



A Study on the English Translation Strategies of Culture-loaded Expressions in Political Articles

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Abstract: The English version of Chinese political articles are the main source for foreigners to obtain China's economic development and policy trends. It appears to be important to translate these Chinese words objectively and accurately, especially for the overseas publicity. On the basis of Eugene A. Nida's functional equivalence theory, the translation strategies of the neologisms, shortened-form expressions, idioms and numerals are analyzed. And the flexibility of translation of Chinese culture-loaded words is discussed. Finally the different translation strategies in political essays are summed up.

Keywords: Chinese culture-loaded expressions, Chinese political articles, functional equivalence theory, translation strategies

With the development of globalization and the increasing communication with different countries in the world, the translation industry has become an essential role player in cross-culture. As a carrier and tool, translation helps people understand different cultural values and leads people of the world to come together to the common international activities.

1. Significance of the study

China has made a great progress in the economy, politics and culture in the new era of modernization. Some western countries would like to understand the development of our country and the attitude towards international events. The Chinese leaders' official comments on the political or diplomatic occasions are the main source for foreigners to obtain China's economic development and policy trends. With changing times, lots of new words reflecting new things, new phenomena and new concepts have emerged in modern society due to the drastic change of the society, the fusion and development of culture, the changes in ideology and so forth. It appears to be more important to translate these Chinese words objectively and accurately, especially for the overseas publicity.

Language reflects culture and stands for different cultural characteristics and cultural information. Juri Lotman & B.A. Uspensky claim that "there is no language that is not rooted in culture, and there is no language that is not a center of the structure of natural language." [1] Translation is not only a conversation between two languages, but also a communication between cultures. "Language expresses cultural reality. Language embodies cultural reality. Language symbolizes cultural reality." [2] Translation, as a carrier of both information and culture, has greatly helped to make China better known to the world. The political articles reflect the present situation of China and the deployment of Chinese government and include the aspects of politics, economy, society and so on. The study in this paper can hopefully shed some light on further research of translation.

The political articles include the speech of the country's leader, the government work report and many Chinese culture-loaded words. The culture-loaded words refer to the words with specific ethnic culture, and they can reflect directly the historic culture, ethnic characteristic, social development and so on. These words have sociocultural meanings. Context has an important role in the understanding of words. Contextual meaning can be generally defined into two senses linguistic contextual meaning and non-linguistic contextual meaning. Non-linguistic contextual meaning includes material culture, system culture (social system, family system, lifestyle, custom and so on), mental culture (thinking models, values, aesthetic taste). When understanding Chinese culture-loaded words, both contextual meanings should be analyzed. Only by fully understanding non-linguistic context can the translator convey their practical meanings.

2. Theory of the study

Language, as a part of national culture, plays a role in culture transmission. That causes the great difficulties in translation of Chinese into English. For example, in either Chinese or English, there are many idioms and phrases. These words are formed by long-time social and historical sediment. Because many cultures are born by specific historic backgrounds, it is necessary that misunderstanding exists in the communication.

In 1993, Nida came up with “functional equivalence” instead of “dynamic equivalence”, whose kernels are idiomatic translation, accurate content and similar readers’ response. According to Nida, Functional Equivalence consists of four principles, which are vocabulary equivalence, syntactic equivalence, discourse equivalence and stylistic equivalence.[3] The reader of a translated text should be able to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive of how original readers of the text must have understood and appreciated it. “Functional equivalence” greatly improves readers’ status. Readers’ cultures, comprehension and appreciation abilities are paid much attention to.

In 1980s, because of opening-door policy, Nida’s translation theory was brought in China. Therefore, the Chinese translators began understanding and being interested in western translation theory. His translation theory has a tremendous impact on Chinese translation field.

3. Analysis of translation of Chinese culture-loaded words

Most political articles apply the solemn and accurate political terms, which have impressed the mark of specific political characteristic. In terms of syntactic structure, most sentences are complex and structures are diverse. In terms of language style, many specific terms and idioms are used. Its language is clear and concise. Besides, antithesis and parallel structures are widely used.

Chinese culture-loaded words in political articles have mainly the significant features in the following.

