture-specific items simply have no precise equivalent in the target language and resulted in cultural connotations and semantic losses. Other researchers suggest that culture-specific items are dependent on cultural contexts and that the presentation of cultural connotations around such items in changed cultural contexts during translation forms a key challenge and point of issue (Terestyényi, 2011; Tiwiyanti & Retnomurti, 2017; Kuleli, 2019). In contrast, other scholars posit that the perceived inadequacy in the quality of translation found in numerous tourist materials can be attributed to the translators' perceived lack of competence (Mason, 2017; Sun, 2017; Feng, 2023). This perspective contends that the translators may not possess a comprehensive understanding of the cultural disparities between the source language and the target language. Consequently, cultural connotations within culture-specific items may be articulated using inappropriate language, leading to the loss or distortion of semantic meanings. Notably, the factors contributing to such cultural connotation losses and semantic losses in the English translation of Chinese travel guides have not been systematically explored. The novelty of this study lies in its focused exploration of the factors contributing to culturally related semantic losses in the English translation of Chinese travel guides. While existing scholarship has discussed the challenges in translation quality and attributed them to translator competence, this study distinguishes itself by systematically investigating the specific factors leading to cultural connotation losses and semantic distortions. By delving into these factors, the research aims to uncover intricacies that have not been comprehensively addressed in previous studies, thus contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in translating culture-specific items in the context of travel guides.

The current study identified several limitations of previous studies on tourism materials translation, specifically on the lonely planet's travel guides. Firstly, most prior studies focused on examining culture-specific items in the source text of tourism materials and discussing the cultural connotations conveyance and losses into the target text but did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the typologies of cultural connotations losses. More cultural connotations losses are identified in culture-specific items translation, while few studies investigate the cultural connotations losses in Chinese culture-specific items translation. Hence, the cultural connotations losses were not explored enough in the context of travel guides translation, especially in the Chinese travel guides English translation.

Secondly, despite the literature on the tourism materials translation from different languages, prior studies mainly demonstrated that culture-specific items translation is problematic and proved the semantic meanings of culture-specific items were affected by inappropriate translation without delving deeper into the relation between cultural connotations losses and semantic losses in the culture-specific items translation in tourism materials. Specifically, the extent of certain types of cultural connotations loss causes semantic loss were not examined.

Thirdly, the effects of translation procedures used in the Chinese culture-specific items English translation on cultural connotations and semantic loss have not been fully investigated. Most previous studies merely focused on exploring the dominant translation procedures and the overall cultural tendency in culture-specific items translation and clarified whether the translation was minimizing the transparency of different cultures or emphasizing differences in culture while orienting the reader

toward the original culture. However, the translation procedures' effects on the cultural connotations and semantic loss in the culture-specific items translation have not been investigated in tourism materials translation.

Besides that, factors that influence the culture-specific items with embedded cultural connotations and semantic losses in translation of tourism materials have remained underexplored. Amenador & Wang (2022) argued the need for comprehensive research on culture-specific items. The studies on culture-specific items translation for tourism materials are abundant, stressing the critical necessity to investigate the cultural context of tourism. Previous studies attribute the non-equivalence nature of culture-specific items and translators' incompetence to the cultural connotations and semantic loss in cross-cultural communication. However, even professional translators constantly confront the difficulties of handling culture-specific items. Therefore, a deep analysis of the culture-related semantic losses in tourism materials is necessary.

Addressing these identified gaps, the current study seeks to identify the types of cultural connotations losses in the Chinese culture-specific items English translation for Lonely Planet's travel guides. In addition, this study attempts to investigate the relationship between cultural connotations and semantic losses, with special reference to cultural connotations that result in partial or complete semantic losses. Besides that, this study aims to examine the influence of macro translation method of identified translation procedures, as involved in the translation of culture-specific items, on cultural connotations and semantic losses, as well as explore the factors that cause these losses.

1.3 Research Questions

This study attempts to identify the types of cultural connotations losses in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides. It also aims to study the connections between cultural connotations losses and semantic losses. In addition, this study focuses on the translation procedures used and the factors that lead to cultural connotations and semantic losses in translating of culture-specific materials. Four specific research questions are listed.

