

An Analysis of English Translation of Chinese Classics from the Perspective of Cultural Communication

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Abstract—This paper aims to analyze the English translation of Chinese classics from the perspective of cultural communication. Through the analysis, it is hoped that the communication of Chinese traditional culture can be promoted.

Index Terms—the English translation of Chinese classics, Chinese traditional culture, cultural communication

I. INTRODUCTION

China is a country with a long history of ancient civilization. In the past five thousand years, Chinese culture not only gave birth to its glorious history, but also made an outstanding contribution to human civilization. But at present, the cultural communication of China and the influence of Chinese culture to the world is limited. As we all know, the history of translation in China has a long history. However, there is an indisputable fact that the quality of the translation works should be further improved. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the transmission of Chinese culture to the world because it will be beneficial to create a good international environment for Chinese economic development and even is good for promoting the world peace and development. Obviously, how to overcome the obstacles of international cultural communication and strengthen the exchange between Chinese culture and foreign countries has become a major task of our times.

As we all know, Chinese cultural classics is an important carrier of Chinese culture. Therefore, the translation of Chinese cultural classics has attracted the special attention of the government as well as the great concern of the academic and translation fields. At present, how to further develop and deepen the translation of Chinese classics is a glorious mission for the Chinese people.

In this paper, the author analyzes the translation of Chinese classics from the perspective of cultural communication. This study mainly includes six parts. The first part is a general introduction. The second part analyzes the current demand and status quo of Chinese traditional cultural communication. In the third part, it discusses the importance of English translation of Chinese classics to Chinese traditional culture communication. In the fourth part, it analyzes the achievements and problems of the translation of Chinese classics. In the fifth part, it puts forwards several developing strategies of Chinese classics translation from the perspective of cultural communication. The last part is the conclusion of the paper.

II. THE CURRENT DEMAND AND STATUS QUO OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Nowadays, the cultural communication of China is still lagging behind. And the “cultural deficit” between Chinese and Western countries has attained a ratio of one hundred to one. Therefore, the urgent task at present is to end the “cultural deficit” phenomenon in Chinese and Western cultural exchange. And the only way to achieve that is to increase cultural communication and enhance mutual trust (Yang, 2007).

With the further development of economic globalization, cultural globalization is becoming more and more prominent. Economy is the foundation for the prosperity of culture, and at the same time, culture becomes the driving force for economic development. In other words, the development of the two are complementary, so the economic globalization will inevitably bring about the cultural globalization. And the economic and cultural globalization will make the communication between countries become more and more frequent. With the increasing of international communication, people are more and more aware of the importance of understanding and experiencing different cultures. And the original exploratory, mandatory cultural exchanges has gradually transformed into active and diverse cultural exchanges. In cross-cultural communication, cultural output can further promote communication. Thus, it is the historical mission of contemporary Chinese people to communicate Chinese native culture and expand the cultural influence of ancient Chinese civilization.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CHINESE CLASSICS TO CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE COMMUNICATION

The Chinese nation has a long history. And the history of five thousand years of Chinese civilization is condensed into a variety of classic books, which has enriched the human culture and civilization. However, if China wants to keep an invincible position in the fierce international competition, the Chinese nation should attach special importance to external publicity and pay more attention to foreign translation (Shi, 2015).

Language is an important medium for cultural communication and cultural output, and translation is the most important and effective means for languages of different nations to communicate. Therefore, the translation activities in the new historical period are no doubt to be carried out under the background of cultural studies. The translation work, as a link to cross national and cross-cultural communication, is a necessary way of cultural transmission and is also the embodiment of a country's foreign exchange.

In the process of Chinese culture transmission, it can be found that every major progress in history can not be separated from translation. And every major cultural renaissance is always accompanied by the climax of translation. It has been proved in history that translation plays an important and unique role in the process of world civilization. If there is no translation activity, it is impossible to have cultural exchange. Needless to say, the nature of translation is cultural communication. Hence, in international communication, China must pay attention to the importance of translation.

Chinese cultural classics are an important carrier of Chinese culture and its English translation constitutes an important aspect of Chinese culture communication (Wang, 2013). Therefore, it is of special significance to translate the cultural classics of the Chinese nation systematically and accurately into foreign languages. It is the needs of the world's cultural exchanges and the development of the country's "soft power". Therefore, the translation of Chinese classics into English, which is an important way to spread Chinese culture, has become an important task for translators in China.

