

On the Chinese-English Translation of Current Political Culture-loaded Words in News from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement of global integration, the cultural exchanges between China and the West have become increasingly close. The translation of culture-loaded words is particularly important in this process. This paper aims at studying the Chinese-English translation of political and culture-loaded words in news from the perspective of intercultural communication. The author selects bilingual news from the news media *China Daily* from March 2020 to March 2021 to form a self-built corpus as the research object. Through the combination of quantitative analysis, the translation strategies of culture-loaded words in news are explored. Through studying the methods of specific words in translation samples, this paper discusses and summarizes the translation strategies of political culture-loaded words in news, including literal translation, transliteration, and free translation. It summarized the translation strategies of political culture-loaded words and provides reference for the translation of culture-loaded words in news.

Keywords: Culture-loaded word, Self-built Corpus, *China Daily*, Translation strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of global integration, the cultural exchanges between China and the West are increasing day by day. More and more overseas individuals want to observe China as comprehensively and correctly as possible. At the same time, China needs to introduce and publicize itself through various ways to establish an international image, so as to improve its status. News is the main way of communication between countries. As a medium, it is responsible for the dissemination of major information of various countries. Communication of culture mainly uses news, so the accuracy of news translation plays an essential role in it. A major feature of news language is the frequent use of culture-loaded words. These culture-loaded words are one of the difficulties and major obstacles in intercultural communication and Chinese-English news translation. Many recent studies have given priority to news translation strategies and culture-loaded words in Chinese novels. However, few investigations have studied the translation of political culture-loaded words in news. Therefore, the results of previous studies are not accomplished. In view of this, in this study, based on the self-built corpus, the author analyzes political

culture-loaded words in news from the perspective of intercultural communication, and summarizes their translation strategies. As it is necessary to preserve the cultural charm of Chinese language and enhance the influence of Chinese culture in international communication. At the same time, we should avoid cultural conflicts, enhance mutual understanding, realize intercultural communication, and finally promote the exchange and development of cultures around the world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON NEWS

On the characteristics of news language, Wang Ting and Xu Quan (2001) concluded it into six components: i) the words of the news are novel, exquisite and unique; ii) The patterns of sentences are diverse and flexible; iii) The tense is ingenious; iv) Frequent use of the passive voice to emphasize the key point; v) The structure is reasonable with distinct layers; vi) Good use of rhetoric [1]. A more concise summary conducted by Li Xia (2004) reported that English news sentences are characterized by the large amount of information, simple structure, rich grammatical means and noun

modifiers prefixed [2].

Wang Jiayan (1998) identified that there are quite a few countries and people in the world, and each of them has its own specific language and culture. The members of these groups talk to each other or communicate with each other, which is virtual communication between different cultures, referred to as "cross-cultural communication" or "multicultural communication", also known as "intercultural communication"[3]. As suggested by Liu Qizhong (2004), the news translation is to translate news written in one language in to another language. After re-dissemination, readers of the target language can not only get the information reported by the news reporter in the source language, but also get the same information or literary enjoyment as readers of the news in the source language [4]. Therefore, the news translation is a typical intercultural communication activity.

2.2. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON CULTURE-LOADED WORDS

The definition of culture-loaded words is extensive at home and abroad. At present, there is still no clear standard for the definition. Liao Qiyi (2000) summed them up as Words, phrases, sentences and idioms that signify something unique in a culture. They reflect the unique ways of activity of a particular people that have progressively accumulated over the course of a long history and distinguish them from other ethnic groups [5]. Mona Baker (2000) provided the definition of culture-loaded words was that the vocabulary of his source language may convey a concept that is completely foreign in the target language. This concept may be considered abstract or concrete; it may relate to religious convictions, social practices or food. These concepts are commonly referred to as "cultural specifics" [6]. As Bao Huinan (2004) points out, "culture-loaded word" is also called lexical vacancy, which means that the cultural information carried by the words of the source language has no counterpart in the target language [7].

