

A Comparative Study of Translations of the Word "Junzi" into English from the Perspective of Cultural Communication

Xijin Lin^{1,*}

¹ School of Foreign Languages, Fuzhou University of International Studies and Trade, Fuzhou, Fujian 350202, China

*Corresponding author. Email: sissi127@163.com

ABSTRACT

The word "Junzi" highly sums up the connotation of Chinese traditional culture, which often appears in Chinese classical literature. With the development of one belt one road's construction, the economic, cultural and political exchanges at home and abroad are increasingly frequent. The translation of Chinese classical literature has become an important part of the strategy of Chinese culture going abroad. Due to the obvious differences in customs, religious beliefs and historical origins of different countries, the difficulty of Chinese traditional culture transmission behind Chinese-English translation is revealed through translating the word "Junzi".

Keywords: Junzi, English translation, Chinese culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Junzi" has perfect personality, noble spiritual realm, can undertake major social responsibility, can make contributions to society, has always been a model for the educated to learn [1]. Since ancient times, people have regarded "Junzi" as an important standard to improve themselves and evaluate others. Confucius highly praised "Junzi". In "the Analects", the connotation of "Junzi" was elaborated comprehensively and carefully. For this reason, many translators have conducted in-depth research on the Confucian thought contained in the word "Junzi" based on "the Analects". However, as a high-frequency word in ancient Chinese cultural classics, the meaning of "Junzi" varies with different works. In addition, translators have different understanding of the word "Junzi", which leads to many versions of the word. For example, in the current English translation, the common expressions of the word "Junzi" are "the superior man", "a wise and good man", "the gentleman", "the exemplary man", "the profound man". As a result, there are various deviations in the understanding of "Junzi" advocated by Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, this paper analyzes the different English translations of "Junzi" from the perspective of culture, and discusses the

difficulties in the transmission of Chinese traditional culture in C-E translation, so as to provide some references for English readers to understand the meaning of "Junzi" as well as Chinese traditional culture.

2. THE CONCEPT OF "JUNZI" IN CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE

In order to translate the word "Junzi" accurately, translators need to be able to grasp the concepts in traditional Chinese culture and make clear its development trend. The word "Junzi" comes from the classic book of songs, which was originally used to express men. With the advent of "the Analects", its meaning has been expanded and sublimated, and it has also given the word a richer connotation. In Confucius' view, people with benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, faith and other moral qualities can be called "Junzi". This is the standard of ideal personality and self-cultivation. For the ancient emperors, to be a "Junzi" is also an important prerequisite to achieve the goal of governing the country and the world. To a certain extent, "Junzi" can be divided into "benevolence" and "courtesy" [2]. First of all, the core idea of Confucianism is "benevolence", which

means that "Junzi" should be able to show mercy to others and be obedient to the elders, and also need to be loyal to the country and love the society. Only when the "Junzi" can really have the quality of "benevolence", can he achieve the restriction of behavior. Secondly, in ancient Chinese society, "courtesy", as an important educational system, was an important criterion for the ancients to behave themselves. It required people to be modest and courteous in dealing with others and loyal and rational in dealing with things. Therefore, "Junzi" should take the initiative to restrict his words and behavior in daily life, and other people can also understand the good quality of "Junzi" through his external performance. Compared with other Chinese classical cultural works, "the Analects" shows traditional literature, ethics and morality in a clear and understandable form, so it has a very high position in the history of Chinese literature.

With the development of society, the meaning of "Junzi" still contains wisdom, benevolence and other good moral character, and can also be used to describe people with excellent quality or cultural accomplishment. In addition, the word is not only used as a honorific for men, but also for many women with noble moral character [3]. Therefore, in order to translate the word "Junzi" appropriately and gracefully, translators need to combine the compilation background of literary works and put forward the translation methods in line with its cultural connotation, so that English readers can better understand the content of the word "Junzi" and the traditional culture behind it.

3. TRANSLATION OF THE WORD "JUNZI" AND ITS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

According to the statistics of the English versions of "the Analects", there are more than 30 translation versions of the word "Junzi". Some of them are quite representative.

3.1 The Main Translation Versions of "Junzi"

James Legge's translation of "the Analects" has been highly praised by scholars in the field of Confucius, and its translation is also considered as the most faithful to the original. His translation of "Junzi" adopts different versions according to the context. Of all versions, "the superior man" is the most frequently used, with more than 80 times[4]. As mentioned above, "Junzi" mainly refers to a

person of noble morality in Chinese culture. When the word "superior" is used as an attributive to modify a person, it mostly refers to a person with a sense of superiority, which has a derogatory meaning in English. Therefore, there is a certain gap between "the superior man" and Confucius' ideal personality. As a missionary, Legge's translation of is inevitably religious, which makes it difficult for readers appreciate the wisdom of "Junzi" culture [5].

Gu Hongming basically adopts domestication strategy in translation. Gu is a Chinese master who translated many classics aiming to make English readers accept Oriental philosophy more easily. He translated "Junzi" into "a wise and good man" in most case [6]. The word "wise" refers to intelligence in English. The word "good" is just a general term for excellence. Such translation is obviously different from "Junzi" who has wisdom, kindness and moral nobility in the culture. Therefore, Gu's version does not fully show the image of "Junzi", and even make it stiff and colorless.

