

A Study on the Translation of Cultural-loaded Words in the Publicity Film of Pingyao County from the Perspective of the Skopos Theory

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Abstract—City publicity film aims at appreciating the landscape from a general view and certain scenic spot, planned and organized by the local government or tourism authority. It is consisted of diverse factors from history, culture, geographic features to custom. In terms of people-to-people exchange, it has become the paramount window for foreign tourists to learn more about China, especially Chinese cities with distinctive local cultures. In the process, culture-loaded words play a significant role in scaling up cross-cultural exchange and helping readers to enjoy Chinese culture readily. Therefore, the translation of cultural-loaded words should be valued to a large extent. Regarded publicity film of PingYao County in Shanxi as subject, this paper aimed at identifying words and dialogues with cultural characteristics, and studying the translation of culture-loaded terms from the perspective of the skopos theory. It can conclude that some translation strategies are adopted in the translation of publicity film of PingYao County such as omission, compensation, domestication, foreignization, literal translation, liberal translation and so on.

Index Terms—city publicity film, the translation of cultural-loaded words, the skopos theory

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

With the growing trend of economic development, it is urgently needed for China to improve its cultural soft power. There is no more time to waste. More importantly, the urgency inspires more scholars to pore over the issue that how to introduce the traditional Chinese culture and time-honored cities into other countries. Thus, urban culture plays an important role in the process. The urban culture has become the soul embedded in a city and its people, which reflect lasting historic charm and glory. However, a lot of words and conventional expressions in Chinese culture are hard to be translated faithfully into other languages, especially with as little as distortion and deletion. Moreover, in the introduction of urban culture, it is impossible to avoid these intricate issues. Therefore, a number of scholars pay much attention to the translation of culture-loaded words. In fact, they are regarded as the cultural and regional characteristics.

B. Research Significance

To be specific, culture-loaded words translation studies involve a wide range of types, in which most works focus on related literature, like *A Dream in Red Mansions*, *The Wolf Totem*, *The Analects*, *Moment in Peking*, *Red Sorghum*, *Rickshaw Boy*, etc.

As the traditional Chinese medicine is in the spotlight in recent years, the culture-related words in those medicine classics also attract more attention in the academia.

Moreover, due to the growing popularity of Chinese TV dramas overseas, a part of researches prefers the study of subtitles, such as that of American version of *Empresses in the Palace*, *Detective Chinatown*, *Nirvana in Fire*, *Once Upon a Time*, *A Bite of China*, etc.

However, there are few papers putting emphasis on the introduction of urban culture. Therefore, in order to establish a good image for Chinese cities, the paper will study the cultural elements from the perspective of the publicity film.

C. Research Structure

The research subject is based on the publicity film of Pingyao County, Shanxi province, from CGTN and CCTV. The author has chosen some dialogues and voiceover to conduct the detailed analysis.

Part one is to pen the answer of how to define the publicity-oriented texts and identify the types of them.

Part two is about the introduction of related translation theories and the analysis based these theories.

Part three is to dissect some cases and try to come up the effective and accessible translation strategies and techniques.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are the definitions of publicity-oriented texts and culture-loaded words. These are the foundation of understanding this paper.

A. *The Definition and Types of Publicity-oriented Texts*

Publicity-oriented texts refer to the introduction of development in politics, economy, national defense, science and technology, culture, policies and announcements of governments, the related information involving in exchange with outside world, the publicity in correlation with municipal construction in various regions, foreign businesses and investment, tourism, international activities, exhibitions. Besides, advertising and product presentation are included in the texts. Therefore, it is noteworthy of the complicated background, up-to-date information and various themes, imposing a great challenge for translators. Thus, in order to make it clearer in analyzing different texts, it is necessary and effective to distinguish them in terms of types.