1. What are the types of cultural connotations losses occurred in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides?
2. What are the culture-related semantic losses in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides?
3. How the macro-level translation method of the identified micro-level translation procedures impact the culture-related semantic losses in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides?
4. How are the culture-related semantic losses caused in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

With respect to the specific research questions, this study addressed the following research objectives:

1. To describe the types of cultural connotations losses in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides.
2. To demonstrate the culture-related semantic losses in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides.
3. To analyse the macro-level translation method of the identified micro-level translation procedures impact on the culture-related semantic losses in the

English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides.

4. To evaluate the factors that caused the culture-related semantic losses in the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The current study's theoretical framework was established based on four theories providing the theoretical basis for the study of culture-related semantic losses in the culture-specific items translation in Lonely Planet's travel guides. More specifically, Newmark's (1988) model was used to identify culture-specific items, Nababan's (2012) translation quality assessment (TAQ) was employed to examine the culture-related semantic losses in culture-specific items on the travel guides, while Venuti's (1996) domestication and foreignization were used to explore the translation procedures effects on these losses, and Baker's (1992) inevitable loss and avertable loss was employed to assess factors that influence these losses. Figure 1.1 illustrates the current study's theoretical framework.

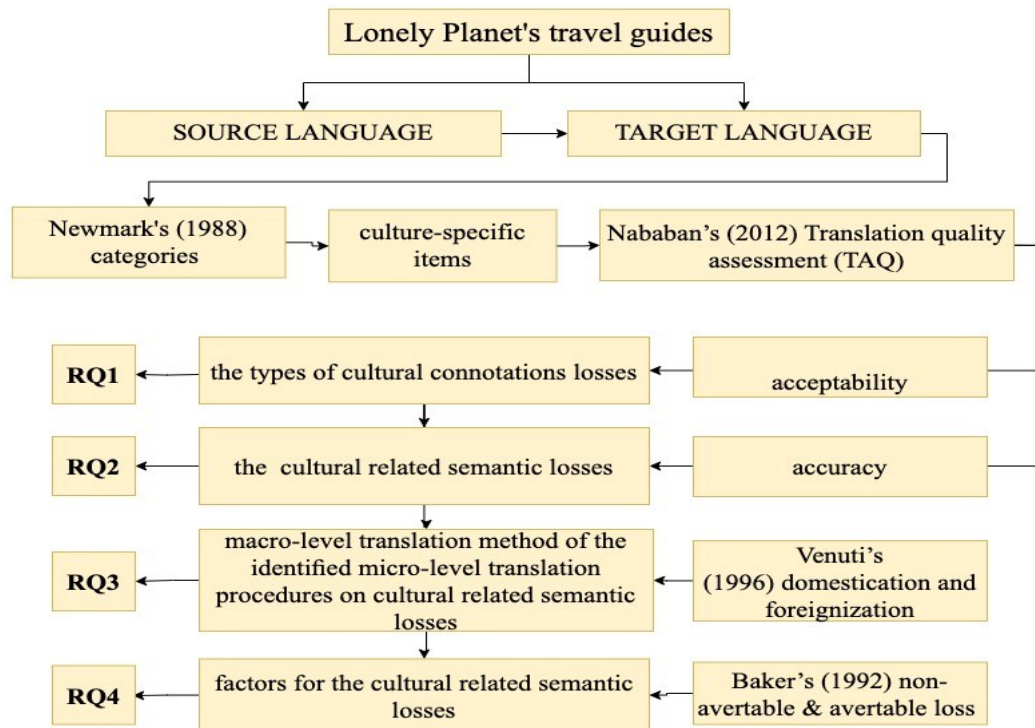


Figure 1.1 : Theoretical Framework of the Study

1.5.1 Newmark's culture-specific items model (1988)

In the present study, Newmark's (1988) cultural categories are utilized to identify culture-specific items in the translation of Lonely Planet's travel guides. This approach builds upon the work of Nida (1964), who recognized the challenges inherent in translating culture-specific items between languages due to differences in cultural contexts. Newmark (1988) expanded upon Nida's (1964) idea, stated the translation problems arising from cultural differences and proposed five cultural categories with corresponding subcategories to aid in the identification of culture-specific items in translation. This framework is used in the present study to guide the analysis of culture-specific items in the translation of Lonely Planet's travel guides. Newmark (1988, pp.94-103) categorized the exotic cultural-specific items into five categories, as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 : Culture-Specific Items Categorization