In addition, many other great translators such as Lin Yutang take "gentleman" as the translation of "Junzi" [7]. However, the word "gentleman" cannot be equated with "Junzi" because of different cultural backgrounds in English and Chinese. Therefore, Lin's version still has some limitations in cultural communication.

Thus, the social background of translators, their purpose of translation, and their subjective understanding will have a certain impact on the translation of "Junzi". All these factors also interfere English readers to understand "Junzi" and its culture.

3.2 The Translation Version from Roger Ames

In order to enable English readers to understand Confucius' philosophy and social thought through "the Analects", American sinologist Roger Ames made an in-depth analysis of Chinese philosophy. In his translation of such words as "Ren" and "Li" in "the Analects", he mainly adopted the strategy of foreignization, which can preserve the style of original language well. For the word "Junzi", Roger translated it into "exemplary person".

Firstly, the word "Junzi" represents an outstanding person with courage, faith and wisdom. "Exemplary person" literally means "a person who

can set an example for others", which is close to the meaning of "Junzi".

Secondly, the word "Junzi" mentioned in "the Analects" does not refer to male only, but refers to all people with excellent qualities. However, the "gentleman", "the superior man" and other translations of "Junzi" all contain the word "man". In this case, western female readers may misunderstand that "Junzi" culture is with male chauvinism. Therefore, Roger's translation shows the equality between men and women, which also catch up with the trend of modern social and people's way of thinking.

Thirdly, in Confucian classics, "Junzi" is a sage, a scholar, a philosopher who knows the law of the changes in the world. In this context, "Junzi" is not the image of gentleman in western culture. It emphasizes the moral character and academic accomplishment. Thus, the foreignization strategy is relatively suitable in translating "Junzi". It can better retain the style of its unique culture and help English readers better appreciate the connotation and the essence of oriental wisdom.

Fourthly, Roger's translation is not confined by the translation strategy of domestication. He does not seek the corresponding word to "Junzi" from English vocabulary, but uses the existing words to explain "Junzi" according to his own understanding. "Exemplary person" cannot only show the meaning of "Junzi" vividly, but relatively simple and easy to understand. It is an illuminating way to explore the word "Junzi" from the perspective of philosophy, which also provides a new translation idea for translators.

Compared with other translation methods mentioned above, Roger's version neither defines the gender of "Junzi" nor makes its culture religious, which is consider to be more appropriate and novel. The word "Exemplary person" makes the image of "Junzi" more clearly presented to English readers[8]. To a certain extent, Roger's translation has laid a good foundation for the spread and development of oriental Philosophy in the English-speaking world.

4. THE DIFFICULTIES OF CULTURAL TRANSLATION

The long history of Chinese culture and its unique Oriental attribute determine that it is inevitably different from western culture. Therefore, proper nouns bearing their own cultural attributes are often difficult to translate. By translating of the

word "Junzi", it can be found that it is particularly important to choose appropriate translation methods according to different situations.

Transliteration is a very common translation method in international cultural exchanges. It is often used in the translation of proper nouns such as person names and place names. For example, the word "Junzi" can be transliterated. And its corresponding meaning can be solved by adding annotation, so as to help readers understand the meaning of these unique concepts [9]. With the deepening of cultural exchanges, many concepts unique to China have been widely accepted by western countries, such as Wushu, Yinyang, Fengshui are added into English vocabulary. They are just as sofa, microphone and other English words were added to the Chinese dictionary in the earlier years.

Literal translation is another common method of translation. Literal translation, to be specific, is word for word translation. However, this method has strong limitations, and the translation is often relatively rigid. Readers can only understand the surface meaning of words, but hard to appreciate the deep connotation of the article. Although the way of adding notes can solve this problem to a certain extent, it will affect the readers' reading experience. A typical example of literal translation is that Jiang Jiansong translated "Junzi" into "the Junzi gentleman" in Caign Tan, which corresponded the word "Junzi" to "gentleman" in English. The problem as mentioned above, the image of "Junzi" in China is different from that of gentleman in Britain.

Interpretation is generally used in cases where it is difficult to find the expression of equivalence. Compared with other translation methods, interpretative translation is a more flexible way, because it is not limited by the construction mode of Chinese words. It can better express the deep sense of the source language which smooth the cultural exchange. However, such kind of translation method requires translators to have high cultural literacy. Their subjective emotion will also affect the result of translation. Therefore, translators need to revise and polish the language over and over again to achieve a better version. For example, Du Weiming, a Chinese-American translator, interprets "Junzi" as "the found Man", which emphasizing the scholar's knowledge and philosophical wisdom [10]. While translating, Du creates the image of "Junzi" in his mind in advance, according to his own cultural and aesthetic

consciousness, and then interprets it as "the person found", which is also an acceptable way commonly used by translators.

5. CONCLUSION

The diversity of culture brings many problems to inter-cultural translation. From the perspective of translating "Junzi", it is found that the translation of traditional culture challenges translators' literary knowledge and language ability. Perhaps, it is difficult to find a perfect version of cultural translation, but there is always a way to find a relatively better version. Just as Roger Ames' version, which is considered to better reflect the core idea of "Junzi" in terms of semantics, humanities, translation strategies and Philosophy. Therefore, in order to make greater achievement in cultural translation, translators need to learn the original and target languages well, to study both domestic and foreign cultures deeply, to use various translation methods flexibly, to catch the trend of social development, and to integrate these contents and ideas into the job of translation.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Xijin Lin.

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