According to Newmark (2001), text type is consisted of expressive, informative and vocative. Moreover, the publicity-oriented C/E translation, especially the publicity film of Pingyao County, put its top priority on the introduction of local culture. That is to say, those videos have to transfer useful information and present attractive moments as much as possible in a limited time. At the same time, the texts also need to focus on exotic features, which will encourage more people to explore the culture they have never seen before. By doing so, they will be accessible to more curious audience. Taking their features into account, it is easy to find out that publicity film incline to informative and vocative.

B. *The Introduction of Culture-loaded Words*

Various cultures are transferred through their respective languages. Durdureanu (2011) argues that words carry in cultures a myriad possibility for connecting us to other human beings, other situations, events, acts, beliefs, feelings... The indexicality of language is thus part of the constitution of any act of speaking as an act of participation in a community of language users. So, when language is regarded as a means of expression for a particular community, it also produces potential influence on people's lifestyle and way of thinking. Du (2018) holds that those special words composed through accumulation and assimilation in such a long period of time has been categorized as culture-loaded words.

In order to better study the translation of culture-loaded words, it is necessary to classify them according to various cultural factors. As for the classification of culture-loaded words, the famous translation theorist Eugene Nida divides culture into five categories, namely (1) Ecological culture;(2) Material culture;(3) Social culture;(4) Religious culture;(5) Language and culture. We can see from these classifications that culture-loaded words cover almost all aspects of culture. Therefore, it is very necessary to explore more effective translation methods of culture-loaded words for more efficient communication among different cultures.

III. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The skopos theory is the theoretical foundation of this paper. The introduction of the skopos theory and the applicability of the skopos theory are as following.

A. *The Introduction of the Skopos Theory*

The skopos theory is the core of Functionalist Translation Theory of Germany. It is an approach to translation which was put forward by Hans Vermeer (1978). His work *Framework for a General Theory of Translating* lays the foundation of skopos theory. And the theory developed in Germany in the late 1970s and which oriented a more functional and cultural concept of translation. It is divided into three parts, including skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule according to later development.

Translation is a purposeful act. Skopos rule is the most basic and important rule of skopos theory. It means translation can play a certain functional role in the target language culture target language users expect. The purpose of translation has a decisive influence on the translation process, namely the result determines the method. Duan (2000) argues that the purpose of translation is further divided into three categories :(1) the basic purpose of the translator;(2) communicative purpose of translation text;(3) the purpose which a particular translation strategy or means is intended to realize, whereas the word "purpose" often refers to communicative purpose.

The coherence rule refers to intralingual coherence. It emphasizes that the translation should be coherent which means that the translation is at least a correct text that makes sense to the target language reader. In other words, the coherence rule emphasizes the readability of the translation. Even in the coherence rule, what is in the original text is not the most important, but merely to provide some information for the translator. The translation should be done from the perspective of the target audience, so as to make the translation coherent and smooth and conform to the language expression habits of target readers. Make sure that the target language readers can accept and understand the translation and make sense in the target language culture.

The fidelity rule means that there should be interlingual coherence between the source text and the target text, emphasizing the connection between the source text and the target text. The translation should be responsible for the original text and be faithful to the content and style of the original text to the greatest extent. But the degree and formula of fidelity largely depends on the translator's own understanding and the purpose of the translation activity.

In the translation, it is difficult to consider the three rules of skopos theory at the same time. Fidelity rule is subordinated to the coherence principle, and both are subordinated to the skopos rule. Therefore, in the process of translation, the translator can choose a flexible and effective translation strategy according to the specific intention of the target text.

B. *The Applicability of the Skopos Theory*

In terms of the features and purposes of publicity film, they are designed to mainly focus on the target languages and texts. In other words, various areas of translation should be in line with that of target cultures, such as means of expression and figures of speech. In effect, the reader-centered text can be combined with the skopos theory. As the three rules mentioned above, the publicity films, with cultural words, need to take the needs of audience into consideration, especially their sense of identity, language habits, taboos, etc. In terms of the communicative purpose, the text, especially the dialogue in videos, should maintain its concise and accurate features with limited time. As for coherence rule, videos pay much attention on repeating the proper nouns to strengthen people's impression, closely connecting the first clips and the coming ones. Besides, the fidelity rule refers to the equivalence between different spots and their according English name in videos. In the process of translation, the translator can choose a flexible and effective translation strategy according to the specific intention of the target text from the perspectives of the skopos theory.