Ecology	Geographical and environmental concepts (including flora, fauna, winds, and plains)
Material Culture	Food Clothes House Transport
Social Culture	Work and leisure
Gestures and Habits	
Organizations, Customs, and Concepts	Political and administrative items Religious items Artistic items

(Source : Newmark, 1988)

1.5.2 Nababan et al.'s translation quality assessment (2012)

Nababan et al.'s (2012) translation quality assessment served as this study's main theoretical support in assessing and exploring the various types of cultural connotations losses and the relation between cultural connotations and semantic losses. According to Nababan et al. (2012), translation quality assessment is based on three primary aspects: accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Each aspect plays a significant role in translation and its quality.

Nababan et al. (2012) defined accuracy as the degree of correspondence or fidelity between the content of the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). A translation is considered accurate when it faithfully conveys the original text's meaning, information, and intent in the target language without distorting or misrepresenting the source message (Nababan et al., 2012). The qualitative parameters of accuracy are shown in Table 1.2. Nababan et al. (2012) highlighted that the contents must be accurately presented and carry the same semantic meanings in translation.

Table 1.2 : The Assessment Parameter of Accuracy

Category	Qualitative Parameter
Accurate	Meaning of words, technical terms, phrase, clause, sentence, or source language text is accurately transferred into the target language text. There is no distortion of meaning.
Less Accurate	Most of the meanings of words, technical terms, phrases, clauses, sentences, or source language texts have been accurately transitioned into target language. However, there is still distortion of meaning or double translation of meaning or some omitted meaning, disturbing the integrity of the message.
Inaccurate	Meaning of words, technical terms, phrases, clauses, and sentences or source texts are not accurately transferred in the target text or deleted.

(Source : Nababan et al., 2012)

In addition, acceptability is another crucial dimension of translation quality assessment, as described by Nababan et al. (2012), which refers to the degree to which a translated text conforms to the norms, conventions, and customs of the target language and culture. A translation becomes more natural, relatable, and comprehensible to the target audience by adhering to the target language's norms, conventions, and customs. It ensures that the translated text fits seamlessly into the cultural and linguistic context, promoting effective communication and minimizing the risk of misinterpretation or rejection by the audience. The qualitative parameters of acceptance are shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 : The Assessment Parameter of Acceptance

Category	Qualitative Parameter
Acceptable	The translation is natural; the technical terms used are common for the target readers; the phrases, clauses, and sentences used are in accordance with the target language rules.
Less Acceptable	In general, the translation is natural; however, there are some little mistakes or problems in using some technical terms.
Not Acceptable	The translation does not feel natural when it is read; the technical terms used do not familiar for the target readers; phrases, clauses, and sentences used are not in accordance with the target language rules.

(Source : Nababan et al., 2012)

Readability is another essential dimension of translation quality (Nababan et al., 2012), and it refers to how easily and effectively the intended audience can comprehend the translated text. A readable translation ensures that the target audience can understand the content without undue effort or confusion. According to Nababan et al. (2012), a readable translation directly impacts the effectiveness of communication and the reception of the translated content by the target audience and facilitates the transfer of information and ideas between languages and cultures, enhancing cross-cultural understanding and communication. The translator must carefully consider the intended audience of the translation to adjust it accordingly (Nababan, 2008). The qualitative parameters of readability are shown in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 : The Assessment Parameter of Readability

Category	Qualitative Parameter
High Readability	Words, technical terms phrases, clauses, sentences, or subtitles can be easily understood by the reader.
Moderate Readability	In general, the translation can be understood by the target readers; but there are certain parts that must be read more than once to understand the translation.
Low Readability	The translation does not feel natural when it is read; the translation is difficult for the reader to understand.

