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Studies on the Translation of Red Culture Publicity from the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication*

Wu Gui-yan¹, Shen Hui-jia², Mao Yu-tian³, Yuan Zi-ji⁴, Feng You-zhu⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Zhejiang University of Finance & Economics Dongfang College

Abstract

Red Culture is one of the symbols of Chinese national spirit in China. With the enhancement of China's international status, the world gets to know the Red Culture stage by stage. And yet, in the process of Red Culture's foreign publicity, the depth and breadth of cultural diffusion have been affected by different factors. This paper objectively analyzes the current situation of foreign publicity translation about Red Culture and then focuses on the Red tourism industry to explore the characteristics and advantages of foreign-oriented publicity translation under the intercultural communicative perspective. In the end, we are trying to come up with some methods to increase the accuracy of Red Culture publicity translation.

Keywords: Red Culture, Foreign-Oriented Publicity, Cross-Cultural Communication, Translation Methods

1. Introduction

The year 2021 marks the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. As an excellent traditional culture developed and preserved during the Chinese revolution, Red Culture is rich in spiritual connotations and research values. With the enhancement of China's international status, China's Red Culture will continue to "go global." The foreign publicity of Red Culture can solidify the cultural confidence of our people and carry forward our fine ideals and beliefs to the world while bringing the world a better understanding of China.

Red Culture refers to the advanced culture with revolutionary colors and Chinese characteristics created by Chinese people during the wartime. As a unique and excellent traditional culture in China, Red Culture is worthy of in-depth exploration. Thus, we should not only promote it in China but also abroad. In recent years, one of the most popular ways of foreign-oriented publicity in China is Red tourism. As a form of cultural communication, foreign-oriented publicity translation is of great importance to the outward development of Red tourism. However, being affected by several factors, the current situation of foreign-oriented publicity is very worrying which directly influenced the effectiveness of the external communication of Red Culture. Due to our ability

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limitations, the source materials we cited are mainly from the South Lake Revolutionary Memorial Hall in Jiaxing and the Zhejiang Revolutionary Martyrs Memorial Hall in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province.

2. Current Situation of Red Culture Publicity Translation in China

With the improvement of China's international position and influence, Red tourism has been popularized. This kind of industry is attracting a growing number of tourists at home or abroad. However, when visiting these scenic spots, we found many mistakes occurred in the text of those C-E translations, such as inappropriately translated proprietary vocabularies, confusing translation structure, translation errors and omissions, and a dearth of knowledge about the corresponding historical and cultural background, and so on.

The South Lake Revolutionary Memorial Hall is located on the shore of South Lake in Jiaxing. It was built to commemorate the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China at South Lake. Now, it has become an important base for educating, especially the youth the traditions of socialism with Chinese characteristics and patriotism. In the exhibition hall, most of the translations adopt the direct translation method. Though the expressions there are simple and straightforward, we found a lot of mistakes in them. For example, there is a sentence presented as “实现中华民族伟大复兴” The corresponding translation is “bringing forth a rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” but “bringing forth” means “to produce or to put forward (suggestions, evidence, etc.),” which is different from the meaning of the original text “实现”(i.e. to realize). It is suggested that the translation should be consistent with the English version of the *Government Work Report*, which is directly translated as “achieve national rejuvenation,” “realize (or fulfill) the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation” or “realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” Another example we cite here is the sentence “十月革命一声炮响给中国送来了马克思列宁主义” the accompanying translation printed is “The salvos of the October Revolution brought Marxism to China.”, which simply translated the “马克思列宁主义” into “Marxism.” The correct translation should be “Marxism-Leninism.”

The Zhejiang Revolutionary Martyrs Memorial Hall is located on Yunju Mountain, which is adjacent to the West Lake in Hangzhou. The memorial was established to pay tribute to the martyrs' deeds and promote their spirits. Coincidentally, the translations use the direct translation method mostly as well. And there are still some incorrect translations. For example, the phrase “以身许国的光复先驱” is translated as “Restoration Pioneers Dedicating Themselves to the Country.” But the “restoration” literally means “the act of bringing back a law, tax, or system of government,” while the actual meaning of “光复先驱” denotes “the pioneers from the Restoration Society,” so it is supposed to be translated wholly as “Pioneers from the Restoration Society Dedicating Themselves to the Country.”