IV. THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND MAIN PROBLEMS OF ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CHINESE CLASSICS

A. *The Achievements*

The translation of Chinese classics has reached its golden age in the first ten years of twenty-first century. And the achievements made in the translation of Chinese classics into English can be summarized as the following (Wang, 2012):

1. The status of English translation of Chinese classics has been rapidly raised.

After entering into the twenty-first century, the English translation of Chinese classics has been attached to great importance. In order to improve the quantity of the cultural output, China has initiated several different cultural transmission projects. Among them, one of the most influential projects is "Great Chinese Library" project, which systematically introduces the Chinese translation of ancient books to the world for the first time in Chinese history. The translation of classic books in this project includes literature, history, philosophy, economy, military, science and technology and so on. Trying to show the basic features of Chinese culture and brilliant achievements, the "Great Chinese Library" has undoubtedly become more and more far-reaching both at home and abroad (Wang, 2012).

2. The number of translation works is increasing year by year.

Since the new century, the number of English translation of Chinese classic works grows exponentially. And there are more and more Chinese classics translation academic monographs, textbooks and papers are published by domestic and foreign language publishing press and journals. At the same time, the English translation of Chinese classics research content is widely expanded, the research results are more and more abundant, and there are more and more interdisciplinary research (Yao, 2010). In addition, there are a number of studies on the translation of Chinese classics are listed into the Ministry of education and the National Social Science foundation projects. Needless to say, these achievements have played an important role in the translation of Chinese classics (Wang, 2012).

3. The number of people who are engaged in the English translation of Chinese classics has been increased.

With the start of cultural translation projects such as the "Great Chinese Library" project, the numbers of Chinese scholars who have joined the English translation of Chinese classics have been increasing. In the study of English translation of ancient books, the new situation of "theory and practice is closely integrated" is shown with the coming of the twenty-first century. In 2002, The Association of Comparative Studies of English and Chinese in China added a "Specialized Committee" to study the English translations of Chinese classics. It has held seven national classics translation seminars and has published five volumes of papers on the study of the English translation of Chinese classics. In 2001, Shantou University established the "Classics Translation Research Center"; Dalian University of Science and Engineering in 2003 established the "Dalian University of Science and Engineering Classics Translation Center" and at the same time it set up the relevant website; Suzhou University in 2012 established the "Classics Translation Research Center". Besides, many colleges and universities such as Nankai University, Suzhou University, Sichuan University, East China Normal University, Henan University, Dalian University of of Science and Engineering have enrolled a number of graduates and doctors to do research on Chinese classics translation (Wang, 2012).

B. *Main Problems*

Although the English translation of Chinese classics has achieved a lot, it still has a lot of problems that needs to be solved.

1. The translation selection is relatively simplex.

In view of the history of English translation of Chinese classics, the translators are mostly concentrated in classical literature. However, there are still a lot of non-literary classics and ancient books of ethnic minorities have not been translated into English. Therefore the translation of non-literary classics and ancient works of ethnic minorities should be strengthened. In view of the fact that most of the Chinese classical literature has been translated into English, it is necessary to expand the scope of English translation to the fields of Chinese classical law, medicine, economy, military, astronomy, geography, and other ethnic minorities. Only in this way can it be regarded to translate the Chinese classics into English completely (Wang, 2012).

2. Disconnection between theory and Practice

At present, the phenomenon of disconnection between theory and practice of Chinese classics translation is still serious. Professor Wang Rongpei in the "Classics Translation Study" (Fifth Edition) pointed out that most of the staff who work on the Chinese classics translation practice do not do theoretical research, and people who are busy with theoretical research are not engaged in translation practice. Now the authors of the translation theory articles are a number of graduate students and doctoral students of professional translation. Generally, they don't have practical translation practice. In addition, there is still a lack of systematic research on the standards and methods of English translation of Chinese classics (Wang, 2012).

3. Cooperation and exchanges needs to be strengthened.

The English translation of Chinese classics is composed of two parts, one is the overseas translator, and the other is the translator in China. At present, the translation works of overseas translators are mainly published abroad, and the other translator's translations are mainly distributed in China. In addition, scholars both at home and abroad lack regular and timely communication and cooperation, and lack comprehensive and accurate understanding of each other in the translation of Chinese classics (Wang, 2012).

4. Lacking of effective channels for foreign communication

Nowadays, the translation and the influence of the Chinese classics translated by Chinese translators are far more satisfactory. At present, the translated versions of Chinese classics are mostly for domestic readers and lack of effective channels to go abroad. Take the translation of "The Dream of Red Mansions" as an example, the majority of foreign readers are familiar with Hawkes's version, and fewer people will read the translation of Yang Xianyi (Wang, 2011). Therefore, we need to analyze the English translation of Chinese books in the English speaking world carefully, such as translation criteria and strategies, the initiator, the translator and the reader of the English translation of Chinese classics. Through the analysis, we can explore the most effective international channels for foreign communication (Wang, 2012).