(Source : Nababan et al., 2012)

It is imperative to clarify that this study exclusively centres its analysis on the parameters of accuracy and acceptability, with the parameter of readability intentionally omitted from consideration. The deliberate exclusion of readability as a parameter in this study stems from methodological considerations that are integral to the research design. While readability undoubtedly constitutes a fundamental dimension of Nababan et al.'s (2012) translation quality assessment, it has been consciously omitted for the following substantiated reasons. Firstly, the primary focus

of this research centres on a meticulous textual analysis of the translated travel guides. The principal objective is to investigate the cultural subtleties embedded within the translations, rather than assessing their ease of comprehension for a target audience.

Moreover, the study refrains from employing surveys or interviews with foreign visitors, a decision which further underscores the rationale for excluding readability assessment. Given that the evaluation of readability necessitates direct feedback from the target audience, the absence of such data renders a comprehensive assessment of this dimension unattainable. In addition, the specific research objectives of this study revolve around a focused exploration of how cultural connotations in culture-specific items are rendered in the translated travel guides. This thematic emphasis inherently diverges from concerns related to readability, as the paramount consideration lies in upholding fidelity to the source text's cultural nuances.

In summation, the deliberate exclusion of readability as a parameter in this study is justified by the conscientious research design, which prioritizes textual analysis and cultural fidelity over considerations of audience reception and comprehension. This methodological choice is anchored in the distinct research objectives and analytical framework employed in this investigation.

In this study, the researcher aims to investigate the culture-related semantic losses in translating culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides. Acceptability is used to determine the many types of cultural connotations losses in culture-specific items translation. Therefore, the qualitative parameter such as acceptable translation is excluded; less acceptable and not acceptable translation are included for analysis.

Similarly, the accuracy parameter is used to determine the relation between cultural connotations losses and semantic losses. Accuracy consists of three categories: accurate, less accurate, and inaccurate translation. Accurate translation is excluded from this study. The current study focused on analysing less accurate and inaccurate translations of culture-specific items in lonely planet's travel guides to explore the relation between cultural connotations and semantic losses. For example, if a certain type of cultural connotations was lost in translation, the current study examined the cultural connotations loss results in partial semantic or complete semantic loss.

1.5.3 Venuti's domestication and foreignization (1995)

The current study applied Laurence Venuti's domestication and foreignization to analyse the macro-level translation methods of the identified micro-level translation procedures impact on the English translation of Chinese culture-specific items. In 1813, the eminent German philosopher Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher delivered a lecture titled *On the Different Ways of Translating* in which he introduced the two terms (domestication and foreignization). According to Schleiermacher, there are only two primary ways to translation. Either the translator makes the author as comfortable as possible while drawing the reader closer to the author, or the translator makes the reader as comfortable as possible while drawing the author closer to the reader (Lefevere, 1977).

1995's *The Translator's Invisibility*, authored by Laurence Venuti, offered readers with brand-new insights. Foreignization, according to Venuti's book, is "an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign tending the reader abroad," while domestication is "an ethnocentric

reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home” (Venuti, 1995, p. 19).

Venuti (1995) researched domesticating and foreignizing methods in different contexts including society, politics, ideology, and history and discovered that competent translation has almost always held a dominant position in the Western world’s translation history. He stated that the Anglo-American culture, which favours fluent translation, is dominated by the domesticating method. Under the requirements of fluency, the target text includes no evidence of translation and is viewed as if it were produced in the target language by the original writer. The discrepancies between both the two languages are filled with something recognizable to the reader of the target language. According to Venuti (2004, p. 203), domesticating translations “conform to values currently dominating the target-language culture, taking a conservative and openly assimilationist approach to the foreign text, appropriating it to support domestic canons, publishing trends and political alignments.” On the other hand, foreignizing translation may “resist and aim to revise the dominant by drawing on the marginal, restoring foreign texts excluded by domestic canons.”

In accordance with Venuti’s perspective, Shuttleworth & Cowie defined domestication in the *Dictionary of Translation Studies* as a term to “describe the translation procedure in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for TL (target language) reader” (p. 54). Shuttleworth & Cowie defined foreignization as “a term to designate the type of translation in which a TT (target text) is produced which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original” (Shuttleworth

& Cowie, 2004, p.59).

As Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization have significantly influenced translation procedures, the current study analysed culture-specific items embedded with cultural connotations and semantic losses in translation in the context of travel guides and examined the effects of translation procedures employed to handle culture-specific items on these losses in the target language.

1.5.4 Baker's (1992) non-avertable and avertable losses

Each language has specific linguistic and cultural characteristics; when one language lacks these characteristics, it is difficult for translators to express the intended meaning of the source language into the target language. As a result, there may be some unexpected losses during the translation process.

According to Baker (1992), there are two kinds of losses: non-avertable and avertable. Non-avertable loss happens due to linguistic variances between two languages, namely the source and target languages. Therefore, the differences between Chinese and English can be examined since they are members of two different language families. The English language is of the Germanic Indo-European family, while Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family. On the other hand, avertable loss arises when a translator cannot uncover an appropriate or equivalent translation in the target language.

Baker's (1992) theory of two kinds of losses was deemed fitting for the current study to explore the factors that result in the cultural connotations and semantic losses that

occurred in the Chinese travel guides English translation.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.2 presents the conceptual framework of the current study. The current study identified the culture-related semantic losses in the translation of culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides. It follows the four primary sections in the analysis of cultural connotations loss and semantic loss.

Firstly, this study examined the acceptability of culture-specific items translation in the three Lonely Planet travel guides to investigate the types of cultural connotations losses. From the obtained findings in the types of cultural connotations losses, this study explored the relation between cultural connotations and semantic losses based on accuracy parameter. Moreover, this study analysed the translation procedures adopted by translators in rendering culture-specific items and investigated the effects on cultural connotations and semantic losses. Finally, this study explored the factors for cultural connotations and semantic losses in the translation of Lonely Planet's travel guides. Figure 1.2 below illustrates this conceptual framework.

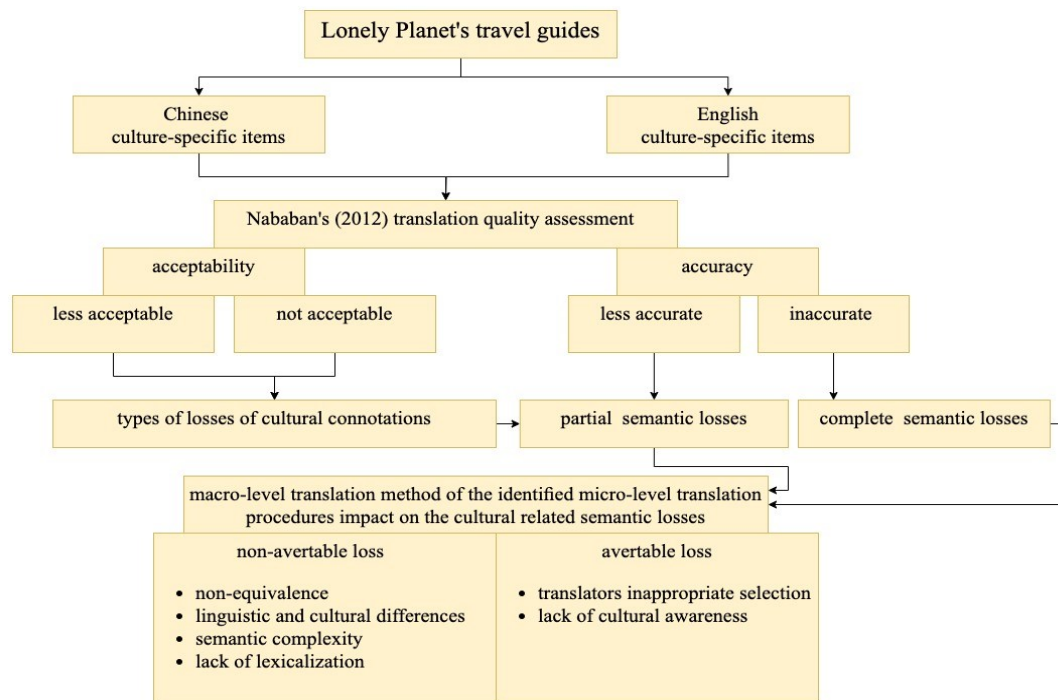


Figure 1.2 : Conceptual Framework of the Study

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of the study sets clear boundaries for the research, ensuring that the study stays focused on research questions (Akanle et al., 2020). It helps avoid ambiguity and ensures that the thesis addresses a well-defined area of inquiry.