3. Analysis of the Causes of the Current Situation

3.1. Affected by the Society

Firstly, most people in China do not know much about Red Culture and only have superficial knowledge about it. They have no interest to understand it deeply. Most of them do not have deep attainments in English and pay little attention to the English version of these texts, so they cannot find the errors in the translation when visiting these memorials. Therefore, the supervision of foreign publicity translation from the masses is almost zero. Secondly, since the end of 2019, people's travel has been restricted by the pandemic. The number of visitors to the Red tourism scenic spots has also plummeted, which cannot promote further development of Red tourism. In addition, the number of foreign tourists has decreased as China's control over incoming and outgoing international flights becomes stricter.

3.2. Affected by the Government

First of all, the government does not pay enough attention to the outreach of Red tourism and lacks financial and technical support. Secondly, the government's supervision of the standardization of the foreign publicity translation of memorial halls is not strong enough, resulting in the problems of poor standardization of translation. Finally, the government's efforts for cultural publicity are insufficient. Most of the public signs in scenic spots are substandard. There are even scenic spots with blurred handwriting on the signs. If foreign tourists want to search for Red tourism scenic spots online, they can only find publicity videos in Mandarin instead of in English or other languages. Comprehending Red Culture is really a huge difficulty for foreign tourists who do not speak Chinese. Reading signs without English translation will discourage them from understanding the culture.

3.3. Affected by the Industry

There is a lack of unified translation standards in this industry for the translation of Red Culture vocabularies and texts. For some common Red words alone, there are three or four versions of their translations. For instance, the word “井冈山” is translated as “Jinggang Mountain,” “Jinggang Hill,” “Mt.Jinggang,” and other different versions. Sometimes you can even see many different versions of the same proper noun in one scenic spot. It will make foreign tourists feel confused and cause certain obstacles to their reading and understanding, thus influencing the effect of Red Culture transmission.

3.4. Affected by Translators Themselves

For translators, many factors like limited level, insufficient knowledge of Chinese history, and a lack of cross-cultural awareness make errors occur. There are some revolutionary verses in the introduction of Red Culture scenic spots. If the imagery contained in the verses is simply translated according to the literal meaning rather than the connotation and spirit in them, foreign tourists cannot understand the profound connotation. In addition, Chinese and Western cultures are different from each other. Red Culture vocabulary and texts should be translated on the basis of good understanding, otherwise, we will not only confuse tourists but also damage China's national image in their minds.

4. Characteristics and Advantages of Red Culture Publicity Translation Based on Cross-cultural Communication

4.1. Characteristics

There are two main features of foreign-oriented publicity translation of Red Culture based on cross-cultural studies: First, it is easier for readers to receive the information and cross the gap of cultural differences. Red Culture has strong political and military colors and a lot of cultural connotations. Being closely related to the history of revolution in China, Red Culture has many revolutionary stories and spirits and generates many special terms. It is difficult to express the connotations without a deep understanding of the original text and the history in the process of translation. Therefore, the translation of Red Culture texts based on cross-cultural studies is from the perspective of readers and helps them recognize this special Chinese culture. According to the different social systems and ideologies of China and the West, the relevant historical background is appropriately added to the translation to facilitate the readers to know and understand the Red Culture and make the Red Culture spread more widely. Second, foreign-oriented publicity translation based on cross-cultural studies can help people bridge the chasm in the aspect of language and the way of thinking between the West and Chinese culture. For example, China is a country of high-context culture with more subtle language expressions and deeper meanings, while most Western countries are of low-context cultures with more direct language expressions. Consequently, the translation based on cross-cultural studies takes into full consideration the way of language expression and thinking, presents the text from the perspective of foreign readers, and improves the comprehension of the translation of Red Culture based on the premise of fluency and accuracy.