5. Translation talents needs to be cultivated

At present, the staff who is specialized in English translation of Chinese classics are still few. In other words, there is an urgent need of translators and translation talents to introduce Chinese traditional culture. Besides, so far, almost all the colleges and universities in China, including foreign language colleges and universities, do not recognize the translation of foreign language teachers (He, 2012). Therefore, the young scholars are unwilling to engage in English translation of Chinese classics. At present, most of the senior experts who are engaged in the translation of Chinese classics have gradually entered the old age, while the middle-aged talents are seriously lacking (Wang, 2012).

V. DEVELOPING STRATEGIES OF CHINESE CLASSICS TRANSLATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The problems of the translation of Chinese classics are realistic and need to be studied systematically and comprehensively. In view of the above problems, this part will put forward the developing strategies of Chinese classics translation from the perspective of cultural communication.

A. *Have a New Understanding of Chinese Culture and Its Classics and Formulate the Long-term Strategy of Foreign Promotion*

The transmission of Chinese culture, is not a simple language transformation of national culture. In the process of cultural communication, we should pay attention to the promotion of China's excellent culture and absorb the world's outstanding culture. The Chinese culture should have distinct personality and national characteristics so as to show the Chinese people's advantages of hard-working, courage, wisdom and justice. Therefore, we should have a new understanding of Chinese culture and its cultural classics. It is necessary to strengthen ties and communication between different disciplines in China and emphasize the exchange of ideas and information. Specifically, the so-called Chinese classics, should not only include literature, history and philosophy, but also it should be gradually expanded to include astronomy and geography, manufacturing technology, painting, calligraphy, art theory and other fields, such as landscape construction, customs and systems and so on (Zhang, 2013).

As we all know that "Chinese fever" in foreign countries has continued for many years. However, the increase of the number of people learning Chinese does not necessarily mean that the number of Chinese cultural and literary translation talents are increased. In Britain, for example, at present, only a few scholars, such as Lan Shiling, are really devoted to the translation of Chinese literature. In the process of communication between China and foreign countries,

the cultural deficit between Chinese and other major languages will continue. Therefore, the formulation of a long-term strategy for the promotion of Chinese culture will make the translation work in an orderly manner (Zhang, 2013).

B. Deepen the Subject of English Translation of Chinese Classics from the Perspective of Cultural Communication.

In order to promote the Chinese culture, we should arouse the Chinese and foreign people's identity of the outstanding of the Chinese cultural classics in theory. And then we should try to explore the communication strategy of Chinese cultural classics and find the international market for the translation of these classics and ultimately succeed in spreading the excellent Chinese culture (Wang, 2012).

In fact, it is very necessary to learn something from many western theories of translation, and to study the English translation of Chinese classics from various angles. At the same time, we should pay attention to the integration and balance of theoretical resources when we accept the views of different theoretical schools. Therefore, we should deepen the subject of English translation of Chinese classics. At the same time, we should create actively a systematic, practical, theoretical framework and evaluation system which is suitable for the translation of Chinese classics (Wang, 2012).

C. To Strengthen the Organization and Planning of the Translation of Ancient Books, and to Explore the Cooperation between China and Foreign Countries

We should give full play to the positive role of the functional departments of the state, the editorial departments of the press and the departments of translation studies, and strengthen the unity and coordination to achieve greater achievements.

In addition, the other academic research organizations and social organizations can also exert their roles in classics translation. For example, the "Chinese Institute for Comparative Studies of English and Chinese" added the "Chinese Classics Translation Studies Discipline Committee", and the chairman Pan Wenguo is actively involved in organizing the translation of classics conference. Up to now, the "National Academic Conference on English Translation of Chinese Classics" has been held many times. Of course, the role of the individual experts and scholars and translators such as Xu Yuanhong, Wang Rongpei, Wang Baotong and Zhuo Zhenying can not be underestimated. They have made a lot of translation practice and research and should continue to play a leading role in their translation (Zhang, 2013).

The importance of Chinese and foreign cooperation is particularly prominent in the audience of foreign translation works. This cooperation can be multifaceted. First of all, people can join hands with the mainstream press in Europe and the United States if opportunities are available. Secondly, it is proposed to set up a special fund to support the scholars who undertake the project of foreign translation to study in the Western Sinology institutions and seek cooperation with foreign scholars. Thirdly, we should attract foreign scholars to participate in the translation of Chinese works (Zhang, 2013).