American translation theorist Eugene Nida (1945)'s classification method of culture-loaded words has been widely adopted in the academic world: material culture-loaded words, ecological culture-loaded words, religious culture-loaded words, social culture-loaded words and language-culture-loaded words [8]. And this study discusses the current political culture-loaded words in the social culture-loaded words.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this research is to investigate the Chinese-English translation of culture loaded words of

current affairs in the news. Traditionally, there are two main directions of translating culture-load words, domestication and foreignization. As far as the results of previous studies are concerned, foreignization is the main translation strategy for culture-loaded words. There are two research questions in this paper.

R Q1: Which one of domestication or foreignization is mainly used in the translation of culture-loaded words of current affairs?

R Q2: What method of translation is applied into the Chinese-English translation of culture loaded words of current affairs in the news?

3.2. RESEARCH METHODS

To answer the research question, this research adopted a self-built corpus research method. Macro-statistics and sampling statistics were used and analyzed with examples. Regarding the corpus, the author selected 300 bilingual news reports from China Daily, containing a total of 225,992 Chinese words and 145,857 English words. The corpus is a scrupulous parallel corpus. It contains bilingual news broadcasts extracted from the official website of China Daily from March 2020 to March 2021. To derive the results, the authors established a parallel corpus to study the original Chinese news texts as well as their English translations. Txml was used for text alignment and LncsBox was used to construct the corpus. The corpus was searched for culture-loaded words of current affairs in Chinese and different translation methods were obtained. The different translation methods are also counted and their percentages are calculated, which can show the distribution of translators' choices among the Chinese-English translation methods for the culture-load words of the current affairs category, in order to enhance the scientificity of the statistical results.

4. RESULTS OF RESEARCH

4.1. RESULTS OF DIFFERENT TRANSLATION METHODS AND STRATEGIES

As the contents of culture-loaded words differ, translators use different translation methods and translation strategies. This experiment provides further research on the translation of culture loaded words by summarizing and analyzing the results of the corpus. The authors present the specific data in Table 1., Table 2. and Table 3

Table 1 The Percentage of Translation Methods in Foreignization

Translation Method	Percentage(%)
Literal Translation	67.39

Transliteration	28.26
Others	4.35
Total	100

Table 2 The Percentage of Translation Methods in Domestication

Translation Method	Percentage(%)
Free Translation	58.33
Other	41.67
Total	100

Table 3The Percentage of Translation Strategies

Translation Strategies	Percentage(%)
Foreignization	56.10
Domestication	43.90
Total	100

The analysis of Table 4.3 shows that dissimilation accounts for a higher proportion of the translation strategies. Thus in the translation of topical and culturally loaded words, the alienation translation strategy is used more often. In the case of Table 4.1, the most used translation method among the alienation translation strategies is the direct translation, with more than half, a whopping 67.39%, while the transliteration is second only to it. As far as Table 4.2 demonstrates, among the translation strategies of domestication, free translation plays a dominant role. With the analysis of data from the corpus, the authors derived the above findings.

In terms of translation strategy data, the strategy of foreignization is used primarily and the strategy of domestication is used subsidiarily. This is because when translating culture-loaded words, the translator needs to convey to the reader the content of the news and the cultural connotations behind the original text. Transliteration can accurately convey the pronunciation of culturally loaded words, but the lack of explanation of the meaning of the words may result in a lack of understanding of the content of the news by the reader. A literal translation, however, is an interpretation of the intended meaning of the culture-loaded word. For the reader of the news, comprehension of the content is more important than knowing the pronunciation, so the translation method of literal translation is more often used by translators.

In a word, translators tend to use the literal translation and transliteration of the foreignization strategy when choosing their translation strategies for culture-loaded words in current affairs. The domestication strategy is also used in the translation of culture-loaded words, but less frequently

4.2. APPLICATION OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES AND METHODS

4.2.1. LITERAL TRANSLATION

As Zhang Peiji (1980) clarifies that a literal translation is one that preserves the content and form of the original, especially the metaphors, images and national and local colors of the original, as far as linguistic conditions allow. This method of translation conveys the maximum amount of meaning expressed in the source language and avoids the lack of information conveyed in the translation process. It allows readers to gain an accurate reading and understanding of the news content, and puts the right to interpret it in the hands of the readers. Furthermore, due to the deep culture background inherent in culture-loaded words, the cultural identity of the source language can only be preserved through literal translation which can even facilitate the cross-cultural communication. For example:

The document emphasizes that the country must retain a "red line" of 120 million hectares of arable land.