IV. TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF CULTURE-LOADED WORDS IN PUBLICITY FILM OF PINGYAO COUNTY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SKOPOS THEORY

Pingyao is a small town in central Shanxi Province into whose history goes back 2700 years when it was first built during the reign of King Xuan (827-782 BC) of the Western Zhou Dynasty. Since the "Province and County System" set by Emperor Qin in 221 BC, the city has been the County seat in all the times. Despite so many events or incidents, it survived practically as it was in the 600 years or more since Ming and Qing dynasties, and ranks as the only intact ancient city of Ming and Qing dynasties well-preserved in China. This research regards the publicity film of Pingyao County as subject to study culture-loaded words of it from the perspective of ecologic, material, linguistic, social and religion culture and the translation strategies under the skopos theory.

A. *Ecologic Culture-loaded Words and Translation Strategy*

Ecological culture loaded words reflect the natural, geographical, climatic and other characteristics related to ecological civilization in the region of some cultures. It represents the relationship between man and nature and the ecological environment, including plants, animals, mountains, rivers, cities and towns, and the associative meaning (Zhang, 2013). Due to different geographical location, topography, climate and life, different countries have different ecological cultures. Some ecological and cultural loaded words are unique to China, such as "小满" and "惊蛰" in Chinese, which means that we cannot find corresponding words in the target language. Therefore, the translation of eco-culture-loaded words plays a very important role in cultural communication.

Example 1

ST: 平遥又以窑洞闻名。这是中国西北地区的典型建筑，以砖石结构砌成，冬暖夏凉。常装饰有历史悠久的雕花门窗，烘托出窑洞古色古香的艺术气息。

TT: Pingyao is also famous for its vaulted ceiling dwellings, which are the characteristics of north western China. These Yao Dong dwellings were built masonry and are known to stay cool in the summer and warm in the winter. The doors and windows are often decorated with intricate wood carvings that have survived hundreds of years and give these houses a quaint yet artistic feel.

Foreignization aims to transmit the alien features of the source culture, transplanting the new images and concepts into the target language and culture. Thus, the target language will be enriched and reformed (Ye, 2014). By maintaining the foreignness, the local culture and language habits will be preserved well. Domesticating translation makes the translator invisible and the dominant cultures usually adopt the domesticating translation strategy to produce coherent reading for the target language readers. Then translators are able to keep the coherence within the target text and readers will pay much attention on major information and content, not interrupted by weird words and tedious annotation. The translation text combines the domestication and foreignization altogether, like "vaulted ceiling dwellings" and "Yao Dong dwellings", contributing a lot to the fruitful cross-cultural communication. On the one hand, tourists are able to catch the information about its basic appearance and function. On the other hand, transliteration maintains the exotic features embedded in traditional Chinese architectural culture. Moreover, the text also complements more functions and artistic style about the special building, so that the vivid picture and people's imagination will highlight its unique charm and encourage visitors to come there soon. That is to say, the translation achieves its vocative characteristic.

B. *Material Culture-loaded Words and Translation Strategy*

Material culture-loaded words reflect the production and material achievements of human beings, such as economy, science, technology, food, clothes, crafts, buildings. These words are reflections of daily life of human being and embody the labor and wisdom of human beings.

