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Research on Translation Strategies of Taoism in the New Media Environment

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ABSTRACT

This paper puts forward a multi-level translation path of reader-centered, text-based, culture-oriented, new media environment-based and translator-centered approach, in order to provide feasible solutions for Taoism translation with the focus on the characteristics of new media environment, the characteristics of religious texts, the cultural cognitive background of target readers, religious cultural compensation methods, translation purposes, spread channels and effects.

Keywords: Multi-dimensional translation path, Taoism, New media environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Taoism, as one of the major schools of philosophy in China, has about 2000 years' history, reflecting the wisdom and belief of the ancients. Today, with the increasing development of Internet, the communication between cultures is smoother, which creates opportunities to the overseas dissemination of Taoism. Traditionally, the translation of Chinese culture mainly undertook the inter-lingual approach, but in the digital age with the storm of data, "the approach of culture translation relies increasing on the multi-models with the help of deferent elements" [4]. Both the English publicity and introduction of Taoism in China and foreign countries mainly rely on encyclopaedic knowledge websites, education and teaching websites, cultural research websites, scholars' research papers, monographs and personal blogs, which provides a language bridge for Taoism and history to go global, but at the same time, there are some problems, mainly in the following aspects: first, due to the lack of sufficient understanding of Taoist cultural connotation and religious image, English expression on Taoism and history on foreign media platforms is misleading or unclear although the language expression is fluent.

Particularly, the core connotation and historical changes of Taoism are not accurately conveyed. Secondly, the domestic media platform does not fully convey the development and religious connotation of Taoism, which causes the English translation incomplete. Thirdly, most of the researches on English translation of Taoism are closely related with tourism, which greatly promotes the spread of Taoism in the English-speaking countries, but the translation didn't adapt to the changes of the current media requirement to make the effect less sufficient, and the very essence of Taoism is degraded in these translations to make the texts more readable and attractive. These problems go against the three requirements of culture translation — "the representation of the original theme, coherence and message" [5]. On the other hand, they don't concord with the requirement of culture translation which need "the positive interaction among message receivers, the massage delivers, the information, the translator and the media" [6]. As far as the new media environment is concerned, the roles of information publisher and information receiver are ignored. The translation of culture assumes particular importance in protecting the diversity of global culture, promoting cross-cultural communication. In the translation, "the source text would be introduced into the target language confidently and flexibly to select the proper content and take the target readers into full account. The good balance among these crucial

elements can help translators tell Chinese culture well" [2].

The translation of Taoism is a real challenge to most translators, but it is not an impossible task to introduce the refined culture into foreign countries. It is believed that "though the translation of Chinese culture would deviate from the source text, it is still translatable and accessible to foreign reader as long as proper and flexible strategies are applied" [1].

2. THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT ON THE TRANSLATION OF TAOISM

The influence of environment on the strategy of religious culture publicity is increasing. The new media integrates text reading, audio-visual and personal experience, and the information access is convenient, fast and accurate, helping people to use new communication means to strengthen and enhance the efficiency of information dissemination. Application of new media changed the traditional one-way communication channel, and the new media shows the interactive nature of information dissemination, which makes information disseminators lose their traditional central position. With the progress of technology and social development and the arrival of the new media era, the media platform changes from the previous pattern with media as the centre and message receivers as the edge. In such a case, the translators of Taoism are required to re-examine their communication awareness, translation act, communication process, communication effect and responsibility, as it is commonly acknowledged that

the dissemination of Chinese culture is a cross-cultural communication which requires the translator to faithfully introduce the source text and its ecology to the target language and manage to make the translation readable and accessible to the readers [3].

3. THE CURRENT TRANSLATION OF TAOISM

Through comparison of translation materials on internet both home and abroad, it is found that the translation of Taoism still depend on the traditional approaches, like literal translation, free translation, transliteration, literal translation + explanation, transliteration + explanation, striving for the equivalence of information between the original text and the target text. To a large extent, English readers' knowledge background of Taoism is ignored, and there is little multimodal approach to cultural compensation. Instead of making full use of the advantages of new media, very few pictures, videos, sound files, information links and other means are used to reproduce the image and connotation presented by the source language. In addition, there are language errors and inconsistent translation terms in translation, which injures the readability and the force of the translation.

On the basis of the corpus of Taoism, the translation differences between domestic platforms and foreign platforms mainly centre on the following levels: word selection, sentence pattern, translation method and cultural compensation. ("Table 1")

Table 1. The translation of Taoism on domestic and foreign online platforms

Platforms / Levels	Domestic	Foreign
Word selection	Most cultural terms or information are transliterated, retaining Chinese religious and cultural characteristics, which are obscure and difficult to understand.	Most expressions are inaccurate, and the characteristics of Chinese religious culture are not obvious.
Sentence pattern	Simple sentences	Long sentences
Translation method	With Foreignization as the major approach, the translation stresses information correspondence, focusing on spreading religious culture, but setting reading obstacles to target readers.	With Domestication as the major approach, the translation pays attention to the cognitive background and understanding of the target readers, and reduces the characteristics of Chinese culture to a certain extent.
Cultural compensation	A small amount of in-text notes (like Chinese characters, pronunciation and explanation), a small amount of pictures and a small amount of links to information on other websites.	A large number of in-text annotations (like Chinese characters, pronunciation and explanation), a large number of pictures, and information links of culture-loaded words on other websites.

These differences can be exemplified in the following quotations.