In this translation, the “红线” is referred to in both the original and the translation. In foreign languages, the red line is regarded as an imprescriptible bottom line. In this news, the term "耕地红线" refers to the minimum area of land that is regularly cultivated. Since the understanding of the red line is the same for foreign readers as for domestic readers, a literal translation is more appropriate here, so it is directly translated as red line.

4.2.2. TRANSLITERATION

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines transliteration as to write a word, sentence ,etc. in the alphabet of a different language or writing system. With the increasing frequency of intercultural communication, the phenomenon of word meaning gaps in different cultures is becoming more and more obvious. Some culture-loaded words in Chinese news have no equivalent words in English at all. In this case, transliteration is often used to make up for the gap in Chinese-English translation. For example, "kowtow", "Yin and Yang", "baijiu", "kung fu", "jiaozi" and so on.

China's lunar probe Chang'e 5 successfully carried out its first orbital correction Tuesday night, according

to the China National Space Administration (CNSA). The probe conducted the orbital correction at 10:06 pm when its 3000N engine was operational for about two seconds, and then continued its trip to the moon.

In this translation, the word “嫦娥” is transliterated directly to “Chang'e”. “Chang'e” is a character in ancient Chinese mythology. The story of Chang'e flight to heaven represents the ancient Chinese worship of the moon. Since this image is derived from ancient fairy tales, it is familiar to Chinese people, but unfamiliar to Westerners. Therefore, the translator uses the transliteration method to raise the interest and curiosity of foreign readers.

4.2.3. FREE TRANSLATION

Free translation is a translation method which preserves only the content of the original text but not the form of the original text. In international news, literal translation is a better way to translate culture-loaded words, because it can directly clarify the meaning of culture-loaded words. However, literal translation can also lead to some misunderstandings. In this case, free translation is needed to make readers understand the content of the news.

Over the past eight years, the final 98.99 million impoverished rural residents living under the current poverty line have all been lifted out of poverty. All 832 impoverished counties and 128,000 impoverished villages have been removed from the poverty list.

The word “摘帽” means to take off one's hat, and its extended meaning in Chinese is to “shake off the title of 'poverty-stricken county'”. If it is directly translated as “take off their hats”, readers will be confused about the content of the news. Therefore, it is translated into “been lifted out of poverty”, which not only expresses the meaning of the original text, but also makes readers understand the news content.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper briefly examines the translation strategies and methods of current affairs culture-loaded words in the news from the perspective of intercultural communication, and uses the bilingual news of China Daily as a corpus for analysis. By evaluating the results of the study, it can be concluded that in translating the culture-load words of current affairs, the translation strategies of foreignization and literal translation are mainly used by the translators, while the translation strategies of transliteration, free translation and domestication are also involved. Culture-load words are the culmination of the cultures of various ethnic groups, and merely through the use of appropriate translation methods can translators accurately convey the social, political, economic and cultural backgrounds of the

ethnic groups behind the culture-load words. It is through a sufficient understanding of the relevant information that a situation of mutual recognition and respect between people and nationalities can be achieved and that the people of the world can work together in harmony to foster a better future. However, there are limitations to this study. The first is the small sample size of the corpus. In this study, the authors only counted bilingual news in the China Daily from March 2020 to March 2021, a somewhat small amount of news broadcast for only one year, which may make the results not universally applicable. Secondly, the content of the sample chosen is rather limited. Only information from the official website of China Daily was chosen for this study, while paper media, mobile news were ignored. Lastly, the paper's study of culturally loaded words is limited to words, without further analysis of sentences and paragraphs. Therefore, it is hoped that in future analysis, the authors can build a more comprehensive corpus with universal coverage and analyze it with a more systematic perspective, so as to obtain more scientific data and derive better conclusions about the translation strategies of culture-loaded words. This will enable news translators to be more judicious and meticulous in translating culture-loaded words and to do a better job of cultural communication, so that cultural exchange between China and the West can be spread in an equal, harmonious and comprehensive way.

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