Example 2

ST: 衙门, 库房, 镖局

TT: criminal law court, underground vault, armed escort agency

The translation compensation is applied in the translation of material culture-loaded words. According to their distinctive functions, the first step is to find their respective equivalents. With the same role in Western world, like "衙门"

is equal to the court, which is defined as the place where legal trials take place and where crimes are judged. By doing so, the new context is created according to pragmatic equivalence. Then, in order to narrow the range further and avoid the misunderstanding of civil court, the editor complements extra part “criminal”. Thus, the audiences are able to catch the major functions of “衙门”. As for “库房”, in the video, it directly points to store the ancient currency, like silver and gold. So, vault is the equivalent, used for keeping valuable things safe, especially in bank. The “underground” illuminates the specific location and the traditional habits in ancient China. In the translation of “镖局”, after ensuring its basic type as an agency to provide a particular service especially on behalf of other businesses or organizations, “armed escort” will stimulate tourists to associate it with the escort ships or armed guards in modern sense. In the process, cultural default is addresses by bridging different cultures.

C. Linguistic Culture-loaded Words and Translation Strategy

There are nine major language families in the world, among which there are great differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax and grammar. Chinese belongs to Sino-Tibetan language and English belongs to Indo-European language family. Four-character words are an important type of language culture-loaded words in tourism texts. Compared with Chinese, English has the characteristics of conciseness, conciseness and semantic concentration.

Example 3

ST: 老掌柜, 贵客取元宝。掌柜, “财源滚滚, 步步高升!”

TT: Dear manager, our respected customer is here for her ingots. May your profits pour in, may you rise step by step.

The liberal translation and amplification are applied in the translation of linguistic culture-loaded words. This follows the coherence rule. It is obvious that the dialogue comes up in an organization with the same function of bank, of which “掌柜” is in charge. Thus, the equivalent “manager” has provided the presupposition and context, which implies the activity of clients. It is liberal translation. Besides, “May your profits pour in, may you rise step by step.” Add the subject “your profits, you”. It is amplification. In particular, the traditional blessings are translated properly, with the same styles and condensed content. When listening to it, the audience can feel its readability and catchy features.

D. Social Culture-loaded Words and Translation Strategy

In the long-term development of history, different societies have different social systems, values, lifestyles, behavior patterns, etiquette and customs, etc. Social-cultural loaded words refer to the words and expressions created by local people under the influence of local unique folk customs, lifestyles, behavior patterns and other factors. Therefore, social culture-loaded words can reflect different customs, historical backgrounds and ideologies.

Example 4

ST: 平遥古镇有一千多座古宅, 以钱庄, 镖局等历史悠久的老字号为特色。天一黑, 七百米长街就亮了起来。游客可以品尝到许多当地的特色美食, 尤其是山西面食。《又见平遥》是一部大型室内情景剧。

TT: The ancient town has over 1,000 ancient houses, featuring banks, escort agencies and other time-honored brands. As it gets dark, a 700-meter-long gourmet street is lit up. Visitors can taste a variety of local specialties, especially Shanxi pasta. “See Pingyao Again” is a large-scale indoor situational experience drama.

Example 5

ST: 这条路叫十米财路。因为你看到这个墙上都有铜钱, 这个叫铜墙铁壁黄金路。

TT: This is called the “10-Meter Fortune Path”. You can see copper coins in the crevices between the bricks. So, they bless this path to the vaults.

Liberal translation and omission are applied in social culture-loaded words. As mentioned in example 4, “山西面食” is replaced by Shanxi pasta. It is liberal translation. The word “pasta” refers to an Italian food made from flour, water and sometimes eggs, formed into different shapes and usually served with a sauce. In terms of appearance, it can be the counterpart of noodles, a long thin strip of pasta. Besides, the pasta also has a wide range than noodles, if the translators take the variety of local specialty into consideration. To some extent, it amounts to cultural borrowing in an effort to set up a fundamental impression and context regarding to pragmatic equivalence. Besides, something beyond expectation also attracts visitors to try the specialty snack based on geographic features.