First of all, there are many new proposals that describe the principles and strategies related to the Chinese politics, economy and culture, such as, 从严治党, 供给侧结构性改革, 依法治国, 中国特色社会主义, 小康社会, 社会主义核心价值观.

Secondly, there is a particular phenomenon expressed by many proper nouns like 天宫, 蛟龙, 天眼, 悟空, 墨子.

Thirdly, there are many idioms employed in the government work report for balancing the structures and making it easy to understand. These words have distinct Chinese characteristics. By using these words, the Report is full of appeal and charisma. Such as 登高望远, 居安思危, 迎难而上, 开拓进取, 不忘初心, 牢记使命, 防微杜渐.

Fourthly, Chinese numerals are widely used in it. These words are simple but have rich contents. Such as “三个代表, 五位一体, 四个全面, 一带一路, 两学一做, 三严三实. This paper will study these four categories of Chinese culture-loaded words and their translations.

3.1 Translation of neologisms

Neologism is a kind of words that appears with the development of society and represents new phenomenon, policy or culture. Neologisms can be defined as newly created lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire a new sense.[4] Therefore, when analyzing this kind of words, translators must completely understand the original text and pay attention to the context, and they can choose words and phrases in the target language to express what they understand.

3.2 Translation of proper nouns

Since most proper nouns are some new explanations or meetings, the translation of them are expressed by using transliteration with some explanation. Transliteration is a method which represents the sounds of one language by using the corresponding sounds of another language. In Chinese, “Pinyin” is the most common way of transliteration.

3.3 Translation of idioms

There is a trend recently that idioms are more and more frequently and extensively used. Idioms represent the Chinese cultural characteristics. People like to use idioms because they are refined and smart. Most of the Chinese idioms are four-character expressions and play a very important role in the political report. Viewed from the rhetorical perspective, we can find many situations hard for translation. In the Chinese rhetoric, personification, antithesis and pun can be seen frequently. These cause trouble in the translation of culture-loaded words. Different methods should be employed to translate idioms according to different circumstances. In the political articles, most idioms are translated by using free translation. That could be seen in the most occasions.

3.4 Translation of numerals

The frequent use of numerals is attributed to the shortened-form of some policies. These abbreviations can be divided to two kinds. The first one consists of the common words from original texts and the corresponding numbers. The second one is expressed by the corresponding numbers and words that show common meaning from original texts. This kind of words has been widely used for its features of summarizing, which requires the translators to show deep meanings through concise structures. There are a lot of expressions with numerals..

4. Conclusion

This study analyses and discusses the translation of four types of Chinese culture-loaded expressions. They are neologisms, proper nouns, idioms and numerals.

Chinese culture-loaded words are a kind of special expressions. Neologism is a new expression in Chinese, so it is difficult to find corresponding English words. Therefore, most words are translated by using literal translation. However, when translators come across some characters hard to understand, they use literal translation with annotation and free translation in order to help foreign readers understand. According to the study, free translation is not practical in the translation of Chinese culture-loaded words while literal translation is frequently used. Neologisms refer to new policies, things etc. Even though the literal translation methods are commonly used in translation, many translations are not entirely accurate.

Chinese policies are so complex that it is difficult to understand just according to several words. Proper nouns always represent specific places, meetings, organizations and so on. So these words are translated by transliterating. In fact, some transliterated words and phrases have been collected by English dictionaries and accepted by English-speaking people. That is, this method is effective and influential to maintain the “Chinese flavor” in the translation of Chinese terms.

Besides, the idioms have concise structure and deep meaning, so most of them are translated by focusing on their meanings and their structures. The translators mainly use the literal translation.

Finally, for the translations of the numerals, translators are mainly use literal translation, because these numerals have frequently appeared in our daily life. However, foreigners may be confused about the implicated meaning of it. They must search information online or dictionary if they want to know the connotation of the source text.

The translation of the political articles is committed to presenting the national policies and guidelines, and summarizing results in all aspects at this stage and introducing our aims of the future. Especially, the translation of the speech of the country’s leader endowed it with high political awareness and plays an important role in building up our national image in the world. However, it is by no means a simple task. It needs the wisdom and worthy efforts.

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