With respect to the specific research questions, this study exclusively focused on the culture-related semantic losses in English translations of Chinese Lonely Planet's travel guides. This study demonstrated the occurrence of such phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, this study will focus only on the identified culture-specific items in the travel guides; the other information in the travel guides is not examined in the scope of this study, such as transportation, accommodation, maps, and illustrations.

In addition, this study is limited to the travel guides for Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan. These three travel guides are informative. The Chinese versions of the Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan comprise 503,000, 484,000, and 816,000 words, respectively. Moreover, this study is based on specific theories to analyse and examine the culture-specific items translation in travel guides, including the parameters in the translation quality assessment of Nababan et al. (2012), specifically accuracy and acceptability; Venuti's (1995) paradigm of domestication and foreignization; and Baker's (1992) avertable and non-avertable losses.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Tourism materials translation plays a vital role in enhancing cross-cultural understanding, which is an essential tool for tourists seeking to understand and adapt to a new cultural environment (Liu, 2020). China is a popular destination for international travellers due to its rich cultural heritage, historic landmarks, diverse landscapes, and vibrant cities (Qiu et al., 2023) and has experienced a steady increase in the number of international visitors over the years. In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted travel, China welcomed international tourists, but some of the main source markets for inbound tourism include neighbouring Asian countries. Additionally, Western countries such as the United States and several European nations contribute significantly to the inbound tourist numbers. English is the most widely spoken language globally and is the lingua franca in the international tourism industry. By translating Chinese travel guides into English, China can cater to a broader audience, including English-speaking tourists from various countries.

The current study was deemed significant as a more comprehensive typology of cultural connotations losses was examined in the translation of culture-specific items within the context of tourism. This study also explored the cultural connotations and semantic losses on culture-specific items translation based on the translation quality assessment to assess the cultural connotations and semantic losses on the travel guides translation, which provided valuable insights on tourism materials from a new perspective. Moreover, this study was expected to significantly benefit tourism materials translators. The obtained findings can enhance the translation of cultural connotations and semantic meanings in tourism materials to achieve the expected promotional and communicative effects.

Besides that, this study significantly contributed to the literature on Lonely Planet's travel guides. Lonely Planet is a well-respected travel guide publisher known for its authenticity and reliability. The obtained findings proved the necessity of maintaining the cultural context of the destinations in translation. Any loss of culturally related semantic meanings could lead to a reduction in the guide's overall trustworthiness. In addition, the current study's investigation of the travel guides for Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan presented a better understanding of the culture-specific items translation of different languages and cultures.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

The fundamental terms used in the current study are explained below so that the readers can understand them better.

1.9.1 Culture-specific items

Culture-specific items are "source language words [that] express concepts unknown in the target culture" (Baker, 1992, p. 21). Aixelá (1996), Manapbayeva et al. (2021), and Amenador & Wang (2022) define culture-specific items as textual components linked to certain conceptions in a foreign culture (such as literature, art, or history) that the target audience may not be familiar with these conceptions.

This study viewed culture-specific items as cultural context-dependent, as any textual element with connotative meaning in the culture of origin might be considered a culture-specific item. (Zsuzsa, 2000; Vermes, 2004).

1.9.2 Cultural connotations

Culture-specific items transmit different messages to people of other cultures. As a result of their distinct cultural background and history, some expressions incorporating culture-specific items have taken on varied connotations in different cultures, for example, cultural connotations in rhetorical devices, religious beliefs, and social customs. The differences in cultural connotations are determined by each culture's unique national and historical background, traditions, habits, life experiences, and aesthetic psychology (He, 2009). It is a kind of permanent cultural phenomenon (Kanan et al., 2022).