D. Strengthen the Discipline Construction of the Translation of Ancient Books and the Cultivation of Translation Talents and Improve the Quality of Translation

The current situation of English translation of Chinese classics is not optimistic, and the cultivation of Chinese English translation of Chinese classics is far behind the needs of social development and cultural exchange. Therefore, to speed up the construction of the subject of English translation of Chinese classics, and to cultivate high-quality talents for the translation of Chinese classics into English, has become a top priority in the development of the English translation of Chinese classics. In view of this, this paper will put forward some suggestions on the cultivation of English translation of Chinese classics from the aspects of curriculum setting, textbook construction, teacher training and teaching materials.

1. Curriculum setting

The translators who are engaged in English translation of Chinese classics should be highly qualified. In addition to having comprehensive English knowledge, the translators should also have high academic attainments, encyclopedic knowledge, and be familiar with Chinese philosophy, history, sociology, cultural studies, folklore, religion, art, classical literary theory and so on. The special requirements for the English translation of Chinese classics translators means that the cultivation of classics translation talents is a long and arduous project. Therefore, the establishment of reasonable training system and curriculum setting is directly related to the knowledge structure of talents and training quality (Cao, 2013).

There are some suggestions for English translation of Chinese classics curriculum setting.

First, undergraduate students who are interested and determined to engage in Chinese classics translation should be chosen as majors of English translation of Chinese classics. The curriculum should be made specially for them. For example, these students should know the basic theory of translation and master the strategy and standard of classics translation. At the same time, they should have some translation practice, which can lay a solid foundation for their further study and practice. In addition, universities should guide students to study many elective courses such as ancient Chinese text, history, philosophy, law and other related courses in science, etc (Cao, 2013).

Second, as for the cultivation of postgraduate students, the curriculum should be expanded in study contents, theories and methods. Especially, the translation theory and research methodology of the study should be strengthened, and translation theory research ability and the quality of classics translation practice should be improved. When it comes to elective courses, linguistics and literary theory, such as semantics, pragmatics, rhetoric, stylistics, literary criticism, and

other related disciplines such as literature, logic, aesthetics and philosophy should be taken. In view of the fact that the English translation of Chinese classics is a highly practical subject, the translation practice should be given special attention (Cao, 2013).

2. Textbook construction

The textbook is the main content and important basis for the quality of teaching. Therefore, textbook construction plays a vital role in discipline construction. Unfortunately, the current construction of the English translation of Chinese classics teaching material is still in its infancy. There are few published classics translation textbook, which can not meet the multi-level classics translation talent training and discipline construction needs. Therefore, it is necessary to develop the teaching syllabus for the English translation of Chinese classics as soon as possible and establish relevant teaching materials evaluation system. Furthermore, the construction of teaching materials should be actively carried out (Cao, 2013).

3. Teacher training

Teacher is the undertaker of the teaching task, the executor of the syllabus, and the implementor of the goal of training talents. Therefore, the training of teachers is a necessary prerequisite and important content for the construction of the discipline.

As for the training of Chinese classics translation teachers, there are two suggestions to follow: first of all, the classics translation teachers should have a passion for the translation of classical Chinese teaching and research career and are able to resist the materials temptation consciously; Secondly, the classics translation teachers should strengthen their theoretical study, improve their theoretical attainments and improve their knowledge structure (Cao, 2013).

As far as the external environment is concerned, it is necessary to create good conditions for the cultivation of English translation of Chinese classics teachers. First, the translation of classics subject and academic status should be given sufficient attention, and preferential policies on teaching and research of English translation of Chinese classics should be given and the classics translation research project should be encouraged and supported. In that case, the classics translation teachers and researchers can feel at ease in their teaching and scientific research. Secondly, we should create a good academic atmosphere for the teaching and research of English translation of Chinese classics. The continuous success of the symposium on the translation of ancient Chinese classics has provided an important platform for the study of the English translation of Chinese classics. In contrast, the teaching research on the translation of Chinese classics, such as the seminar, senior seminar, salon, and excellent courses, is still lagging behind. Thirdly, teachers should be provided with more opportunities for academic and non-academic education so that their professional and academic ability can be improved (Cao, 2013).

VI. CONCLUSION

As an important carrier of Chinese culture, Chinese cultural classics play a vital role in Chinese history. Nowadays, the translation of Chinese cultural classics has attracted special attention of the country and Chinese people. Therefore, this paper analyzes the Chinese cultural classics translation from the perspective of cultural communication, hoping to promote the communication of Chinese traditional culture in a reasonable way.

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