4.2. Advantages

Translation based on cross-cultural studies is more accurate, professional, and standardized. For the government, accurate translation is conducive to building an international Red tourism city, promoting the development of local Red Culture foreign propaganda, thus promoting Red Culture to “go global.” This translation strategy enables the government to pay more attention to the cultivation of Red Culture translation talents. For the Red tourism industry, the professionalism and standardization of the foreign-oriented publicity translation are conducive to the unification of terminology in the translation of Red Culture and the development of the industry. It is beneficial to improve the translation quality of the Red tourism industry and the experience of foreign tourists. For translators, it will deepen the translators’ research about this area, help the translation talents become professional, and improve the accuracy of the contents, thus improving the degree of reproduction of the Red Culture connotations and promoting the cultural transmission.

5. Translation Methods of Red Culture Publicity based on Cross-cultural Communication

5.1 Aspect of Culture

5.1.1 Pay Attention to the Cultural Differences in Color Perception

Due to cultural differences, the word “*红*” has different connotations in different cultures. In Chinese culture, it contains an important social and cultural meaning, which is righteous and generally positive. Therefore, in the translation process of Red Culture, the word “*红*” in many nouns and phrases is directly translated as “red.” But in English culture, the word “red” is mostly used in a derogatory sense. For example, “be red rules of tooth and claw” is used to express the hatred of violent murderers and organizations, and “red-headed” is often used to express rage. To avoid excessive differences in the process of language conversion, it is important to check the semantic backgrounds of color words in different cultures.

5.1.2 Pay Attention to the Deviation of the Meaning

In English, each word often has multiple meanings. Therefore, we can find that there is a phenomenon called “familiar words with lesser-known meanings.” And sometimes different words with the same meaning need to be used in their own fixed contexts. If we neglect the broad and deep meanings behind some keywords in the C-E translation, it will lead to improper word choice. As a result, there will be the result of semantic deviation. In Red Culture, many proper nouns have their historical meanings. Choosing English words by virtue of their literal meanings alone may cause lexical deviations. Consequently, in order to achieve the expected effect, we should be careful and cautious when we need to do a translation about foreign-oriented publicity. That is to say, we should consider the accuracy of word usage carefully.

When translating, it is necessary to understand the text of the Chinese version, and to be more careful in word selection, so as to avoid meaning errors and deviations. Translators also need to look up the broad and deep meanings of the keywords. For example, the translation of “*抗日战争*” in the South Lake Revolutionary Memorial Hall is “Anti-Japanese War.” But this paper thinks that this translation is inappropriate because this is a war against aggression, a war to defend national sovereignty and territory, and a war of justice. The meaning of “Anti-Japanese War” is more inclined to “the war against Japan.” If we choose this version, the features of the war against imperialist aggression will not be reflected, and the readers may even misunderstand it. Therefore, this paper suggests that this term should be slightly modified as “the War Against Aggression of Japanese Imperialism,” which would be more appropriate.

5.2 Aspect of Thinking

5.2.1 Hypotaxis and Parataxis

The focus of the English language in the syntactic structure is formed. Therefore, the interconnections of the components in English sentences are often done with connecting words. On the contrary, Chinese focuses on meaning, and the interconnections of the components in Chinese sentences rely on semantic coherence and contextual connection. There are fewer connecting words in Chinese. The meaning connection of Chinese is implicit while English, on the contrary, is explicit, and needs more connecting words.

When doing language translation, we should pay attention to the context of the C-E conversion. We need to consider the thinking patterns of the readers so that we can add words or delete them appropriately and translate the text in a way that is correspondingly applicable to these readers. For example, in the Zhejiang Revolutionary Martyrs Memorial Hall, there is a sentence presented as “19 世纪中叶起，由于西方列强的侵略和本国封建统治的腐朽，中国逐步沦为半殖民地半封建社会，国家积贫积弱，战乱不已，生灵涂炭，陷入苦难和屈辱的深渊”。This paper translates it as “As of the mid-19th century, China gradually became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society with the state being poor and weak. It was haunted by incessant wars, and the people being plunged into an abyss of misery and humiliation because of the aggression of the Western imperialist countries and the rotten feudal governance of Qing Dynasty”.