Translators fail to find an equivalent to transferring the cultural connotations in cross-cultural communication, which causes loss of cultural connotations, which refers to unclear use of words in translating a culture-specific item from the source language to the target language (Kanan et al., 2022).

1.9.3 Semantic loss

Semantic loss refers to the inaccurate, inappropriate, or unsuitable usage of lexicons to translate the meanings of the lexicons from the source language to the target language (Abdelaal & Md Rashid, 2015). It is utilized to describe meaning in general, including any loss that could impact the communicated meanings.

Semantic loss is either complete or partial (Abdelaal & Md Rashid, 2016). Partial losses may alter meaning at the expressive level or impair the transmission of some connotative meanings, which are shades of the primary meaning present in the source language. Partial losses do not impact the primary meaning's transmission. Complete losses, on the other hand, distort or impede the source language's existing meaning (Abdelaal & Md Rashid, 2016).

1.9.4 Intended meaning

In translation, the intended meaning is closely tied to the meaning of the language speaker's purpose, wherein they mean beyond what is expressed literally (Austin, 2018). In this study, the intended meaning of a culture-specific item relates to the implicit meaning. In addition, the intended meaning goes beyond the literal translation and requires an understanding of the cultural context.

1.9.5 Tourism texts

Scholars widely recognize the paramount significance of tourism texts in fulfilling the dual communicative roles of imparting information and exerting persuasive influence upon the intended readership (Federici, 2007; Sulaiman & Wilson, 2018). This

acknowledgment resonates with the pivotal economic function that the translation of materials endorsing tourist destinations assumes. Culture-specific items are the most prominent aspect of tourism texts that are relevant for the communication function (Turzynski-Azimi, 2021).

1.9.6 Travel guides

Travel guides typically emanate from authors who belong to the same linguistic and cultural community as the ultimate recipients. These authors function as intermediaries bridging the familiarity of the "known world" and the allure of the partially "exotic" destinations spotlighted and delineated within the textual content (Baumann, 2018, p. 183). However, it is pertinent to acknowledge the existence of translated versions of prosperous travel guide series, crafted in diverse languages, as an extension of this phenomenon. The translation of travel guides necessitates the adept adjustment of the source text to cater to the needs of the intended audience, adhering to a pragmatic-functional framework. As Li (2021) underscored the act of translating a travel guide introduces inherent challenges, primarily situated at the cultural differences in the culture-specific items translation.

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

This study explores the cultural connotations-related semantic loss in the Chinese culture-specific items' English translation in Lonely Planet's travel guides for Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan.

This study is divided into five chapters as follows. Chapter one includes the background of this study and describes the problem statement, research questions,

research objectives, scopes, and limitations. Moreover, the significance of the study, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and definitions of key terms are also presented.

Chapter two covers the literature review of this study and describes a detailed account of the related topics pertinent to this study. In this part, the translation of culture-specific items and cultural connotations losses in tourism translation are explored in detail. This chapter also covers a critical review of the previous studies that seemingly stand as the core pillar of this study. In addition, a detailed investigation of the associated theories provides a solid theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter three describes the research design and research methodology. It covers an account of the source of data, how the data are extracted, collected, and analyzed, and the data sampling. In addition, the criteria for data selection and data verification are also presented. Methods and the outlines of data analysis are also included in this chapter.

In chapter four, the findings and discussion of the data are presented. The research questions are answered accordingly. The researcher's critical reflections are also expressed.

Chapter five, finally, outlines an overview of the results of this study and provides conclusions made from the results. Recommendations are also presented, which would be helpful for future researchers when confronting the translation of culture-specific items. In addition, some suggestions in this field of study are made for further research.

1.11 Summary

This chapter covers an overview of the background of this study. A preliminary review of previous studies shows that the translation of culture-specific items in Lonely Planet's travel guides from cultural connotations and semantic losses was insufficient.

The present study is regarded as an endeavour to fill the gaps by realizing the research objectives of this study. Besides that, this study also illustrates the scope and limitations, theoretical and conceptual framework. The rational and possible contributions to this study lie in exploring culture-specific items in the non-literary genres, namely, tourism-related materials. Finally, the thesis's structure and definitions of critical terms utilized in this study are also presented.

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