In the example 5, the translation of “铜墙铁壁黄金路”, the English version doesn’t repeat the first two objects, which have been illustrated before, but directly point to the final object with simplicity. Another is the shared features with subtitle translation, owing to the type of publicity films. To be specific, there is readability for audience and conciseness. Besides, the former two sentences have explained the specific implied meaning of the path and copper coins. Therefore, although the last sentence in Chinese lists several imageries, it has been redundant for the English version. That’s exactly why the free translation transfers the better quality with effective omission. It follows the fidelity rule.

E. Religious Culture-loaded Words and Translation Strategy

In the long process of historical development, different ethnic groups formed different religions and beliefs. Religious belief is an important part of national culture. Most people in China believe in Buddhism, Taoism and

Confucianism. However, most Westerners believe in Christianity. Because the religious beliefs of Chinese people are different from those of Westerners, it is difficult for Westerners to understand some words and expressions in Chinese religious culture. Therefore, it is significant to apply appropriate translation strategy.

Example 6

ST: “社火节”字面意思就是“土地和火”，大多在农村地区举办有庆祝活动。这个有着上百年历史的节日也提醒着人们中国社会中农业的重要性。每到这个时候，人们会向土地公祈求好收成，向火神祈求火种以取暖烹调。如今仍有许多乡镇庆祝这个节日，但规模最大的还是中国山西的平遥。

TT: "Shehuo" literally translates as "Earth and Fire" and is a festival mostly celebrated in the countryside. It's a centuries-old practice that reminds us of the importance of agriculture in Chinese society. During Shehuo, people pray to the god of Earth for a good harvest and to the god of Fire for giving them warmth and the ability to cook. While the festival is celebrated in many towns and villages across the country, one of the biggest is held in the ancient city of Pingyao in north China's Shanxi Province.

The unique traditional festival is transferred through two different translation techniques, including transliteration and literal translation. As it is almost impossible to find out an equivalent in English, the “Shehuo” preserves the exotic feature successfully. Continuously, the text also explains its literal meaning and implication, related to the agriculture. From the perspective of audiences, the center of skopos theory, what they have commanded is not only the name “Shehuo”, but also its history and implications. Interestingly, the sacrificial culture also shows up vibrantly.

ST:这是双林寺，是平遥三宝之一……双林，字面意思就是“两片森林”，得名于释迦牟尼“双林入灭”的典故。

TT: This is Shuang Lin Temple, the so-called third treasure of Pingyao. The name Shuang Lin, literally named double forests and it was inspired by Sakyamuni, the founder of the Buddhism, entering nirvana between the two trees. Nirvana in the context refers to the transcendent state of consciousness where the soul is freed of desire and suffering.

In terms of tourists' different degrees of understanding of Buddhism, the proper noun “双林寺” is translated through transliteration and literal translation. In particular, the potential allusion is added to complement the cultural default. Involving the nirvana, the narrator continues to illuminate why the process of death is so holy and sacred for Buddhists, especially for those who are lack of knowledge about Buddhism. Thus, the target text relatively maintains the intertextual coherence, with as little as distortion.

V. CONCLUSION

Publicity-oriented texts involve in many areas in correlation with the information of the outside world. Furthermore, considering the functions to introduce local culture and attract tourists, the publicity film is the typical one, subject to informative and vocative in terms of types. In the process, the translation of culture-loaded terms is so significant in the widespread urban culture, terms which undergo the distinctive feature and incomparable charm. Through the considerable analysis, it is clearer and easier for translators to adopt flexible and reasonable translation strategies in the face of cultural-loaded words under the skopos theory. Ecological culture-loaded words apply the domestication and foreignization translation strategies. Material culture-loaded words apply the compensation. Linguistic culture-loaded words apply the liberal translation and amplification. Social culture-loaded words apply liberal translation and omission. Religious culture-loaded words apply transliteration and literal translation. All of these strategies are applied to achieve special purpose from the perspective of the skopos theory. The skopos rule is the core of the skopos theory. Good translation requires that the translators need to have a good command of both basic language skills and profound cultural background. Only by doing so, can the urban culture strengthen its modern value and gain widespread popularity in the worldwide.

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