The domestic translation of Taoism is set as following:

"Taoism is China's indigenous religion, 'morality' as the highest faith. Based on Huang and Tao thinking theory, ancient Chinese Taoist spirits worship derived since the formation of the Warring States Period. In Eastern Han Dynasty, a large number of Taoist organizations emerged and the notable ones were Peace Taoism League and Five Bushels of Rice League. The ancestral Taoist master Zhang Daoling officially founded Taoism organization which had a history of over 1800 years. Taoism is polytheism and the god worshiped by Taoists are enshrined the reflection of 'Tao' personification. Taoist priests are clerics and the number of priests nationwide is 3 million. Taoist Temple is a place for Taoism activities. The registration temples within the country reach more than two thousand" [7].

The translation is quoted from a tourism website which introduces Chinese culture and sites to foreigner who are interested in China. In the above introduction to Taoism, the key terms of Taoism, like "道", "德", "黄老学说", "太平教", "五斗米教", "张道陵" are translated as "Dao", "morality", "Huang and Tao thinking theory", "Peace Taoism League", "Five Bushels of Rice League", "Zhang Daoling", and other culture-loaded words, like "战国时期", "东汉" are translated as "the Warring States Period" and "Eastern Han Dynasty". These translations are the typical presentation of transliteration, literal translation without much explanation of the cultural message and any strategy to help the readers to comprehend these terms, like pictures, links, videos, sound files. When readers get these words, many can hardly understand what "Dao" refers to. The culture connotation of the original is not expressed in the target language faithfully and accurately, let alone the proper introduction of Taoism. There is also a grammatical error: "temples" works as the subject, but the "reaches" is used as its verb, which should be used in the plural form in the text. In this way, the translation can't serve for the good spread of Chinese culture, as the translator doesn't take readership, the source text, the media platform and the aim of translation into account and balance the different elements in translation.

There is an example of foreign translation of Taoism.

"Definitions of Daoism are controversial because of the complex twists in its development as it played its role in the long history of China. Even the coining of the term creates ambiguity about what counts as 'Daoism'. Three to seven centuries after they were supposed to have lived, Han dynasty (around 100 BCE) historians identified Laozi and Zhuangzi as Daoists. The historians postulated six schools of classical thought — Confucian, Mohist, Yin-yang, Legalist, Daoist and school of names. They coined the term *dao-jia* (way-school) or (*dao-de jia*) (way and virtue school) and came to identify Laozi and Zhuangzi as paradigms of the study of *dao* way[2]. Other texts were linked by their incorporation of themes from the two classics including the *Liehzi*, the *Baopuzi* and the *Huinanzi*. After it was linked to the interpretation of the *Laozi* by Wang Bi, the *Yijing* came to be thought of as a classic of Daoism" [8].

The translation is quoted from the Website of Stanford University, which is the beginning of the introducing Taoism to students. Evidently, the culture-loaded words like "汉朝", "道家" and "道", are translated as "Han dynasty (around 100 BCE)", "*dao-jia* (way-school) or (*dao-de jia*) (way and virtue school)" and "*dao* way [2]". The expression of "Han dynasty (around 100 BCE)" can help readers locate the age of the philosophy was established, without and the addition of "(around 100 BCE), the readers wouldn't understand the value of the philosophy as many don't know the period of the Han Dynasty. Similarly, the translation of "道家" undertakes the approaches of transliteration and explanation, but the explanation is not so faithful to the original for the translator's misunderstanding of the term, which is the primary problem in the translation of Taoism. In addition, footnote is attached to the explanation for readers' better comprehension of the target expression. As mentioned previously, the foreign platform favors the informative explanation or in-text annotations (like Chinese characters, pronunciation and explanation) to respect the cognitive background of the target readers, and reduces the characteristics of Chinese culture to a certain extent to make the translation more accessible to readers.

4. SUGGESTION TO THE TRANSLATION OF TAOISM IN THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

For a long time, the challenge in the translation of Taoism is how to tell Chinese religious stories well in English, spread religious culture without distortion and fully respect the Taoism in the target language and the cognitive state of the target readers. With the traditional challenge of zero cultural equivalence and profound Taoist philosophy, the translation of Taoism is required to rely on the new media, to take the translation purpose, the advantages of the new media environment and the communication effect into account and fully utilize multimodal approaches, like pictures, videos, sound files, website links, to help the target readers have easier and clearer access to the profound theory.

5. CONCLUSION

Facing the new media environment, the Taoism translation need to make full use of the media advantage to adapt to the message delivery mode of the media on the basis of faithful dissemination of Taoist philosophy. In short, the translator should take full account of the lexical, syntactical, textual and stylistic equivalences, and give particular attention to the specific need of culture translation, like the aim of disseminating Taoism, the cognitive state of the target readers. Hence, in the digital age, the translation of Taoism should take the multi-perspectives, to integrate the internet message delivery mode, text style, readership, information compensation strategy, delivery effect as an organic whole. In the translation process, the five elements play active roles dynamically to balance the thinking of translators, which helps the translator to put the source into the target with target readers as the centre, text as the base, the acceptance and appreciation of Taoism as the aim, new media as the platform and the translators themselves as the decisive subject.

This study raises the multi-mode approach of the translation of Taoism on the basis of collecting the exemplary samples from the website, and with the limited space, only two examples are set as the proof of the differences between domestic and foreign platforms and problems in the translations. It is expected that this study would shed light on the relevant study and promote the translation of Taoism or provoke the readers' interest in the ancient philosophy. In the future, the author will continue to investigate the field and build parallel corpus of Taoism translation to make comparative study on the differences between domestic and foreign translation of the philosophy on the levels of wording, sentence, text and style. With this, the study will be improved with more data, which is bound to be more conniving with quantitative analysis.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Fei Luo.

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