5.2.2 Breaking up the Whole into Parts & Assembling the Parts into a Whole

As long as there is no mistake in structure and grammar, no matter how long and complex the sentence is, it can appear. Therefore, in E-C translation, we often turn long and difficult sentences into many simple sentences. When writing or speaking, Chinese people are inclined to use short sentences. These short sentences are held together by the whole topic. Therefore, the C-E translation is often done by converting a number of fragmented Chinese sentences into a single English sentence.

When translating Red Culture texts into English, we need to consider the overall structure and the logical relationship of the phrase or the whole text. We also need to think about the combination of each sentence, translating the text in accordance with the reading and writing habits of people from English countries.

5.2.3 Objectification and Personification

Chinese emphasizes personification, while English emphasizes objectification. The English language often expresses how objective things act on human perception. When using the object as the subject, it also needs to use the passive tense. Chinese tends to narrate things from the perspective of a person and often use the person as the subject. The morphology is mostly the subject tense. Therefore, when translating from English to Chinese, the subject should be appropriately converted. For example, the sentence in the Zhejiang Revolutionary Martyrs Memorial Hall “在浙皖起义、光复上海、光复浙江、攻克南京等革命活动中，尽显光复会志士们的英雄本色和杰出才华” is translated as “During various revolutionary activities, including Zhejiang-Anhui Uprising, restoring Shanghai, restoring Zhejiang and conquering Nanjing, the members of the Restoration Society had fully demonstrated their heroic character and outstanding talents.” But when we consider the converting of objectification and personification, this sentence should be translated as “The heroic natures and outstanding talents of the members in Restoration Society were fully demonstrated during various revolutionary activities such as the Uprising in Zhejiang-Anhui, the Restoring in Shanghai, the Restoring in Zhejiang and the Conquering in Nanjing.”

5.2.4 Putting Emphasis on the Head or the End of the Sentence

The English language tends to put the judgment or conclusion in the front and the description behind. And the emphasis of an English sentence is usually put on the head. However, the Chinese are completely different. It puts the emphasis on the end of a sentence. Therefore, when translating, we should pay attention to the position of emphasis in the original text beforehand. The translation version should consider the reader's expression and reading habits. For example, in the Zhejiang Revolutionary Martyrs Memorial Hall, the sentence “在这场革命

运动中，浙籍的革命志士为创立民国、捍卫共和作出了重要贡献” is translated as “During this revolution, the revolutionaries born in Zhejiang had made an important contribution to the establishment of the Republic of China and the defense of republicanism.” If we consider the position of the emphasis correctly, this sentence should be translated as “During this revolution, significant contributions had been made for the establishment of the Republic of China and the defense of republicanism by the revolutionaries born in Zhejiang.”

6. Conclusion

Chinese Red Culture is very rich in connotations and profound in meanings. To avoid deviations, mistakes, and misunderstandings during the process of translation, the emphasis on the translation should be gradually shifted. Translators should try to use more translation strategies and translate from a cross-cultural perspective to demonstrate the linguistic and cultural connotations of Red Culture. They should deepen their understanding of the historical background. For some specific cultural words, translators should not only express their original meanings without deviations but also show readers the profound connotations in them. At the same time, society should pay more attention to the translation texts, the government should offer more support to funding, talents, supervision, and publicity, and the industry should improve the relevant translation standards so as to improve the quality of translation. We believe that the joint efforts of many parties will reduce the understanding obstacles caused by different cultural backgrounds.

This paper has analyzed a series of problems with the Red Culture foreign publicity translation and the causes of these problems. Meanwhile, we expounded the characteristics and advantages of using the intercultural translation methods. In the end, we tried to give some suggestions for the translation strategies from the perspective of cross-culture. We sincerely hope that the practical recommendations providing in this paper will be helpful for those who are going to do translation in this field. In conclusion, we hope this paper can offer some help to improve the quality of foreign-oriented publicity translation of Red Culture and make it “go global” more and go further.

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